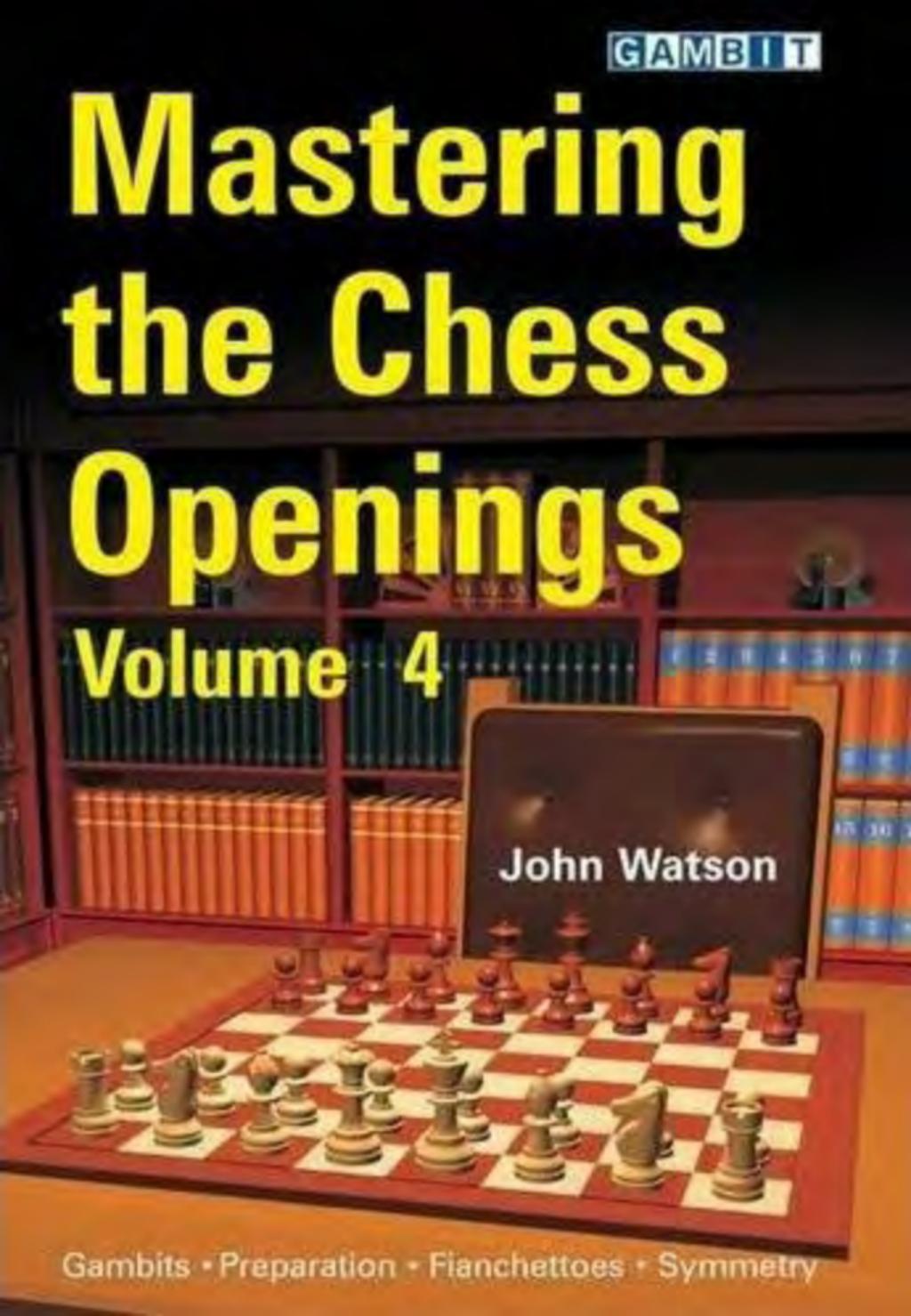


GAMBIT

# Mastering the Chess Openings

Volume 4



John Watson

Gambits • Preparation • Fianchettoes • Symmetry

# **Mastering the Chess Openings**

**Volume 4**

**John Watson**

**G A M B I T**

First published in the UK by Gambit Publications Ltd 2010

Copyright © John Watson 2010

The right of John Watson to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without prior permission of the publisher. In particular, no part of this publication may be scanned, transmitted via the Internet or uploaded to a website without the publisher's permission. Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damage.

ISBN-13: 978-1-906454-19-7

ISBN-10: 1-906454-19-1

**DISTRIBUTION:**

Worldwide (except USA): Central Books Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.  
Tel +44 (0)20 8986 4854 Fax +44 (0)20 8533 5821. E-mail: [orders@Centralbooks.com](mailto:orders@Centralbooks.com)

Gambit Publications Ltd, 99 Wallis Rd, London E9 5LN, England.

E-mail: [info@gambitbooks.com](mailto:info@gambitbooks.com)

Website (regularly updated): [www.gambitbooks.com](http://www.gambitbooks.com)

Edited by Graham Burgess

Typeset by Petra Nunn

Cover image by Wolff Morrow

Printed in Great Britain by The Cromwell Press Group, Trowbridge, Wilts.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Gambit Publications Ltd**

*Managing Director:* Murray Chandler GM

*Chess Director:* Dr John Nunn GM

*Editorial Director:* Graham Burgess FM

*German Editor:* Petra Nunn WFM

*Webmaster:* Dr Helen Milligan WFM

# Contents

Symbols	6
Dedication	6
Acknowledgements	6
Bibliography	7
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1 Réti: Open and Closed Variations</b>	<b>12</b>
The 2...d4 Advance	13
The Open Réti	20
The Closed Réti	23
The Réti Benoni	27
The ...b6 Fianchetto	29
<b>2 Réti: Slav Variations</b>	<b>34</b>
The System with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$	35
The System with ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$	39
The Gambit Accepted	42
The Double Fianchetto System	46
Capablanca Variation with 4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$	48
The New York System	51
<b>3 Modern Kingside Fianchetto</b>	<b>56</b>
The Modern Defence	57
Tiger's Modern	63
Modern Defence with an Early ...c6	68
Classical Set-Up	80
Other White Formations	84
Averbakh Variation	90
<b>4 Modern Queenside Fianchetto</b>	<b>94</b>
Owen Defence	94
English Defence	106
Larsen's Opening: 1 b3	125
<b>5 Gambits</b>	<b>133</b>
Primitive Gambits	134

Danish and Göring Gambits	134
Milner-Barry Gambit	145
Morra Gambit	149
Blackmar-Diemer Gambit	157
Other Primitive Gambits	159
Positional Gambits	160
b4 Gambits	161
g4 Gambits in the Dutch Defence	161
...b5 Gambits in the Nimzo-Indian Defence	163
Gambits in the Réti Opening	165
The Evans Gambit	166
Positional Gambits of Centre Pawns	170
The Ultra-Positional Benko Gambit	172
<b>6 f-Pawns and Reversed Openings</b>	<b>182</b>
Dutch Defence/Bird Opening	183
Leningrad Dutch	185
Bird Opening	191
Classical Dutch	201
Stonewall Dutch	208
King's Indian Attack	212
Reversing Double e-Pawn Openings	221
<b>7 Symmetry and Its Descendants</b>	<b>229</b>
Petroff Defence	229
Four Knights Game	236
Symmetry in the English Opening	243
English Double Fianchetto Variation	244
<b>8 Irregular Openings and Initial Moves</b>	<b>249</b>
The Appeal of the Irregular	249
Adventures with 1 e4	250
Responding to the Unfamiliar	253
Assessing the Initial Moves	254
Sokolsky/Polish: 1 b4	256
Linkspringer: 1 ♜c3	263
The Strange Ones	269
Grob: 1 g4	271
Universal First Moves for Black	275
Black Plays 1...d6	276
Black Plays 1...♜c6	277
Specialized Black Debuts	285
<b>9 Choosing and Preparing Openings</b>	<b>289</b>
How Important is Opening Study?	289

Openings Selection	290
Category D Openings	292
Category C Openings	294
Category B Openings	296
Category A Openings	298
Improving Your Opening Play	300
<b>10 The Future of Openings</b>	<b>308</b>
Index of Openings for Volume 4	312
Index of Players	314
Index of Openings for the Entire Series	316

# Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
corr.	correspondence game
tt	team event
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
½-½	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
(D)	see next diagram

## Dedication

To Tom Lombard, Kent Nelson and my friends in the Nebraska chess community.

## Acknowledgements

This book wouldn't be complete without Graham Burgess's superb editing and excellent analytical suggestions. I also want to thank Ken Case, John Donaldson, Jeremy Silman and John Tomas for their friendship and inspiration throughout the five years of this project.

# Bibliography

This partial bibliography doesn't include books in which I found only one or two notes, nor have I listed many of the magazine and website articles that I used. However, all annotators and analysts are credited in the text. I've used a few sources so extensively that they deserve to be singled out: the outstanding annotations on the website *ChessPublishing.com*; the contributions and ideas in Jeroen Bosch's series *Secrets of Opening Surprises*; and the extraordinary articles in Stefan Bücker's magazine *Kaissiber*.

## Periodical Publications

*Chess Life*; United States Chess Federation

*Chess Today*; Alexander Baburin

*Chess*; *Chess & Bridge*

*ChessBase Magazine*; ChessBase

*Informator* (1-105); Šahovski Informator

*Kaissiber*; Stefan Bücker

*New in Chess Magazine*; New in Chess

*New in Chess Yearbook*; New in Chess

## Websites

*ChessBase*; [www.chessbase.com](http://www.chessbase.com)

*ChessCafe*; [www.chesscafe.com](http://www.chesscafe.com)

*ChessPublishing*; Kosten, A.; [www.chesspublishing.com](http://www.chesspublishing.com)

*Internet Chess Club*; [www.chessclub.com](http://www.chessclub.com)

*JeremySilman.com*; Silman, J.; [www.jeremysilman.com](http://www.jeremysilman.com)

*Kenilworth Chess Club*; [www.kenilworthchessclub.org](http://www.kenilworthchessclub.org)

*The Week in Chess* (up to no. 795); Crowther, M.; [www.chess.co.uk/twic](http://www.chess.co.uk/twic)

*United States Chess Federation*; [www.uschess.org](http://www.uschess.org)

## CD and DVD General References

*Corr Database 2009*; ChessBase 2008

*Mega Database 2010*; ChessBase 2009

*Opening Encyclopaedia 2009*; ChessBase 2009

## Books and Electronic Products

Aagaard, J.; *Dutch Stonewall*; Everyman 2001

Bauer, C.; *Play 1...b6*; Everyman 2005

Beim, V.; *Understanding the Leningrad Dutch*; Gambit 2003

Benko, P. with Silman, J. & Watson, J.; *My Life, Games, and Compositions*; Siles 2003

Berry, S.; *A Friend for Life? A personal look at the opening 1 b3*; *Chess*, Dec 2009

Bezgodov, A.; *Challenging the Sicilian with 2 a3!?*; Chess Stars 2004

Bosch, J.; *Secrets of Opening Surprises 1-10*; New in Chess 2003-9

Bücker, S.; *Over the Horizons* (column); *ChessCafe.com*

Burgess, G.; *Gambits*; Batsford 1995

Davies, N.; *1...d6 Universal* (DVD); ChessBase 2007

Davies, N.; *Gambiteer 1*; Everyman 2007

- Davies, N.; *Gambiteer 2*; Everyman 2008  
Davies, N.; *Starting Out: The Modern*; Everyman 2008  
Davies, N.; *The Dynamic Réti*; Everyman 2004  
de Firmian, N.; *Modern Chess Openings*, 15th Edition; McKay 2008  
Donaldson, J. & Hansen, Ca.; *A Strategic Opening Repertoire for White*, 2nd Edition; Russell 2007  
Dunnington, A.; *Easy Guide to the Réti Opening*; Everyman/Gambit 1998  
Dunnington, A.; *Winning Unorthodox Openings*; Everyman/Gambit 2000  
Dunnington, A.; *Gambit Play: Sacrificing in the Opening*; Everyman 2003  
Emms, J. & Palliser, R.; *Dangerous Weapons: The Sicilian*; Everyman 2006  
Emms, J., Flear, G. & Greet, A.; *Dangerous Weapons: 1 e4 e5*; Everyman 2008  
Emms, J.; *Play the Open Games as Black*; Gambit 2000  
Ernst, S. & Van der Stricht, G.; *Tactics in the Chess Openings 6*; New in Chess 2007  
Euwe, M.; *Theorie der Schach Eröffnungen: Indische, Réti, usw.*, 2nd Edition;  
Siegfried Engelhardt, 1959  
Gawehns, K.; *Theorie und Praxis: Owen-Verteidigung*; Kaissiber 30, Jan 2008  
Grivas, E.; *A Complete Guide to the Grivas Sicilian*; Gambit 2005  
Hansen, Ca.; *The Symmetrical English*; Gambit 2000  
Harding, T.; *Four Gambits to Beat the French*; Chess Digest 1998  
Harding, T.; *The Leningrad Dutch*; Batsford 1976  
Hillarp Persson, T.; *Tiger's Modern*; Quality Chess 2005  
Jacobs, B. & Tait, J.; *Nimzo-Larsen Attack*; Everyman 2001  
Johnsen, S. & Bern, I. with Agdestein, S.; *Win with the Stonewall Dutch*; Gambit 2009  
Keene, R.; *Flank Openings*, 2nd Edition; British Chess Magazine 1970  
Keene, R.; *Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack*; Batsford 1977  
Keilhack, H.; *Knight on the Left: 1 ♜c3*; Kania 2006  
Keilhack, H. & Schlenker, R.; *1... ♜c6! ... aus allen Lagen*; Kania 1995  
Kindermann, S.; *Leningrad System: A Complete Weapon Against 1 d4*; Olms 2005  
King, D.; *English Defence*; Everyman 1999  
Konikowski, J. & Sosynski, M.; *I b4: Theory and Practice of the Sokolsky Opening*; Russell 2009  
Kosten, A.; *The Dynamic English*; Gambit 1999  
Krnić, Z. (ed.); *ECO A – 4th Edition*; Šahovski Informator 2001  
Krnić, Z. (ed.); *ECO B – 4th Edition*; Šahovski Informator 2002  
Krnić, Z. (ed.); *ECO C – 5th Edition*; Šahovski Informator 2007  
Krnić, Z. (ed.); *ECO D – 3rd Edition*; Šahovski Informator 1998  
Krnić, Z. (ed.); *ECO E – 3rd Edition*; Šahovski Informator 1998  
Lane, G; *Opening Lanes* (column); ChessCafe.com  
Langrock, H.; *From the Sidelines* (column); ChessCafe.com  
Langrock, H.; *The Modern Morra Gambit*; Russell 2006  
Lapshun, Y. & Conticello, N.; *Play 1 b4!*; Everyman 2008  
Martin, A.; *b4 White Repertoire* (e-book); Everyman 2006  
Martin, A.; *... b6 Black Repertoire* (e-book); Everyman 2006  
Müller, K. & Voigt, M.; *Danish Dynamite*; Russell 2003  
Nunn, J., Burgess, G., Emms, J. & Gallagher, J.; *Nunn's Chess Openings*; Gambit/Everyman 1999  
Odessky, I.; *English Defence*; Chess University 2008  
Odessky, I.; *Play 1 b3! The Nimzo-Larsen Attack*; New in Chess 2008  
Oleinikov, D.; *Bird Opening* (CD); ChessBase 2002  
Pachman, L.; *Geschlossene Spiele: Indische Verteidigung u.a.*; Sportverlag Berlin 1965  
Palliser, R., Kosten, T. & Vigus, J.; *Dangerous Weapons: Flank Openings*; Everyman 2008  
Palliser, R., Emms, J., & Ward, C.; *Dangerous Weapons: The Benko and Benoni*; Everyman 2008  
Palliser, R.; *Beating Unusual Openings*; Everyman 2007  
Palkövi, J.; *Morra Gambit*; Caissa 2000

- Pinski, J.; *Italian Game and Evans Gambit*; Everyman 2005
- Pinski, J.; *The Benko Gambit*; Quality Chess 2005
- Pinski, J.; *Classical Dutch*; Everyman 2002
- Raetsky, A. & Chetverik, M.; *Petroff Defence*; Everyman 2005
- Schiller, E.; *Gambit Opening Repertoire For White*; Cardoza 1998
- Schiller, E.; *Gambit Chess Openings*; Cardoza 2002
- Schiller, E.; *Unorthodox Chess Openings*; Cardoza 2003
- Schipkov, B.; *The Dutch Defence Leningrad System (CD)*; ChessBase 2004
- Speelman, J. & McDonald, N.; *Modern Defence*; Everyman 2000
- Taimanov, M.; *Slawisch bis Réti Eröffnung*; Sportverlag Berlin 1976
- Taylor, T.; *Bird's Opening*; Everyman 2005
- Watson, J. & Schiller, E.; *Handbook of Tricky Opening Strategies in Chess*;  
Hardinge Simpole 2004
- Watson, J. & Schiller, E.; *How to Succeed in the Queen Pawn Openings*; Trafford 2006
- Watson, J. & Schiller, E.; *Survive and Beat Annoying Chess Openings – The Open Games*;  
Cardoza 2003
- Watson, J.; *Chess Strategy in Action*; Gambit 2003
- Watson, J.; *Dangerous Weapons: The French*; Everyman 2007
- Watson, J.; *English: Franco, Slav and Flank Defences*; Batsford 1981
- Watson, J.; *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*; Gambit 1998
- Watson, J.; *Symmetrical English: 1...c5*; Batsford 1988
- Watson, J.; *The Unconventional King's Indian Defense*; Hypermodern 1999
- Williams, S.; *Play the Classical Dutch*; Gambit 2003
- Wisnewski, C.; *Play 1...Qc6!*; Everyman 2007
- Yermolinsky, A.; *The Road to Chess Improvement*; Gambit 1999
- Yrjölä, J. & Tella, J.; *An Explosive Chess Opening Repertoire for Black*; Gambit 2001

# Introduction

In this book, I first examine some major opening systems which lie outside the purview of the first three volumes, and then turn to a wide variety of openings related by type or theme. The result is a mix of modern strategies, old-fashioned approaches, and unconventional schemes in the openings. I supplement this with a detailed discussion of choosing and preparing openings, including ways to improve your play, and, finally, I indulge in a bit of philosophy to round things out.

Specifically, the first two chapters are devoted to an investigation of the Réti System, 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , which is a logical complement to the 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4 of the previous volumes. Later on, in the context of reversed openings, I look into 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  again, in the form of the King's Indian Attack. The next two chapters concentrate upon the fianchetto, with its advantages and disadvantages. Historically, the subject of the fianchetto and its consequences was the last broad strategic area to be investigated by chess-players; although now used routinely in conventional openings, the fianchetto is still associated with modern and non-traditional systems. In this volume, I've put particular emphasis on these, including 1...g6, 1...b6 and 1 b3, with a detailed discussion of the first two. These variations are late bloomers (their general acceptance dates from approximately 15 to 40 years ago, depending upon the specific lines), but they have strong grandmaster advocates and I feel that they merit serious treatment. The double fianchetto is also a part of modern chess, and I shall discuss its use under more conventional circumstances, such as the Réti Opening, Dutch Defence and Symmetrical English. The strategic ideas expressed in fianchetto openings tend to repeat themselves; by familiarizing yourself with them, you will also improve your understanding of the related systems in previous volumes.

This series doesn't attempt to investigate all openings, preferring to concentrate upon those which are the most useful for average players in terms of explanation and instruction. By this point, however, quite a high percentage of important systems have been examined and, happily, this volume covers a number of gaps from the first three in the context of wider themes. For example, just as 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is new to this volume, so are the f-pawn openings 1 f4 and 1...f5. They are examined in a chapter about reversed openings, with the Dutch Defence (1 d4 f5) receiving extensive treatment. Similarly, the Petroff Defence and the Four Knights Opening are analysed within the broader topic of symmetrical systems.

The Benko Gambit, another mainstream opening, is explored as part of a lengthy chapter on gambits. As a teacher, I've become convinced of the practical value of traditional gambits for the developing player. Referring to his refusal to take them seriously as a young player, Alex Yermolinsky says: "The hard work I had to put up to overcome this case of arrested development ... could have been easily avoided if I had given myself a little practice [with gambits] in my younger days." Thinking along those lines, I investigate 'primitive' attacking variations such as the Göring Gambit, Milner-Barry Gambit and Morra Gambit, in addition to various positionally-based gambits in major openings.

The use of moves and variations previously looked upon as inferior is on the rise. Accordingly, I've spent a chapter investigating the appeal, benefits and drawbacks of so-called 'irregular' openings. Of course, it's impossible to address the vast assortment of unconventional openings because there are so many of them, each with their own peculiar theory (in both senses of that word!). Four volumes may seem like a lot, but a truly encyclopaedic coverage of openings – one that includes both fundamental ideas and an acceptable level of detail – is well outside of the bounds of even a much longer work. In any case, I expect that you will enjoy the discussion of initial moves, ranging from the almost-normal 1 b4 and 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  to the absurd 1 h4. On the black side, I have surveyed the

'universal' systems associated with 1...d6 and 1...c6, to which considerable attention has been devoted in recent years. The ideas expressed are also 'universal', in the sense that both the structures and strategies strongly overlap with those of mainstream openings.

In the first two volumes of this series, my general approach was to give broad and instructive examples without becoming too entwined in details. For many of the currently contested English Opening systems in Volume 3, however, I made extensive theoretical investigations, and was able to contribute much that was new. In this volume, I find that the existing theory on many of the lesser-played variations is strange and limited, so it has been easy add my own suggestions, corrections and analysis throughout. The reader can do the same, that is, expand upon theory and find new paths through these little-explored regions. That's where the fun comes in.

As in previous volumes, I've focused upon move-order issues to a greater extent than most opening book authors do. In my own and my students' playing experience, their neglect has caused a lot of frustration and sometimes inferior results. You're probably familiar with the experience of heading for your favourite opening, when suddenly your opponent exploits a tricky move-order and diverts you into a line with which you're unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable. I'd rather bore the reader with tiresome details than allow those moments to occur too frequently.

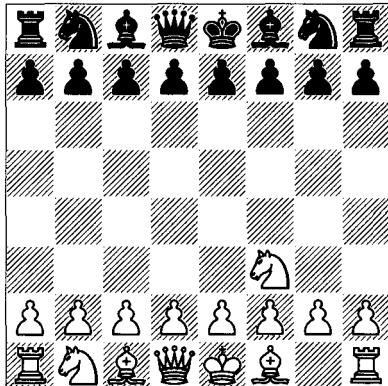
At some point, you actually have to decide which openings to choose, and what to do with them. I've devoted a lengthy chapter to opening selection, preparation and study, with concrete methods of improving your opening play. In my experience, how to go about these things depends upon your playing level, something that isn't always taken into account. Hopefully my many years as a chess teacher will be helpful in that regard.

I've tried to reach a very broad audience, from the developing student to the relatively sophisticated and experienced player looking for new ideas and analysis. I hope there is enough of value here to assist both of them in becoming better players.

# 1 Réti: Open and Closed Variations

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D)**

B



We begin this last volume by exploring the move 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and the Réti Opening. Right off, 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  develops a piece towards the centre and prevents 1...e5. It resembles 1 c4 in that it leaves open major decisions about what kind of centre White wants to build; for example, he can still play c4, d4 and e4 in any combination. This gives him the choice of transposing into other openings depending upon what Black does. For instance, by playing 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  White may simply be side-stepping 1 c4 e5 while heading for an English Opening via 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 2 c4. In other cases, he may be preparing to enter 1 d4 systems; for example, 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 d4 or 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 d4, leading to a number of other d4 openings. 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 2 e4 is a Sicilian Defence, and you will also find 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  as the introduction to the King's Indian Attack, which consists of the additional moves g3,  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 0-0 and d3 (see Chapter 6).

The name 'Réti Opening' is used to describe different variations depending upon which book you're reading. As I define it, the Réti Opening arises after 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4, although those moves don't have to be played immediately. That is, in order for the opening to be a Réti, White has to play  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and c4, and Black ...d5. To distinguish the Réti further from other

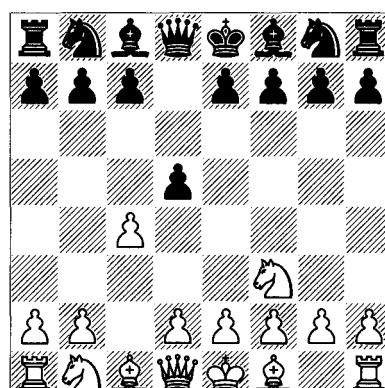
openings, I'll stipulate that White doesn't play d4 at an early stage (that is, not before White completes most of his development). In the vast majority of cases, he fianchettoes one or both of his bishops. In fact, some books examine only variations with the double fianchetto, as practised by the opening's most famous advocate, Richard Réti himself. I'll include positions with a single fianchetto or no fianchetto at all if they are relevant to specific move-orders.

**1...d5**

This is Black's normal path to the Réti Opening. After 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , the players can also arrive at variations of the Réti by 1...e6 2 c4 d5 or 1...c6 2 c4 d5. Of course, Black has many other possibilities, such as 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , when 2 g3 b5! is an example of the kind of leeway that Black is given by the non-committal 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Black frequently plays 1...c5, when he is probably hoping for 2 e4 (a Sicilian Defence) or 2 c4 (a Symmetrical English Opening). If White replies to 1...c5 with 2 g3, the game might continue in any number of directions; for example, a King's Indian Attack (after  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 0-0 and d3), a Symmetrical English Opening (after c4), or, less frequently, a Closed Réti Variation (with ...c5, ...e6 and ...d5 in response to White's c4 and a fianchetto on either wing; see below). Other nuances are best shown by example.

**2 c4 (D)**

B



White attacks the centre. As described above, he will fianchetto one or both bishops, with g3 &  $\mathbb{B}g2$  and b3 &  $\mathbb{B}b2$  in the majority of variations. Most openings, even those of a largely positional nature, contain several major lines that are unavoidably tactical. The Réti Opening is an exception, in that almost all its set-ups involve long-term manoeuvring. Because White avoids moving a centre pawn, there tends to be little early contact between the opposing forces. White fails to provide Black a target, and with some exceptions Black will also avoid too aggressive a commitment of his pieces. In most important variations, Black does establish a significant pawn presence in the centre. White's strategy is to snipe at his opponent from the wings, and eventually to expand on the queen-side or in the centre. In broader terms, this is the 'hypermodern' strategy, a name which probably needs updating, since it came into general usage in the 1920s!

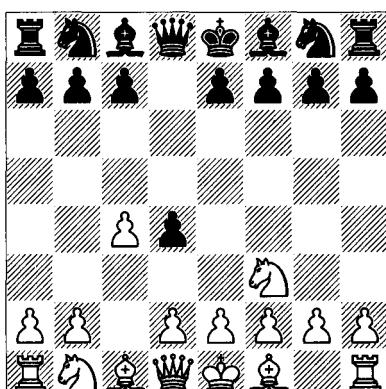
After 2 c4, the game can still transpose into other openings, of course, notably if White plays d4. Since each variation leads to distinct positional themes, I'll discuss them as we go along.

## The 2...d4 Advance

**Khuzman – A. Mikhalevski  
Beersheba 1993**

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 d4 (D)**

W



This aggressive push is one of the traditional and most important replies to the Réti Opening,

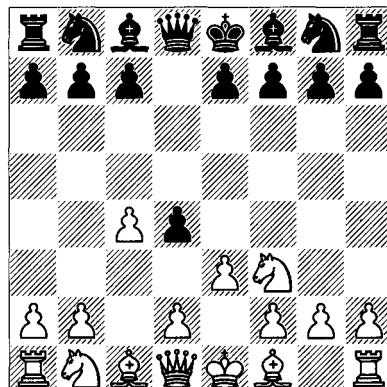
and has always had a good reputation. In fact, some players prefer to make the Réti move c4 only after 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 g3 e6 3 c4 or, say, 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 g3 c6 3 c4 (or, if he doesn't want to gambit his c-pawn, he will wait with c4 for a few moves), or after an early b3 and  $\mathbb{B}b2$ .

Black's motivation with 2...d4 is territorial gain. You may recognize that this position bears a close resemblance, with colours reversed, to the Modern Benoni (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 c5 3 d5) should Black play ...c5 next; and to the Schmid Benoni (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 3 d5 and 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) if Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (without ...c5). In several variations we shall see illustrations of reversed positions in which White's extra tempo gives Black the information that he needs to adjust strategies and maintain equality. That trade-off has been a theme throughout these volumes, and is explicitly featured in Chapter 6.

**3 g3**

An obvious alternative is 3 e3 (D), introducing one of the very few Réti Opening lines in which White will not normally fianchetto a bishop as part of his strategy.

B

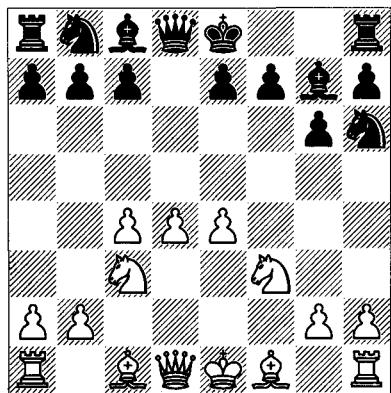


This e-pawn advance isn't seen as much as 3 g3 in grandmaster play because Black is thought to gain an uncontroversial equality. On the other hand, the resulting play has enough substance to keep good players interested:

a) 3...c5 4 exd4 cxd4 5 d3 is a reversed Benoni, intending g3 and  $\mathbb{B}g2$ . That opening boasts of dynamic options versus almost any set-up, so it's probably best for Black to avoid it when he is a tempo behind.

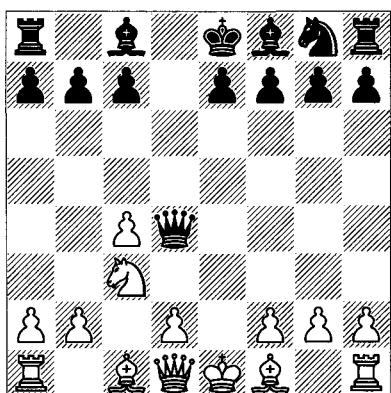
b) 3...dxe3 has been a bit underrated. To be sure, after 4 fxe3 Black has surrendered the

centre to White (who has a 2-1 majority), but a d3/e3 pawn-formation isn't terribly impressive unless the pawns can both advance. The standard line is 4...g6 5 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and now 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ ? has the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , so Gausel-Mortensen, Copenhagen 1996 continued 7 e4!? (D).



After 7...0-0!? (7...c5 would attack the vulnerable d4-square at the cost of a cramped game following 8 d5) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !? (8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (9 d5) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ? (9...f5 is best) 10 gxf3 White threatened 11  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , winning the knight. Then Dunnington suggests 10...e5 11 d5 f5, but 12 h4 looks extremely strong, with space, two bishops and an attack. Obviously, both sides have many options in such flexible positions.

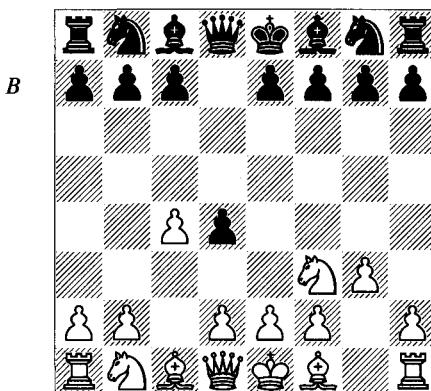
c) The simplest course is 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  4 exd4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D).



White has failed to get an advantage here for many years, although there is plenty of content in the position, and play for both sides. I'll just

show an excerpt from the most popular modern main line: 6...c6 (preventing  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ; 6...e5 7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  has been played for at least 70 years without being completely resolved; it's fair to say that the game is unbalanced but equal) 7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? (headed for f5) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (after 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9 g4  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  is a known line; then 10... $\mathbb{W}d6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  e5 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  is unclear; Black has also played 8...g6) 8... $\mathbb{W}d8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !? $\mathbb{Q}gh6$  10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11 d5, Zviagintsev-Granda, Pamplona 1995/6. Here Black's bishop on g7 compensates for his weaknesses; he can play, for example, 11... $\mathbb{W}d6$  or 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ .

We now return to 3 g3 (D):



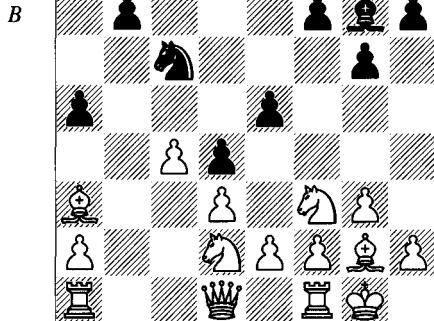
### 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

This is easily Black's most popular move, but not his only one.

a) 3...c5 is playable, giving White an interesting decision. He can play 4 b4, with a reversed, tempo-up Benko Gambit. This is an appealing practical choice, because the tempo is definitely helpful in most, if not all, lines. Moreover, the variation is more difficult for Black to play than White. It would be a useful exercise for the reader to compare the position after 4 b4 with the Benko Gambit itself, which is dealt with in Chapter 5. White's other main option is 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5 0-0 e5 6 d3. Then he usually plays the moves e3,  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ -c2,  $\mathbb{M}e1$ , a3 and  $\mathbb{M}b1$  in some order, in order to chip away at Black's centre by b4 and a timely exd4. Black can counter with any of several formations, but one consistent feature of the position is that exd4 gives Black the option of ...exd4, which tends to be safer than the Benoni-style recapture with ...cxd4. You will see a true reversed

Benoni with ...c5 in our section on 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 e6 below, when Black follows a main line and plays ...c5 and ...d4.

b) Grandmasters have shown some liking for the move 3...g6. Then Larsen-Chandler, Hastings 1987/8 provides a good example of the play: 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 d3 e5 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 b4! 0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (or 8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and either queenside expansion or a central break by e3; this leads to original positions) 8...a5 9 b5 c5! (Black shouldn't cede too much ground) 10 bxc6  $\mathbb{Q}exc6$ ! (the idea is that the knight on e7 has few prospects, whereas the knight on b8 can watch over c5 from a6 or d7) 11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (D) (11  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  is the obvious alternative; Black has satisfactory play in this kind of position because of his ability to put knights on b4 and/or c5 as needed).

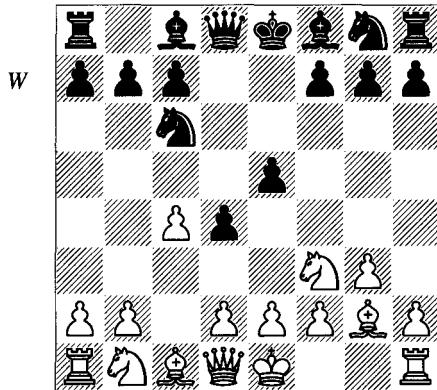


11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , introducing the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ; then White might try to target squares like d6 and b6 by 12 c5, having in mind  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}8a6$  (a good alternative is 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}8a6$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}8c6$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  axb4?! (13... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  is better) 14 a3! bxa3 15  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fb1$  and White had a pleasant advantage, very much in the style of a Benko Gambit, and not even a pawn down!

4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e5 (D)

5 0-0

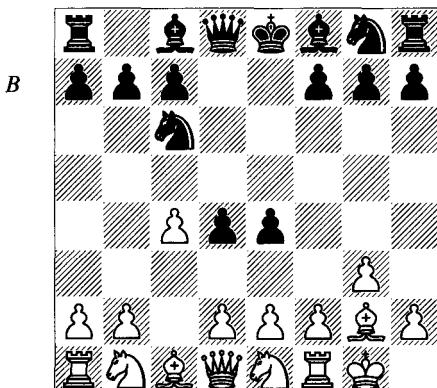
In the reversed position (picture Black's knight already developed on f6), d3 is usually met by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ , to force a piece to d2. That strategy is also a sensible one here; for example, 5 d3  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (the idea is that after 6  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , White can no longer play  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2$ , but 6  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  would certainly be possible, retaining the



option of  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2$ ) 6...a5; Black might play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d7-c5$  later. Naturally, there are trade-offs. For one thing, White is developing rapidly and getting castled ahead of time. It's an open question whether he can break with e3 or b4, and what advantage that might bring.

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

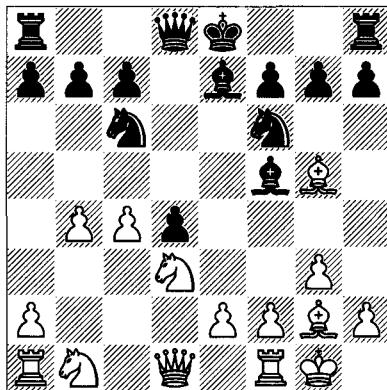
There's an interesting parallel here with the Schmid Benoni line 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 3 d5 g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 e4 (a position also important to the Sicilian Hyper-Accelerated Dragon: 1 e4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 3 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 d5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 5...0-0 (as opposed to 5...d6) 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ . If you've played that line with either colour, you might well think that 5...e4 6  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (D) would favour White in our game because of the vulnerability and likely decimation of Black's centre.



But that's not necessarily the case. Black has two possibilities:

a) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (perhaps White should settle for 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , when Black has a slight positional disadvantage after 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 dxe4

$\mathbb{Q}xe4$  or 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . At this point, increasing the light-square pressure by 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is not terribly impressive following 10...0-0, when 11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8!$  anticipates White's  $\mathbb{Q}ec5$ , and 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  is about equal. Therefore the recommended move is 10 b4!? (D).

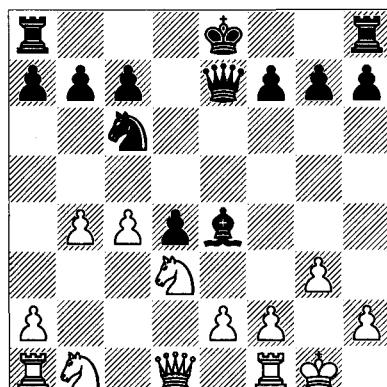


B

This position is said to be clearly better for White, and it certainly looks promising with the cooperation of a queenside advance and the bishop on g2. However, Black's centralized pieces provide a counterweight. Here are some options:

a1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ ? 11 exd3  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (after 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ? 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$  White either wins a piece or exposes the black king) 13  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  with a large positional superiority and attacking possibilities.

a2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  illustrates Black's central presence: 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (D), and then:

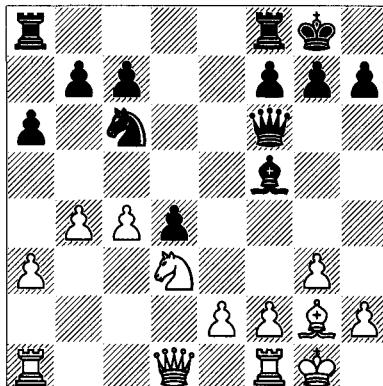


W

a21) 13 b5 and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ ? 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  and ... $b6$  is dynamically balanced. Black can also sacrifice a pawn for activity by 13... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  h5!.

a22) 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 (13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14 b5 and here 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  b6 is unclear, while 14... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  is safer) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15 b5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (or 15... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  with compensation.

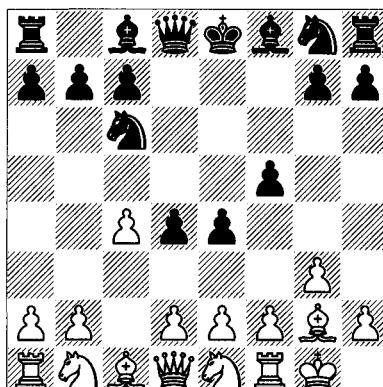
a3) Kovačević-Ree, Karlovac 1977 continued 10...a6 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ !) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (or 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15 a3 (D).



B

Here Black has several moves (such as the ambitious continuation 15...h5), but 15... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  is the most consistent; for example, 16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ !, with the idea 18  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ ? (18  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ ) 18...d3 19 e3  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

b) Strange to say, even after 6...f5!? (D), a seeming overextension of forces, Black's position isn't necessarily inferior.



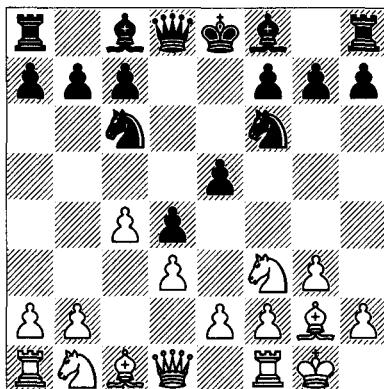
W

Theory gives this fifth pawn move a ‘?’ with the follow-up 7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , but then 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  10 dx $e$ 4 fx $e$ 4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  gives Black compensation for the pawn after 12  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  g5! 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  and ...0-0-0, intending ...h5) and now 13...h5! 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h4 or 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  h5. White can play 12  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  instead, after which Black might try 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0-0 with the idea 14  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{W}he8$ ? 15  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$ . The point of all this is that White's capture of the e-pawn takes valuable time while Black has the extra space to justify ...0-0-0 and ...h5-h4.

Let's return to 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ :

**6 d3 (D)**

B



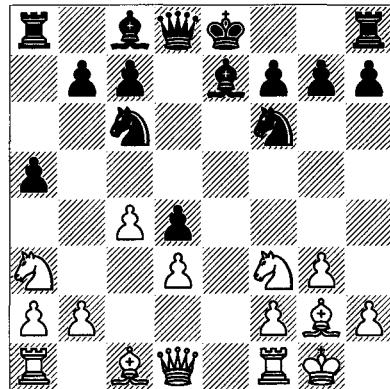
**6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

Generally, this move has been criticized because of White's response. There are other moves, such as 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , but the most important is 6...a5, when 7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  is sometimes played with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ,  $\mathbb{B}b1$ , a3 and b4. Such positions are fascinating from a strategic point of view, and may appeal to those who want to play chess without immediate confrontations. However, the main line is 7 e3, attacking the centre. Then Black can try:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 exd4 exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (D).

a1) Now 9... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  10 bx $a$ 3 is a kind of trade that we've seen in several openings, sometimes when White captures a knight on a6. In conjunction with a fianchettoed bishop on g2, a rook on the b-file will generally more than compensate for the doubled a-pawns, which tend not to be a weakness until the endgame in any case. When White also gains the bishop-pair without giving Black's knights a major

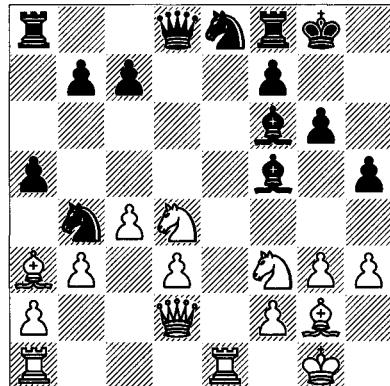
B



outpost, the overall assessment will normally be in favour of White.

a2) Black played 9...0-0 in Speelman-Humpy Koneru, British Ch, Torquay 2002, which continued 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (now Black is tied to the pawn on d4, so she can't move her c6-knight and play ...c6) 13...g6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15 h3 h5 16  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ?! (the superior 16 h4! plans  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , to clear the long diagonal for White's g2-bishop, and in some cases to settle in on the strong e4-square; for example, 16... $\mathbb{W}d7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  a4 18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19  $\mathbb{W}f4$ ; 16  $\mathbb{W}f4$ ! is another idea) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}bx $d$ 4!$  (D).

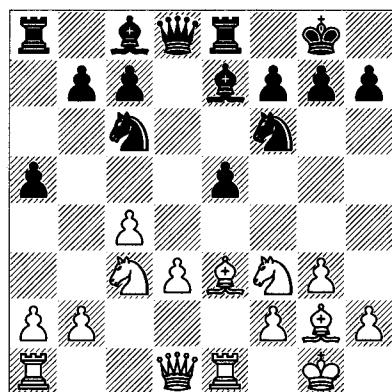
B



A piece sacrifice that takes advantage of the weakening of the kingside that ...h5 produced. The game is instructive, as we see White's attack on the dark squares inducing further weaknesses; nevertheless, with perfect play Black might hold: 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ ? (19... $\mathbb{W}d8$ ! was necessary, when White may have to settle for 20  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21  $\mathbb{M}e5$   $\mathbb{M}a6$ )

22  $\mathbb{E}xf5$   $gxf5$  23  $\mathbb{W}g5+$  with a repetition) 20  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  (20... $f6$  21  $g4!$   $hxg4$  22  $hgx4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  23  $\mathbb{E}e3$ ) 21  $c5!$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  22  $\mathbb{E}e5!$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  23  $\mathbb{E}xh5!$ ; 22... $\mathbb{E}a6$  23  $\mathbb{E}xf5$   $gxf5$  24  $c6!$ ) 23  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (23  $\mathbb{E}e8!$   $\mathbb{E}axe8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and mate follows) 23... $\mathbb{E}a6$  24  $\mathbb{E}xf5!$   $gxf5$  25  $\mathbb{W}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  1-0.

b) 7... $dxe3$  establishes an intriguing balance of forces: 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{E}el$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  (D).



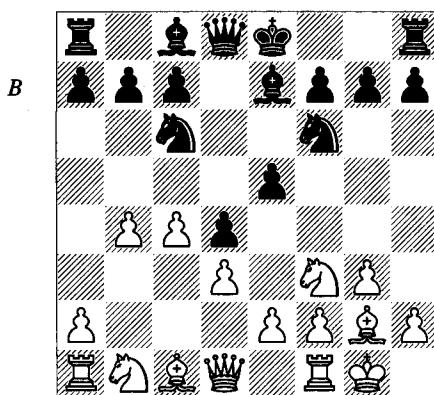
Both sides have advantages: White with his very active bishops and pressure on e5, while Black has control of d4 and a target in White's d3-pawn. Cvitan-Hort, Berne 1992 continued 11 h3 (11 d4 exd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  c6 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf5$  leaves Black with the bishop-pair but saddled with the weak f-pawns; since White can't occupy f5 or d6 for any length of time, the position is about equal) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  13  $\mathbb{E}ad1?!$  (Davies suggests 13  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ , both preparing d4 and preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $exd4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  b5 16  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$   $bcx4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $cxb3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $bxa2$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16  $\mathbb{E}e5$  b6 17  $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  1/2-1/2. Black actually stands better after 18... $\mathbb{W}d7$ , hitting h3, because 19  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  c6 20  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  has ideas of ...b5 and/or doubling on the e-file.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ (D)

White strikes out on the flank, using tactics to justify an accelerated attack.

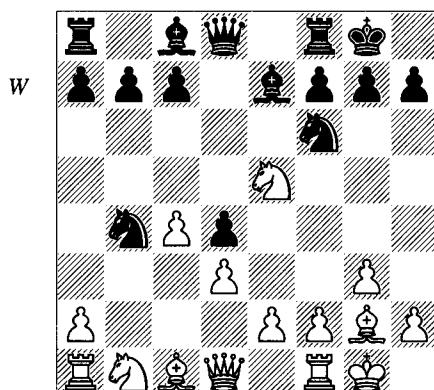
### 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$

This negative retreat must leave White on top. 7 b4 is obviously a powerful move, but it's not clear that White gains the upper hand versus best play:



a) Playing into White's idea by 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  isn't so bad, but it gives White a small advantage if Black continues 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+bxc6$  11  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ . Instead, the exchange sacrifice via 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{W}xb4$  b6!? of Sjöberg-Adler, Swedish Team Ch 1997/8 can be met by development *a tempo*: 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  (11  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  c5! and 12... $\mathbb{W}xa8$  affords Black definite compensation for the exchange) 11...c5 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 13...a6 14  $\mathbb{E}ab1$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{W}b2$  and White wins material.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xb4!$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 (D) is much better than its reputation.

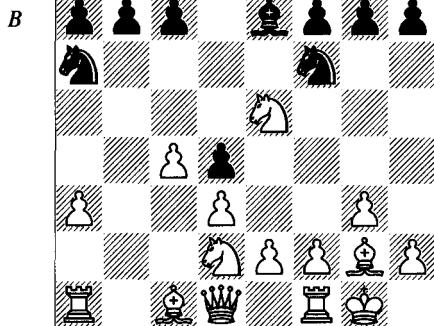


White has an extra centre pawn, but Black's pawn on d4 controls territory and restrains any pawn advances. A few examples:

b1) White played 9  $\mathbb{Q}b2?!$  in Kaidanov-Khmelnitsky, Philadelphia 1993, but this is the reverse of what he normally does when the bishop is blocked by a pawn on d4. That is, when White already has his bishop on b2, he

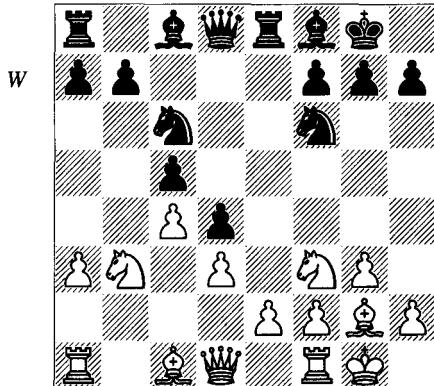
usually moves to c1 in order to activate it on f4 or g5! So if White can't remove the pawn from d4 in a satisfactory way, this bishop move is likely to be ill-advised. Black can reply 9... $\mathbb{B}d6!$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (10 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ ) 10...c5. The game's 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}bb8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  would also have been promising after 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

b2) 9 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (heading for the ideal square c5) 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (D).



10... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  was played in Blatny-Ricarute Lopez, Salinas 2005, when 11... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  would have resulted in a solid position.

b3) Ivkov-Teschner, Bamberg 1968 went 9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (another idea is 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D).

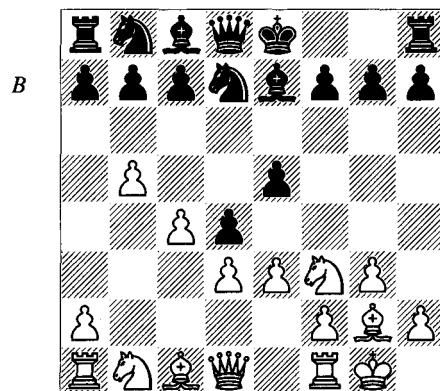


After 13 e3?! (White should consider 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  or 13  $\mathbb{Q}a2?$ , preparing e3) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14

$\mathbb{Q}xe3$  the best course of action would have been 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ , intending 15 d4 cxd4 16  $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  with some advantage for Black because of White's weak c-pawn.

8 a3?!

Salov gives 8 b5!  $\mathbb{Q}cb8$  9 e3 (D).

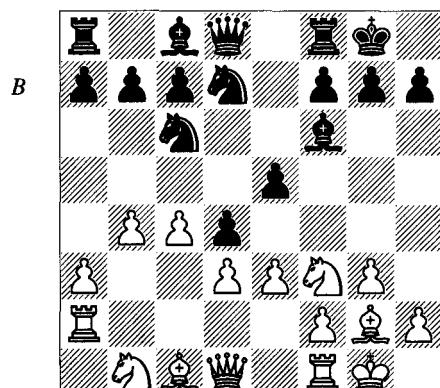


White hopes for 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ , when his bishops would rake the queenside. Black can try 9...c5 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  11 exd4 exd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  is perhaps moderately better for White) 10...0-0, but he has a hard time getting his pieces out; for example, 11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13 exd4 exd4 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .

8...0-0 9 e3

9 b5 still looks right.

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}a2?$  (D)

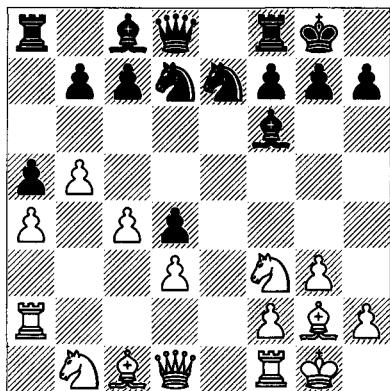


10...a5

It was probably time for 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  a5! 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  (12 b5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is

starting to look good for Black) 12...axb4 13 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  with a small but certain advantage for White.

**11 b5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 exd4 exd4 13 a4! (D)**



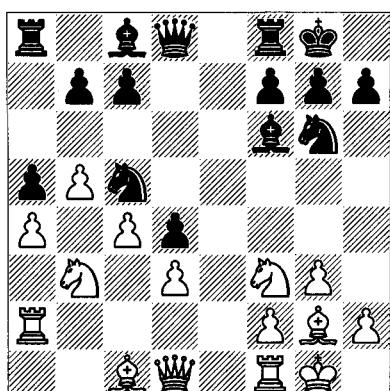
White eliminates any difficulties involving a combination of ...a4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . More importantly, he discourages the single move that most coordinates Black's pieces, 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

**13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$**

That is, 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ ?! 15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16  $\mathbb{M}e1$  has the idea  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ; then 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18 dx $e$  leaves White in charge due to the threat of 19 e5.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ?! 15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ?! (D)**

The most accurate move was still 15  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !; for example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  17  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  18  $\mathbb{W}xa3$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 18... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  19 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  21  $\mathbb{M}e2$ .



**15... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  16  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?!?**

16... $\mathbb{M}e8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is only slightly better for White.

**17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  20  $\mathbb{M}e1$  h6 21  $\mathbb{W}a3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  b6**

Black sacrifices the exchange, but it isn't good enough. However, after 22... $\mathbb{M}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  c6 24  $\mathbb{M}ae2$ , White's pressure is too great.

**23  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  24  $\mathbb{W}c1$  c5 25 bxc6  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  26  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{M}d8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  28  $\mathbb{M}e5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  29  $\mathbb{M}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  30  $\mathbb{M}eb5$**

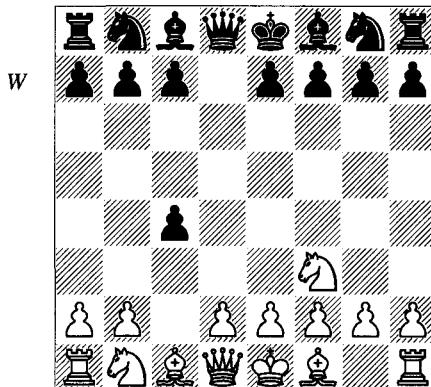
and White went on to win.

## The Open Réti

Danailov – Bernard

Warsaw 1990

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 dxc4 (D)**



Capturing on c4 opens the position, hence the name 'Open Réti', also called the 'Réti Accepted'. By this means Black resolves the problem of having to defend a structure with ...e6 and ...d5, or ...c6 and ...d5, which he may feel is a cramped one. His d-file is open, and there's a good chance of establishing a healthy restraint of White's d-pawn via ...c5 or ...e5.

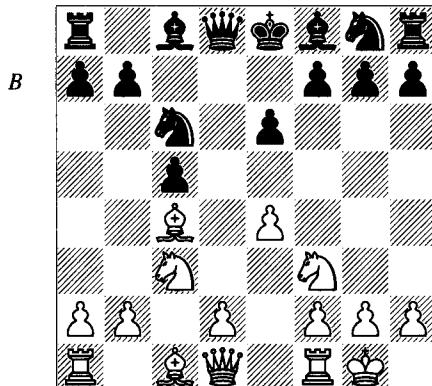
**3  $\mathbb{Q}a3$**

For White, 3  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  is arguably the course truest to the spirit of the opening, since fianchettoes will follow. This development of the knight to the rim is also seen in the Catalan Opening and a couple of other Réti variations, with similar trade-offs. Of course, this is not the only way to recover the pawn; let's look briefly at alternatives:

a) 3 e3 will usually transpose to a Queen's Gambit Accepted after 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  c5 5 d4.

b) 3  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  can lead down independent paths or in some cases transpose to a Catalan Opening. Of Black's many replies, 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is perhaps best in terms of clarity: 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  can be met by 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  or 4... $\mathbb{W}d6$  with the idea 5  $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{Q}d7!$ ) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 e4 (5 g3  $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  6  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  7  $\mathbb{W}b3$  e5) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  (6  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  e5) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  7  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  8  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

c) 3 e4 is one of the more interesting choices. Then the natural 3...c5 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  often follows: 5 0-0 (5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 7 0-0 is an original approach by Gavrikov; Davies gives 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 10 d4, when Black might try 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 with what looks like equal play) 5...e6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D).



In spite of his gaping hole on d4, White's lead in development means that Black needs to be a little careful: 6...a6!? (6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{M}e7$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9 d4 cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}bx4$  gives White a slight edge) 7 d3, and now:

c1) Krasenkov-Volzhin, Koszalin 1998 continued 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{M}e1$  (Kosten mentions 9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 9... $\mathbb{M}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with a standard attacking formation. Black held his own following 10...0-0 11 a3 b5 12  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 15  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (trading down as quickly as possible) 16  $\mathbb{M}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  with the idea 17...f5!. Since 17  $\mathbb{M}xd4?$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18  $\mathbb{M}e4?$  f5 is bad for White, he retreated by 17  $\mathbb{M}e2$ , and 17... $\mathbb{M}c8$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  was fully equal.

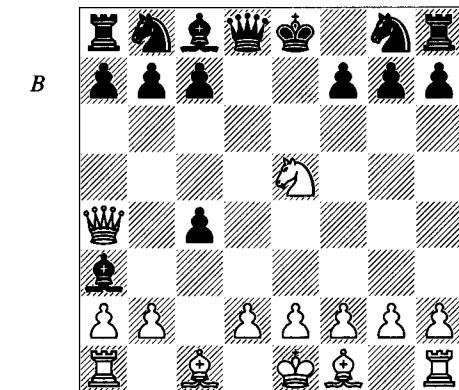
c2) In Neverov-Ibragimov, USSR Ch, Moscow 1991, Black played the safer-looking move 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ , when 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  d4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  was equal. Two alternatives for White are 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ .

Both sides have a lot of leeway in interpreting this variation.

3...a6

Black threatens to defend his c4-pawn and wants to develop quickly by ...b5. There are of course other moves:

a) 3...e5!? 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  5  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  (D) (5  $\mathbb{bxa3}??$   $\mathbb{W}d4$ ) and now:



a1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and now 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  7  $\mathbb{W}xa3$  is unclear after 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 e3) 8  $\mathbb{W}g3$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  10  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11 b3. White can also play 6  $\mathbb{bxa3}$ ; for example, 6...a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (7...b5? 8  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$  cxd6 9  $\mathbb{W}e4+$ ) 8  $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , when White's two bishops and central majority should outweigh Black's faster development, but that can be argued.

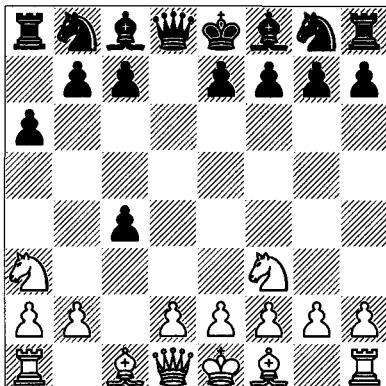
a2) 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{W}xa3$  wins the two bishops and dark squares for White. One line goes 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (6... $\mathbb{W}d6$ ? 7  $\mathbb{W}f3$ ) 7 d3  $\mathbb{W}d6$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  cxd6 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  cxd3 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! with two bishops and the better pawn-structure, Nybäck-Deva, European Under-16 Ch, Kallithea 2001.

b) A traditional recipe is 3...c5 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5 b3 e5! 6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ ??  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}d4$ ) 6...f6 7 g3  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  10 e3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 d4 cxd4 (11...e4 is unclear after 12  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  cxd4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !?, f5 or 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f5) 12 exd4 e4 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f5 14 f3, Hübner-Garcia Palermo, Bad Wörishofen 1993. Now 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?, 15 fxe4 fxe4 16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  leaves Black's e-pawn vulnerable, but he has aggressive squares for his pieces by way of compensation.

We now return to 3...a6 (D):

4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  b5 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Virtually forced (5  $\mathbb{Q}ce5$  f6 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5 is no fun), but the knight does good work here. In the

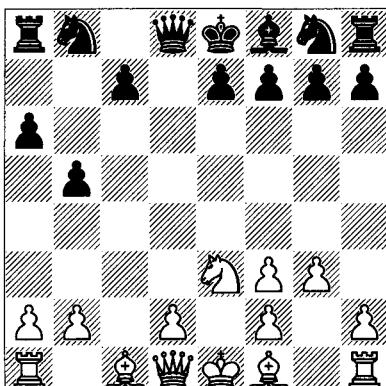


W

Réti, White often doesn't move his e-pawn anyway.

**5...♗b7 6 g3 ♜d7**

A natural and good move. At first, 6...♝xf3 7 exf3 (*D*) looks tempting, because Black will put a piece on d4 in front of the isolated d-pawn.



B

But the combination of White's better development (notice Black's kingside pieces), the strength of his bishop coming to g2 and his attack on Black's weakened queenside prove more important than his weaknesses. For example, 7...♜c6 (7...e5 8 ♜g2 c6 9 0-0 ♜f6 10 ♜e1 ♜c5 11 f4! e4 12 ♜c2; 7...♜f8 8 a4 b4 9 ♜g2 ♜d3 10 f4 ♜a7 11 ♜e2 ♜xe2+ 12 ♜xe2 with d4 next) 8 ♜g2 ♜d4 9 f4 ♜f6 10 a4 (10 ♜xa8? ♜xa8 will give Black plenty of counterplay) 10...♜b8 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♜c2 e6 13 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 14 ♜c6+ ♜d8 15 0-0 ♜c5 16 ♜xb5!? (16 d3 favours White as well) 16...♝e7 17 ♜a4 ♜d6 18 ♜e2 ♜hd8. Black has some compensation, but it doesn't seem sufficient.

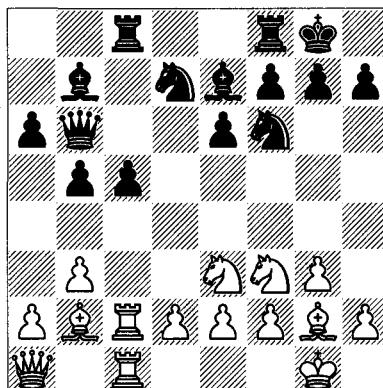
**7 ♜g2 ♜gf6 8 0-0 e6 9 b3**

The double fianchetto is used in most Réti systems.

**9...c5 10 ♜b2 ♜e7**

Black is making natural moves and has good central control, but 10...♜d6 keeps an eye on e5 and may be easier to play.

**11 ♜c1 0-0 12 ♜c2 ♜c8 13 ♜a1! ♜b6 14 ♜fc1 (*D*)**



B

White has played in true Réti style. The ♜c2 and ♜a1 manoeuvre goes way back to the opening's creator and namesake. White's pieces all have good range, but Black has pawn control of the centre. Neither side can claim an advantage yet.

**14...♝a7??!**

Tempi aren't absolutely vital in such positions, but 14...♜fd8 is natural and probably better.

**15 d3**

Finally a centre pawn moves! Black's position is fine; nevertheless, he needs to find a plan.

**15...♜fd8 16 h3 (*D*)**

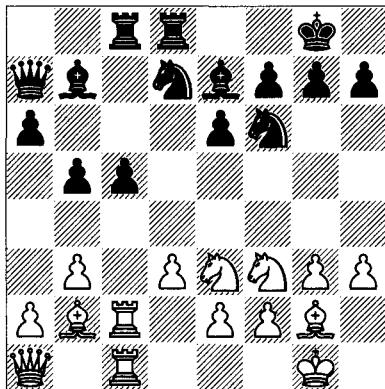
**16...h6**

16...♜f8 looks like a better solution, guarding g7 in order to free the f6-knight to play ...♞d5; for example, 17 ♜e5 (17 ♜g4 ♜d5) 17...♝xg2 18 ♜xg2 ♜xe5 19 ♜xe5 ♜b7+ 20 f3 ♜d5 21 ♜xd5 exd5 22 e4 and now 22...c4!? or 22...♝d7 is equal.

**17 ♜g4!?**

A typical 'crawling-forward' idea would be 17 ♜c3 ♜c6!? (17...♜f8 looks positionally suspect after 18 a4!?, but Black comes out satisfactorily after 18...♜a8 19 ♜a2 ♜b6) 18 ♜b2 (with

B



the idea 19 b4) 18...a5 19 a3 ♜f8? (19...♜a6!) 20 b4 axb4 (20...cxb4? 21 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 22 ♜xc6) 21 axb4 ♜d5 22 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 23 ♜d4! ♜b6 24 e4 ♜b7 25 ♜e3. Then White has in mind 26 bxc5 and can claim a serious central advantage.

**17...♝xg4**

There doesn't seem to be a real threat, so other moves such as 17...♜b6 can be considered.

**18 hxg4 ♜f6 19 g5 hxg5 20 ♜xg5 ♜xg2??**

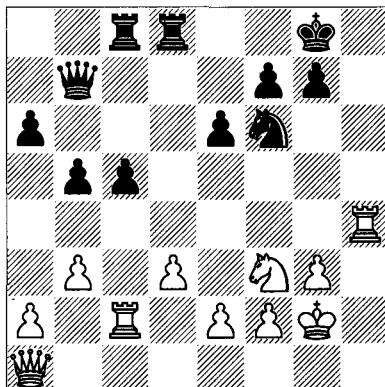
This is not disastrous, but why give White's rook the h-file? A calm move like 20...♜b6 is better, when 21 ♜xb7?! ♜xb7 22 ♜f3 ♜g4! has the idea of ...f6 and ...e5, blunting White's bishop (23 ♜xg7?? f6).

**21 ♜xg2 ♜b7+ 22 ♜f3 ♜e8**

Now after 22...♝g4 23 ♜h1 f6, 24 ♜h4! ruins Black's plan. Carsten Hansen suggests that 22...♜d5 23 ♜h1 ♜h5 is equal, but White should get a little something out of 24 ♜xh5 ♜xh5 25 ♜h1 ♜f6 26 ♜h4.

**23 ♜h1 ♜f6 24 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 25 ♜h4 (D)**

B



White has the simple ideas of ♜h1 and the move he plays next. He has no weaknesses in his pawn-structure, in contrast to Black's slight one on c5. In conjunction with the h-file and his control of the key square e5, this is enough to claim a winning position!

**25...♝f8 26 ♜c1! ♜d5 27 ♜d4?!**

Cleverly winning a pawn, but direct attack by 27 e4! decides outright; for example, 27...♜c6 (27...♜xd3?? 28 ♜d2) 28 ♜h8+ ♜g8 (28...♛e7 29 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 30 ♜g5) 29 ♜e5 ♜c7 30 ♜g5 (threatening ♜h5) 30...f6 31 ♜g6+ ♛e8 32 ♜h5 ♜d7 33 ♜h7 ♜d6 34 d4 and White wins.

**27...cxsd4 28 ♜xc8 ♜e7 29 ♜xd8**

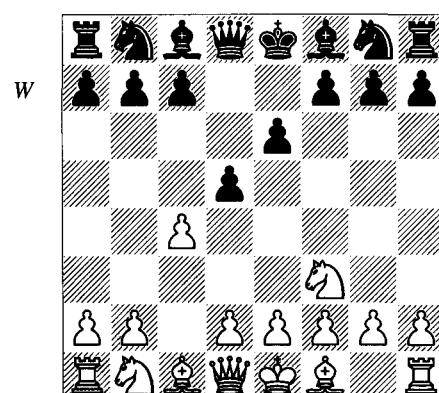
Or 29 ♜c5! ♜a8 30 ♜g1. The rest is easy.

**29...♜xd8 30 ♜f4 ♜d7 31 ♜b8 ♜g4 32 ♜f8 ♜e5 33 ♜xg7 ♜xf3 34 ♜xf7+ ♜c8 35 ♜xf3 ♜d6 36 g4 ♜a3 37 ♜c6+ ♜b8 38 ♜xe6 ♜xa2 39 g5 ♜d2 40 ♜e5+ ♜b7 41 g6 ♜h6 42 g7 ♜g6+ 43 ♜f1 ♜f7 44 ♜g3 ♜g8 45 ♜f3+ 1-0**

I think that it's fair to generalize a bit here and say that after 1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4, White can't expect to gain an advantage versus either 2...d4 or 2...dxc4; however, he can almost certainly reach unbalanced positions which have sufficient strategic content to challenge both players.

## The Closed Réti

**1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4 e6 (D)**

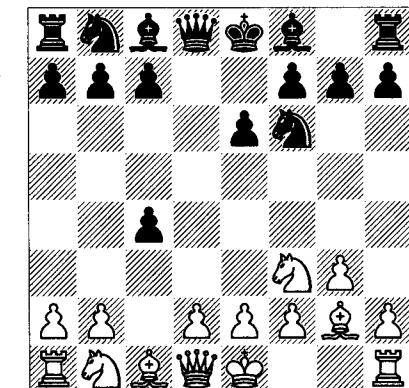


This is the Closed Réti Opening, the most consistently played variation of the Réti over the first few decades of its development, and

still very popular. This is due in part to the fact that English Opening players, when faced with 1 c4 e6, frequently want to avoid a transposition into the Queen's Gambit Declined by 2 d4 d5 or 2 ♜c3 d5 3 d4. Thus, after 1 c4 e6, they play 2 ♜f3 d5 and go into a Réti Opening via 3 g3 or 3 b3. Still another possible move-order is 1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜f3 e6 3 g3 (or 3 b3) 3...d5. Not surprisingly, the Closed Réti is characterized by slow manoeuvring. Both sides tend to develop their pieces conventionally, with White fianchettoing both his bishops and Black playing ...♜f6, ...♝e7, ...0-0, ...b6 and ...♝b7 and usually setting up a moderate-sized centre with ...c5. You will see that, barring the exchange cxd5, both sides' rooks can stay uninvolved in the fray for a long time, and their optimal placement is difficult to determine until the early middlegame or later.

### 3 b3

The main line that we're heading for can be reached if White begins with either fianchetto; for example, 3 g3 ♜f6 4 ♜g2 ♜e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 c5, etc. Black has unique options, however, after 3 g3 ♜f6 (or immediately 3...dxc4) 4 ♜g2 dxc4 (D) (4...♝e7 5 b3 transposes to the main Réti lines).



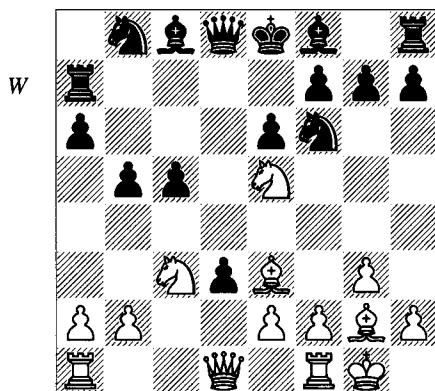
I can't do justice to the large and disparate body of theory and practice here, but both sides should look out for these possibilities:

a) 5 ♜c2 (the similar 5 ♜a4+ is less flexible because after 5...♝bd7 6 ♜xc4 {or 6 ♜a3} 6...c5, the queen will have to move again; theory indicates an equal outcome) 5...♝bd7 (not the only move, of course) 6 ♜a3 c5 (6...♝xa3 7 ♜bxa3 8 ♜b6 8 ♜e5 0-0 9 ♜b2 may give White a

small edge because of his bishop-pair) 7 0-0 (or 7 ♜xc4 b5 8 ♜ce5 ♜d5 9 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 10 b3 ♜e7 11 ♜b2 0-0 12 0-0, Polugaevsky-Serper, Tilburg 1992, and now 12...f6 followed by ...♝c8 should be fine) 7...♝b8 8 ♜xc4 b5 9 ♜ce5 (9 ♜e3 is worth a try) 9...♝b7 10 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 11 d3, Suba-Inkiov, Iraklion 1985, and here 11...♝d6 (preventing ♜f4) equalizes.

b) 5 ♜a3 ♜d5! 6 ♜a4+ (6 ♜c2?! can be met by 6...♝c6 7 ♜xc4 ♜b4?! or 6...♝xa3 7 ♜xa3 ♜c6 8 0-0 e5!; 6 0-0 is similarly answered with 6...♝xa3 7 ♜a4+ ♜c6 8 ♜xa3 e5) 6...c6 (or 6...♝d7 7 ♜xc4 ♜c6) 7 ♜xc4 ♜xa3 8 ♜xd5 exd5 9 ♜bxa3 ♜f5!? 10 ♜b2 ♜bd7 with a solid position, and roughly equal play.

c) 5 0-0! is a flexible move: 5...a6 (or 5...♝c6, with the idea 6 ♜a4 ♜d5! 7 ♜c3 ♜c5) 6 ♜c3?! b5 (Kosten gives the imaginative 6...♝e7 7 b3?! cxb3 8 ♜xb3, planning d4, e4 and ♜f4) 7 d3! cxd3 8 ♜e5 ♜a7 9 ♜e3 c5 (D).



10 ♜xd3!? (or 10 ♜xd3) 10...♝c7!? (after 10...♝xd3 11 ♜xd3 ♜bd7 12 a4! b4 13 ♜e4 White will recover the c-pawn and obtain the better ending) 11 ♜fd1 ♜e7, G.Kuzmin-Belavsky, Kiev 1978, and here 12 ♜f4! is extremely strong.

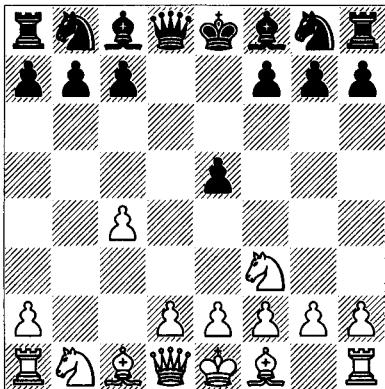
### 3...♝f6

At this point it's possible to play the extremely rare 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5!? (D).

The tactical basis for this advance is that 5 ♜xe5?? loses to 5...♝d4.

This dynamic idea, wasting a whole move on ...e6-e5, merits more attention than it has received. In practice the logical continuation 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 has followed. Then White has to deal

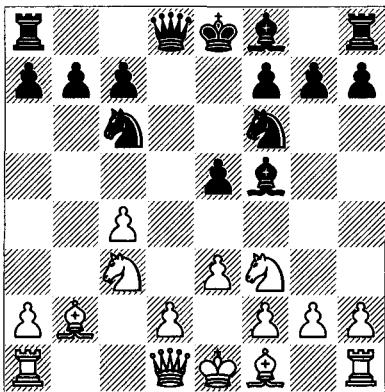
W



with the ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  & ...e4, or ...f5 & ...e4. Limited practice has seen:

a) 6  $\mathbb{A}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 e3 was tried in Marin-Vuković, Bucharest 2000. Then 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (*D*) would have been particularly interesting, targeting d3 and planning ...e4.

W



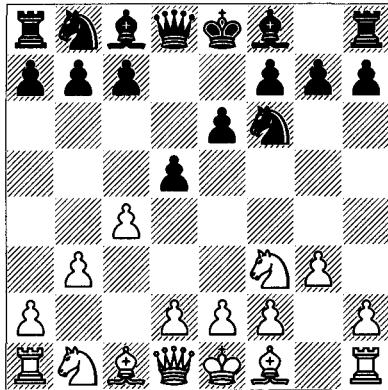
For example, 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$ ! can be answered by 8... $\mathbb{A}d6$ !, with the idea 9  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! followed by ... $\mathbb{B}b8$ , or 8...e4.

b) 6 g3 f5 (6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  8 0-0 0-0 9 d3 may give White a very slight English-style edge) 7 d3 (7  $\mathbb{A}g2$  e4 8  $\mathbb{Q}gl$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is unpleasant for White, while 7  $\mathbb{A}b2$  e4!? 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{A}h3$ !  $\mathbb{A}c5$ ! is an unclear pawn sacrifice) 7... $\mathbb{A}b4$  (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{A}b2$   $\mathbb{A}c5$  9  $\mathbb{A}g2$  0-0) 8  $\mathbb{A}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !  $\mathbb{A}c5$  10  $\mathbb{W}b5$ !  $\mathbb{W}e7$  (Black stands well after 10... $\mathbb{W}d6$ ! intending 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !?) 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12 cxd5 a6 13  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{A}b8$  14  $\mathbb{A}g2$ , with the idea 0-0 and  $\mathbb{A}fc1$ , Krnić-Wirschell, Wijk aan Zee 2001. White has the better of it here, but you can see that the clever idea with 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5 has considerable promise for

Black. Thus the decision between 3 g3 and 3 b3 becomes more confusing.

4 g3 (*D*)

B



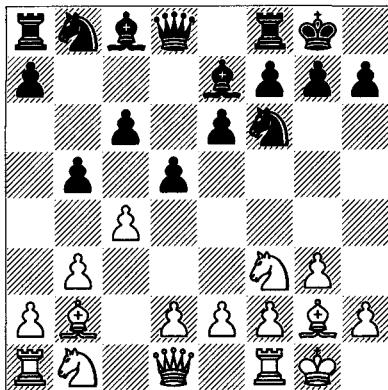
4... $\mathbb{A}e7$

Here 4...dxc4 5 bxc4 e5!? still merits consideration.

5  $\mathbb{A}g2$  0-0 6 0-0 c5

Black used to employ the formation with 6...c6 7  $\mathbb{A}b2$  b5!? (*D*) more frequently than he does today.

W

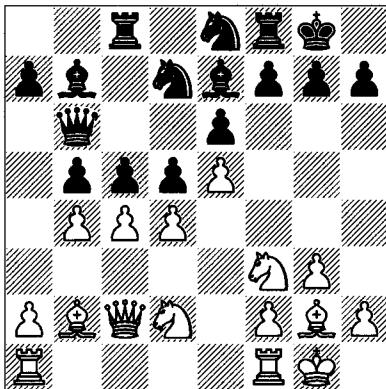


The idea is to get developed and tie White to the defence of c4; if White advances with c5 at any point, it should make ...e5 easier to accomplish. Strategically, Black either plays for a queenside attack via ...a5-a4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c5$ , or, if White plays d4, he will ideally get in the freeing move ...c5.

For his part, White will try to use his greater mobility and the slight weaknesses in Black's camp. The classic example is Botvinnik-Bisguier, Hastings 1961/2: 8 d3 (since 8 cxb5 or 8

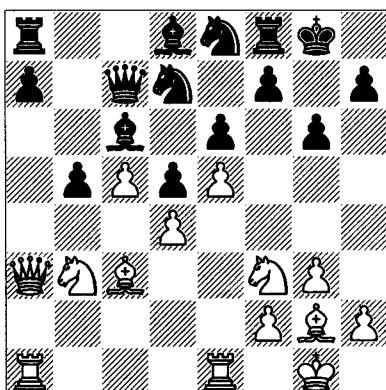
$\text{cxd5}$  would free  $\text{c6}$  for Black's knight, White plays conservatively, happy with the fact that his bishop on  $\text{b}2$  is superior to Black's light-squared bishop) 8... $\text{Qbd7}$  9  $\text{Qbd2}$   $\text{Qb7}$  10  $\text{Wc2}$   $\text{Ec8}$  11  $\text{e4}$   $\text{Wb6}$  12  $\text{e5!}$   $\text{Qe8}$  13  $\text{d4}$   $\text{c5}$ . Now it looks as though Black has achieved all of his goals and will free his game, but White has prepared a trick: 14  $\text{b4!}$  (D).

B



Whatever Black does, White will be able to close the position temporarily and then make use of his space advantage: 14... $\text{cxb4}$  (14... $\text{dxc4?}$  is a bad error due to 15  $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{Wc7}$  16  $\text{a4!}$   $\text{a6}$  17  $\text{axb5}$   $\text{axb5}$  18  $\text{Ea7}$ , when along with ideas such as  $\text{Qd4}$ , White threatens 19  $\text{Wxb7!}$   $\text{Wxb7}$  20  $\text{Qg5}$ , attacking the queen and  $\text{h7}$ ) 15  $\text{c5}$   $\text{Wc7}$  16  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{Wc6}$  17  $\text{Ef1}$  (White plays to prevent ... $\text{f6}$  or ... $\text{f5}$ ) 17... $\text{g6}$  18  $\text{a3!}$   $\text{bxa3}$  19  $\text{Wxa3}$   $\text{Ea8}$  20  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qd8}$  21  $\text{Qb3}$  (D).

B



Finally White wins the battle for  $\text{a}5$  and is thus able to penetrate on the queenside. (An exercise: count the number of squares available

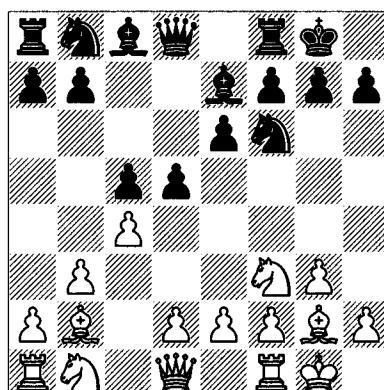
to each side's pieces.) The game proceeded 21... $\text{Qg7}$  22  $\text{Qa5}$   $\text{Wb7}$  23  $\text{Qxd8}$   $\text{Wfxd8}$  24  $\text{Qa5}$   $\text{Wc7}$  25  $\text{Ee2}$   $\text{a6}$  26  $\text{Qe1}$   $\text{Qf5}$  27  $\text{Wc3}$   $\text{b4}$  (if Black does nothing, White will build up and fashion a kingside breakthrough) 28  $\text{Wxb4}$   $\text{Wdb8}$  29  $\text{Wc3}$   $\text{Nb5}$  30  $\text{Eea2}$   $\text{f6}$  31  $\text{Qxc6}$   $\text{Wxc6}$  32  $\text{Qf1}$   $\text{fxe5}$  33  $\text{Qxb5}$   $\text{Wxb5}$  34  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{d4}$  35  $\text{Wd3}$   $\text{Wxc5}$  36  $\text{Wxa6}$   $\text{Wxa6}$  37  $\text{Wxa6}$   $\text{Wxe5}$  38  $\text{Qd3}$   $\text{Wf6}$  39  $\text{Wc8+}$   $\text{Qf8}$  40  $\text{Waa8}$   $\text{Qd6}$  41  $\text{Wd8}$   $\text{Wxd8}$  42  $\text{Wxd8}$   $\text{Qb5}$  43  $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Qg7}$  44  $\text{Qc6}$  1-0. Very nice.

7  $\text{Qb2}$ 

Delaying  $\text{Qb2}$  with 7  $\text{e3}$  has good and bad points; the idea is that in Benoni-like positions with ... $\text{d}4$ , White's bishop is often better-placed on  $\text{c}1$  than  $\text{b}2$ . For one thing the bishop on  $\text{b}2$  blocks White's support of a  $\text{b}4$  advance by a rook on  $\text{b}1$ ; furthermore, a bishop on  $\text{c}1$  might find an influential post on  $\text{f}4$  or even support the move  $\text{f}4$  if Black plays ... $\text{e}5$ . After 7  $\text{e3}$   $\text{Qc6}$  8  $\text{We2}$ , Kourkounakis-Botsari, Aegina 1995 proceeded 8... $\text{d}4!$ ? 9  $\text{exd4}$   $\text{cxd4}$  10  $\text{Qe5!?$   $\text{Qxe5}$  11  $\text{Wxe5}$   $\text{Qd7!}$  12  $\text{We2}$ . Now Black should probably play 12... $\text{e}5$  13  $\text{d}3$   $\text{Ee8}$  14  $\text{Qd2}$   $\text{Qc5}$ , conceding White just a small edge after 15  $\text{Qe4}$  due to his mobile queenside majority and a powerful bishop on  $\text{g}2$ . Unfortunately for White, the absence of a bishop on  $\text{b}2$  allows Black to contest  $\text{e}5$  by 8... $\text{dxc4}$  9  $\text{bxc4}$   $\text{e}5!$ , with the idea 10  $\text{Qb2}$   $\text{Qf5!}$ . If that's satisfactory for Black, then the text-move is preferable.

Thus we return to 7  $\text{Qb2}$  (D):

B



This is the traditional main line of the Closed Réti, and arguably of the Réti Opening as a whole. Black now decides where to put his queen's knight, what to do with his bishop, and whether to play for ... $\text{d}4$ . Let's see some games.

## The Réti Benoni

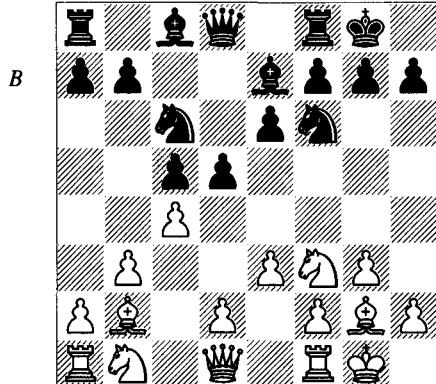
**McNab – A. Norris**  
*Scottish Ch, Aberdeen 2001*

**1 c4 e6 2 ♜f3 d5 3 b3 ♜f6 4 g3 ♜e7 5 ♜g2  
 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 ♜b2 ♜c6**

I haven't used the exact move-order of the game because I want to mention a frequently-used move-order, 7...b6 8 e3 ♜b7. This will transpose to one of our main lines if Black plays 9...♜c6 or 9...♝bd7 (after 9 ♜e2, for example); see the following game. In this case, however, Black can't play the ...d4 variation that he does here.

**8 e3 (D)**

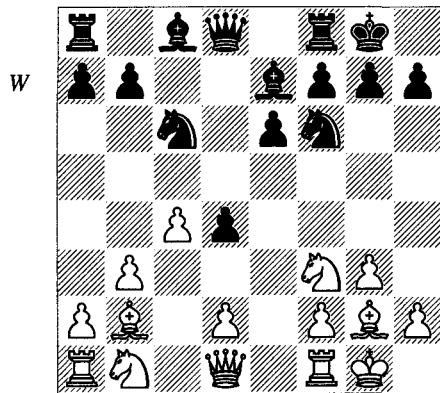
Over the years, White has settled upon this move as the main line. 8 cxd5 comes too early to cause Black real problems: 8...exd5 (or 8...♝xd5 9 ♜c3, when 9...♝f6 10 ♜c1 ♜xc3 11 ♜xc3 e5 was Réti-Grünfeld, Teplitz-Schönau 1928, while 9...b6 with the idea ...♜a6 is also fine) 9 d4 ♜e8 10 ♜c3 ♜g4 11 dxc5 ♜xc5. Here Black has the kind of active play he doesn't get in the main lines, when his bishop is on b7 instead of g4.



**8...d4**

In the next game we'll see the safer 8...b6. Other moves are seen much less often, although several are playable. Generally, if left to his own resources White can play ♜e2 and an early d4 (often after cxd5), or in some cases d3 and e4, with some pull. It's worth mentioning that 8...dxc4 9 bxc4 ♜d3 can be met by 10 ♜b3 with a superior position should Black exchange queens.

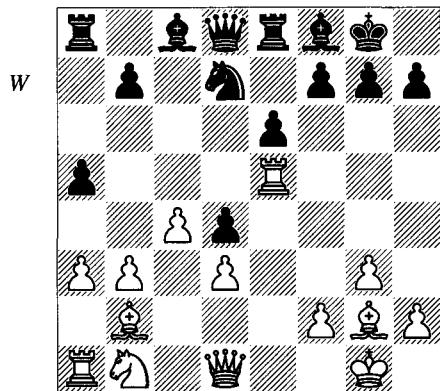
**9 exd4 cxd4 (D)**



Initially only a small minority of players were willing to test this position as Black, since it looked too much like a Modern Benoni with colours reversed in which Black wouldn't be able to play ...e5 successfully.

**10 ♜e1 ♜e8!**

This retreat became the main line after some bad experiences with slower moves. Tal-Zhuravliov, USSR Ch, Kharkov 1967 continued 10...♜e8 11 a3 a5 (12 b4 must be prevented) 12 d3 ♜f8 (12...♝b6!?) 13 ♜e5! ♜xe5 14 ♜xe5 ♜d7 (D).



**15 ♜b5! (threatening ♜xd4) 15...e5 16 ♜d2!.** These are standard Benoni ideas. White's pressure on the queenside and superior development (all but one of Black's pieces are on the first rank) guarantee him the advantage. Notice that in this line White doesn't solve Black's problems for him by 16 ♜xb7?! ♜xb7 17 ♜xb7 ♜c5 18 ♜b5 ♜b8!.

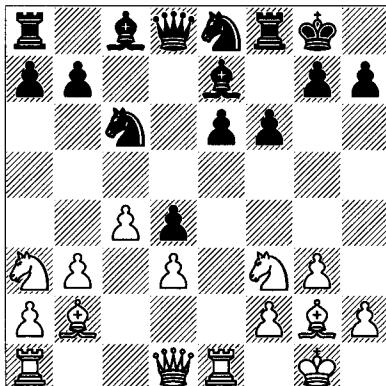
By contrast, 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  prepares to support d4 by ...f6 and ...e5 while covering vulnerable squares inside Black's camp.

### 11 d3

White can play more ambitiously by 11  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{B}xe5$  f6 13  $\mathbb{B}e1$  e5 (or 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14 f4  $\mathbb{B}b8$  with the idea ...b5, which is hard to assess) 14 f4! (hacking away at Black's pawn-chain) 14...exf4 15  $\mathbb{W}f3$ ! (15 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16  $\mathbb{W}f3$  a5 17 d3 a4 produces a double-edged fight) 15...fxg3 16  $\mathbb{W}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17 hxg3  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , as in Fishbein-D.Schneider, USA Ch, San Diego 2004. White has sacrificed a pawn for excellent piece pressure. 18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !? looks best, when Kosten suggests 19  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ !. Then if 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+22\mathbb{Q}xf2$ , White's central pawns, combined with the e-file and temporary pressure on b7, are at least the equivalent of Black's three passed pawns. Similarly, 21... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  22 d4 gives White good chances, especially in view of 22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  24  $\mathbb{B}xe6$ . Overall, this line looks like a promising way for White to go.

### 11...f6 12 $\mathbb{Q}a3$ (D)

B



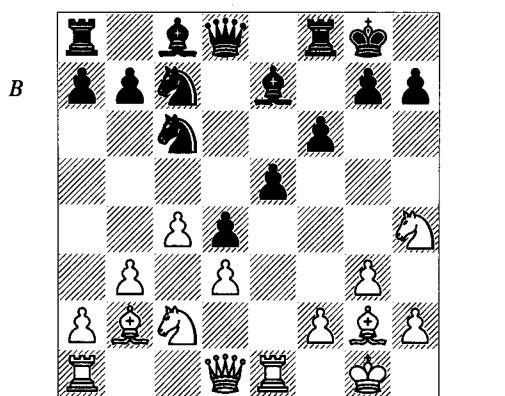
### 12...e5 13 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

Although ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is common in the Modern Benoni, here we see White playing the alternate Benoni plan  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ -c2 in almost every line, because b4 (or at least the threat of b4) is necessary in order to keep Black on the defensive and counteract his space advantage.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d2$

White supports the move b4 and clears his back rank. This does use up the d2-square for a knight redeployment, but  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  isn't necessarily a good idea anyway. Instead, 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !?(D) is a

strange-looking but promising move that tries to provoke Black into weakening his kingside with ...g5, and then attacking it with h4.



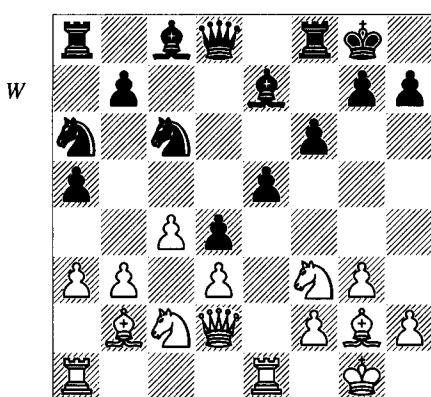
This is an idea that appears in the King's Indian Defence as well as the Modern Main Line of the Benoni. Since f4 is a positional threat, Black 'cooperates': 14...g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Now White is ready to play h4; apparently, he needn't be in a hurry to make progress in such positions since he faces few threats. Here are two examples:

a) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?! 16  $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$  (this seems a good spot for 16 h4! g4 17  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  18  $\mathbb{W}d2$  a5 19  $\mathbb{W}h6$ ) 16...exd4 (16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 18  $\mathbb{B}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ ! 20  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  21  $\mathbb{W}xe6$ !  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  is unclear) 17  $\mathbb{B}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  (18... $\mathbb{W}d6$  19  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ ? 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with a lovely outpost and good prospects, Macieja-Vescovi, Bermuda 2005.

b) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  seems more accurate: 16  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! covers the second rank to quash any tactics; then 17 h4 g4 18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is hard to assess) 17 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?! (17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 18 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ . Now the safest move is 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ! 21  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  22  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ; then Black has his share of the centre, but White has the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  and moves like  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and  $\mathbb{B}ad1$  in store. Instead, Kosarev-Bets, Peterhof 2006 continued 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !? $\mathbb{Q}b4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  22  $\mathbb{B}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ?! (22... $\mathbb{B}b8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ) 23 gxf5  $\mathbb{B}b8$ , when White should have opened lines for his rook by 24 h4! gxh4 25 f4! exf4 26  $\mathbb{W}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  27  $\mathbb{W}xf4$  with two bishops, an attack and d4-d5-d6 in reserve.

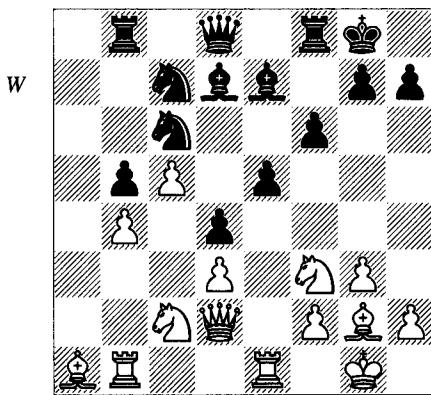
Sometimes White plays 14 a3 a5, when 15  $\mathbb{W}d2$  transposes to the game, while 15  $\mathbb{B}b1$  has also led to many tough battles.

14...a5 15 a3 ♜a6 (D)



16 b4!?

White embarks upon a pseudo-sacrifice consistent with the aim of piece activity. Schwartzmann-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 1993 saw the slower 16 ♜ab1: 16...♜b8 17 ♜a1?! (17 ♜c1! keeps the bishop on a freer diagonal: 17...b5 18 ♜h4 ♜d7, Deleyn-Chuchelov, Belgian Team Ch 1995/6, and now 19 f4!?) ♜c7 20 f5 bxc4 21 dxc4 ♜c5 22 ♜d3 could be considered, with the idea of advancing by g4, h4 and g5) 17...♜d7 18 b4 axb4 19 axb4 b5 20 c5 ♜c7 (D).



This kind of pawn-structure, common to this variation and the Modern Benoni, would be fine for White if he didn't have his dark-squared bishop, because he could challenge for the a-file. But it sits uselessly on a1, so Black must have the better prospects. In our main game, White solves that problem as follows:

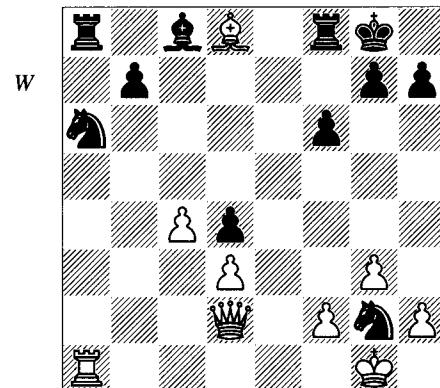
16...axb4 17 axb4 ♜cxb4 18 ♜fxd4! exd4  
19 ♜a3

The point: White gets his piece back.

19...♜xc2 20 ♜xe7 ♜xe1!

Black made the wrong queen 'sacrifice' in Lautier-Kotronias, Sochi 1989: 20...♛xe7? 21 ♜xe7 ♜xa1 22 ♜a5 ♜b3 23 ♜d5+ ♜h8 24 ♜f7! ♜g8 25 ♜e8 ♜e6 26 ♜xg8+ ♜xg8 27 ♜xe6 ♜ac5 28 ♜b6 and White went on to win.

21 ♜xd8 ♜xg2 (D)



22 ♜b6 ♜h3

Now 23 ♜d1 g6 24 ♜xd4 ♜ad8 25 ♜b6 ♜d6 is unclear. However, White went astray with 23 ♜e2?! g6 24 ♜b1 ♜ae8 25 ♜f3?? (25 ♜d2) 25...♜e1! 26 ♜xb7 ♜b4! and Black was winning. In general, the chances in this game looked balanced, which we could say about the entire variation. I would encourage White to investigate his alternatives on moves 11 and 14.

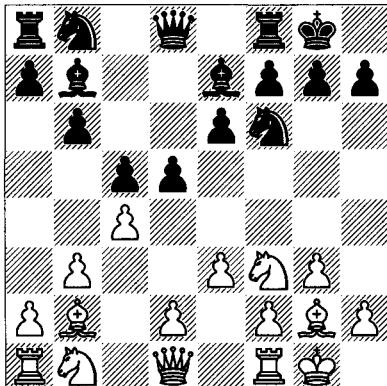
### The ...b6 Fianchetto

Scherbakov – Vaganian  
St Petersburg 1998

1 ♜f3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♜f6 4 ♜g2 ♜e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 b3 c5 7 ♜b2 b6 8 e3 ♜b7 (D)

This and the following positions can be reached by a large number of move-orders; in fact, this game began with ...b6 on the second move! Since there are as yet no open lines, the question of how to activate rooks becomes of interest. Black tends to centralize with ...♜d8, opening the d-file by ...dxc4 when the timing is right; his other rook might go to b8 to support ...a6 and ...b5. White sometimes beats him to the punch with cxd5 and then places rooks on c1 and d1, hoping for an effective d4. Another

W

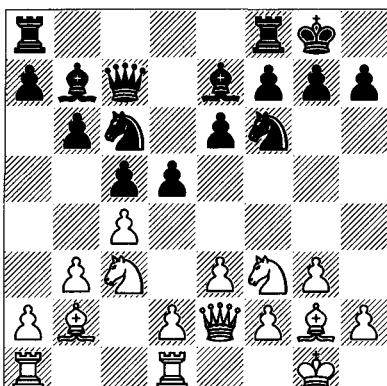


plan is d3 and a well-timed e4. It's all very position-specific.

**9. Qc3**

Let's see two examples of the sort of classical attack that White has mounted time and again: 9. We2 Qc6 10. Hd1 Wc7 11. Qc3 (*D*).

B

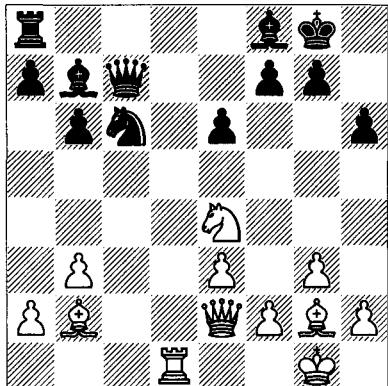


Now it's very risky to delay ...dxc4 too long, because sooner or later cxd5 will produce an advantage, often in the form of a decisive attack:

a) 11. Hfd8 12. cxd5 Qxd5 13. Qxd5 Hxd5 14. d4 Hd7 (14...cxd4 15. Qxd4 Qxd4 16. Hxd4 and now 16...Hd7 17. Hac1 leaves White with a clearly superior position; still worse is 16...Hd6? 17. Hdc1! Hd7 18. He5 with the idea 18...Hd5? 19. Hc7) 15. dxc5 (this draws a piece away from Black's already under-populated kingside, and the bishop on c5 will often be subject to attack) 15...Qxc5 16. Qg5! Hd1+ 17. Hxd1 h6 18. He4 Hf8? (*D*).

19. Qf6+! (routine, possibly, but nice anyway) 19...gxf6 20. Wg4+ Wh7 21. He4+ f5 22.

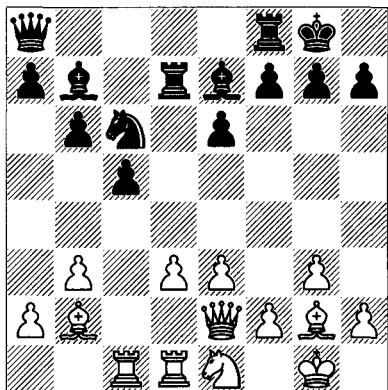
W



Hxf5+ exf5 23. Wxf5+ Kg8 24. Hd7 Wxd7 25. Wxd7 Hb8 26. Wg4+ Wh7 27. Wf5+ 1-0 Szabó-Padevsky, Amsterdam 1972.

b) 11...Had8 12. d3 Wb8 13. Hac1 Wa8 14. cxd5 Qxd5 15. Qxd5 Hxd5?! (or 15...exd5 16. d4 Qb4?! 17. Hc3 Ha6 18. Hd2! intending 18...Hd3? 19. Qf1! c4 20. Qxd3 cxd3 21. Qe1) 16. Qe1 Hd7 (*D*).

W

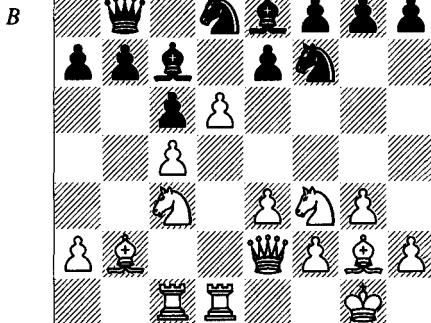
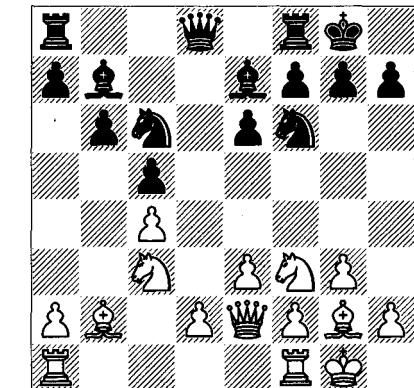


17. Wg4 (a typical gravitation kingside) 17...g6 18. Wf4 Wb8! 19. Wh6 f6?! 20. d4 Hfd8 21. Qd3 Wa8? 22. Qf4 Hd6 and now 23. He1! is hard to meet, while 23. Qxg6!? hxg6 24. Wxg6+ Hf8 25. Wh6+ He8 26. Wh5+ also gives White an attack. Instead, the natural 23. d5?! (Padevsky-Gregoriu, Istanbul 1975) allows the surprising defence 23...Qe5! 24. Qxe5 fxe5 25. Qxg6 Qf6.

**9...dxc4!**

Black cuts out the idea of cxd5 right away. Actually, 9...Qbd7 is a respectable move with hundreds of games behind it. Just one example: 10. We2 (10. d3! is more flexible, stopping ...Qe4 and leaving open the plan of Qe1 and f4,

and in some cases g4-g5) 10...a6 (10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is an equalizer, according to theory) 11  $\mathbb{H}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  12  $\mathbb{B}ac1$  dxc4 (again, Black shouldn't wait too long; a number of games have seen the likes of 12... $\mathbb{B}ac8$  13 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15 e4  $\mathbb{B}b7$  16 d4 and Black has to cope with both 17 dxc5 and 17 d5) 13 bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 14 d4! (we see that White's position has some elasticity to it, and he begins a potential central pawn-roller) 14... $\mathbb{W}b7$ ? (Kosten gives 14...cxd4 15 exd4  $\mathbb{B}fe8$ (?!)!), although 16 d5! exd5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  still causes difficulties) 15 d5! (D).



Black really should have seen this standard pawn sacrifice coming. Sorokin-Sambuev, St Petersburg 1999 continued 15...exd5 16 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (no better for Black is 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19  $\mathbb{H}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  20  $\mathbb{B}dx5$  or 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ ? 19  $\mathbb{H}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}e4$  20  $\mathbb{B}c4$ ) 19  $\mathbb{H}xd5$ ! (the geometry is nice, and Réti players especially love their bishops when they look like these do!) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{B}ad8$  21  $\mathbb{W}d2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ !? (the bishops are too strong following 21...f6 22  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  b5 23  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{B}d6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  27 e4; after White wins the queen, Black has some tricks, but nothing that should work) 22  $\mathbb{B}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  23  $\mathbb{W}c2$  c4! 24  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  26  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}fe8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$ + 29  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  30  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and White won. An excellent game for the student to play through.

**10 bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (D)**

This has been the starting point for hundreds of games. White is reserving the right to play d3 or d4. He can put his rooks on c1 and d1, or d1 and b1 (leaving the queen's rook on the queenside to restrain ...b5) or he can leave the king's

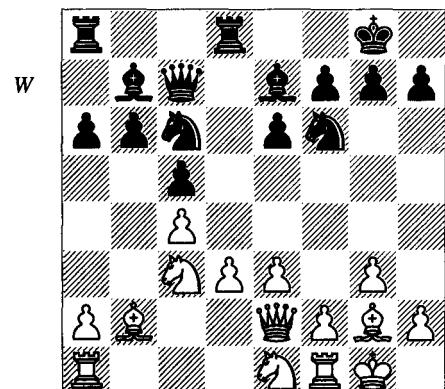
rook on f1 to support a kingside pawn-storm. In fact, much of the time that White succeeds directly out of the opening, he does so with some version of f4-f5 or g4-g5 and transferring his pieces towards the black king.

Conversely, having played ...dxc4, Black doesn't have to worry about cxd5 diverting his pieces and can get to work in the centre and queenside. It's generally important to exchange off White's light-squared bishop, which otherwise might participate in a central or kingside attack. Generally, ...a6 and ...b5 are key moves for Black's counterplay, opening lines on the queenside or driving White's pieces away.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$**

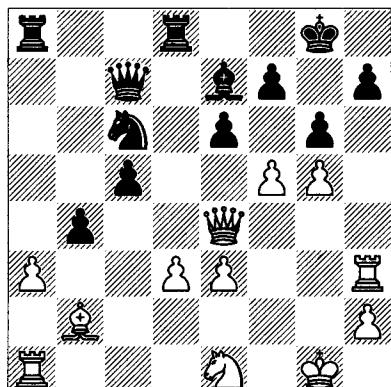
The most common move is 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ . Here are two typical examples after 12 d3:

a) 12... $\mathbb{H}fd8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (the conventional move: White protects g2 and prepares an assault by g4, f4-f5, g5, etc.) 13...a6! (D).



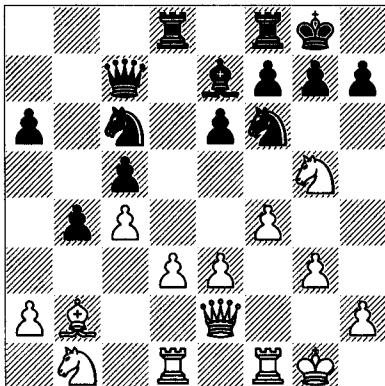
Black begins the customary counterattack. He will often support ...b5 by ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ , and probably

should do so next move. 14 f4  $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}a7!$  15 a4!  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  17  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}ab8$  is level) 15 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xg2?!$  (rather eager; sometimes Black foregoes this move in order to prevent a knight or queen from reaching g2) 16  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17 g4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18 g5  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19  $\mathbb{B}f3$  (19  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  20  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  was probably the best plan anyway, thinking about f5 and/or  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ) 19...b5 20 cxb5 axb5 21  $\mathbb{B}h3$  b4! (just in time) 22  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  23  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  g6 24 f5! (D).



B Suddenly White has ideas like  $\mathbb{B}xh7$ , fxe6 and  $\mathbb{W}h4$ . However, the position is just simplified enough for Black to defend, and he has diversionary moves on the queenside. 24...exf5! (24...gx5? 25 g6!!) 25  $\mathbb{W}h4?!$  (25  $\mathbb{B}xh7$  threatens mate; then 25... $\mathbb{B}d4!$  – everything else is a disaster – 26  $\mathbb{B}xd4$  cxd4 27  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e5$ ! 28  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$   $\mathbb{W}xe3+$  29  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}e2+$  30  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}e3+$  draws) 25...h5 26 gxh6!. Now everything holds by a thread. There are tremendous complications, but I'll limit the notes: 26... $\mathbb{Q}e5?!$  (26... $\mathbb{Q}h7!$  27  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  is best) 27 h7+  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$  f6? 29  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (a pretty line is 29  $\mathbb{W}h6?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  bxa3? {30...c4} 31  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$   $\mathbb{B}xd3$  32  $\mathbb{W}xg6!!$   $\mathbb{B}xc3$  33  $\mathbb{B}g3$   $\mathbb{W}xg3+$  34  $\mathbb{W}xg3$  a2 35  $\mathbb{W}f3$  and White should win) 29...fxe5 30  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  31  $\mathbb{B}h6??$  bxa3 32  $\mathbb{B}xa3$   $\mathbb{B}xa3$  33  $\mathbb{B}xg6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$  34  $\mathbb{B}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  35  $\mathbb{W}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  36  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}xd3$  37  $\mathbb{B}c6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  38  $\mathbb{B}xc5$   $\mathbb{B}xe3$  39  $\mathbb{Q}f4?$  0-1 (time) Lobron-Tiviakov, Moscow Olympiad 1994. A terrific battle with useful tactical themes.

b) 12... $\mathbb{B}ad8$  13  $\mathbb{B}ad1$  a6! 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5?!$   $\mathbb{Q}a7!$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  (generally, this is a good move if White can't recapture with a knight; even then, Black can usually cope with White's kingside play) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  b5 17  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  b4?! 18  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D).



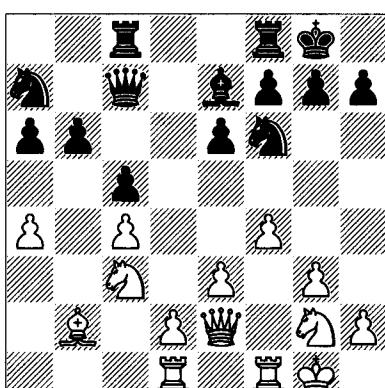
W

19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5!? (Black's attack is faster than White's, but he could interpose 19...h6 to be safe) 20 g4  $\mathbb{W}d7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}de4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  22 dxе4?!,  $\mathbb{W}c7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a4 24 g5  $\mathbb{B}xd1$  25  $\mathbb{B}xd1$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  26 h4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  27  $\mathbb{B}xd8+$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  28  $\mathbb{W}c2$  a3 29  $\mathbb{Q}a1$  f6 with some advantage for Black, Timman-Spassky, Sochi 1973. In this example, White did a good job of handling Black's queenside advance, but you can see that Black maintained his prospects of penetrating into White's position.

12  $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  a6 14 f4  $\mathbb{Q}a7!$

So far we see all the same ideas; White's omission of d3 is the only real difference, which gives him a better chance of restraining Black's queenside, because the queen on e2 watches over b5.

15 a4  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  (D)



B

16... $\mathbb{W}d7$

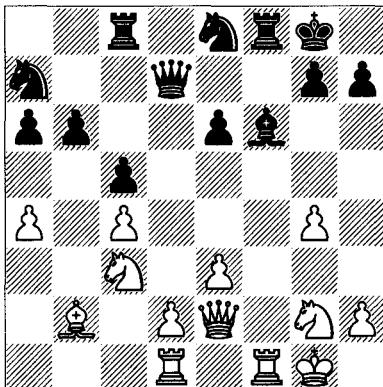
Black should probably play ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  on this or the next move, bringing the knight back into the action.

17 g4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18 f5!

White will often attack e6 on the grounds that after fxe6, Black must either take on an isolated pawn by ...fxe6 or cede the d5-square after ... $\mathbb{W}xe6$ .

18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19 fxe6 fxe6 (D)

W



20 g5!

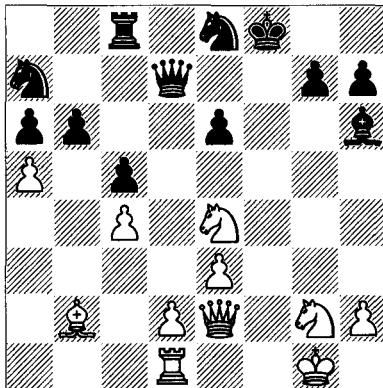
White sacrifices a pawn to open up lines with a gain of tempo.

20... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

20... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ? 21  $\mathbb{M}xf8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  22  $\mathbb{W}g4!$  threatens  $\mathbb{W}e4$ .

21  $\mathbb{M}xf8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  23 a5! (D)

B



A nice blow on the other wing. Black's pawn-structure is permanently damaged.

23...bxa5 24  $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$   $\mathbb{W}e7$

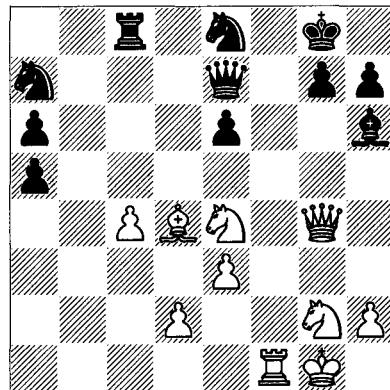
Not 24... $\mathbb{M}xc5$ ? 25  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  26 d4. The a3-f8 diagonal proves decisive anyway.

25  $\mathbb{M}f1+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  26  $\mathbb{W}g4!$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8?$

White stands much better in any case after 27... $\mathbb{M}f8$  28  $\mathbb{M}xf8+$   $\mathbb{W}xf8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$

28  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  (D)

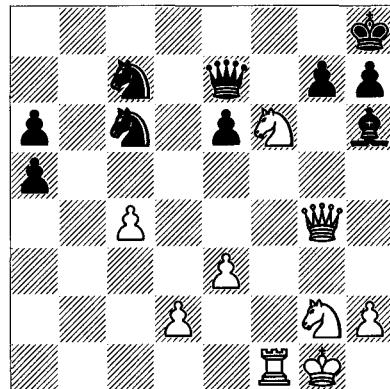
B



Now Black can do nothing about the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

28... $\mathbb{M}c7$  29  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{M}xc5$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  31  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  32  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  (D)

W

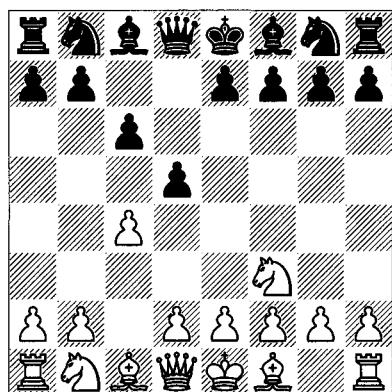


33  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{M}xd5$  34  $\mathbb{W}c8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  35  $\mathbb{M}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$   
36  $\mathbb{W}xd8$  1-0

The Réti Opening leads to positions that are fluid and unclear. I suspect that its lack of greater popularity in part derives from the absence of the kind of predictable structures that characterize many mainstream openings. Some might consider that an advantage, however, in that the player who better adjusts to new issues will generally carry the day.

## 2 Réti: Slav Variations

1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 e4 c6 (D)

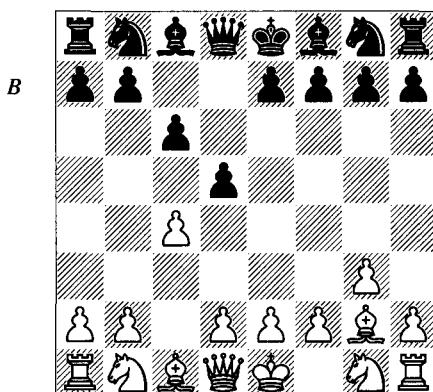


A broad complex of positions can arise from ...c6/...d5 structures in the Réti Opening. Right away, I should put them in context. In playing 2...c6, Black indicates that he is happy to contest a Slav Defence, which White can immediately enter into by 3 d4. The most common alternatives to that move are 3 g3 and 3 b3. White sometimes plays a combination of e3,  $\mathbb{W}c2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , b3 and  $\mathbb{A}b2$ , but the ‘purest’ Réti set-up is the one followed by Réti himself: a double fianchetto. How White can achieve that and whether Black permits him to do so are the first questions both sides must consider, because there are so many early changes of direction that might spoil their respective plans.

The question of how to react to a Slav move-order also arises in the English Opening, and it’s worth a digression to talk about how White should respond after 1 c4 c6. Again, he can play 2 d4 d5 with a Slav Defence. Or he can choose 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5, transposing to this chapter. I should mention a third option, 2 e4 (equivalent to the Caro-Kann line 1 e4 c6 2 c4), when after 2...d5 3 exd5 cxd5, 4 d4 is a Caro-Kann Panov Attack. He can also play 4 cxd5, which can reach typical isolated queen’s pawn positions after 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , though White has independent options such as 5  $\mathbb{W}a4+!$ ? and 5  $\mathbb{A}b5+$ . If

Black wants to avoid all this, he can also try 1 c4 c6 2 e4 e5, but that has its own set of problems after 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , and is quite rare. The interested reader will have to dig around in books and databases.

Sticking with the 1 c4 c6 English Opening for a moment, Tony Kosten points out that the move-order 2 g3 d5 3  $\mathbb{A}g2$  (D) has some positive features.

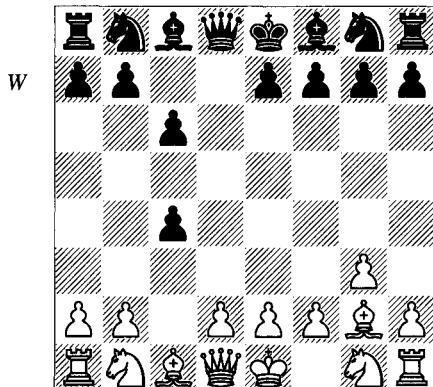


First, this move frustrates Black’s desire to play ... $\mathbb{A}g4$  without committing his knights: 3... $\mathbb{A}g4$ ? 4 cxd5 cxd5 5  $\mathbb{W}b3$  attacks d5 and b7, and 5... $\mathbb{W}c8$  (threatening the bishop on c1) only staves off material loss for one more move, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , because 6...e6?? loses to 7  $\mathbb{W}a4+!$  and 8  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  (keep your eye out for this trick, which occurs in several openings).

Therefore, after 1 c4 c6 2 g3 d5 3  $\mathbb{A}g2$ , Black might want to try 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{A}g4$ , but this transposes into a version of the Réti main line below (1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}g4$ ) in which White can play the effective move 5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . Contrast this with the sequence 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3  $\mathbb{A}g4$  4  $\mathbb{A}g2$ , when Black can choose 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , preventing  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ .

So by playing 1 c4 and 2 g3, White has reached a Réti System and bypassed the popular set-up with both ... $\mathbb{A}g4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Of course, there are always trade-offs. After 1 c4

c6 2 g3 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , White must be willing to play against 3...dxc4 (D).



Then Kosten suggests recovering the pawn by 4  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (not 4...b5? in view of 5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ , but 4...e5 5  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  f6 is definitely worthy of consideration) 5  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 7  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Following 9...e5 10 a3 b5 11 axb4 bxc4, he recommends 12  $\mathbb{W}e3$ !, attacking e5 and a7 while in some cases playing an effective  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ . So far, so good, but a possible problem is that Black can play 9...e6 instead, which sets up a nice restraint pawn-structure that goes well with the good bishop on f8. 9...e6 also works tactically in the line 10 a3 b5 11 axb4 bxc4 12  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with the idea 13  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  c5. This last position is hard to assess, but at any it's not a clear improvement for White over the lines beginning with 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

Instead of Kosten's 4  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , McDonald likes 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , giving the gambit line 4...b5 5 a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  6 b3! cxb3 7  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  (actually, 7 axb5 cxb5 8  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  seems to favour White slightly as well) 7...a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with strong play. One issue in that case is whether other fourth moves like 4... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  are better. For example, after 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , we've transposed to 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  dxc4 below.

I have gone somewhat far afield to describe these ramifications of 1 c4 c6 2 g3, but they could be of considerable interest to English Opening players as well as those who prefer the Réti Opening.

Let's return to 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6. The material expands quickly, as White has multiple moves at every juncture and Black several replies to each. With the warning that I shall only

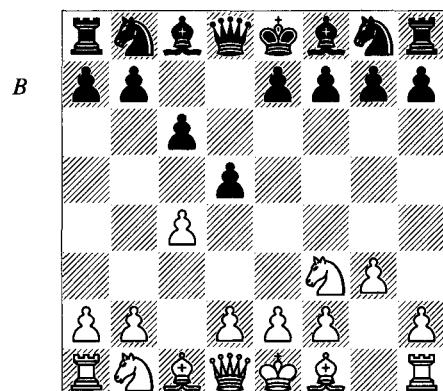
touch upon a subset of these, let's look at a few games.

## The System with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Miroshnichenko – Mammadov  
Baku 2006

1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3 (D)

We are used to weighing the differences between 3 g3 and 3 b3 when White is planning to fianchetto both bishops. But his intention in this game is to forego b3 with other ideas in mind. A drawback to doing so is that he allows ...dxc4 without being able to recapture with the b-pawn, but a significant benefit is that his queen is free to come to b3 or a4, something that happens consistently in the variations of this game and the next. White will also delay  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  for some time so as to steer clear of attack by ...d4, as well as to reserve to right to play  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  or  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ .



3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

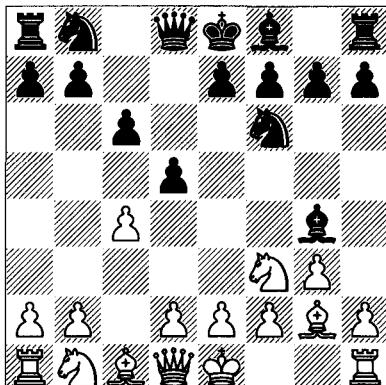
Black doesn't commit his queen's bishop, which can go to f5 or g4. Upon occasion, 3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is played instead of 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , but this introduces issues of an early  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , either immediately or after 4 cxd5. The ideas are similar to ones below.

4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$

The basic position. We'll look at acceptance of the gambit by ...dxc4 on this or the next move in the game Poldauf-Saltaev below ('The Gambit Accepted').

4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (D)

W



As you can quickly work out, this basic and popular position can arise via other move-orders. Having played ... $\mathbb{B}g4$ , Black is free to follow up by ...e6 without shutting in his bishop, something he is forced to do in many 1...d5 openings. While he has several ways to proceed, Black's most common and in many ways ideal set-up is ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , ...e6, ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and ...0-0, with ...e5 to follow at some point. Occasionally, he is more ambitious and plays ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  and ...e5 straightaway, which saves a tempo, but is riskier because it cedes the bishop-pair and leaves his d-pawn only loosely defended. The move ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  fits in well with this general idea of central expansion, particularly if White uses the extra tempo h3 to encourage it. That said, h3 can also be answered by ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . You can see why many players like the flexibility and imbalance that the ...c6/...d5 systems can provide.

White has his own opportunities, of course. A significant drawback to 4... $\mathbb{B}g4$  is that it takes a defender away from Black's queenside. White will very often try to exploit its absence by playing  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , hitting the d5- and b7-pawns, or  $\mathbb{W}a4$ , tying up Black's pieces on that side of the board. Another issue is that White can play  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , attacking Black's bishop on g4. Note that  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , c4,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  all either directly or indirectly attack Black's central and queenside light squares, which means that Black can easily lose material if he isn't careful. What's more, a further pawn-break by e4 can cause additional damage.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}e5$

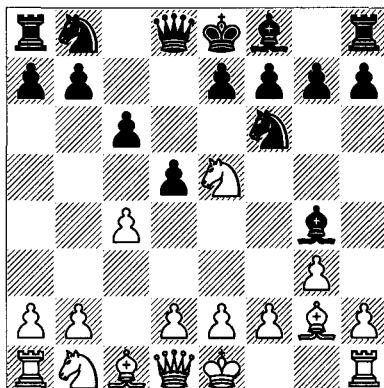
This leap of the knight disturbs the balance by attacking the bishop on g4; White also steers clear of ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ . Obviously, this needs to be

done before 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is played. On the other hand, Black allows this move for a reason: the knight on e5 isn't defended and can be swapped off by ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  with a gain of time. A little simplification won't hurt Black, who temporarily controls more space.

Of course, White can still go into the double fianchetto lines by b3 (which has its own section below; see, for example, the game Podzielny-Dautov), but other slow moves have generally been unimpressive because they don't do enough about Black's basic plan. For one thing, Black threatens 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  dxc4, winning a pawn that is not easy to recover. If White plays 5 cxd5, Black often responds with 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  cxd5, on the grounds that he now has the ideal square for his knight on c6; here 5...cxd5 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is another respectable option. So we can see the reasoning behind 5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , which is the critical move.

Thus we return to 5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (D):

B



### 5... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?

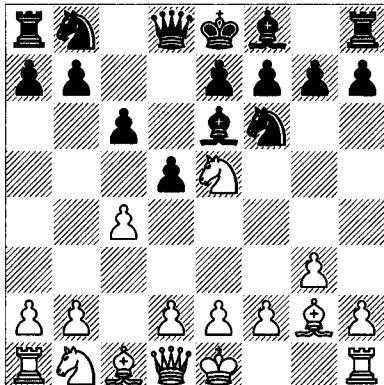
Since White intends to play  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  followed by e4, Black removes his bishop from capture.

a) The retreat by 5... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  occurs less often, but it's a legitimate continuation. Then 6 cxd5 cxd5 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (7  $\mathbb{W}a4+!?$ ) can be met by 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with the idea 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 9  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , or 9... $\mathbb{W}d7$ . Otherwise, 7...e6 8  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  transposes to a position from this game.

b) The most important alternative is 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (D), which may well be the best defence.

Black threatens ...dxc4, in some cases followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  or ... $\mathbb{W}d4$ . As one might expect, White has many ways to react. Unfortunately, they aren't related thematically, so if you are

W



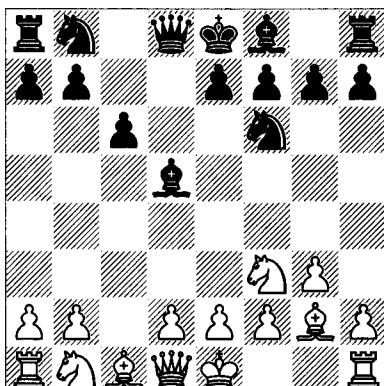
interested in this line for either colour you'll want to do some work. Here are a few ideas:

b1) 6  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  is easy for Black because White is so far from getting his pieces out that he can't exploit the queen's placement along the c-file. There may follow 7 d3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  9 0-0 e6 with full equality.

b2) 6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  dxc4 (6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  develops more quickly) 7  $\mathbb{Q}axc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8 f3! (preserving his light-squared bishop and preparing e4) 8...e6 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 e4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  15  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  gives White the centre and an undoubted edge. But without a knight it's always difficult to make real progress against Black's classic restraint centre with ...e6 and ...c6.

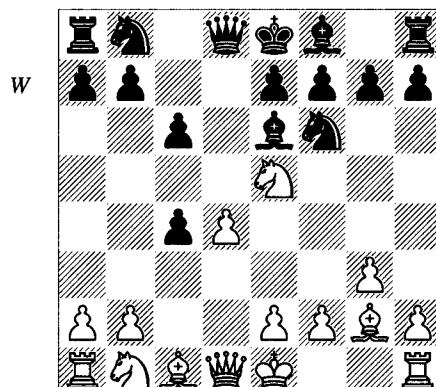
b3) 6 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (6...cxd5 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8 d4 is comfortable for White) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D) (7 f3?! can be met safely by 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5, or more aggressively and unclearly with 7... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ !?) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  {forking e5 and a2} 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ! {9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ } 9... $\mathbb{W}xa2$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{W}xb1$  11  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ ! {threatening  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ } 11... $\mathbb{W}a2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !.

B



Now White wants to play  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and capture the bishop on d5, so Black gives it a retreat-square on c6: 7...c5 8 0-0 (8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10 d3 appears more promising, intending e4,  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and d4) 8...e6 9 a3!?  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12 e4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !? (12...e5 13 b4!?  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  14 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16 d4 0-0 is unclear; White has a nice centre, but still has to prove full compensation) 13 b4!?  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  14 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  15  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  e5 16 b5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 d4 0-0 18 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with a complicated position that offers chances for both sides, Stoček-Talla, Czech Ch, Lazne Bohdanec 1999.

b4) An intriguing gambit idea is 6 d4!? dxc4 (D).



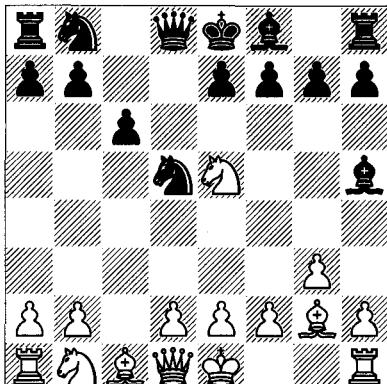
7 e4 (trying to recover the pawn by 7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  provokes the response 7... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8 f3 b5 9 e4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , and now 10 f4! gives White space and some development for the pawn; this deserves a closer look) 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8 f4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9 fxе5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? (11 0-0! seems better; for example, 11...e6 12  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  or 11...f6 12 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 d5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  14 e6  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15  $\mathbb{W}c3$  b5 16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  17 a4 – White's central pawns must count for something!) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ! 12 d5!? f6 13  $\mathbb{W}e3$ , Goodwin-Mansson, Coventry 2005, and here 13...cxd5! 14 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  eyes d3 for the bishop or knight and seems safe enough.

**6 cxd5 cxd5??**

From now on Black has problems with his light-squared bishop, as demonstrated by a number of games. Yet the alternative 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (D) gives White a central majority and lets him play for advantage in an instructive fashion.

a) Quite a few games have featured 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Then 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  10

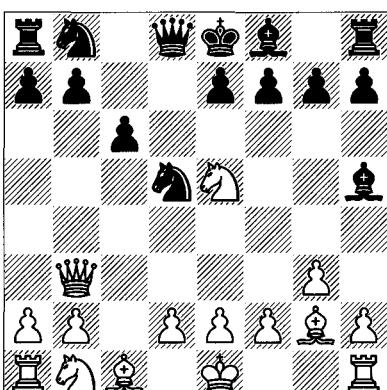
W



$\mathbb{B}b1\ b6\ 11\ d4\ e6$  approaches equality. The popular move is  $7\dots e6$ , but  $8\ g4\ \mathbb{A}g6\ 9\ h4!$  poses a problem in the form of  $h5$ ; maybe  $9\dots \mathbb{A}d6\ 10\ \mathbb{Q}c4\ h5\ 11\ \mathbb{B}b3\ b6$  is best, hoping that the pawn-structure more or less compensates for White's bishops following  $12\ \mathbb{Q}xd6+\mathbb{B}xd6$ .

b)  $7\ \mathbb{B}b3!$  (*D*) seems promising.

B



Then play can go  $7\dots \mathbb{W}c7$  ( $7\dots \mathbb{Q}d7$  has been used by strong players, yet  $8\ \mathbb{A}xd5!$  seems to secure an edge in view of  $8\dots \mathbb{Q}xe5\ 9\ \mathbb{A}g2$  with  $d4$  coming next)  $8\ d4\ e6?!$  ( $8\dots f6$  with the idea  $...\mathbb{A}f7$  is more active)  $9\ e4\ \mathbb{Q}f6\ 10\ \mathbb{Q}c3\ \mathbb{A}e7\ 11\ h3?!$  ( $11\ \mathbb{A}f4!$ )  $11\dots \mathbb{A}g6$  ( $11\dots \mathbb{Q}bd7\ 12\ \mathbb{A}f4\ \mathbb{Q}xe5\ 13\ \mathbb{A}xe5$  followed by  $g4$  and  $f4$ )  $12\ \mathbb{A}f4\ \mathbb{B}b6\ 13\ \mathbb{Q}c4?!$   $\mathbb{B}b4\ 14\ 0-0\ 0-0$ , Kirov-Van de Oudeweetering, Groningen 1988, and now the simplest course is  $15\ \mathbb{B}xb4\ \mathbb{A}xb4\ 16\ \mathbb{A}d6\ \mathbb{Q}xd6\ 17\ \mathbb{Q}xd6$  with a large positional advantage.

Apparently Black can't equalize against  $7\ \mathbb{B}b3$ , indicating in turn that  $5\dots \mathbb{A}h5$  is slightly suspect. Black's bishop on  $h5$  or  $g6$  is cut off

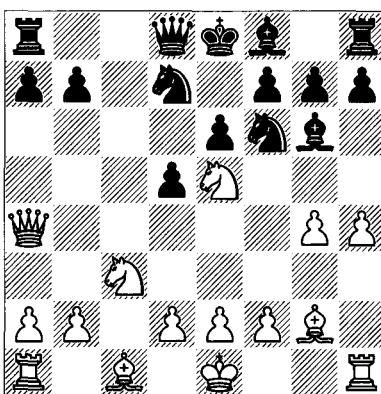
from the rest of the action, as often happens in the Slav Defence.

7  $\mathbb{Q}a4+!$

7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  isn't quite as forcing, but tends to lead to some advantage. A good example is  $7\dots \mathbb{Q}c6$  ( $7\dots e6\ 8\ g4\ \mathbb{A}g6?!$ )  $9\ h4\ \mathbb{A}d6\ 10\ d4$  is very awkward for Black)  $8\ \mathbb{W}a4\ \mathbb{W}d6\ 9\ d4\ \mathbb{W}b4\ 10\ \mathbb{Q}xc6\ \mathbb{W}xa4\ 11\ \mathbb{Q}xa4\ bxc6$ , Kosten-Shirazi, Sautron 2005, and here  $12\ \mathbb{A}f4!$   $e6\ 13\ \mathbb{B}c1$  with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  must be good, especially in view of  $13\dots \mathbb{B}b4+ 14\ \mathbb{A}d2!\ \mathbb{A}xd2+ 15\ \mathbb{A}xd2$ , when White doubles by  $\mathbb{B}c3$  and  $\mathbb{B}fc1$ , and can play  $e3$  and  $\mathbb{A}f1$ , if needed, to win material on the queenside.

7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7\ 8\ \mathbb{Q}c3\ e6\ 9\ g4\ \mathbb{A}g6\ 10\ h4$  (*D*)

B



We've seen this advance in many openings; the basic idea is that Black can't provide an escape-square for his bishop by moving his h-pawn, because  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  would be positionally disastrous for him.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7?$

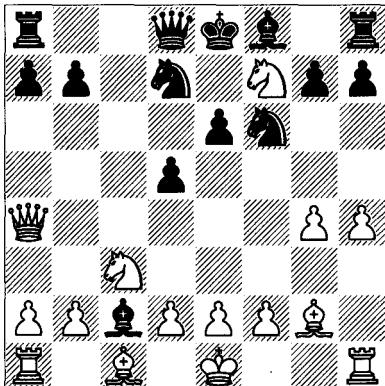
Black has tried several moves here, mostly in vain. Here's an abbreviated account, very useful as an overview of tactical themes:

a) 10... $\mathbb{A}c2?$   $11\ \mathbb{Q}xf7!$  (*D*).

11... $\mathbb{W}xa4$  ( $11\dots \mathbb{A}xf7?$ )  $12\ \mathbb{W}xc2\ \mathbb{Q}xg4\ 13\ \mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{A}xd5\ 14\ \mathbb{Q}xd5+\mathbb{A}e8\ 15\ \mathbb{W}e4+\mathbb{Q}de5\ 16\ f3$  and White emerges two pawns ahead)  $12\ \mathbb{Q}xd8\ \mathbb{A}xd8\ 13\ \mathbb{Q}xa4\ \mathbb{Q}xg4\ 14\ \mathbb{A}h3\ \mathbb{Q}df6\ 15\ d4$  (better is  $15\ \mathbb{B}g1!$   $h5\ 16\ f3\ \mathbb{Q}e5\ 17\ \mathbb{Q}xe6$ )  $15\dots \mathbb{B}c8? 16\ \mathbb{Q}c5?$  ( $16\ f3!$ )  $16\dots \mathbb{A}xc5\ 17\ dx5\ \mathbb{Q}e5\ 18\ \mathbb{B}g1!$   $g6\ 19\ \mathbb{A}f4\ \mathbb{Q}ed7\ 20\ \mathbb{Q}xe6?!$   $\mathbb{A}xc5\ 21\ \mathbb{A}e3\ \mathbb{B}c6\ 22\ \mathbb{A}h3$  and White's bishop-pair led to a win in Romanishin-Suba, Moscow 1986.

b) 10... $\mathbb{A}d6\ 11\ d4\ h6$  (Kaidanov-Hübner, PCA Qualifier, Groningen 1993) and now the

B



simplest path to an advantage is 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  fxg6 13 g5 hxg5 14 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xh1+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17 e4.

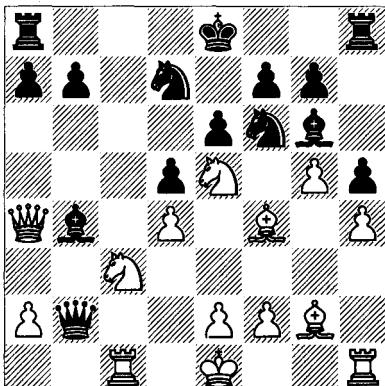
c) 10...a6!? barely hangs on tactically, but leads to other problems. Fernandez Murga-Ginzburg, Buenos Aires 1999 went 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  13 h5  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  14 d3 (to trap the bishop) 14...d4. Now, instead of the game's 15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ , Kosten points out that White's best line is 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ ! 16 exd3 dx $c$ 3+ 17 bxc3 0-0-0?! 18  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , when the bishop-pair grants him a clear superiority.

11 d4 h5

11...h6 is also losing: 12 g5! hxg5 13 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xh1+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16 e4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx $e$ 4 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .

12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13 g5!  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (D)

W



Otherwise Black loses material at once.

15 0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16 gxf6  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

Kosten gives the pretty line 17 fxg7  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21

$\mathbb{Q}xg8$ ++  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  and White mates or wins more material. The rest is clear.

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  gxf6 21  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  a6 22  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  24 f3  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ? 25  $\mathbb{Q}c8+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e7\#$  (1-0)

## The System with ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

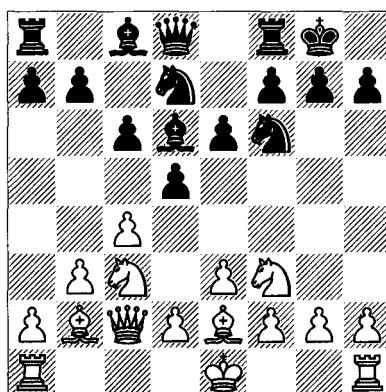
Smyslov – Bronstein

USSR Ch, Odessa 1974

1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3

Sometimes White sets up a structure with e3, b3,  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , moves which can be played in a variety of orders. Let me just present some of the more dynamic ideas: 3 e3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (4  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  e6 5 b3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  transposes; naturally, there are alternatives) 4...e6 (among many options, Black has 4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , 4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and 4...a6; the last is a modern way to treat many Slav Variations; for one thing, it means that lines with  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , hitting the b-pawn, can be answered by ...b5 or even ... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ) 5 b3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 g4?! is promising, since 7... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  recovers the pawn, and incidentally weakens Black on the a1-h8 diagonal) 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (D).

B



We have arrived at a system that Black plays versus the Colle Attack, but with colours reversed and White having an extra tempo. At this point things can get surprisingly tactical:

a) 8...e5?! is slightly premature because of another typical idea from the Semi-Slav: 9 cxd5 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  White

has the dual ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ . Instead, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  allows White to play the fun and dangerous attack 11  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$  g6 12 h4!.

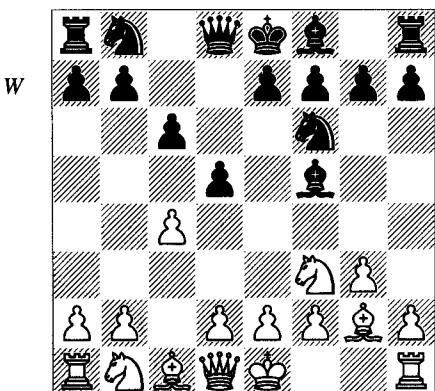
b) 8...dxc4 9 bxc4 e5 and now 10 0-0 favours White slightly because of his centre pawns, but the sacrifice 10 g4!? is more fun: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ ! (10... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  11 g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  12 h4 is double-edged) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  f5 13  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ , and instead of 13... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ? 14  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ , as in Cornette-Arutinian, Iraklion 2002, 13... $\mathbb{Q}df6$  14 c5 e4 15 h3 exf3 16  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  leads to great complications.

c) 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$  9 g4!? (this is a popular pawn sacrifice in similar positions; White's first idea is g5, driving the knight from the centre, followed by 0-0-0 and a kingside pawn-storm) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (Wojtaszek-Cichocki, Dzwirzyno 2004) and here Kosten suggests 12 0-0-0!, giving the sample line 12...dxc4 13 f4! cxb3 14  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with a powerful attack; for example, 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  16 h4 f5 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with the idea h5.

Obviously, White won't always get such dynamic play from the slow build-up with e3,  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , b3 and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , but in any case the game is unbalanced and both sides should know something about it.

d) 8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}g1$ ! b5 10 g4 b4 (after 10...bxc4, Gurevich suggests 11 g5! cxb3 12 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with threats) 11 g5!  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13 h4, M.Gurevich-Kallai, Bundesliga 2001/2. White has a dangerous attack, but the position is obscure.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (D)

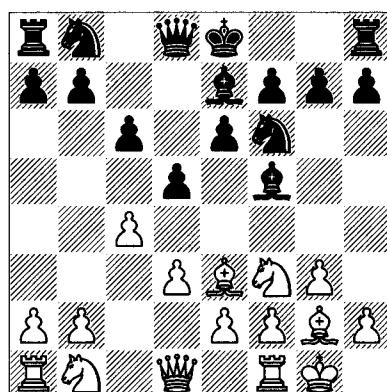


Black develops his bishop before cutting it off by ...e6. As always, the players can arrive at

this basic position via different move-orders, and this game in fact began 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 g3 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  4 c4 c6. By putting the bishop on the active square f5, Black avoids getting hit by  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , as in the last game, but also loses the option of ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , which makes a successful ...e5 less likely. Since Black's queenside is defended by one less piece, White will bring his queen to b3 and try to combine pressure on d5 with that on b7.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

This is the most popular choice, although there are two major alternatives. One is to play into a traditional Réti set-up by 5 b3 e6 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ; compare the double fianchetto game below. The other is 5 0-0, when 5...dxc4 is a respectable move that transposes to 4...dxc4 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . Instead, if Black plays 5...e6, 6 d3 has a bit more to it than may first appear: 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (the structure after 6...dxc4 7 dxc4  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  favours White slightly; he wants to gain the bishop-pair by  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , and 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  renews that idea, intending to answer 10...h6?! with 11  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! cxb5 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , after which the bishops rule) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !?(D).



Quite a few games have arrived at this position. White is playing one of Black's favourite set-ups with colours reversed (that is, in the London System with 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 3  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  versus the King's Indian Defence). White's idea is that after  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , Black won't be able to reply with ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , and if Black's queen moves to the c-file, a speedy cxd5,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  will create strong pressure down that file.

With care, Black should be able to keep his disadvantage to a minimum, but the game stays

lively; for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  9 cxd5 opens the c-file and offers White a small advantage; 7...dxc4 8 dxc4  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  is naturally playable for Black, but White has somewhat the better of this queenless middle-game) 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (8 cxd5 exd5 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ? keeps a very small edge) 8... $\mathbb{W}b8$ ! 9 cxd5 exd5 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  11  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0, Serafimov-Heyman, Metz 2005, and now 14 e4 dxe4 15 dxe4 with the idea of f4 mobilizes White's majority and causes Black some difficulties.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! is not a terrible move, and yet it gives up Black's pawn presence in the centre. One possible reply is 6 0-0 e6 7 d4 with a superior central position. Then Black cannot prevent e4 forever; for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ? 10 e4!  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  12 dxc6!, etc.) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 11 h4!, and h5 can only be stopped by a compromising sequence such as 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  hxg6 13 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 h5! gxh5 15  $\mathbb{W}xh5$ , with White threatening  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}h1$ , and also simply  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ .

Returning to the game (after 5 cxd5 cxd5), we see that the position has a similar structure to the Exchange Slav. However, the placement of White's bishop on g2 in the Réti gives the position a different character. Although White has taken an extra tempo to develop it, the bishop won't normally be exchanged, as it is after  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  in the Slav. This means that it can support the advance e4.

### 6 $\mathbb{W}b3$ (D)

This attack on b7 is played in the great majority of games.

### 6... $\mathbb{W}c8$

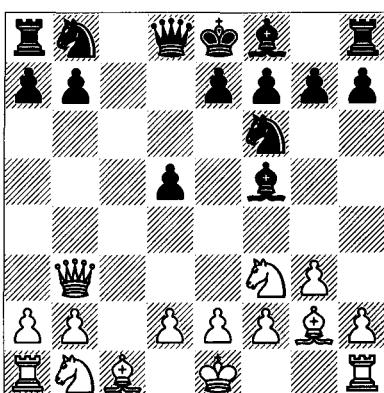
Since 6...b6 would badly weaken the light squares, Black needs to defend b7 with his queen. There are two other logical ways to do so:

a) 6... $\mathbb{W}d7$ ! 7  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  isn't as bad as it looks; for example, 7... $\mathbb{W}c7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (White defends c1, and can answer 8... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ ? by 9  $\mathbb{W}xb7$ ; thus he gains a lead in development) 8...e6 9 d3 (White prevents Black from putting a piece on e4; it appears that he could go for broke by 9 g4?!, meeting 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  with 10 h4!, when perhaps 10...h6 11  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  fxg6 is workable; note that Black must avoid 9... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ ? 10  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  11  $\mathbb{W}a4$ !) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 11 0-0 (Dzhindzhikashvili-Bagirov, Tbilisi 1973) and now Black would experience no real problems after 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  or 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ .

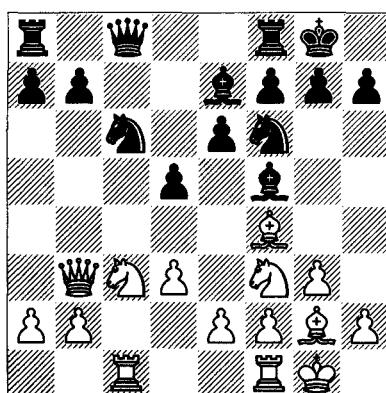
b) 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$  may be best: 7  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  (7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is also played) 7...axb6 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (8...e6 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?) is supposed to favour White, although after 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , that's hard to demonstrate) 9 d3 e6 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ + 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}fd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ + 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14 f4!. White prevents any counterplay based upon ...e5 and has a modest edge. The most famous and instructive game from this position continued 14...h6 15 a3  $\mathbb{Q}hc8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ + 21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$ ?! 22  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  f6 24  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  g6 26  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  27 e4! dxe4 28  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  29  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5?! 30 fxe5 fxe5 31 a4!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  32  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with a decisive advantage based upon  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , since all bishop vs knight positions are winning, Portisch-Smyslov, Wijk aan Zee 1972.

7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 8 d3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (D)

B



B



**11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$** 

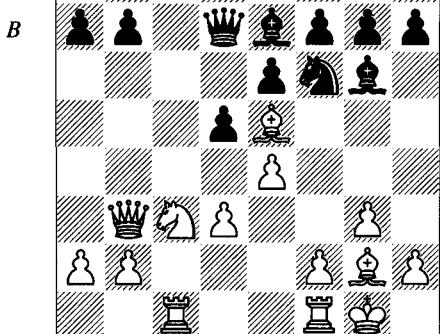
Black has played 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  in several games, to fight for control of e5. In Vilela-Alarcon, Havana 2007, White responded with the direct 12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (after 12 a3 a6, the standard idea 13 e4! gives White the upper hand, especially after 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15 b4) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}bd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16 b4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17 a3, and the a6-knight is restricted by White's queenside pawns, so he has something to play for.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ?**

The pawn sacrifice 12 e4 also leads to the better game. Black should accept the pawn, although it comes at the cost of exposing his pieces and ceding the bishop-pair: 12...dxe4 (12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13 exd5 exd5 14 d4 favours White) 13 dxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  18  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 21  $\mathbb{W}xc6$  with an edge for White, Barcza-Smyslov, Moscow Olympiad 1956.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14 e4 (D)**

A much later game, Piguusov-Lin Weiguo, Beijing 1996, saw the seemingly slow 14 h3, to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . There followed 14... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  15 e4 dxe4 16 dxe4 with a central superiority for White. A prophylactic move such as 14 h3 is possible since Black has no way to create threats or change the pawn-structure in one move.



After the text-move (14 e4), White has the initiative and Black's bishop on g6 is shut out of the game.

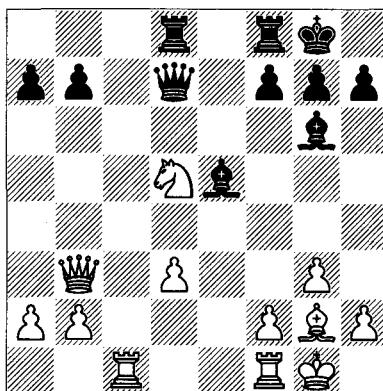
**14... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$** 

The situation becomes tactical after 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  dxe4 16 dxe4 e5 17  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  (or

17...exf4 18  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}h3!$   $\mathbb{Q}d6?$  (18...h5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  21  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  and White will stay a pawn ahead) 19 f3 h5 20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  1-0 Pigusov-Maximenko, Riga 1988.

**15 exd5 exd5**

White will also win a pawn after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 17  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  18 d4.

**16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (D)****18 d4!  $\mathbb{Q}b8$** 

Or 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ .

19  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  22  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  h5? 23  $\mathbb{Q}c8$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e1+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  28  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  1-0

**The Gambit Accepted**

**Poldauf – Saltaev**  
Bundesliga 2006/7

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 e6 3 g3**

For 3 b3 and related moves, see the next game.

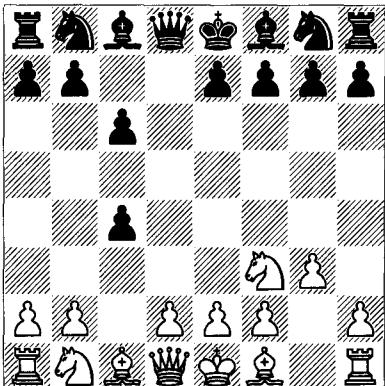
**3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$** 

3...dxc4 (D) is possible already, and has some unique features.

After 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  transposes to our main game, but 4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is an interesting alternative. It prevents 5  $\mathbb{W}c2$  and intends 5  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  e5!, which is a theme that we're going to get used to in the next game. The point is that 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$  is a blunder in view of 6... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  7 bxa3  $\mathbb{W}d4$ .

Instead, White can continue 4  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , when 4... $\mathbb{W}d5$  and 4...e5 raise issues that we'll deal

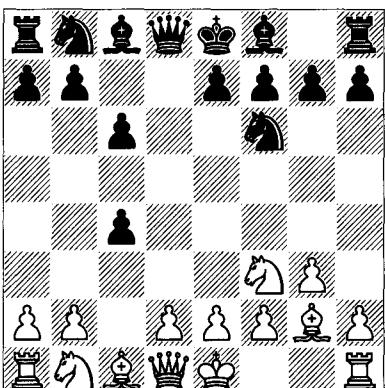
W



with below. Unfortunately, the material is limited on the latter move, but clearly 5  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  (again, 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$  loses to 5... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ ) 5...e4 6  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  can't please White, so 5  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  should be examined.

4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $dxc4$  (D)

W



Accepting the gambit. This main line is very important if we are going to assess the Réti Slav as a whole. White is a pawn down, and if he can't recover it or has to make concessions in doing so, this whole move-order becomes suspect. As we shall see in the next game, it's also not easy to bypass this position via earlier deviations.

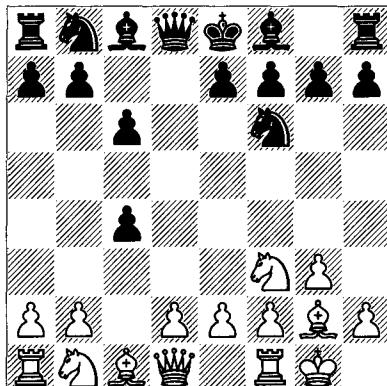
5  $\mathbb{Q}c2$

Over the years, this move has probably had the most success and is recommended in two English Opening repertoire books. Not only does White target the pawn on c4, but he stops ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and stays flexible in terms of playing  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , 0-0 and/or a4. However, White has run into quite a few difficulties, so finding an alternative could be important. Fortunately, there are at

least three candidates. They have a good deal of theory behind them, so I'll try to indicate the outlines and trust you to look into the material more deeply:

a) 5 0-0 (D) is fascinating, because White gives Black extra time to consolidate his pawn. The consequences are still unresolved.

B



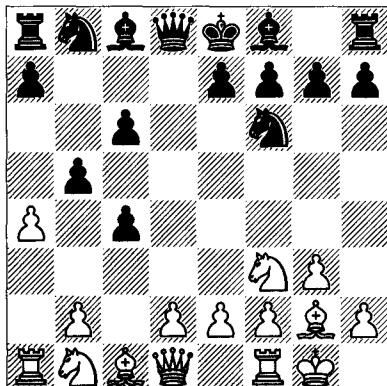
Black has an array of options, each unique, with few unifying themes among them:

a1) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  e5!? 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  (7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  8 bxa3  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 7...e4 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? (or 8  $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ ) 8...h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ) 14 b3  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  15 bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with no clear resolution in sight, Salov-Piket, Amsterdam 1996.

a2) After 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , the forcing sequence 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  7 e4 h6 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  has been assessed as unclear. Instead, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !, with the idea 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , resembles other lines with ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ; it should be fine for Black.

a3) 5...b5 6 a4! (D) is risky for Black.

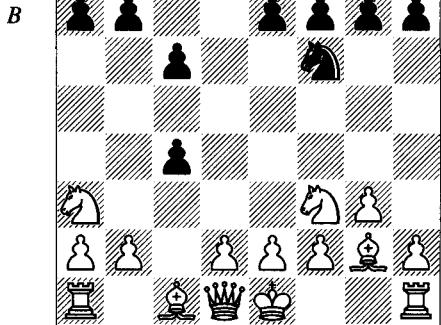
B



White threatens 7 axb5 and leaves Black to cover his weaknesses: 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (6...a6? 7 axb5 cxb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  with the idea 8... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ ; 6...e6 7 axb5 cxb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9 d3!) 7 b3! cxb3 8  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !? (or 9 d4 e6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! and Black won't be able to castle if he plays ...e6.

a4) 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  7 a4 a5 8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is also complex; White has tried 9  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ !, and 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  12 b4!, a position reached in several games) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !? (Black has also played 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , when 9 b3!? strives to keep the initiative) 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (White needs something better here) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , Deriabin-Sitnikov, Dnepropetrovsk 2002, and now Black can repeat, or play 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! with the idea 10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , when White may have to struggle for compensation. All this needs to be studied critically in order to get a feel for the imbalances.

b) 5  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (*D*) and now:



b1) 5...e5?! is ineffective due to 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  e4 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !, when 7... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ? loses to 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! in view of 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?? 9  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ! or 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  9 d3! exd3 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with too big an attack. Upon 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?, 8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ! is strong.

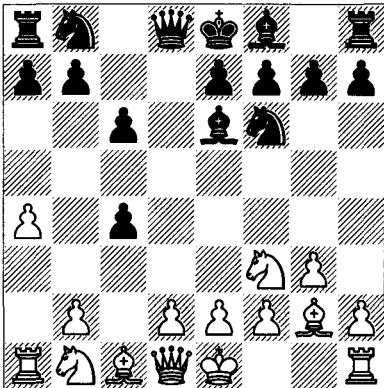
b2) White can reply to 5...b5 with 6 b3!, intending 6...cxb3?! 7  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  with active play.

b3) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is a good option; for example, 6 0-0 e5?! 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and White must work for his compensation. Perhaps 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  would follow.

b4) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? (this initiates a typical sequence that we shall see in other contexts and is usually satisfactory for Black) 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  7 e4

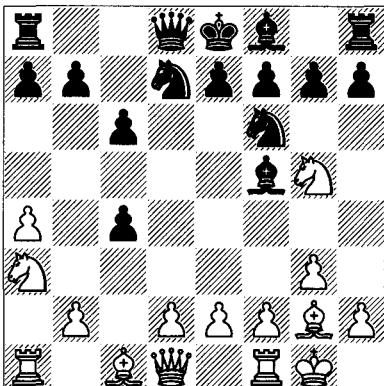
h6 8 exd5 hxg5 9 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  e6 11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !? with unclear complications based upon 13  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !.

c) 5 a4!? is one of the most challenging moves; for example, 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? (*D*), and now:



c1) After 6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !?, as in the game Padevsky-T.Sørensen, Berlin 1984, Black has 7... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! 8 f3  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}axc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  11 d3 and now 11... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  with strange complications.

c2) 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ !?? 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (*D*) and here:



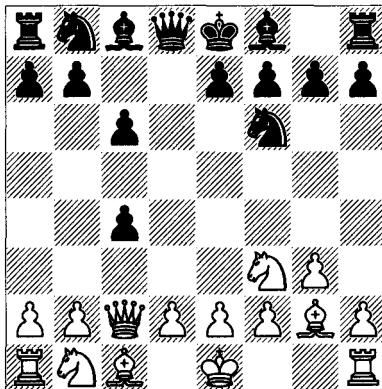
c21) 8...h6!? 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e5 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  e4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  12 a5 and 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , as in Miroshničenko-Skachkov, Cappelle la Grande 2004, is fine, but 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! has tactical points that are hard for White to meet. There are probably improvements here.

c22) Frolianov has suggested the amazing 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !? 9 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! 10 exd3  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  'with compensation'! In fact, two pawns, an impressive

bind and kingside attacking chances may be quite enough.

Let's return to 5  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (D):

B



5... $\mathbb{W}d5!$

White has had trouble with this rare move, which simply protects the c-pawn and intends the powerful ... $\mathbb{A}f5$ . Other moves:

a) As usual, 5...b5 is a legitimate choice, when 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3 intends to exert pressure on the dark squares and keep Black's c-pawn backward. For example:

a1) 7...e6!? 8 0-0  $\mathbb{A}b7$  9 d4 and now 9... $\mathbb{A}e7$  10  $\mathbb{A}a3$   $\mathbb{A}xa3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xa3$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{W}d1$  is unclear, with ideas like  $\mathbb{Q}e5-d3$ ; still, a pawn is worth a little suffering. The 9... $\mathbb{A}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 11 e4 c5 of Bogosavljević-Szuhanek, Serbia 2008 should be answered by the thematic and instructive 12 d5! b4 13 dxе6 (13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  is also strong: 13...exd5 14 exd5  $\mathbb{A}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{A}b2!$ ) 13...fxe6 14  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$   $\mathbb{A}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , and the threats of  $\mathbb{W}d1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  are extremely strong.

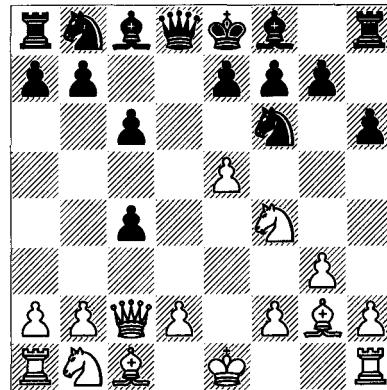
a2) After 7... $\mathbb{A}b7$  8  $\mathbb{A}a3$   $\mathbb{A}bd7$  9 d4 a5!? 10  $\mathbb{A}bd2$  b4?! 11  $\mathbb{A}b2$  e6 (Naundorf-Van Beek, Ruhrgebiet 2005) White should pre-empt ...c5 by 12  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  (12... $\mathbb{A}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}dc4$ ) 13 0-0 c5 14  $\mathbb{A}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  15  $\mathbb{A}xd7$   $\mathbb{A}xd7$  and now 16 dxс5 or 16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

b) 5... $\mathbb{A}e6$  has some theory behind it and looks like a decent move: 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{A}d5$  7 e4 h6 8  $\mathbb{A}h3$   $\mathbb{A}e6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{A}c8$  10 e5! (D) (10  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  e5!).

10...g5!?(10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 e6  $\mathbb{W}d4$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is obscure) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g6!$  fxg6!?(Bus suggests 11... $\mathbb{A}g8$ !) 12  $\mathbb{A}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 exf6 exf6 14 0-0 with an unclear attack, Bus-Stark, Dutch Team Ch 2007.

6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

B

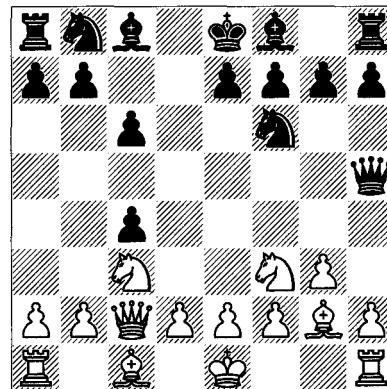


After 6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , Black can protect his pawn by 6... $\mathbb{A}e6$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{A}bd7$  or give it back with a good position by 6... $\mathbb{A}f5$  7  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  e6.

6... $\mathbb{W}h5$  (D)

With the idea ... $\mathbb{A}h3$ ; you have to wonder how White is going to get compensation in this position.

W



7 h3

This at least prevents the bishop exchange. White's alternatives are rather depressing; for example, 7 0-0  $\mathbb{A}h3$  (7... $\mathbb{A}a6$ ! also appears strong) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{A}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{A}xg2$  10  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$ !. No better is 7  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{A}xe4$  (or 7... $\mathbb{A}e6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{A}d5$  9  $\mathbb{A}xf6+$  exf6 10 e4  $\mathbb{W}e5$ ) 8  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{A}e6$  (or 8... $\mathbb{W}d5$ ) 9  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{A}a6$  10 0-0, Hug-Adams, World Team Ch, Lucerne 1991, when Black stays on top with 10...f6!.

7... $\mathbb{A}bd7$ ?

7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! develops with a purpose. Then 8 g4  $\mathbb{A}b4$  9  $\mathbb{W}b1$   $\mathbb{A}a5$  10 a3  $\mathbb{A}bd5$  remains a pawn up, with ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .

8 g4  $\mathbb{W}a5$  9  $\mathbb{A}d1$

Finally attacking c4, but this is too passive.

9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10 e4

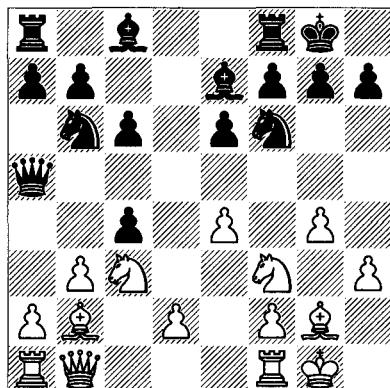
White doesn't improve matters by 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   
11  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

10... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ ?

Black also stands better after 10...e5.

11  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  e6 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 b3

0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (D)



B

15... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ !?

Intending ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ -d3. Black's advantage is quite substantial at this point and he may as well play to grab the centre and develop by 15...e5!.

16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?

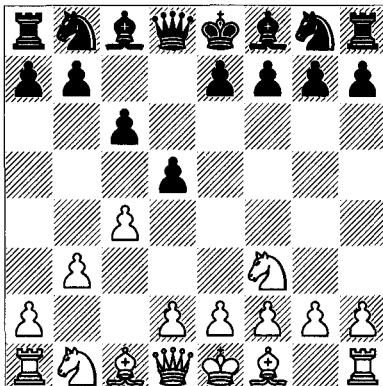
Last chance. White can activate a few pieces by 16 d3! cxd3 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ .

16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  f6 19 e5 f5

20 g5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$

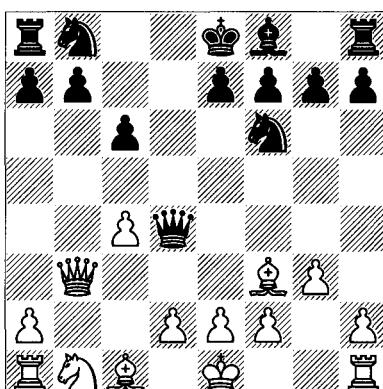
Really, the game is over now.

21  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  22 a4 cxb3 23  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  24  
 $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  25 h4  $\mathbb{Q}exc3$  26 dxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d5$  28  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  29  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  c5 30  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  31  
 $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  32  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  33  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  34  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d2$  35  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  36  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  37  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  38  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 39  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  40  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e4$  41  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  42  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  43  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}be8$   
0-1



B

b3, White makes sure that ...dxc4 doesn't win a pawn. For our purposes, this will introduce a plan with  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ . Depending upon what you think of Black's alternatives in the next two notes, you may prefer other ways to get to the starting point of this system. Our move-order from the previous games is 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (or 4 b3, but this still allows the trick 4...dxc4 5 bxc4 e5!; compare the next note) 4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (or 4... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 5 b3. Then 5...dxc4 6 bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !? 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! doesn't win White's c-pawn because of 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! (D).



B

After 8... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ ? (but otherwise 9  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  with further gain of time) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  White threatens checkmate on c8. His other threat, 0-0,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ , may seem slow yet there's little Black can do about it. Play might go 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (9...e5? 10  $\mathbb{Q}c8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}a3+$  c5 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc5\#$ ) 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  e6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ .

One problem with this 3 g3 move-order for White, however, is that Black still has the option

## The Double Fianchetto System

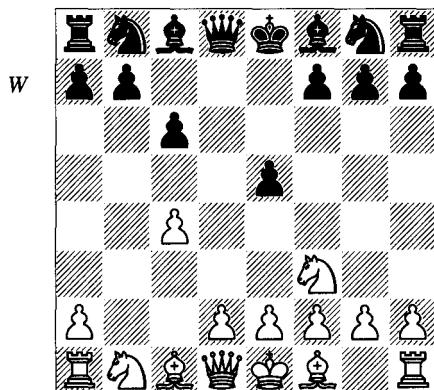
1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3 (D)

Réti's original strategy involved fianchettoing bishops on both sides of the board. With 3

of 4...dxc4, transposing to the previous section and interfering with the double fianchetto that White is aiming for.

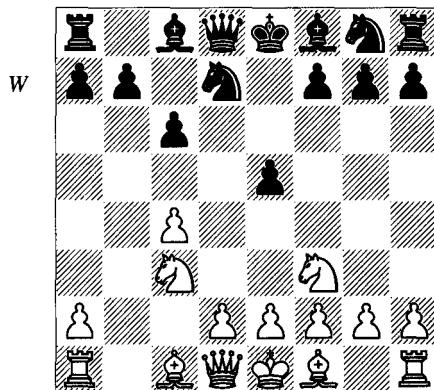
3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The move 3 b3 has been played for aeons in innumerable grandmaster games, but Black has almost never played 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5! (D).



The idea is 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?? \mathbb{W}d4$ . By this means, Black achieves a central pawn presence that White lacks. The idea invites comparison with 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 e6 3 b3 dxc4 4 bxc4 e5!, in which Black is a move short from our current position, but that extra move ...c6 prevents Black from playing ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Both positions are playable.

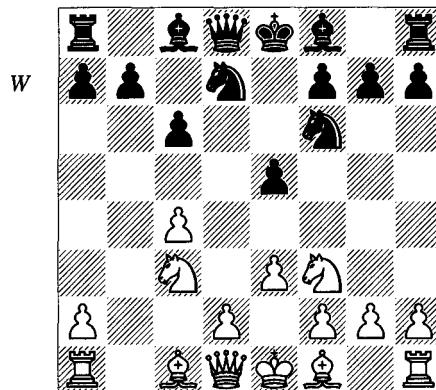
At any rate, White has to develop quickly; for example, 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}b2!?$ ) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D), and now:



a) 6 d3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8 g3 gives Black easy play after 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

b) 6 e3 is sound, although d4 is hard to enforce without concessions; e.g., 6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (D)

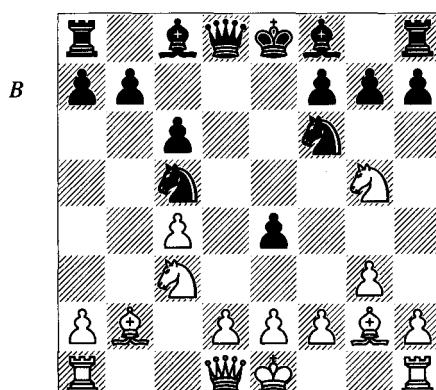
(the alternative 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  7  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6!?$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  would be an interesting sequence, with an eye on d3, but also to a kingside attack via ...e4).



7 d4!? (7  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 { or 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$ } 9 0-0  $\mathbb{H}e8$  is double-edged) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}a5!?$  10  $\mathbb{W}c2$  exd4 11 exd4 (11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  leaves White's c-pawn weak after 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ) 11... $\mathbb{W}e8$ . This isn't clear, but it's easier to play with Black, since after 12 0-0?  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}xe2!$  he wins material.

c) A similar situation arises from 6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ . Now:

c1) 7 g3?! e4! 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (D) leads to obscure play.



One idea is 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , intending ...h6, when White should refrain from continuing 10  $\mathbb{W}c2?$  e3 11  $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{W}xd2+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$ . Another problem for White is 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ; for example, 10  $\mathbb{W}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  has the idea 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  and now 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$

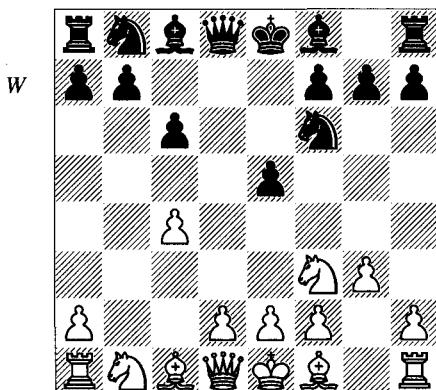
or 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ . Thus the move 7 g3 appears suspect.

c2) If White plays 7  $\mathbb{W}c2$  instead, one of many possible continuations would be 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8 e3  $\mathbb{W}e7$ !? (or 8...0-0, having in mind 9 d4 exd4 10 exd4 c5 11 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e4 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  11 f3 (11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13 f3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e5$  13 f4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  14 g4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0-0 18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ +  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  with unclear prospects not unfavourable to Black.

That's a lot of analysis, but taken as a whole, 3...dxc4 4 bxc4 e5! presents White with problems to solve, enough to call into question his ability to gain an advantage. Remarkably, this little two-step manoeuvre hasn't been given serious consideration in the extensive literature on 3 b3. What's more, the same idea a move later might be even more challenging in this respect, since White's options are more limited.

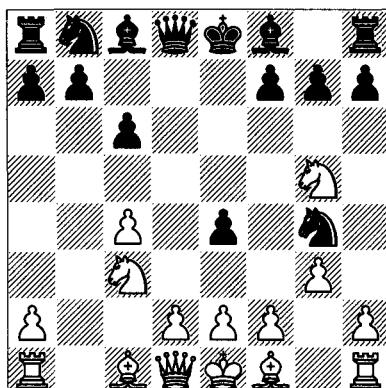
#### 4 $\mathbb{Q}b2$

The most frequently played move by a considerable margin is 4 g3, because White likes to stay flexible about the placement of his queen's bishop, but then he again has to deal with 4...dxc4 5 bxc4 e5! (D).



This time the play can vary sharply because of the inclusion of g3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ; for example, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (and not 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ??  $\mathbb{W}d4$ ) 6...e4!? (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 8 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , when Kosten suggests the remarkable 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! (D) (7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8 e3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  was Malakhov-Sutovsky, Saint Vincent 2002, when Kosten's 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$  10  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !?) 11  $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$  h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xf5$  hxg5 14  $\mathbb{W}c8+$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  15  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  reaps a harvest of pawns).

W



8  $\mathbb{Q}gxe4$  (8 d3?? e3 threatens f2 and the knight on g5, and 9  $\mathbb{Q}ge4$  exf2+ 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}f6$ + picks up the knight on c3) 8...f5 9 f3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ . After this virtually forced sequence, Black can play either 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  11 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11 d3!?

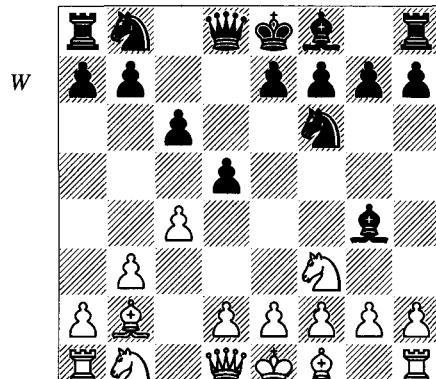
$\mathbb{Q}c5$  with the idea 12 e3?  $\mathbb{W}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ .

Therefore White might want to play 4  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  before g3 after all. Let's return to the main line with 4  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , and look at two games.

#### Capablanca Variation with 4... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Podzielny – Dautov  
Dortmund 1992

1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (D)



This is called the Capablanca Variation, probably unfairly to those who did the real work developing it. It has become the most popular move versus White's double fianchetto system.

**5 g3**

I should mention that some strong players use 5 e3 and try to set up with ♘e2, ♜c2 and ♖c3. This was discussed in the note to 3 g3 in the game Smyslov-Bronstein above. In practice, if you choose 5 e3, you'll probably be on your own at an early stage of play.

**5...e6**

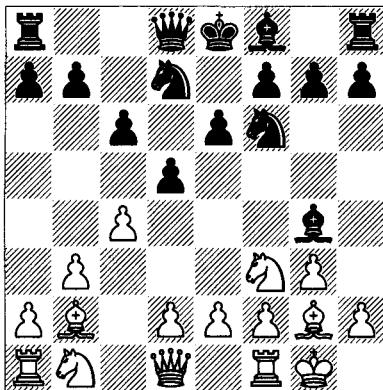
Or:

a) An important move-order was seen in the game Vaganian-Gulko, USSR Ch, Erevan 1975: 5...♝bd7 6 ♜g2 e6 (many players would exchange minor pieces here, without provocation, by 6...♝xf3 7 ♜xf3 e5) 7 0-0 ♖d6 8 d3 0-0 9 ♖bd2 ♜e7, transposing into the main line.

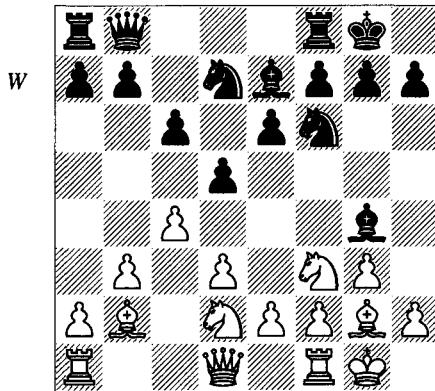
b) 5...♝xf3 6 exf3 commits Black rather early, and after 6...♝bd7 7 f4, White's doubled f-pawn is coming in handy. This might be worth a closer look, except that in the majority of games White has already played ♜g2 by this point.

**6 ♜g2 ♖bd7 7 0-0 (D)**

B

**7...♝d6**

7...♝e7 is less ambitious, deferring ...e5 for a while. In some cases this protects Black from loss of tempo when the d-file opens (after, say, d3, e4, and ...dxe4), or when White brings a knight to c4 or e4. Play usually continues 8 d3 0-0 9 ♖bd2. Now there are several accepted defences, including 9...a5 10 a3 ♜b6. The modern favourite (inspired by some very old games) is 9...♜b8! (D), with the ideas of ...e5 and ...b5, while the queen avoids potential exposure down the c-file that would follow ...♜c7 and ♜c1.



Two brief examples confirm that Black has fully-fledged chances:

a) Morozевич-Vallejo Pons, Amber Blindfold, Monte Carlo 2005 proceeded 10 h3 ♜h5 11 ♜e1 a5 12 ♖f1?! (sometimes White plays this manoeuvre when Black's bishop is still on g4, so that ♖e3 comes with tempo; ♖a3-c2-e3 is another path, but here it appears rather pointless) 12...♜e8 13 g4 ♜g6 14 ♖h4 a4 15 ♖xg6 hxg6 16 ♜c2 b5 with a space advantage for Black.

b) The classic Réti manoeuvre 10 ♜c1 ♜e8 11 ♜c2 ♖d6 12 ♜a1 appeared in Andersson-Garcia Martinez, Madrid 1973, which continued 12...e5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 e4?! and after 14...d4 15 ♜fc1 ♜f8 16 h3 ♜xf3 17 ♖xf3 a5 18 h4?! a4 Black was fine, although 14...dxe4 or 14...b5 were probably better ways to play for an edge.

**8 d3 0-0 (D)**

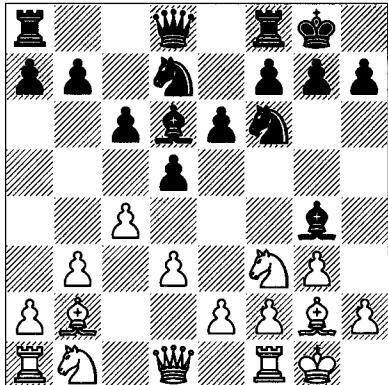
Again, 8...♝xf3 9 ♜xf3 e5 is possible; normally, Black will want to exchange before White plays ♖bd2 with the promise of recapture by the knight in the case of ...♝xf3. On the other hand, that is by no means a hard-and-fast rule.

**9 ♖bd2**

A relatively popular alternative is 9 ♖a3 with the idea ♖c2, when White aims to build up for b4. As opposed to ♖bd2, the knight will cover a3, deterring the exchange of bishops by ...♝a3; also, in a few cases the move ♖e3 can be useful. I'll stick with the classical approach instead, but when you are preparing with either colour, it's nice to know that the idea of ♖a3 exists.

**9...♜e7**

W

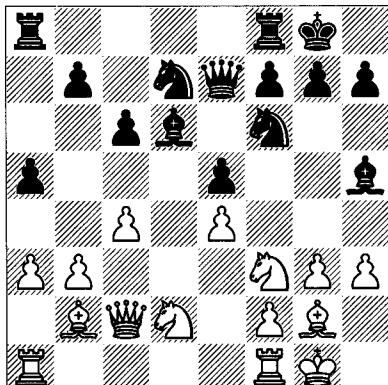


Leko-Kasparov, Wijk aan Zee 2001 went 9...a5 10 a3  $\mathbb{A}h5!?$  (10... $\mathbb{B}b6$  has become a standard way to treat these positions) 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$  e5!? 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4  $\mathbb{E}e8$  14  $\mathbb{A}h4$   $\mathbb{A}c5!?$  (Kasparov prefers 14... $\mathbb{A}c5$  and 14... $\mathbb{B}b6!?$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}df3!$   $\mathbb{B}b6$ . At this point, Kasparov calls 16 h3 clearly favourable for White. This seems an odd assessment, but presumably the idea of g4 and  $\mathbb{A}f5$  is strong enough that Black must play 16... $\mathbb{A}xf3$ , ceding the bishop-pair in a stable position, something you may not want to do on the 2700+ level!

**10 a3 a5 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$**

A game cited above, Vaganian-Gulko, USSR Ch, Erevan 1975, continued 11 h3  $\mathbb{A}h5$  12  $\mathbb{W}c2$  e5 13 e4 dxe4 14 dxe4 (D).

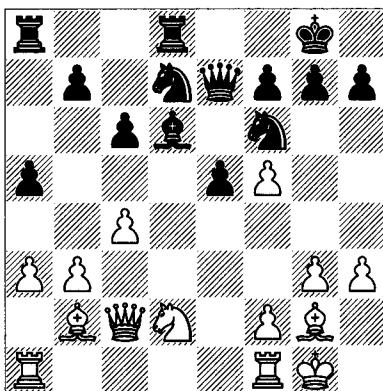
B



In a majority of games involving the double fianchetto and ... $\mathbb{A}g4$ , White plays e4 at some moment and this pawn-structure results. The combination of e4 and c4 has a mixed effect. From White's point of view, the gaping hole on d4 is clearly a negative, although in practice it

proves difficult for Black to occupy. Furthermore, his king's bishop is restricted by his own centre pawn on e4. On the positive side, that same pawn supports a knight on f5, which will be very powerfully placed. Black's problem is that if he exchanges the knight by ... $\mathbb{A}xf5$  (often necessary), then exf5 reopens the g2-bishop's diagonal and White's e-file, while clearing what is effectively an outpost square for White's pieces on e4. In fact, that's what happened in the game after 14... $\mathbb{E}fd8!?$  (Vaganian prefers 14... $\mathbb{A}xf3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$ ; compare this with Kasparov's note above in the same situation) 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{A}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $\mathbb{A}xf5$  17 exf5 (D).

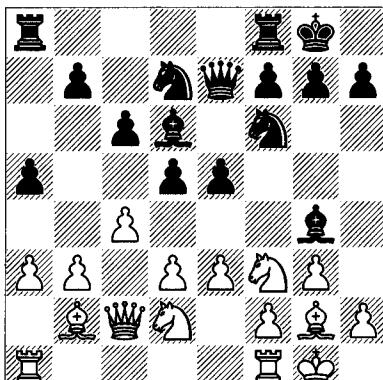
B



White controls the crucial e4-square and has prospects of g4-g5. The game continued 17... $\mathbb{A}c5$  18  $\mathbb{E}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  19  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b1!?$  (or 20  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  22  $\mathbb{W}c3$ ) 20... $\mathbb{W}f8$  21 g4 h6 22  $\mathbb{E}e2$  and White could improve his position slowly while his opponent was left searching for a plan.

**11...e5 12 e3!?** (D)

B



White plays this unusual move with the idea of keeping the position flexible. To begin with, he stops Black's threat of ...e4-e3.

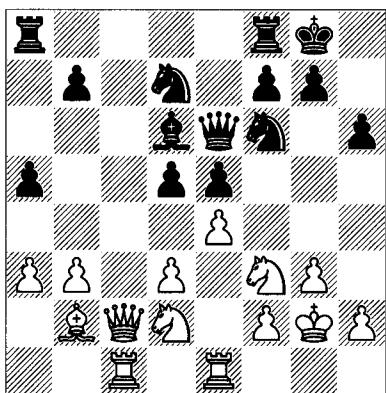
**12...h6!?**

Nevertheless, the advance of Black's e-pawn can be a factor. Horn queries 12...e4, correctly pointing out that after 13 dx e4 the e-pawn lands in trouble following 13...dx e4 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ; that's particularly the case because after the coming h3 and ... $\mathbb{A}h5$ , White has  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . However, I'm not sure that Black stands worse after the reply 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ , when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx e4 15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  looks satisfactory.

**13  $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}e6!?$**

The idea behind this move, exchanging the g2-bishop, is suspect because White can still transform the pawn-structure.

**14  $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{A}h3$  15 cxd5 cx d5 16 e4!  $\mathbb{A}xg2$  17  $\mathbb{B}xg2$  (D)**



Black's problem now is that he has to give White the nice square c4 for his knight; also, White's remaining bishop is his good one.

**17...d4 18  $\mathbb{B}c4!$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}a6!?$**

But 19... $\mathbb{A}b8$  20 a4 and  $\mathbb{A}a3$  gives White a large positional advantage.

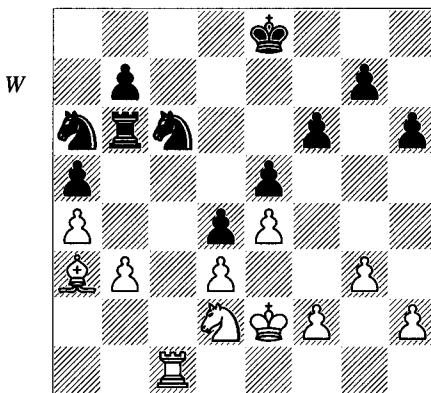
**20  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{B}xd6$  21 a4  $\mathbb{B}b6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

Now White is ready for  $\mathbb{A}a3$ , and he's still in charge of the outpost on c4.

**22... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  23  $\mathbb{A}a3$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  24  $\mathbb{B}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  25  $\mathbb{B}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  26  $\mathbb{B}ec1$**

Black is tied down and almost without useful moves. As is often the case, White need only open a second front to break down his defences. It is instructive how quickly he does so.

**26...f6 27  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  28  $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}db8$  29  $\mathbb{B}c8$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  30  $\mathbb{B}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  (D)**



**31 f4!  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  32  $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6?$**

But in the long run White can put a knight on c4 (following  $\mathbb{B}b1$ ) and if necessary penetrate with his king into the weak light squares on the kingside.

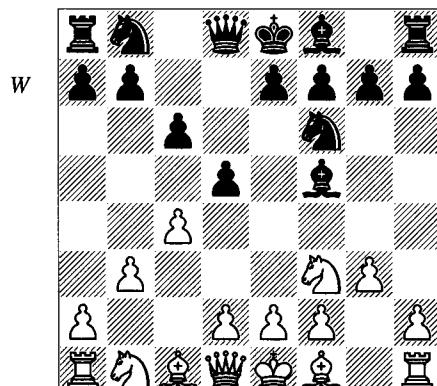
**33 fx e5 fxe5 34  $\mathbb{B}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  35  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{B}c6$  36  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  1-0**

## The New York System

Our final Réti Opening game is an epic battle involving its inventor.

**Réti – Em. Lasker  
New York 1924**

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 b3  $\mathbb{A}f5$  4 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D)**



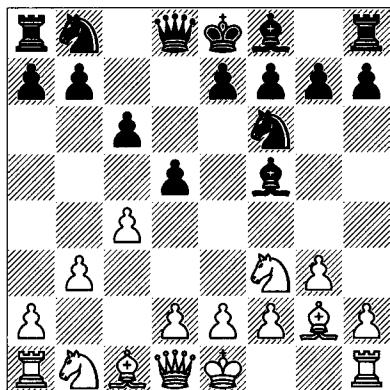
This is the line from the previous game, but with 4... $\mathbb{A}f5$  instead of 4... $\mathbb{A}g4$ . It is often called the New York System, in honour of this game. The set-up with ... $\mathbb{A}f5$  is solid and has a good reputation, although it's not quite as popular or

ambitious as that with ... $\mathbb{B}g4$ . Black wants to bring his bishop out in front of his pawn-chain and control e4, of course, while not exposing himself to a potential loss of tempo via  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . One trade-off is that he can no longer play ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , which as we saw above comes in handy in some positions, and makes possible the idea of ...e5 in one jump.

White will simply complete his development before trying anything too ambitious. He can hope to play e4 with gain of tempo in the future.

**5  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (D)**

B



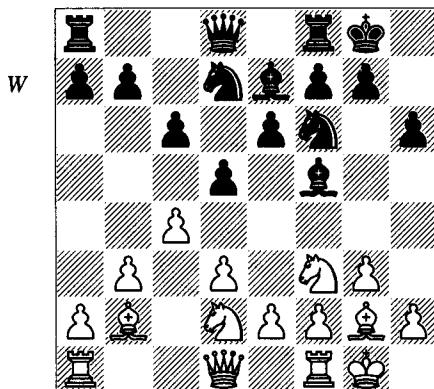
**5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

5...e6 6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0 0-0 is another order of development. Black does not yet commit the knight, which may go to a6 or even appear on c6 after a later ...c5.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  e6 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

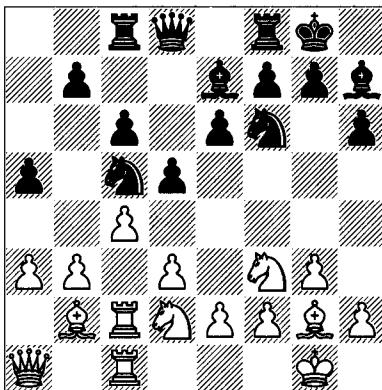
Many commentators (among them Botvinnik) think that 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is less accurate than 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , because the former move exposes the bishop after e4 (see below). Indeed, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is Black's preference in a majority of games, one main line going 8 d3 h6 (Black prepares a retreat-square for his bishop in order to preserve the bishop-pair should White play  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ; this is not strictly essential) 9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 (D).

Then there are various strategies, but play along the lines of our main game goes 10  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  (10 a3 a5 11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  aims to advance with b4, sometimes prefaced by  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , so in Winants-Van der Sterren, Wijk aan Zee 1991, Black took action to prevent that by 12...b5! 13 cxb5 cxb5 14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  b4!? 15 axb4 axb4 16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  18 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 19 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ,



with obscure prospects) 10... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  11 a3 a5 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$  (D).

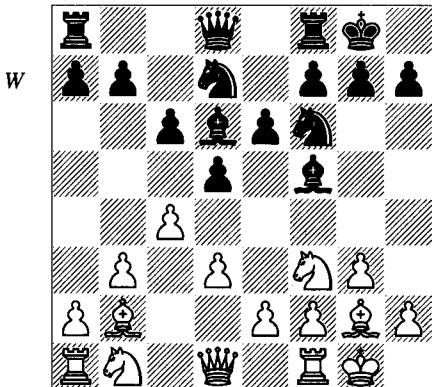
B



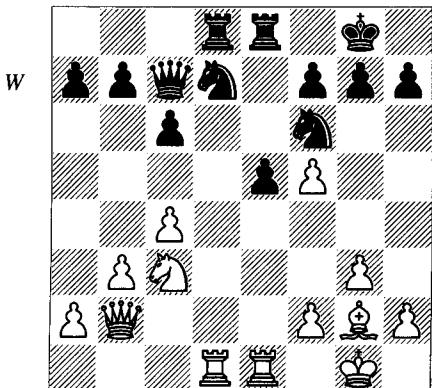
This visually pleasing piece formation was introduced by Réti. White has control of d4 and e5, with pressure along the c-file and elegant bishops raking the long diagonals. For all that, his pieces are bunched up on the first two ranks (only one of them on the third) and Black has the more advanced centre pawn. Csikar-E.Csom, Hungarian Team Ch 1992 continued 14...b6 15 cxd5 cxd5 16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (16 b4 axb4 17 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is obscure, but probably about equal) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?? 17  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18 b4 axb4 19 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and White had carried out his desired take-over of the queenside dark squares. The game went 20 b5!? (20  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! is thematic, with the idea 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 22  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !; and 20  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  22 b5 is also strong) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ?! 22  $\mathbb{Q}a2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}cd7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and Black's game had fallen apart.

**8 d3 0-0 (D)**

The loose position of Black's bishop on d6 is exposed in the line 8...e5?! 9 e4!, hoping for 9...dxe4?? 10 dxе4 11 ♜h4.

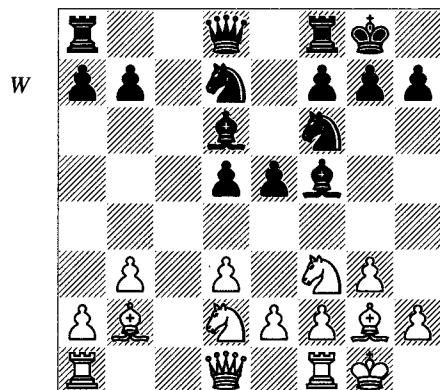
**9 ♜bd2**

In another early clash of legends, Réti-Tarrasch, Breslau 1925, White tried out 9 ♜c3! (blocking off the b2-bishop, but there's nothing essentially wrong with the move) 9...♝e7 10 ♜el e5 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxе4 ♜e6 13 ♜h4 ♜a3 14 ♜f5! ♜xf5 15 ♜xa3 ♜xa3 16 exf5 ♜ad8 17 ♜c2 ♜fe8 18 ♜ad1 ♜a5 19 ♜b2!? ♜c7 (D).



Again we see White's control of e4 and open files. He needs to improve the position of his minor pieces by an advance of queenside pawns resulting in some combination of c5 and b5. The game proceeded 20 ♜a3 (20 b4! has the idea 20...♜b6 21 c5 ♜bd5 22 ♜xd5! ♜xd5 23 ♜e4; then White has won the opening battle) 20...a6 21 c5 ♜b8 22 ♜b4 a5 23 ♜c4 ♜xd1 24

♜xd1!? ♜d8 25 ♜c3 ♜d4? (Black takes over the attractive d4-square but forgets about his back rank; 25...♜bd7! should be fine, with the idea 26 ♜e3 e4! and if allowed, ...♜e5) 26 ♜b2 ♜fd7 27 f4 f6 28 fxе5 fxе5 29 ♜f1?! (29 ♜c4!, threatening ♜xe5, is very strong) 29...b6?, and here 30 cxb6! ♜xb6 31 ♜h1 would have yielded White a winning advantage because of Black's weak pawns and White powerful minor pieces, which can use c4 as a pivot point.

**9...e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 (D)****11 ♜c1!?**

This game has been characterized as a triumph of the Classical School of centre and development over somewhat fanciful hypermodern ideas; however, it would be more accurate to call it a victory by Lasker over Réti. Here, for example, 11 e4!? is fine, and has even been claimed to give White an advantage. I think that Black can come very close to complete equality, but he needs to play carefully:

a) 11...♝g4? 12 exd5 ♜xd5 13 ♜c4 (or 13 h3 and ♜c4) yields the kind of activity that White is after.

b) The same kind of position arises following 11...♝e6?! 12 exd5 ♜xd5 13 ♜c4!.

c) 11...♝g6 isn't bad: 12 exd5 (12 d4 ♜xe4 13 ♜xe5 ♜e8 14 ♜xg6 hxg6 gives Black sufficient activity to equalize) 12...♜xd3 13 ♜e1, and now 13...♜e8 14 ♜c4 ♜xc4 15 bxc4 may favour White slightly, but the computer move 13...♜g4! threatens ...♜xf2 and opens the way for the f-pawn following 14 ♜e4 ♜xe4 15 ♜xe4 f5 16 ♜e2 e4.

d) 11...dxe4 12 dxе4 (or 12 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13 dxе4 ♜e7 and White's bishops are hard to make

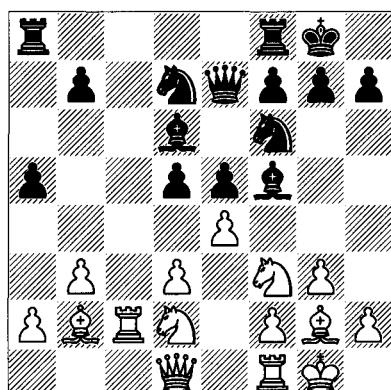
use of; ... $\mathbb{E}ac8$ , ... $\mathbb{E}fd8$ , and perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}a3$  can follow, with a level game) and now 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  looks about equal, but not 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ , which allows White terrific activity after 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  15  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

**11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{E}c2!!$**

This is Réti's wonderful idea again, as above, to maximize the potential of every piece. But another promising method to get some pieces working was to challenge the centre by 12 e4!. You can compare the previous and following notes for the basic ideas.

**12... $a5!$  13  $a4??!$**

This creates a serious weakness on b4. It still seems as though the aggressive 13 e4! (D) is best:



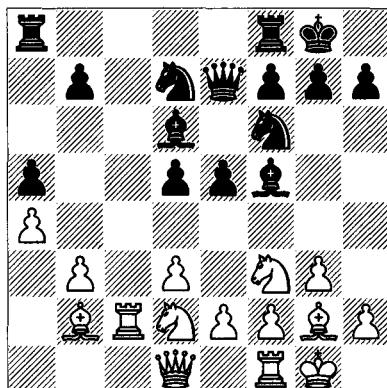
B

13.... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  (or 13...dxe4 14 dxe4 and now 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is playable, but not 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , winning material; here 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  17  $\mathbb{W}e2$  is also good for White) 14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15 exd5 (15 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  again gives Black enough pressure to counteract the bishop-pair) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . This is extremely complex; for example, 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (16...b5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{E}e2$ ) 17  $\mathbb{E}e2$  f5!? 18  $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 21 g4! fxg4 22  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23  $\mathbb{E}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  and the situation is still murky. These lines illustrate the dynamic balance between White's long-range pieces and Black's superior centre, a situation characteristic of many of the Réti Opening double fianchetto lines.

Let's return to 13 a4!? (D):

**13...h6 14  $\mathbb{W}a1$   $\mathbb{E}fe8$  15  $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ ?**  
To guard against ...e4-e3.  
**16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !**

B



Black doesn't fall for 16...e4 17 dxe4 dxe4? 18  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e3 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  20  $\mathbb{E}xc2$  with terrific compensation for the exchange.

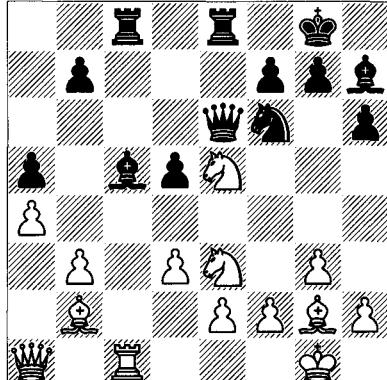
**17  $\mathbb{E}xc5$ !?**

White uncorks another exchange sacrifice, but this time out of a feeling of necessity. If 17  $\mathbb{W}a2$ , 17... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b6! intends ...d4, and Black's big centre is finally getting its due.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  (D)**

White doesn't have sufficient compensation here. Also good was 19... $\mathbb{E}cd8$  20  $\mathbb{E}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ .

W



**20 h3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ?**

A strange mistake. Almost any slow move such as 20...b6 is good.

**21  $\mathbb{E}xc8$   $\mathbb{E}xc8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ?**

Returning the favour. 22  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  23 hxg4 or 23  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  wins the crucial d5-pawn.

**22... $\mathbb{E}e7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h2$ !**

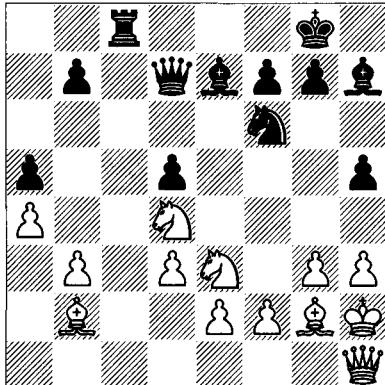
Réti probably couldn't resist showing off, but this is apparently the best move in any case!

**24...h5**

Something level-headed such as 24... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ? 25  $\mathbb{W}h1$  and now 25... $\mathbb{E}e8$  or 25... $\mathbb{E}d8$  is better.

**25  $\mathbb{W}h1!$  (D)**

B



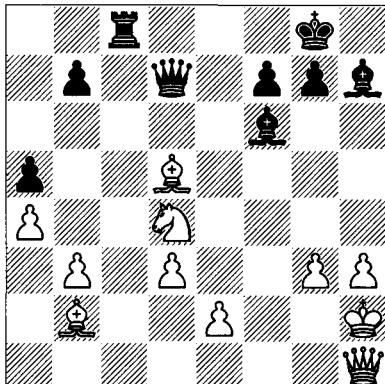
A lovely picture!  $\mathbb{W}a1-h1$  and White's back in the game.

**25...h4**

Now 25... $\mathbb{E}d8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$  has in mind  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , or even  $\mathbb{Q}d4-b6$ .

**26  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $hxg3+$  27  $fxg3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  (D)**

W



Black has to neutralize White's fine set of bishops.

**29  $\mathbb{Q}xb7??$**

29  $\mathbb{W}f3!$  is solid and good; White will play e4 to anchor the bishop on d5, achieving a dynamic balance.

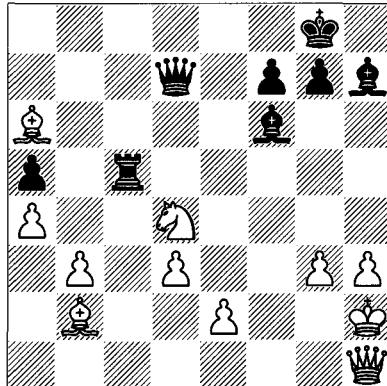
**29... $\mathbb{E}c5?$**

A good move, although 29... $\mathbb{E}d8!$  30 e3  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  31  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  is better still.

**30  $\mathbb{Q}a6?$  (D)**

White threatens  $\mathbb{W}a8+$ , but his pieces get misplaced. He had to scramble with 30  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  32  $\mathbb{W}e4+$  f5 33  $\mathbb{W}h4+!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  34  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  (34... $\mathbb{W}e7$  35 e4  $\mathbb{E}c2+36$   $\mathbb{Q}g1$ ) 35  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}c2$  36  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}xe2+$  37  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , which should end in a draw.

B



**30... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  31  $\mathbb{W}b7$   $\mathbb{W}d8!?$**

White is in serious trouble after 31... $\mathbb{W}d6!$ . But the text-move is also good enough. In what follows White has various alternatives, but he remains just outside the drawing zone.

32 b4!  $\mathbb{E}c7$  33  $\mathbb{W}b6$   $\mathbb{E}d7!$  34  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  35 e3 axb4 36  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  37 exd4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  38  $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  39  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  40  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{E}d6$  41  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{E}f6+$  42  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}e6+!$  43  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}e2$  44  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{E}c2$  45  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  0-1

This great battle illustrates the Réti at its best and I would urge everyone to experiment with his system from time to time in order to obtain some fresh positions to play with.

### 3 Modern Kingside Fianchetto

The fianchetto is used in three general types of central environment. Thus far in this series, we have seen it in a variety of well-established openings of two of these types. In the first case, a central presence is employed in conjunction with a fianchetto. For instance, in the Grünfeld Defence Black plays 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 along with a central break (3...d5), whereas in the Modern Benoni, Black's ...g6 is joined with ...c5. In the English and Réti Openings, White's g3 fianchetto combines with a pawn on c4, whereas in most major d-pawn openings, White can merge the same g3 with the central move d4.

In a second set of mainstream openings, there is no central pawn presence, that is, no early break or pawn on the fourth rank. Some examples are the King's Indian Defence and Pirc Defence, in which Black plays ...d6. It's true that he often follows this with a central advance by ...e5 or ...c5, but not within the first few moves. This also applies to the Queen's Indian Defence with ...b6, where the moves ...d5 and ...c5 are usually delayed. However, notice that in most lines of these openings, Black develops quickly; in particular, his king's knight is developed to f6, controlling e4 and d5 and making kingside castling more convenient. This adds an element of safety and contests the centre of the board.

In a third class of fianchetto defences, still looked at askance by some masters, Black foregoes commitment to either a central break or a strong central presence, often playing without a knight on f6 or c6. The most prominent examples begin with 1...g6 and 1...b6, which can both be played versus any first move by White and may therefore be considered 'universal' openings. In most variations with these moves, Black allows White to choose from a wide variety of central formations. Thus 1...g6 and 1...b6 grant Black flexibility, but do the same for White.

The defences initiated by 1...g6 and 1...b6 appeared sporadically in the 19th century and

first half of the 20th century, but by and large leading players disapproved of them. After all, why should Black want to give White space and an ideal centre without a fight? The 'Hyper-moderns', beginning in the 1910s, proposed that targeting the centre from afar by means of a fianchetto was a legitimate alternative to setting up a traditional centre. But even they usually included a pawn on the 4th rank in their plans, or at least quick development. See, for example, the Réti Opening from the previous chapters. Then, in the latter part of the 20th century, many players discovered that they were comfortable operating with less space, particularly if there were opportunities to extend the range of their fianchettoed bishops by eventual pawn-breaks, or to exploit concessions that White might make to prevent that from happening. Thus 1...g6 in particular was elevated into the mainstream, and 1...b6, while not wildly popular among high-level players, has attracted the attention of a number of grandmasters. The overriding issue in both cases is whether White can use his greater territorial control to clamp down on Black's game. For the developing player, there is a lot to be learned by playing such positions from both sides and watching these conflicting goals play out.

Before plunging into 1...g6, I should note that White can himself pursue such a strategy by means of 1 g3 or 1 b3, allowing Black to set up a large centre, when the tempo derived from moving first gives him some extra ways to develop. In practice, 1 g3 often transposes to other openings. For example, it can lead to the Réti Opening if White follows with  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and c4, to the King's Indian Attack if White plays  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and d3, or to various d-pawn openings if White plays an early d4. At a grandmaster level, however, White plays 1 g3 infrequently, because Black is able set up conservatively if he wishes, without a big centre, and establish equality relatively easily. 1 b3 can run into the same problem, but it has a more defined history of

independent theory which I'll be examining in the following chapter.

## The Modern Defence

1 e4 g6 is called variously the Modern Defence, the King's Fianchetto Defence, the Rat, the Robatsch, and the Utjelky. Perhaps that's a reflection of its multi-faceted nature; in fact, the move 1...g6 tells us little about the kind of the game that will follow. Both White and Black can deploy their forces in a wide array of formations that bear little relation to one another, and the play can go in almost any direction. Thus, in what follows, I'll concentrate upon a selection of the most popular responses to 1...g6, with an emphasis on black pawn-structures that haven't been well represented in the rest of this series.

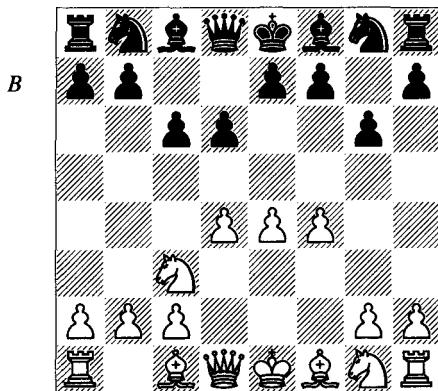
From White's point of view, the normal central set-ups apply, but we'll begin with what is arguably the most important one, involving the centre d4, e4 and f4. This is a direct threat to the playability of 1...g6, more so than the other broad centres that we have examined, for example, in the King's Indian Defence, the Pirc Defence, or the Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian. Let's step through some themes that arise from early moves, and then take a look at the problems arising from that central structure.

**1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘g7**

Obviously 1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♘g7 leads to the same position. Curiously, Black has often played 2...d6 at this point, because there are lines in which he'd rather get on with a queenside attack instead of putting a bishop on g7 yet. Since White plays ♘e3, ♘d2 and ♘h6 in many lines, Black may even save a tempo by not playing ...♗g7. That's rather abstract, but he might also be motivated by a specific sequence, that is, 2...d6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 f4 d5 e5 h5, etc., the set-up White uses in the first three games.

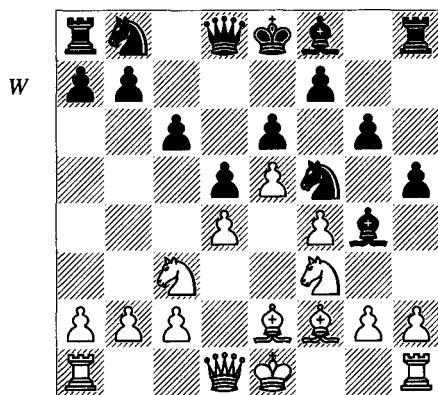
Then 4...♗g7 transposes to the main games, and Black also has these options:

a) 4...♗b6 prevents 5 ♘e3 and puts pressure on the d4-pawn, but Black must be careful in the face of White's attack; for example, 5 ♘c4 ♘g7 6 ♘f3 ♘h6 (6...♗g4? 7 ♘xf7+) 7 ♘b3 ♘g4 8 ♘e3 d5, Bologan-Azmaiparashvili, European Clubs Cup, Panormo 2001, and here



White can play simply 9 ♘d2! dxе4 10 ♘g5! 0-0 11 h3 ♘c8 12 g4 and 0-0-0 with the centre, development and much better placed pieces.

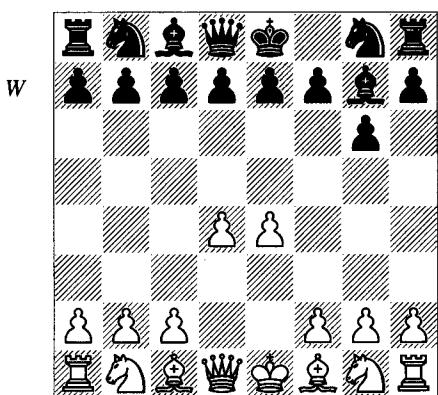
b) The most subtle move is 4...d5! with the idea 5 e5 h5!?, intending to develop his pieces on kingside light squares, a typical sequence being 6 ♘f3 ♘h6 7 ♘e3 ♘g4 8 ♘e2 ♘f5 9 ♘f2 e6 (D).



This is precisely the position arising from the game Hector-Høi below, which begins 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘g7 3 ♘c3 c6 4 f4 d5 e5 h5, etc. In that game, however, Black is a tempo 'ahead', in that he has played ...d5 in one jump rather than via ...d6-d5. Ironically, however, Black's extra tempo there is ...♗g7, which is an undesirable move! This bishop actually belongs on f8, from where it supports the move ...c5 and can go to its best position on e7. Indeed, the move ...♗f8 occurs in Hector-Høi. So, by playing 2...d6 and deferring ...♗g7, Black has managed to save two moves (...♗g7-f8) in return for his loss of only one tempo (...d6-d5). It's

silly things like this that make a positional player's life more gratifying! Of course, 2...d6 in conjunction with 3...c6 is itself committal, and some players may not prefer this pawn-formation if White refrains from (or delays) f4 and plays, say,  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  or  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  instead.

We now return to 2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (D):



### 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

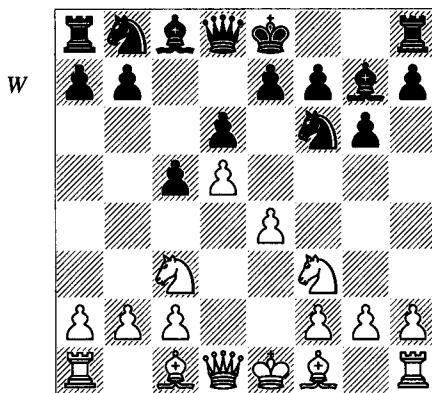
I'm going to focus on this straightforward knight development, which is basic to the traditional main lines of the Modern Defence, and easily the most popular at every level. It also makes possible a hypermodern interpretation of the opening by Black. For example, the move ...a6 with the idea ...b5 is highly relevant in lines with  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and not so much so otherwise. It would be impossible to address the enormous range of possibilities that 1...g6 opens up without sacrificing my emphasis upon ideas and themes, but I'll give games with the moves 3 c3 and 3 c4 below.

### 3...d6

Black can also play the subtle and very popular 3...c6; see below for illustrative games. If he wants to challenge the centre, the most thematic move is 3...c5, perhaps aiming for a Sicilian Defence after 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  cxd4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ . This is infrequently played as White has two good alternatives:

a) One is 4 d5, when after 4...d6 it is harder for Black to find counterplay than in the Modern Benoni (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  exd5 5 cxd5 d6 e4 g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ), because the knight on c3 is well placed to meet Black's natural pawn-breaks. I won't go into the details, but the most natural continuation is 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

(D) (upon 5...e5? or 5...e6? there follows 6 dx e6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ; instead, 5...a6 is logical, but does weaken the b6-square on the queenside, and White can play the standard manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$ ; for example, 6 a4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  exd5 10 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 0-0).

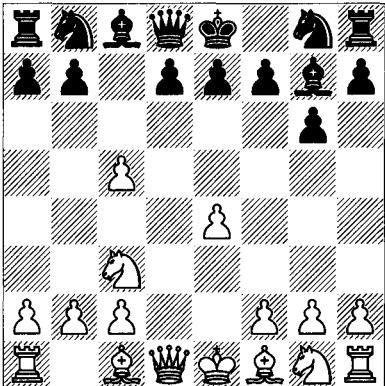


The variation after 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  has transposed to a line of the Schmid Benoni, an opening that can arise from a wide variety of move-orders. A sample line goes 6  $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$ ? (6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is equally common) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7 a4 a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  brings Black's queen's knight to d7, a square from which it can't do much; 6... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  has been played in high-level games, but White has done well, for example in the main line 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ ) 7 a4 0-0 8 0-0 and White intends to play  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and/or  $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$  with an edge. Hundreds of games have been played with the Schmid Benoni, however, and as you might suspect, both sides have lots of ways to set up their forces.

b) 4 dxc5 (D) voluntarily breaks up White's centre, with the idea that Black will either lose time recovering his pawn or make concessions.

This capture has been played quite a bit and there is plenty to explore. One line is 4... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ , when a challenging move is 6  $\mathbb{Q}d5+!$ , threatening 7  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$ . Then there can follow 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (6...b6 is also played, although it's riskier) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (or 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 7...e6 (7... $\mathbb{Q}xb2+?$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  10 0-0 ties Black down due to  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , when 10...a5 11  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  works out tactically in White's favour) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and Black has weaknesses to worry about. Still, this whole line is playable.

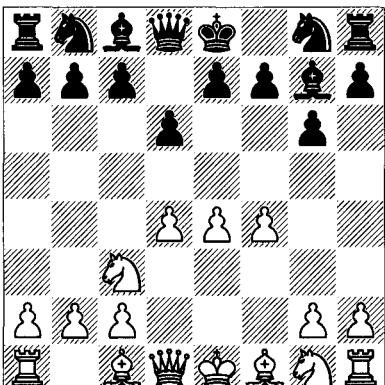
B



4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!?$  5  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  constitutes another trade-off: attack on White's vulnerable pawns versus dark-square weaknesses around Black's king. White can develop normally, but he can also temporarily hold on to his pawn with the ambitious 6  $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{W}b4$ , when 7... $\mathbb{W}xb4$  8  $cxb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  is an ideal position for White's bishop-pair, so 7... $\mathbb{W}c7!$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{W}a4$  might follow. These lines after 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  are particularly interesting and unresolved.

**4 f4 (D)**

B



Here we have White's most direct challenge to Black's entire system. The intent is to dominate the centre and limit Black's pieces. Still, playing with a large centre exposes White to more counterattacking possibilities, so things are by no means clear. One advantage of 4 f4 is that it restricts the opponent's reasonable responses in a way that 4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  or 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  doesn't.

**4...c6**

We shall see 4...a6 in the next section, with a note on 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Note that 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  transposes to

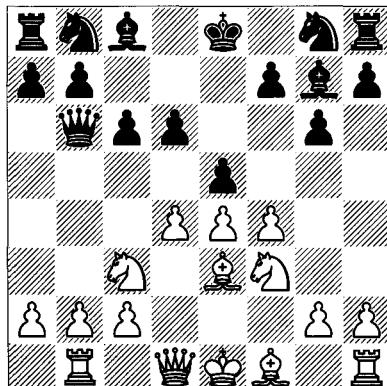
a Pirc Defence, and indeed, a Pirc player may wish to use a 1...g6 move-order to get to some of his favourite lines. However, when Black plays 1...g6, he has to deal with a number of additional early options by White, whereas 1 e4 d6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (the Pirc) compels the defence of e4 on the second move and so limits White's choices. Most notably, the Pirc move-order 1 e4 d6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 bypasses any lines with c4 for White.

After 4...c6 Black intends to answer  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , when by the further ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , he can put pressure upon d4, White's most vulnerable point in the centre. The attack on White's centre by ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and ... $\mathbb{W}b6$  is aggressive and pointed, but it carries the risks that an early queen move typically entails. If Black doesn't want to go this way, he can play for queenside expansion by ...b5, as in the note to 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  below.

**5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is also played, and worth knowing if you play either side of the popular move-order 4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6, because at that point 5 f4 transposes. A seeming drawback to 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , because b2 is attacked and the move ...e5 will exploit the pin on d4. But White can still try for advantage after 6  $\mathbb{R}b1$  (protecting b2) 6...e5!? (6...f5! was Yudovich-Botvinnik, Moscow Ch 1966; then 7 e5!  $dxe5$  8  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! gives good attacking chances for the pawn, so maybe simply 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  should be tried) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D).

B



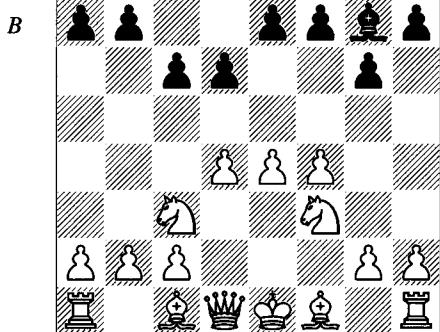
In spite of the tempo consumed by  $\mathbb{R}b1$  (which also precludes 0-0-0), White's centre and development pose serious problems for Black:

a) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{W}d2$  exd4 (8... $\mathbb{W}c7$  9 fxe5 dxe5 10 d5) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  (White piles up on d6; also,  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  can be effective at the right moment) 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{K}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13 e5! dxe5 14 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (otherwise e6 will follow) 15  $\mathbb{W}d4$  f5 16 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}dx6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with a clear superiority.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ? 8 fxe5 dxe5 9  $\mathbb{W}d2!$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  exd4! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ !  $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  yields unclear play) 9...exd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  and White drives Black's pieces back; for example, 10... $\mathbb{W}b4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12 a3  $\mathbb{W}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14 0-0 0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  with a serious attack. Then 15... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  16  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}c5?$ ! 17  $\mathbb{K}bd1$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  18 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  is winning for White.

Because this line with 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  can be intimidating for Black, he might do well to avoid 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$  in favour of 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or 5...b5?!

We now return to 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D):



#### 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Black chooses a committal course: he will have to cede the bishop-pair. The 'positional' follow-up to 4...c6 is 5...b5, which can lead in any number of directions; obviously, such a non-developing move risks having to go on the defensive. In response, the straightforward 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  is popular (as well as 6 a3); for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7 e5?!  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (control of f5 is important) 8 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and White has two instructive options:

a) 9 g4 (preventing Black from occupying f5) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ ! 13 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  14 f5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  16 fxg6 hxg6 17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and White was obviously for choice in Ehvest-Granda, Zagreb Interzonal 1987.

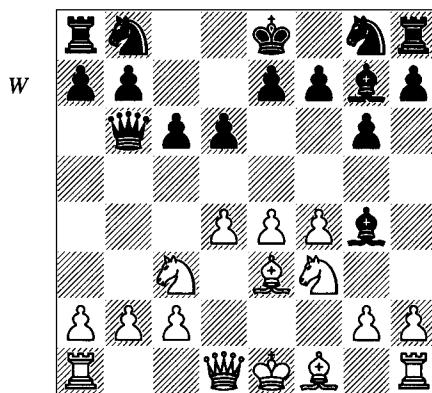
b) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ , with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  10 g4!  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  11  $\mathbb{K}g1$  b4 12  $\mathbb{Q}b1!$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$  d5 14  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ . Then White has a substantial superiority in every sector of the board; among other ideas, f5 can follow.

While 5...b5 may be playable, it gives White a lot of space and development to make use of. As always, you should refer to books and databases to learn more.

#### 6 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

Black's basic idea, to attack White's centre, is shown in the line 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  7 e5  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0-0 9 c3. This is about equal; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5 11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

#### 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ (D)



We have arrived at one of the oldest main lines of the Modern Defence.

#### 7 $\mathbb{W}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

Doubling White's pawns. Without this move, Black's strategy makes no sense. He shouldn't permit a rook to get to the 7th rank by 7... $\mathbb{W}xb2$ ? 8  $\mathbb{K}b1$   $\mathbb{W}a3$  9  $\mathbb{W}xb7$ .

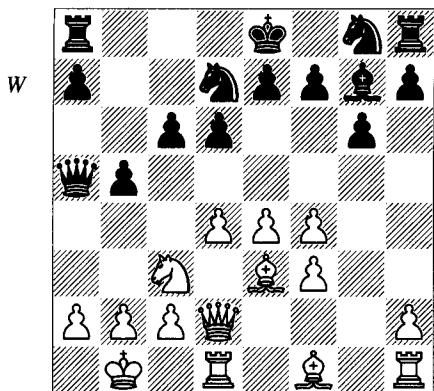
#### 8 $\mathbb{gxf3}$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 9 0-0-0 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}b1!$

A calm move that is characteristic of such positions; for one thing, it defends a2 and therefore frees White's knight on c3 to move.

#### 10...b5 (D)

This advance is consistent with the position, attacking via ...b4 and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ -c4. The main drawbacks to it are that Black still doesn't remedy his backward development and that if the attack doesn't succeed, the move ...b5 will make it riskier for him to castle queenside. Instead, Black could castle more safely right away, but it's not clear where his counterplay is coming from after, say, 10...0-0-0 11  $\mathbb{K}g1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  12

$\mathbb{H}g5$  (or 12 f5) 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$  13 d5, as in J. Polgar-Crouch, Hastings 1992/3.



After the text-move (10...b5), we have a battle between a centralized position and a flank attack. White has no immediate threats, and Black is counting upon the lack of weaknesses in his pawn-structure (typical of positions with few pawns past the 3rd rank); ideally, his solid position will render White's advances harmless until he can himself make progress. This strategy runs up against the Classical school of thought, which says that the modern fianchetto defences (1...g6 and 1...b6) are simply insufficient if White plays in a principled manner by constructing a broad centre, developing quickly and suffocating Black. Experience shows that Black will have many tricky ideas, mostly due to the fact that White's centre is exposed. But the true classicist trusts that these are temporary problems that can be neutralized, after which his pawns and pieces will roll forward. As it happens, the outcome of the particular variation before us (with 4...c6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) seems to support his point of view. Even if that proves the case, of course, the modernist will point to other variations in which his philosophy wins the day. And so it goes.

Let's see how the opposing strategies play out in two illustrative games that begin with 10...b5.

### Bologan – Todorčević Las Palmas 1993

#### 11 h4

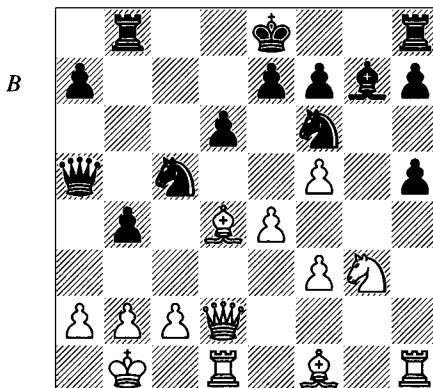
Trusting in his broad centre and space, White launches a straightforward flank attack.

#### 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Black's idea is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , either before or after ...b4, or perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}a4$ .

a) It's still too early for Black to develop by 11... $\mathbb{Q}gf6?$ , because of 12 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13 d5!) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  cxd5 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ .

b) Instead, the d7-knight can also be used to support ...c5, one example going 11...b4 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ ? (13  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  and 13 f5 with the idea 13...gxf5 14  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  are good alternatives) 13... $\mathbb{B}b8$ ?! (13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{W}xh5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  favours White, who intends f5 and  $\mathbb{Q}dg1$ ) 14 h5 gxh5 15 f5 c5 (finally) 16 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (D).



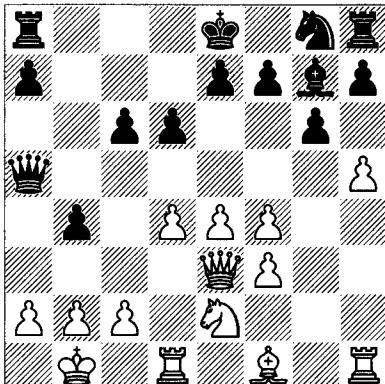
The bishop on d4 opposes Black's bishop on g7 and thereby interferes with his most promising attacking possibilities on the queenside. You might want to compare openings such as the Sicilian Dragon and King's Indian Defence. Laka-Todorčević, Rome 1990 went 17... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (or 18  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ !) 18... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ?! 19  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  23 b3!  $\mathbb{W}b5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  and White was winning.

#### 12 h5 b4 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 14 $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

Black's last few moves seem to be the most logical ones, and at this point he can only maintain his knight on the strong square c4 by allowing White to keep his dark-squared bishop and pursue further attacking ideas: 14...d5 15  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16 hxg6 hxg6 17  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  18 f5! gxf5 and while 19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  was quite effective in Korneev-Movsziszian, Berga 1996, even better is 19 exd5! cxd5 20  $\mathbb{W}xf5$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ .

#### 15 $\mathbb{W}xe3$ (D)

B



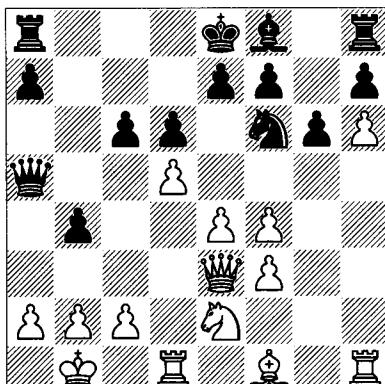
An interesting situation has arisen. At first sight, Black's position seems compact and relatively safe from direct attack. However, he finds it hard to develop his pieces or castle, so he has difficulty working up counterplay. This gives White time to get organized. He has various ways of improving his position such as  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ,  $f5$ ,  $d5$  and  $e5$ , and his bishop can go to  $h3$  or  $c4$ . In general, the opposite-coloured bishops favour White's attack. In view of all this, Black will have trouble defending.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

Black's king is also exposed after  $15\dots 0-0-0$ ; for example,  $16 \mathbb{W}b3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $17 \mathbb{Q}g1$   $e6$   $18 c3!$   $bxc3$   $19 \mathbb{Q}xc3$  sets up attacks based upon the open c-file and  $d5$  breaks. Then Busemann-Vinot, email corr. 2002 continued  $19\dots \mathbb{Q}d7$   $20 \mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$   $21 \mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{B}b8$   $22 f5$   $exf5$   $23 \mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $24 \mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}h8$ , and now the easiest course for White was  $25 exf5$ ; for example,  $25\dots gxh5$   $26 \mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$   $27 \mathbb{Q}e4$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$  among other things.

**16 h6  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17 d5! (D)**

B



**17... $cxd5$  18 e5**

18  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with the ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  and  $e5$  is also strong.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19 e6  $fxe6$  20  $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  23  $\mathbb{W}he1$**

The power of every white piece is maximized, ensuring success.

**23... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24 f5!  $gxf5$  25  $\mathbb{W}xf5$  1-0**

The threat of  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  is decisive.

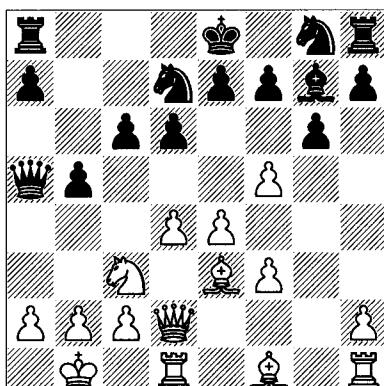
**Franzen – McAlpine**

*corr. 1991*

**11 f5 (D)**

In some ways this is more thematic than the 11  $h4$  of the previous game, in that White frees his e3-bishop for use upon the c1-h6 diagonal. The main difference is that Black is finally permitted to develop his g8-knight.

B



**11... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$**

This move wasn't advisable before 11  $f5$  because White would have responded with  $e5$ . Here's a look at two instructive email correspondence games with alternative defensive plans. In both, we see how important it is to keep your pawn-structure intact in the Modern Defence:

a)  $11\dots \mathbb{Q}b6$   $12 h4$   $b4$   $13 \mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $14 \mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $15 \mathbb{W}xe3$  (very similar to the previous game)  $15\dots \mathbb{Q}f6$   $16 \mathbb{Q}g3$   $0-0-0$   $17 h5$   $gxh5$  (soon after this positional concession White will stand much better, but  $18 h6$  was a threat, and  $17\dots \mathbb{B}hf8$   $18 fxg6$   $hxg6$   $19 hxg6$   $fxg6$   $20 \mathbb{Q}e2$  has threats such as  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , in conjunction with  $\mathbb{Q}h3+$  and perhaps  $d5$ )  $18 \mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{B}df8$   $19 \mathbb{Q}c4$   $d5$   $20 \mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $21 e5$   $\mathbb{B}fg8$   $22 \mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  ( $22\dots \mathbb{Q}xe4$   $23 fxe4$  and Black can't

defend everything) 23  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  24 f6! e6 25 f4  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{M}f8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{M}xf7$  28  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  29  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  30  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{M}hf8$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{M}xf8$  32  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  33  $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}c3+$  34  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  35 e6 1-0 Petraitis-Vinot, email 2004.

b) 11...b4 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  gxf5 13  $\mathbb{M}g1$  (the open file is well worth a pawn) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{M}g5$  e6 15 exf5 h6 16  $\mathbb{M}g1$   $\mathbb{W}xf5$  17  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  18  $\mathbb{M}d3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  (Black is simply underdeveloped) 19  $\mathbb{W}b7$   $\mathbb{M}b8$  20  $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{M}d8$  21 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  22  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23  $\mathbb{M}xd5$  exd5 24  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{M}f8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  a6 28  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{M}b5$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  1-0 Nejtek-Valenta, email 2003.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !?

Quite often this bishop is best-placed on f1, where it can't be harassed and can still choose whether to go to h3. 12  $\mathbb{M}g1$  is in the spirit of the lines above; for example, 12...b4 13  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5? 14 dxc5 dxc5 (14... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16  $\mathbb{W}g2$  with the idea of f4 and e5.

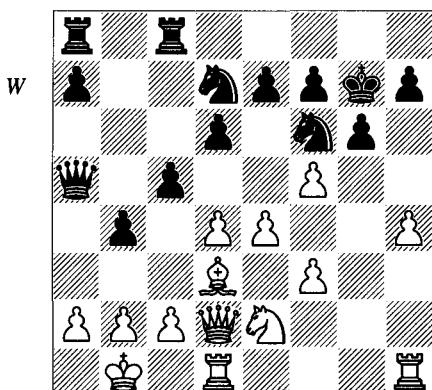
### 12...b4 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ c5 14 $\mathbb{Q}h6$

Or 14 a3  $\mathbb{M}b8$  15 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

### 14...0-0

Black would do better to divert White's queen by 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ ? 15  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  gxf5 16 exf5  $\mathbb{M}c8$ .

### 15 $\mathbb{M}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 16 h4 $\mathbb{W}fc8$ (D)



### 17 h5!

Analysis by Keene, Botterill and Williams from back in 1972 went 17 b3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18 h5 c4! with a highly unclear counterattack.

17...c4 18 hxg6 cxd3 19  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20 cxd3 20  $\mathbb{M}xd3$  may be even stronger.

### 20...b3

20...fxg6 21  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  gxf5 22  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{M}g8$  25  $\mathbb{M}dg1$  is winning for White.

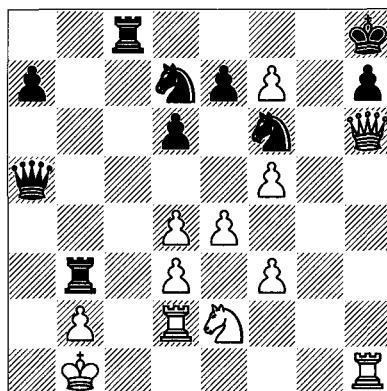
### 21 axb3!?

21 a3! would win more quickly following 21... $\mathbb{M}c2$  22 gxf7  $\mathbb{M}xe2$  23  $\mathbb{M}dg1$ .

### 21... $\mathbb{M}ab8$

White also gets through after both 21...fxg6 22  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{M}g8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$   $\mathbb{M}xg6$  24  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{M}g8$  25  $\mathbb{W}f7$  and 21... $\mathbb{W}c7$  22  $\mathbb{M}d2$ .

### 22 gxf7! $\mathbb{M}xb3$ 23 $\mathbb{M}d2!$ (D)



Threatening  $\mathbb{M}g1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , so Black's play is forced.

### 23... $\mathbb{M}a3$ 24 $\mathbb{M}xa3$ $\mathbb{W}xa3$

Or 24... $\mathbb{M}b8+$  25  $\mathbb{M}b2$ .

25  $\mathbb{M}b2$   $\mathbb{W}xd3+$  26  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}a3+$  27  $\mathbb{M}a2$   $\mathbb{W}b3$  28 e5

and White won shortly.

In these two examples, Black's queenside play wasn't a match for White's pawn-mass.

## Tiger's Modern

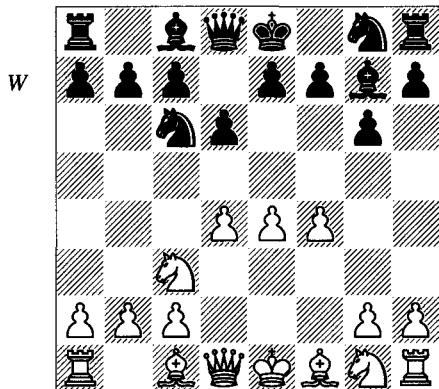
Fedorovsky – Pel  
Pardubice 2008

### 1 d4 g6 2 e4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ d6 4 f4 a6

This advance is eccentric (literally), but fun and respectable. Before going on to describe it in detail, let me mention two rare alternatives. The slightly more committal 4...e6!? has been used to get to what is sometimes called the 'Hippopotamus' set-up, which includes the moves ...b6, ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , ...g6, ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , and sometimes even ...a6, ...f6 and ...c6! Such positions are not easy to crack and contain an elastic energy, which is to say that too hurried an advance by White can provoke a dynamic

counterattack. Nevertheless, it shouldn't surprise anyone that White can achieve the better game if he plays accurately. The best approach is to advance slowly and only with support; after all, Black isn't going anywhere!

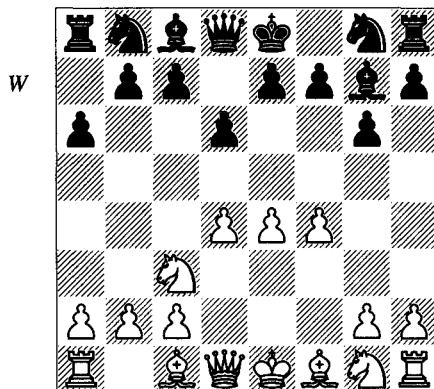
Probably 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (*D*) is the most interesting of the 'irregular' choices.



This attacks White's d-pawn. Black's idea is to reply to 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , further straining the defence of d4. Instead, 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  opens various possibilities, including 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , and here Davies likes the sequence 7...e6 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?!? followed by ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , which is an 'improved' Hippopotamus due to Black's light-square pressure and possible central breaks (which is not to say that he'll achieve equality against perfect play, but you can have some fun here). In place of this, Velimirović-Davies, Vrnjačka Banja 1991 saw 5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (a move that Davies said drove him away from playing 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5?!? (Davies cites grandmaster games which went 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?) 9 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  and 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 0-0 0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ ! with ideas of e5, f5 and/or  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , depending upon Black's response; he rightly prefers White's chances in both cases) 8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 11 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Black has his pieces out, but he lacks space and his g7-bishop is severely restricted. In the game, White expanded with h3, g4-g5 and h4-h5 with an excellent attack. For more on ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , see the next note (in which ...a6 and a4 are played before ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ).

Let's return to the game move, 4...a6 (*D*).

It is sometimes called 'Tiger's Modern', after Grandmaster Tiger Hillarp Persson, and has



an even more modern feel than 4...c6. For one thing, Black doesn't even feint at contesting one of the four central squares. Such rook's-pawn pushes are increasingly common for both players in contemporary chess, representing a flight from some of the heavy theory associated with the traditional face-off of central pawns. These relatively noncommittal moves have a positive purpose (in this case, the support of ...b5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ), but they also serve a preventative function that can frustrate typical plans of the opponent. Here 4...a6 may remind you of the Najdorf Sicilian, in that it prevents  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . Indeed, the moves ...c5 and ...cxd4 often follow, when a very Sicilian-like position arises.

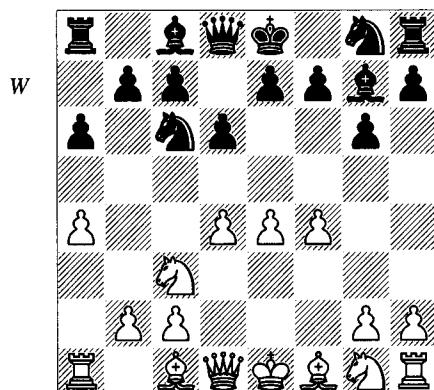
Assuming that he continues with 5...b5, Black has played his first five moves with only one piece developed and a single central pawn modestly situated on the third rank. Why does he do this? One motivation is pragmatic: White's theoretically weakest point in this formation is e4 (as it is d4 in the King's Indian Defence structure with pawns on c4, d4 and e4), because that square can't be defended by the f- or d-pawn. Thus both the moves ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ...b4 will increase the pressure on that point. Likewise, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  at some point attacks e4, and if White plays e5, Black can land a knight on d5, a post that is serendipitously strengthened by a pawn on b5 or b4 (because White cannot as easily play c4 to attack the knight on d5). Black might even find a way to make the move ...f5 work, perhaps after ...e6; notice that these are both moves that support the influence of Black's bishop on b7 down the light-squared long diagonal. Ultimately, Black's ideas and White's counterstrategies are hard to pin down

in advance, and will depend upon the opportunities presented by the opponent.

**5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is often played, and can easily transpose, for example, to the note to White's 7th or 8th move below.

5 a4, preventing ...b5, is a 'natural' response, at least for a player without a lot of experience with this system. But after 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  (D), Black has improved upon 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  because b5 is denied to a white bishop or knight, and should White play d5, Black's knight has access to b4. In addition, White can only play 0-0-0 at the risk of exposing his king to a dangerous attack because of the weakened queenside.



The only potential risk for Black would be in the line 6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 appears logical, but 8 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  targets Black's weakened b6-square) 7 a5. With this advance, White stops ...a5 and now threatens  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  or a knight retreat followed by c3, trapping Black's knight. (Instead, the immediate 7  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  threatens c3, but 7...a5! 8 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  leaves Black with better development, prospects of ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , and an extended long diagonal.) After 7 a5, however, Black stands quite securely if he plays 7...e6 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  c5!, as in Mikhailovsky-Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2003.

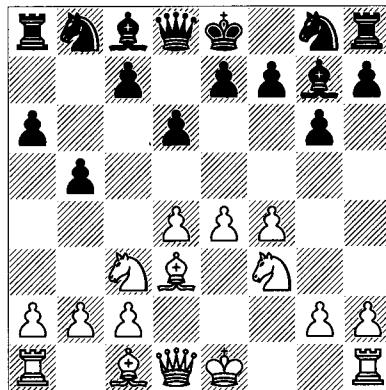
**5...b5**

This is Black's idea: he will forego a central pawn challenge until after he develops by ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Then after ...c5 and ...cxd4, Sicilian themes can arise, or the game can go its own way, as it does in this contest.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (D)**

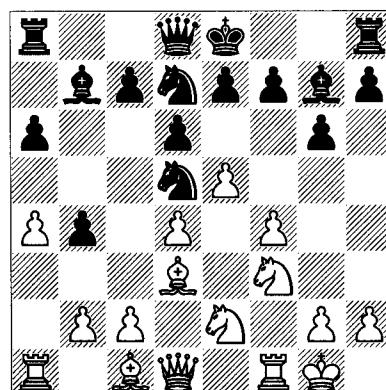
**6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

**B**



Relatively noncommittal; Black would like to play a speedy ...c5 in some lines. There's no way to give a complete survey of this variation, so I'll confine myself to some examples; these will be a little dense but hopefully useful if you're interested in 4...a6. I shall be citing the games and opinions of Tiger Hillarp Persson a lot, because he is the leading contemporary exponent of 4...a6 in Modern Defence lines. Hillarp Persson prefers 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  over 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when he feels that 7 a4! is good for White. This may well be so, yet the latter move is almost never played! Rather than use mountains of analysis, let's follow some logical moves: 7...b4 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  (9...e6 allows 10 f5!, opening lines for both White's rook on f1 and his dark-squared bishop, always a dangerous proposition for Black) 10 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (D).

**W**



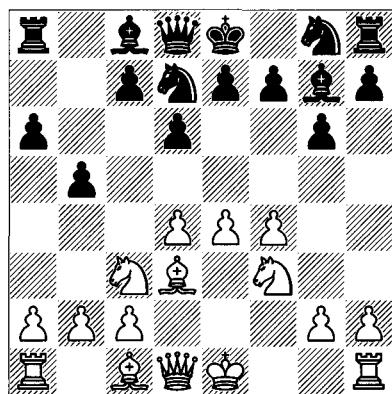
If White can rid himself of the knight on d5, he can trust that his large, mobile centre will work to his advantage. In addition, moves such as e6 and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  can be effective. For his part,

Black will try to break down White's pawn-mass. Specific moves communicate the key ideas better than words can here:

a) 11 c4 bxc3 12 bxc3 (12  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ ? 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  15  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8!$  is about equal; then White shouldn't be too greedy, as after 16  $\mathbb{W}xa6$  0-0 and ...c5, he will struggle to hold things together) 12...0-0 (12...a5 sets up the move ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  in response to c4; then 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ? initiates an attack such as 13...e6 14  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  15 exd6 cxd6 16  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  17  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ ; still, this is a good point for Black to look for improvements) 13  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14 c4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  b6 15 a5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  e6! (16...h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{B}xf7$  18 e6) 17 d5!?  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18 dx6 fxe6 (18... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 20  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  h6 20  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  hxg5 21 exd6 cxd6 22  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with multiple threats. This is fascinating material, although obviously not forced.

b) 11 a5 ('!' – Hillarp Persson; White prevents ...a5 and takes away the retreat-square b6 for Black's knight on d5) 11...c5 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  0-0 (Hector-Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 1997 went 12...cxd4 13 e6  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , when one road to advantage is 14 exf7+!  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15 f5!) 13 e6 f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15 f5! cxd4? (15...g5 is better, however ugly) 16 exd7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  and moves like  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and  $\mathbb{W}g4$  are too strong to resist.

We now return to 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D):



### 7 e5

The usual move. Instead, 7 a4 b4 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is similar to, and may transpose to, the previous note. The move-orders can be confusing; for the record, after 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , 7...c5 8 e5 is the note to White's 8th move, and 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8 e5 is the note to 7...c5.

White can also play 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (perhaps not best; by transposition, Stefansson-Hillarp Persson, Gausdal 1996 went 7...c5 8 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  dxc5 11 e5, when Black held the balance following 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  14 c4 0-0). Now 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 9 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ! is a common position with Sicilian-like qualities. But 8 e5! is more dangerous, in view of 8...c5 9 exd6 cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ . I suspect that 8...e6 or 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is better. Notice how many options both sides have on every move!

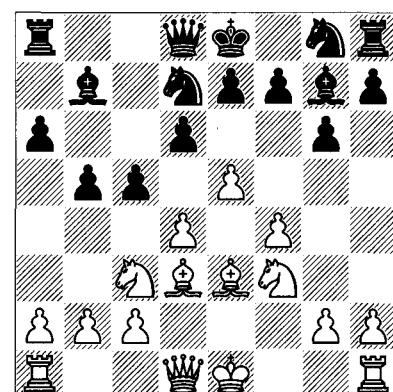
### 7...c5

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is the main alternative, which often transposes, although 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  might now be met by 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (rather than 8...c5); for example, 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$ ) 9...e6 (Finkel mentions 9...0-0 10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  as slightly in White's favour) 10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11  $\mathbb{W}hg1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , and perhaps 12  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  is more accurate than 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  exf5 13 d5, which led to an unclear mess in Antal-Vajda, Nagykanizsa 2003.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}e4$

I ordinarily try to limit chaotic variations which contain few positional lessons, but in this case both sides need to be aware of some concrete possibilities. Keep in mind, however, that if you play 4...a6, you aren't forced to go into this position, and neither is White.

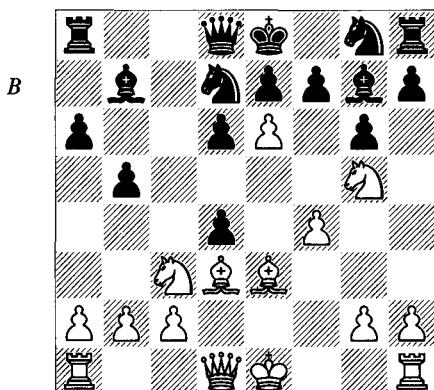
To begin with, some remarkable play can result from 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (D):



a) A couple of games have followed the long and complex line 9  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  (in S.Pavlov-V.Yanov, Kiev Ch 2008, Black tried to get his knight out by 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  fxe5 13 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}dxe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0-0 16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}f4+$

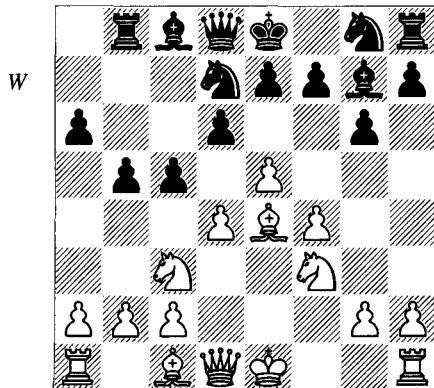
18 ♕b1 ♔xg7 19 hxg4, and here 19...♗e5 would have been unclear according to Finkel; there are naturally many options!) 10 ♖xb7?!? ♖xb7 11 dxc5 dxe5 (11...dxc5 12 a4! b4 13 ♖d5) 12 ♖d5 ♖xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♖c8 14 ♖b6!? ♖xb6 15 cxb6 ♖f6, Mortensen-Hillarp Persson, Danish Team Ch 2003. Now Hillarp Persson suggests 16 fxe5! ♖d5! 17 ♖d4 0-0, when White can keep a modest advantage by 18 0-0-0 or 18 a4 ♖xc2 19 0-0, but it may not be much.

b) A shocking line follows 9 ♖g5 cxd4 10 e6 (D).



10...f5!! 11 ♖xf5 (11 exd7+ ♖xd7 will leave Black with a powerful pawn-centre) 11...♖df6 12 ♖xg6+ hxg6 13 ♖d3 ♖h6 14 ♖xg6+ ♖f8 15 ♖xd4 ♖e8 and Black has the upper hand, San Segundo-Hillarp Persson, Elista Olympiad 1998.

8...♗b8 (D)



A sort of main-line position has arisen, which has produced fascinating play. Black is trying

to combine the best features of the Pirc and Sicilian Defences.

**9 0-0**

A few snippets of analysis illustrate the conflicting factors of White's attacking pieces and his crumbling centre:

a) 9 ♖e3 b4 10 ♖e2 can go in a number of directions; for example, 10...♖h6 (or 10...♖c7 11 c3 ♖h6!) 11 dxc5! ♖g4 12 ♖d4 dxe5 13 ♖xe5 ♖dxe5 (13...♖gxe5 14 c6!) 14 h3!?, 0-0 15 hxg4 ♖xg4 16 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 with approximate equality.

b) 9 ♖g5 cxd4 (after 9...♖h6 10 e6!, there might follow 10...♖f6 11 ♖c6+ ♖f8 12 exf7; then 12...cxd4 13 ♖d5!?) is fairly crazy, whereas 12...♖xf7 13 dxc5 h6 14 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 15 ♖e2 ♖e6 is unclear) 10 ♖d5 (a cute line is 10 e6 f5! 11 ♖xf5 ♖df6!) 10...e6 11 ♖ce4! (11 ♖xe6? ♖xe5!) 11...♖f8 12 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 13 ♖g5+ ♖e8 14 ♖xe6 dxe5 15 ♖f7+ ♖e7 16 0-0 e4! 17 ♖e1 ♖df6 18 ♖b3 ♖h6. This is still unclear.

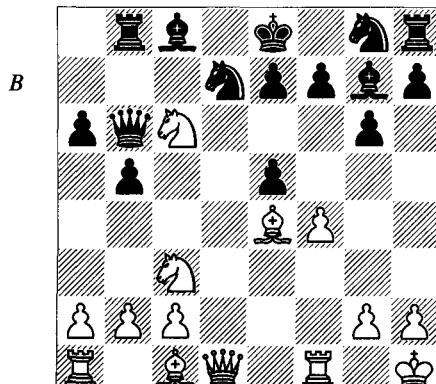
**9...cxd4**

9...b4 may well be just as good, and I'll leave it for you to research.

**10 ♖xd4 dxe5!**

Black sacrifices the exchange for a pawn in order to destroy White's large centre; this is in the spirit of the 4...a6 line, and of many modern openings. The alternative 10...♗b7 11 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 allows White to use his superior development. Hillarp Persson gives 12 e6!?, (12 exd6! is perhaps more convincing, since 12...exd6? 13 ♖d5 is unacceptable, but 12...♖b6 13 ♖e3 ♖xd6 14 ♖e1 maintains White's initiative) 12...fxe6, and even here, 13 ♖e3? ♖f8 14 a4! b4 15 ♖e4 looks promising for White.

**11 ♖c6 ♖b6+ 12 ♖h1 (D)**



**12...Qgf6!**

Black plays another exchange sacrifice for the double purpose of developing quickly and controlling more of the centre. If he tries to avoid capture by 12...Bb7?, White's easiest solution is 13 fxe5, with ideas including Qf3 and Qxe7. Then 13...Qxe5 14 Qe3! Qc7 15 Qf4 leaves Black without good moves. Alternatively Black has tested 12...b4!? a number of times, but instead of 13 Qxb8, 13 Qa4! looks strong; one line would be 13...Qc7 14 Qxb8 Qxb8 15 Qe3, intending 15...Qf6!? 16 Qb6 Qd7 17 Qc5.

**13 Qxb8 Wxb8 14 fxe5**

Erenburg gives 14 Qd3 Qb7 15 We2, but Black still has his basic central control for compensation after 15...0-0.

**14...Qxe5!?**

Several games have proceeded in this fashion, but 14...Qxe4 15 Qxe4 Qxe5 should be investigated as well. Black has obvious and probably adequate compensation for White's minimal material edge.

**15 Qf4 0-0**

Not 15...Qh5?? 16 Qc6+, but now 16...Qh5 is threatened.

**16 Qf3**

White wants to discourage ...Qh5 while clearing the e-file for a direct attack on the e5-knight. 16 We2 Qh5 17 Qd5 Qxf4! 18 Qxe7+ Qh8 19 Qxf4 Qe6 is unclear according to Hillarp Persson.

**16...b4**

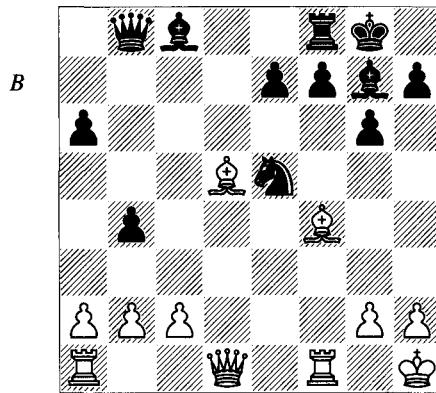
16...e6!? 17 We2 Qfd7 18 Qad1 Wb6 19 Qe4 was Kariakin-Hillarp Persson, Benidorm 2003; here 19...Qb7 would keep Black right in the game.

**17 Qd5!?**

Erenburg and Hillarp Persson like 17 We2!. Then 17...Qfd7 18 Qd5 Qe8 19 a3! should favour White, although Black still has his bishop-pair and pawn for the exchange.

**17...Qxd5 18 Qxd5 (D)**

You can see how theoretical the odd little move 4...a6 has become: it turns out that we're still in a main book line! The earlier game Malmdin-Hillarp Persson, Sandviken 2004 went 18 Wxd5 Qe6! 19 We4 Qf5 20 We2 Wb5 21 Wxb5 axb5 with a pawn and plenty of play for the exchange.

**18...e6!?**

18...Wb5 might be playable. White can force the pace with 19 Qxe5 Qxe5 20 Qxf7+ Qxf7 21 Qd8+ Qg7 22 Qxf7+ Qxf7 23 Wxc8 Qxb2 24 Qe1, but after 24...Qf6, it will be hard for him to make progress.

**19 Qb3 Wb5 20 a3 bxa3 21 Qxa3 Qg4?**

Black should simply develop by 21...Qb7.

22 c4 Wh5 23 h3 Qxb2 24 Qa2 e5 25 Qxb2 exf4 26 Wf3 g5 27 Qg1 Qf6 28 Wh5 Qxh5 29 c5

Black has levelled the material, but White's rooks and passed pawn are too strong.

29...Qg3 30 Qd1 Qf5 31 Qc2 Qe6 32 Qd3 a5 33 c6 Qc8 34 Qc1 Qf8 35 c7 Qe7 36 Qa6 Qe4 37 Qxc8 Qxc8 38 Qd1 1-0

Conclusion: The hypermodern move 4...a6 is somewhat risky, but produces rich chess that will appeal to gamblers.

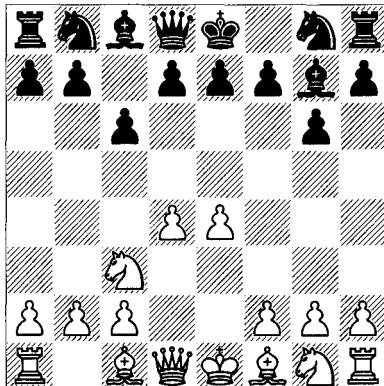
## Modern Defence with an Early ...c6

Hector – Høi  
Copenhagen 2002

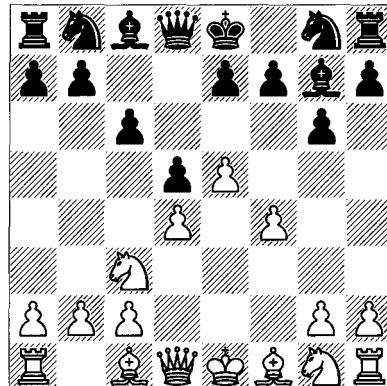
**1 e4 g6 2 d4 Qg7 3 Qc3 c6 (D)**

Today this has become a very popular move-order. Sometimes it is a prelude to fairly conventional set-ups involving ...d6. But Black can also play 4...d5 next (as he does in most of this section), staking out a central presence on the light squares. This strategy resembles Black's in variations of the Caro-Kann Defence (which sometimes directly transpose to these lines), the Scandinavian Defence and the Alekhine

W



B



Defence. It seems odd to move so quickly away from the dark-square strategy that ...g6 implies, but it turns out that the combination of ...g6, ...c6 and ...d5 yields a solid position, whether or not White commits to a big centre. In general, the variation with ...c6 and ...d5 suits players who want to play safely and not be too short of space.

#### 4 f4

Again, this is the most critical test. Indeed, f4 lines are especially appropriate versus the Modern Defence; they pose great danger for Black and at the same time are less risky than similar systems in other defences. Why? Because in other lines with broad centres such as the Four Pawns King's Indian, the Exchange Grünfeld, or even the Four Pawns Attack versus the Alekhine Defence, Black's pieces generally develop more quickly than in the Modern. In the next game we shall see 4 ♜f3 and 4 ♜c4.

#### 4...d5

This move is one of the main points behind 3...c6: Black switches from the dark-square emphasis of 1...g6 and 2...♝g7 to a direct assault on White's light squares. In particular, White's e4-square can no longer be defended by pawns. Of course, it's not too late to return to 4...d6, which we saw above.

#### 5 e5 (D)

#### 5...h5

The odd-looking advance of Black's h-pawn introduces Gurgenidze's system of development, which can also arise from the Caro-Kann Defence via 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 g6 4 e5 ♜g7 (4...h5!? 5 f4 ♜h6 might save Black some time, but 5 f4 is hardly necessary) 5 f4 h5. Black's idea is multi-faceted. He prevents White's move

g4, which might not seem important until you realize that Black intends to put a bishop on g4, appropriately outside the pawn-chain which is about to be constructed by the move ...e6. Normally, that bishop will subsequently be exchanged after White plays h3, when the usefulness of ...h5 becomes apparent: it can both prevent White's g4 directly and, in some cases, it will advance to h4 and restrain two pawns (on h3 and g2) with one.

Black also secures an effective outpost for his knight on f5; and since the knight will probably come there via h6, it's handy that the move ...h5 prevents g4. It also eliminates h4-h5, a standard way in which White normally meets the combination of ...g6 and ...♜h6. Ultimately, then, Black sets up a fortress on the kingside with pawns on e6, f7, g6 and h5, daring White to expand in that sector.

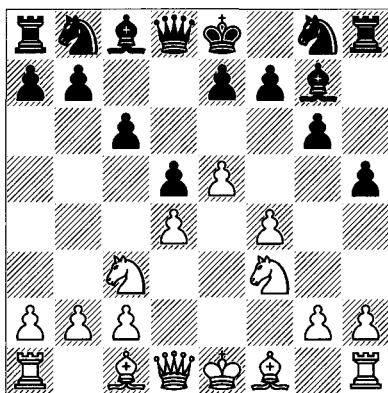
I should mention that Black can play other moves here. One such is 5...♜h6, still looking at the light squares, and if White responds 6 ♜f3, Black can reply with 6...♝g4, or even the strange-looking 6...f6, attacking the front of the pawn-chain (contrary to some of the old textbooks, attacking the front of a pawn-chain is very often a productive way to attack it). I'm going to forego analysis of those lines, however, in part because they tend to be less thematic.

#### 6 ♜f3 (D)

6 ♜e3 has some unique points after 6...♜h6 (6...♝b6 7 ♜b1 ♜f5 8 ♜f3 ♜h6 9 ♜e2 doesn't look like what Black wants) 7 h3!? (7 ♜f3 ♜b6 8 ♜b1 would be more conventional) 7...♜f5 8 ♜f2 h4 (the more forcing line 8...♝b6 9 ♜b1 h4 10 ♜f3 ♜g3!? 11 ♜xg3 hxg3 seems to fall a

little short after 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , intending 13  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , to hit the g-pawn, although that's not completely clear) 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !? (9  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! intends 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$  10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$   $h\times g3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14  $\mathbb{W}e3$ ) 9...e6 (now though, 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ! is a good try, because 10  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !? 11  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$   $h\times g3$  is rather muddy) 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 b3. White can be happy in this kind of position; compare the main game. Since 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  also avoids some of Black's promising options in the main line, it should be looked into carefully by both sides.

B



### 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

This knight eyes the light squares, especially f5, from where it can exert strong influence. An interesting example that shows Black playing for ...c5 is Hellers-Petursson, Malmö 1993: 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ !? 9  $\mathbb{W}f2$  (the d-pawn would be defended indirectly after 9  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !?, due to 9... $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ?? 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ; 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  instead allows 10 g4!, restricting Black's knight – there is plenty to explore here) 9...e6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5?! 14 c4! dx4 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ! gxf5 16 bxc4!? cxd4 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  a6 18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  19 c5! with a huge attack based upon 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ? 20  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  exf5 21  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ . White's c-pawn counterattack is a common worry for Black once he has essayed ...c5, which is not to say that it is always unplayable.

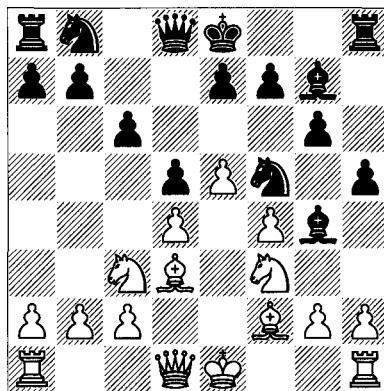
### 7 $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}d3$

The other main move-order is 8 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xf3$ , when 10...h4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e6 12 0-0 transposes to the game, and the independent line 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$  (hitting d4 and b2) virtually forces White to castle queenside, but 11

0-0-0 h4 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  13  $\mathbb{W}b3$ ! gives White effective play in that sector; for example, 13...b5 14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  or 13... $\mathbb{W}c7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , with an early c4 to follow. It could be that 8 h3 is the most accurate move-order; at any rate, it avoids the next few notes.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 9 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ (D)

B



### 9...e6

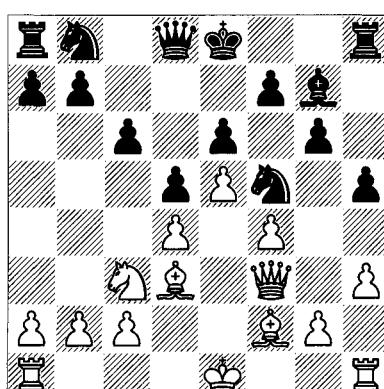
Or:

a) 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$  should definitely be considered, although it is seldom played. For example, 10  $\mathbb{B}b1$  (10  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  14  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  repeats) 10...h4!? (10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11 0-0-0-0-0; 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11 b4!) 11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! 12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13 b4 e6 with an unclear game.

b) A creative if perhaps too exotic alternative played by master Brian Wall begins with 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-e6$ . In one game, Black then continued ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (hitting f4) and ... $\mathbb{Q}eg7$ , further blockading the light squares!

### 10 h3 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 11 $\mathbb{W}xf3$ (D)

B



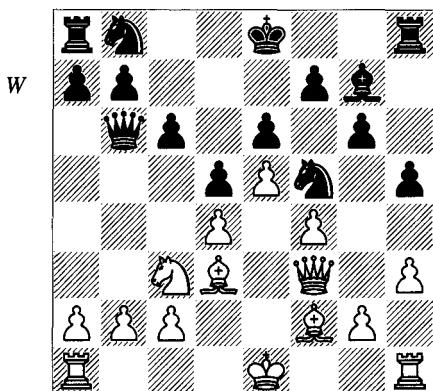
White intends g4.

#### 11...h4

Now we have a position that has arisen many times over the years. Black logically clamps down on the possibility of g4. Given White's successes, however, we should look at alternatives:

a) Anand-Blatny, World Junior Ch, Baguio City 1987 went 11... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  12  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  h4! 14  $\mathbb{W}g4$  exf5) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}xh4+$  15 g3  $\mathbb{W}e7$ . Now White played too hastily with 16 g4?!  $\mathbb{h}xg4!$  17  $\mathbb{h}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xh1+$  18  $\mathbb{W}xh1$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  19 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  and he lacked full compensation. Correct was 16 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 g4 (this is thematic: White wants to blast away with f5) 17...0-0-0 18 f5, and now 18...exf5 19 gxf5 gxf5 20  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$  leaves White better with his pressure down the f-file, whereas 18...gxf5 19 gxf5  $\mathbb{W}h4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 21 c3 gives him a small but real positional edge.

b) The rarely-played 11... $\mathbb{W}b6$ !? (D) is interesting, trying to discourage White's straightforward plan of 0-0 followed by queenside expansion:

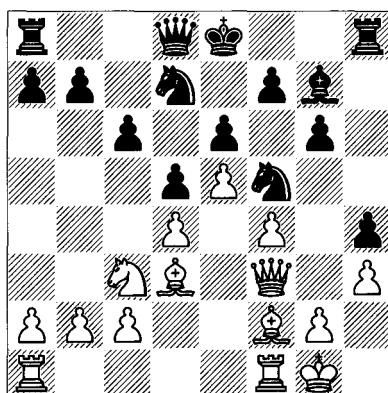


b1) 12 0-0-0 h4 (now that White has committed his king to the queenside, Black should prevent g4) 13  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  gxf5 14  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  and perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , Alekseva-Pietrasanta, Le Touquet 2001) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?. White has the simple idea of  $\mathbb{Q}g1-f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ ; nevertheless, 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  c5! 17  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  gxf5 18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c4! gives Black enough counterplay.

b2) 12 0-0! can be played anyway, because 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{W}d1$  will win the pawn back; for

example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{W}b1$ ! a5 (not 14...0-0-0? 15 b4, when  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  can't be prevented), when there are some wild lines such as 15 a3 a4! 16 b4 axb3 17  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! cxb5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  b6 and 15  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !  $\mathbb{W}b4$  16 c3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}dx5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 20  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  0-0 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  22  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  (or 22... $\mathbb{W}c7$ !?), when White's piece only just outweighs Black's three pawns.

#### 12 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}d7$ (D)

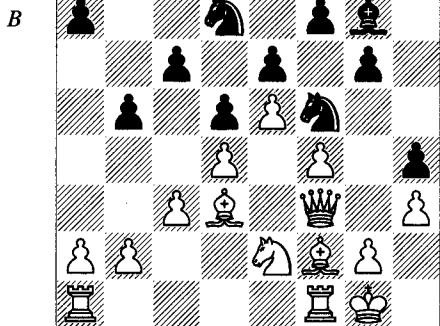


Several top-level games have reached this point. Black has done everything right from a positional point of view: he rid himself of his bad bishop, blockaded White's centre (immobilizing his bishops), and established a 'one restrains two' situation on the kingside (h-pawn versus h- and g-pawns). Nevertheless, White's record from this position has been extremely good. It's not only his two bishops that make the difference, but his greater command of territory. In combination with his lead in development, this is effective in squelching his opponent's counterplay. The position looks closed, but White will be able to operate on the queenside, and as long as he can keep lines open there, his bishops will exert a powerful influence in the long term. Similarly, any pawn-breaks like ...c5 or ...f6 tend to open up lines for White's pieces, so Black usually has to stay passive. Finally, Black's pawn on h4 can become a target for White's pieces. Interestingly, if you look at other openings such as the King's Indian Defence in which White's pawns on b2 and a3 are held up by the manoeuvre ...a5-a4, it will often happen that the pawn on a4 can be attacked to good effect by a queen on d1, bishop on c2 and

knight on c3. The mirror image of this attack shows up in the main game and notes below.

### 13 b3

White anticipates playing c4. The somewhat more accurate 13  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  has been played several times, covering g3 and freeing the c-pawn to move. Then Sivokho-Chernyshov, St Petersburg 2000 illustrates the fundamental strategies: 13...b5!? (13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14 a4 prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}a3$  ideas) 14 c3! (D) (preparing b3 and c4, rather than the immediate 14 b3 b4!, after which Black succeeded in contesting White's queenside expansion in Smirnov-Kobaliya, European Ch, Ohrid 2001: 15 c4 bxc3 16  $\mathbb{H}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !?, and Black could have just about levelled matters with 17... $\mathbb{Q}a3$  18  $\mathbb{H}c2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ , based upon the tactic 19  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ ).



Black's position doesn't look so bad, but he lacks a plan. The game continued 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (after 14... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , one good line is 15 a4 a6 16 axb5 axb5 17 b3 with the idea c4) 15 b3 (here's the point: White has queenside play and Black has nothing equivalent; compare the comments in the main game) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16  $\mathbb{H}fc1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  17 c4 bxc4 18 bxc4 dxc4 19  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (if 19... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ , White's rooks will dominate the c- and b-files) 20  $\mathbb{Q}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21  $\mathbb{H}ab1$  0-0, and here the most direct course was suggested by Lukacs: 22  $\mathbb{H}b7$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  with ongoing pressure.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 14 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

14 a4!? would prevent the resource in the next note.

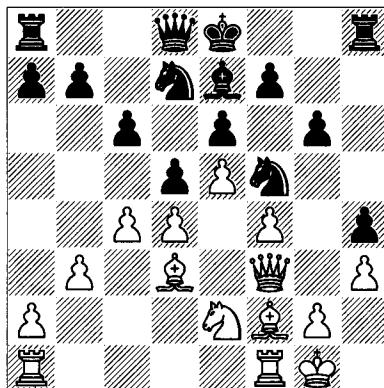
### 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This was Black's opportunity to exploit the slight weakening caused by 13 b3: 14... $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !, and if 15 c4, 15...a5!. Then it's awkward for

White to expel the bishop from a3 or utilize the c-file.

### 15 c4! (D)

Neither side can do much on the kingside. White's greater control of territory, on the other hand, gives his pieces quick access to the queenside if the play opens up there, so he is happy to advance on that wing.



### 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Black wants to lure White's pawns forward immediately and close the queenside. His alternatives illustrate just how important space can be; in spite of the many strong players who have defended the variation beginning with 11...h4, it's possible that Black's position is simply lost:

a) Grishchuk-Kalantarian, Anibal Open, Linares 1999 saw a straightforward execution of White's strategy: 15... $\mathbb{W}a5$  16 a3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17  $\mathbb{H}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  a6 19  $\mathbb{H}c2$  b5 20 c5  $\mathbb{W}c7$  21 a4  $\mathbb{H}hb8$  22 b4 bxa4 23  $\mathbb{H}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  24  $\mathbb{H}ca2$   $\mathbb{H}ba8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  26 b5 cxb5 27  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  and White emerged a pawn up.

b) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is perhaps the most logical move, scurrying over to connect rooks, but it hasn't done much better than the alternatives. One smooth example went 16  $\mathbb{H}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  17 a3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  a5 19 c5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20 b4 axb4 21 axb4 b5! 22  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  (there is only one file open now, so Black hurries to make sure that White doesn't control it) 23  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g1!$  (Black's advanced h-pawn is weak, which means that he cannot defend both sides of the board) 24... $\mathbb{H}xa1$  25  $\mathbb{H}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$ ?! 26  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  28  $\mathbb{H}xa6$ !  $\mathbb{W}xa6$  29  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  exf5 30  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  and White captures on h4, Ehlvest-Negulescu, Erevan 1988. The h4-pawn is one reason that Black

finds it so hard to contest White on the queen-side in this line.

### 16 $\mathbb{E}fc1$

16 c5 is also perfectly fine, since White's b4-b5 can't be stopped without allowing some other type of activity.

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 17 c5! $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 18 b4 a6 19 a4

Black can't really stop this stereotyped attack.

### 19... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{W}c7$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}g1!$ ?

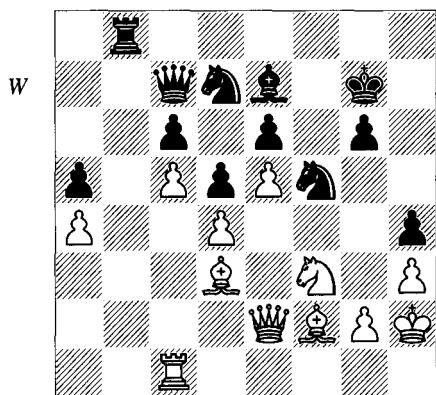
This knight is intended to come to f3 and attack the h-pawn. That's a good plan, although it's probably even easier to play 21  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !, intending b5.

### 21...b6 22 $\mathbb{W}e2$ bxc5

After 22...b5, 23  $\mathbb{E}a3$  and  $\mathbb{E}ca1$ , perhaps even with  $\mathbb{W}a2$ , will penetrate on the queenside.

**23 bxc5 a5 24  $\mathbb{E}ab1$  f6!?** 25  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  fxe5 26 fxe5  $\mathbb{E}ab8$  27  $\mathbb{E}xb8$   $\mathbb{E}xb8$  (D)

27... $\mathbb{W}xb8$  28  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  29  $\mathbb{W}e1$  threatens  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  and capture on h4, but 29... $\mathbb{W}d8$  permits 30  $\mathbb{E}b7$  with devastating effect.



### 28 $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

Now material losses are inevitable.

### 28...exf5 29 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

30... $\mathbb{E}b4$  31  $\mathbb{W}f2!$  threatens  $\mathbb{W}g3$ . After this White has various faster wins, but he keeps a grip on the position and wins nicely:

31  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  32  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{E}xb1$  33  $\mathbb{W}xb1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  34  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g5 35 g3  $\mathbb{W}f7$  36  $\mathbb{W}b8$  g4 37 e6!  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  38  $\mathbb{W}c7+$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  39  $\mathbb{W}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  40  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  41  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  42 h4  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  43  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  44  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  45  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  46  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  47  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  48 c6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  49  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  50  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  51  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  52  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  53 h5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  54 h6  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  55  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  56  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  1-0

This variation has had a fascinating history. Nevertheless, the main line is a wonderful illustration of the advantages of controlling more space. Black should look into playing 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$  or one of his 11th-move alternatives; as so often happens when one player has two knights against two bishops, he can't wait by, but must undertake something dynamic.

### Adams – Bologan

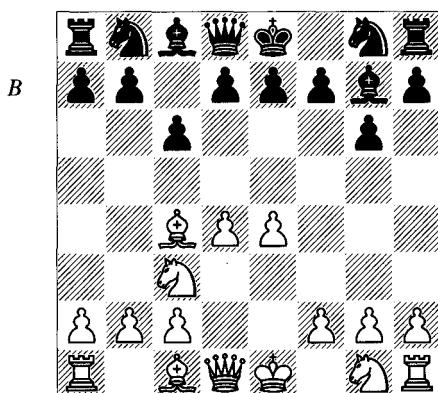
Bundesliga 1998/9

### 1 e4 g6 2 d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6

The remarkable 3...d5?!, intending 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  c6 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  or 4 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (with the idea 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ) is a speculative idea which has received recent attention. It is probably in White's favour, but remains playable. You can research this in books and databases.

### 4 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

White plays the natural developing move, aiming at the centre. Of course, there are many alternatives such as 4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , and 4 h4 is certainly possible. But the popular 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (D) leads to particularly interesting play.



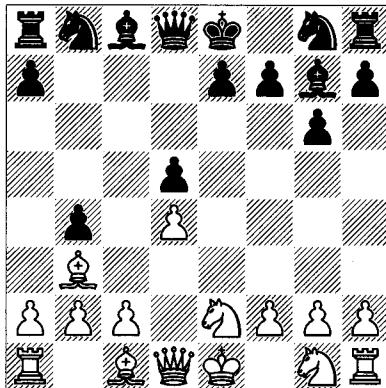
That directly discourages ...d5, and it puts a priority on quick development, sometimes having in mind a direct attack. The play is complex, generally going in one of two main directions:

a) Black should avoid overextending by 4...b5?! 5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  b4 6  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 7 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8 a3!  $\mathbb{E}xa3$  9  $\mathbb{E}xa3$  0-0, as in Georgadze-Radev, Tbilisi 1971, when White can claim much the better game following 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .

b) 4...d5 (this is the way to go if Black wants to insist upon the ...b5 break) 5 exd5 b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$

b4 7  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  (or 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ , eyeing c5 and preparing a3) 7...cxd5 (D).

W

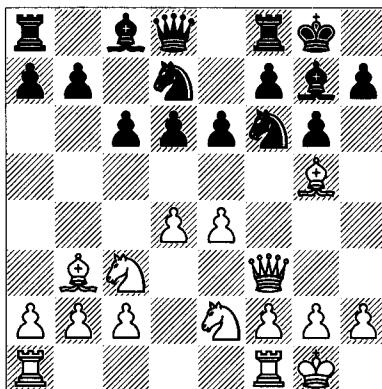


Black has played this way many times with passable results. He gives himself extra operating room on the queenside and hopes to develop rapidly there (...a5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is a natural follow-up). Nevertheless, his queenside structure is a little airy: squares such as a4, a5, c5 and c6 will permanently lack pawn protection. Therefore, White should maintain some edge by gaining access to them; for example, 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !? (the similar 8 a3 bxa3 9  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  gives White positional pressure against the queenside with maximum flexibility) 8...a5 9 a3 bxa3 10  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! (11...e6! anticipates 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ , when White might want to reposition via 13  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , Schmittdiel-Vogt, Austrian Team Ch 1999. Here White could safely play 17  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  with the idea 18... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ ?? 19  $\mathbb{Q}b8\#$ .

c) Black's most common reply is 4...d6 (reaching the same position as after 3...d6 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  c6). Then White's favourite independent move is the primitive 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !?, in order to induce 5...e6 and create dark-square weaknesses on d6 and f6 (5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 6 e5 doesn't work out well). Then one main line goes 6  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (D).

This curious position typifies many variations of the Modern Defence. Black has a backward pawn-structure and passively-placed pieces, but his position remains elastic and he is prepared to react dynamically to advances by his opponent, much as in the Hedgehog Variation of the English Opening and certain Sicilian

B



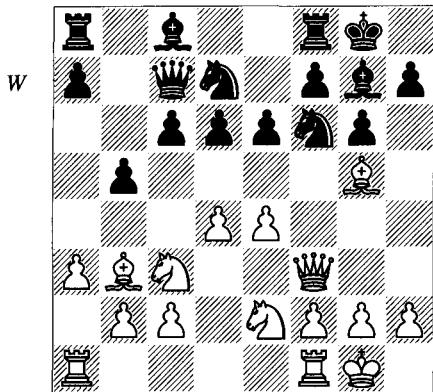
Defences. With that in mind, let's examine a couple of strategies:

c1) Elsewhere in this book we've seen the kind of pawn-structure arising from 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  h6 11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  e5; for example, in the King's Indian Defence, Philidor Defence, and especially the Pirc Defence. Nunn-Fauland, Vienna 1991 continued 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (White's pieces have good scope and he intends to break down the e5 strongpoint) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ !? (12...g5 13  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  keeps lines closed and is at any rate safer) 13 f4! exd4 (initiating exchanges that leave White with the more active pieces; 13...exf4 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}fe2$  may improve, but throws Black on the defensive) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (in Nunn-Ehlvest, Skellefteå 1989, Black played 18... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?, when 19 f5! gxf5 20  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  created two new weaknesses in his position) 19  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  b6 20 a4!  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !. White has a large advantage, intending f5 and, under the right circumstances, a5.

c2) 9...b5! is more in the modern spirit: Black plays flexibly; he might want to follow up with ...b4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , or ...a5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , or simply ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . Now:

c21) The forcing 10 e5! is terribly complicated after 10...dxe5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , when a simple response to 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  is 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !, intending 13  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ ! or 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ . So in Baramidze-Iordachescu, Dresden 2003, White played 12 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ ! 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  16 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , and here Black's easiest course was 20...e5! with the idea 21  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .

c22) 10 a3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  (*D*) (10... $\mathbb{A}b7$  11  $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  also looks playable).



After 11 d5?! (straightforward development by 11  $\mathbb{B}ad1$  followed by  $\mathbb{B}f1$  appears best) 11... $\mathbb{C}xd5$ ! 12  $\mathbb{E}xd5$   $\mathbb{A}b7$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$ , Black gets the pawn back with excellent activity. Rublevsky-Iordachescu, European Ch, Silivri 2003 went 14  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{E}xd5$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! is also good) 17 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{R}ab8$  19  $\mathbb{R}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with a nice initiative for Black. Instead, 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{E}xd5$  18 c3  $\mathbb{R}ab8$  19  $\mathbb{R}ab1$  was suggested, but then 19... $\mathbb{W}c4$  20  $\mathbb{R}fd1$   $\mathbb{R}fe8$  gives Black good counterplay. For example, the isolated queen's pawns can't be blockaded due to the tactic 21  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  22  $\mathbb{R}xd4$   $\mathbb{R}xb2$ .

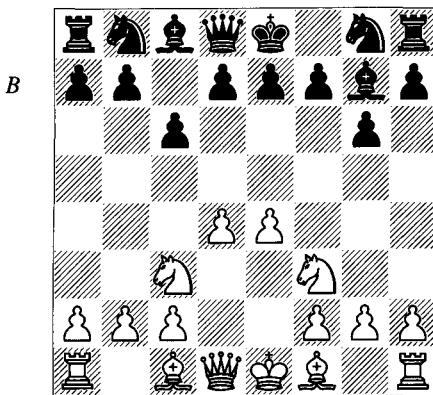
Black can fall victim to sudden attacks in these lines with 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d6 5  $\mathbb{W}f3$ . But some Modern Defence players like to provoke White into aggressive activity, trusting that their compact position can repel any rash advances.

We return to the calmer 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (*D*):

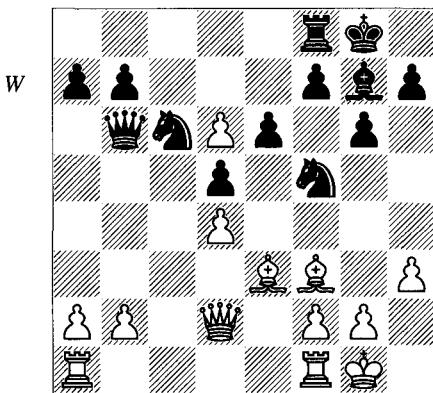
4...d5 5 h3

Over the years, this has become White's most popular choice. He expends a tempo, but prevents Black's plan of playing ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , which is a good minor-piece trade-off in what will be a semi-closed position. After playing ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  and ...e6, Black is left with his good bishop and believes that his knights will be well-placed in the resulting structure. Three brief examples:

a) 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6 e5 e6 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 h3 (slow) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  c5 (central counterattack along the lines of the French Defence makes the



knight as effective as the bishops) 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?! (correct in principle, but it's too time-consuming to try to prop up the central pawn-chain; Black has only a small edge after 10  $\mathbb{C}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  12  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$ ) 10...0-0 11 c3  $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (White can no longer hold the centre: 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{C}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{C}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 12... $\mathbb{C}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{C}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and now 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  16  $\mathbb{W}d2$  wasn't bad for Black in Rozentalis-Blatny, Warsaw 1999, as he can break up the centre with ...f6. However, he could have played the classic exchange sacrifice to destroy White's centre: 14... $\mathbb{W}ad8$ ! 15  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ ! 16  $\mathbb{Exd6}$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (*D*).



In this position both d-pawns will fall, leaving Black's centre pawns unopposed and mobile.

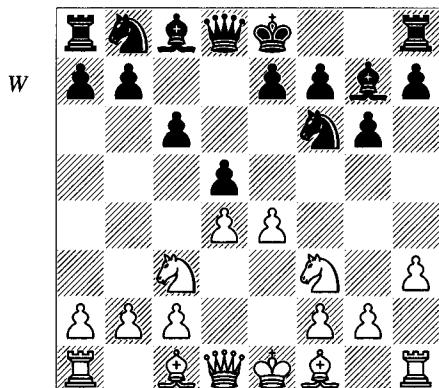
b) White has to be careful not to give Black a favourable French Defence in which he has exchanged off his light-squared bishop and retains excellent knights. For example, A.Belusov-Yurtaev, Seversk 1997 saw 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6 h3

$\mathbb{Q}xf3$  7  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  e6 8 h4?  $\mathbb{W}b6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 10 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{W}d3$  cxd4 12 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  with the better game, since ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is not easy to counter.

c) White can try for a quick attack by 5 exd5 cxd5 6  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is also playable) 7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , but the reply 7... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  forces a retreat. T.Kovarcik-Reinderman, Cappelle la Grande 1996 continued 8  $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ ! (White should be satisfied with disturbing Black's king and accept a loss of time by 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ; then 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10 0-0 e6 creates a threat against the d4-pawn, when 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is roughly equal) 8...e5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 0-0  $\mathbb{W}xa8$  and Black emerged with two pieces for a rook and pawn. Even with his dark-square weaknesses, this must be equal or better for him.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ (D)

This is Black's most direct way to challenge White's centre. In the next game we'll see 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .



### 6 e5

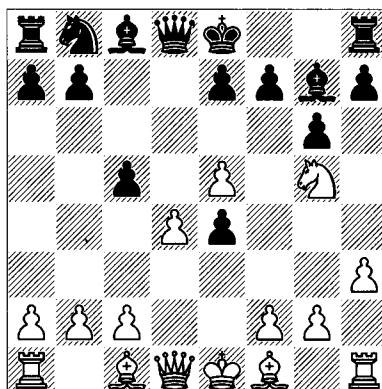
White makes the normal choice. Black can simplify and succeed in liquidating the centre following 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  dxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? (10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5; 10 c3 c5 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  12  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b6) 10...h6!? (10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ! 11  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  e5! would carry off a safe central break) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5! 12 dxc5 (or 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ) 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (13 b4?! a5! 14 b5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15 b6  $\mathbb{W}d6$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! 14  $\mathbb{W}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , Chandler-Christiansen, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984, and now 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  provides compensation. White may be able to find a very small edge after 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , but that isn't clear.

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ 7 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8 bxc3 c5 has some themes in common with the French Defence. I won't go into the theory here, but the play is rather less forcing than in the main lines and worthy of your investigation.

### 7...dxe4 8 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ c5 (D)

Black needs to counterattack before  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  simply wins a pawn.

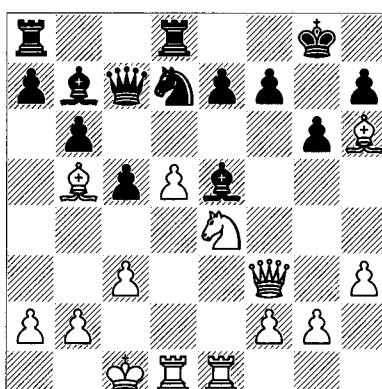


### 9 d5

White plays for a positional advantage. The sharp moves 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and 9 e6 have also been tried here, but Black can at least hold his own after complications.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Delchev-F.Rey, Val Thorens 1996 is often cited for its finish, but also illustrates the dangers of an overly passive strategy for Black: 10...0-0 11 c3 b6?! (better moves are 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and 11... $\mathbb{W}c7$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ?! 13  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}c7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}he1$  (lovely centralization) 16... $\mathbb{Q}ed8$  (D).

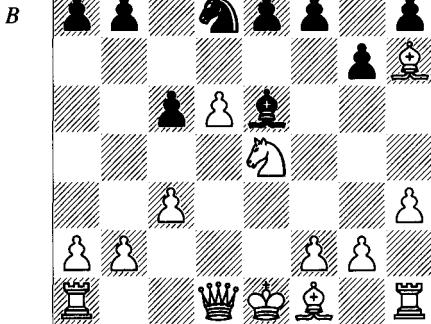


17 d6! (now some pretty tactical play follows)  
 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{W}xf7+!!$  (the point) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  19  
 $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  (19... $e6?$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8?$  21  
 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  mates in a few moves) 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$   
 21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6?$  (but after 21... $\mathbb{W}f6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!$   
 23  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}de5$  Black has weaknesses  
 and is quite tied down) 22  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d3+$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e3+$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}f4+$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$   
 27  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  28 a4 a6 29  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  30  $\mathbb{Q}f3+$   
 $\mathbb{Q}a7$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  32  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  1-0.

### 11 c3 0-0

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  White stands significantly better due to his superior development.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ (D)



B

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

This is sensible, and Black also comes close to equalizing with 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13  $\mathbb{W}d2$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  15  
 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ .

### 13 $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$

An active choice. White has also played 13  
 $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , when 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  equalizes.

### 13...a6 14 $\mathbb{W}xd7$ $\mathbb{Q}xd7!?$

Here 14... $\mathbb{W}xd7$  looks perfectly good; for example, 15  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (15 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}b5!$  followed by  
 $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ) 15... $\mathbb{W}b5$  16  $\mathbb{W}a4!$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  17  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$   
 18 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21  
 a3 f6 and Black's activity fully compensates for whatever slight positional edge White possesses, Lagowski-Macieja, Polish Ch, Warsaw 2004.

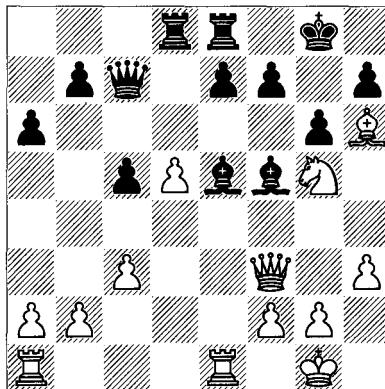
### 15 0-0

15  $\mathbb{Q}xc5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  makes it difficult for White to get castled; ... $\mathbb{W}c7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  might follow.

### 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$

Adams queries this move, and suggests that 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  yields compensation. Then 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  would discourage 17... $\mathbb{W}xb2!?$  due to 18 g4.

### 16 $\mathbb{M}el$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8$ 17 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)



### 18... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

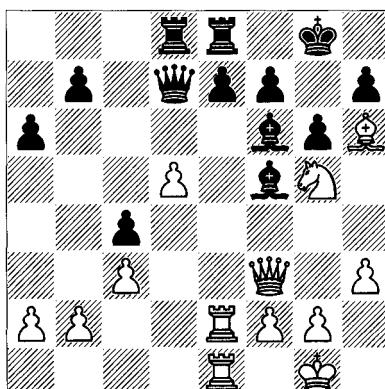
The alternative defence 18... $f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   
 20  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  is unclear.  
 Possibly Black should settle for 22... $\mathbb{Q}h2+$  23  
 $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  instead of 22... $\mathbb{W}b6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$   
 24  $\mathbb{W}d8!.$

### 19 $\mathbb{M}e2$

Adams mentions 19 g4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20  $\mathbb{M}e3$  and 19  
 $\mathbb{M}e3$  with the idea  $\mathbb{M}ae1$ . Compare the game.

### 19...c4 20 $\mathbb{M}ae1$ $\mathbb{W}d7!?$ (D)

Not 20... $\mathbb{Q}d3??$  21  $\mathbb{W}xf6!$ , but 20... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  could be tried.



### 21 g4!?

This forces Black's bishop to a good square. White could instead play 21  $\mathbb{Q}e4!.$

**21...♝d3 22 ♜e3 ♛xg5??**

Now Black will have trouble on the dark squares. He could challenge White to make progress after 22...b5. But not 22...♛xd5?? because of 23 ♜xf6!.

**23 ♛xg5 f6?**

Adams gives 23...♜xd5 24 ♜f4!, with an attack based upon capturing on e7.

**24 ♜h6??**

24 d6! is stronger: 24...♜xd6 25 ♜xf6 ♜f8 26 ♜e6!, etc.

**24...♝f7 25 ♜e5! ♛g8?**

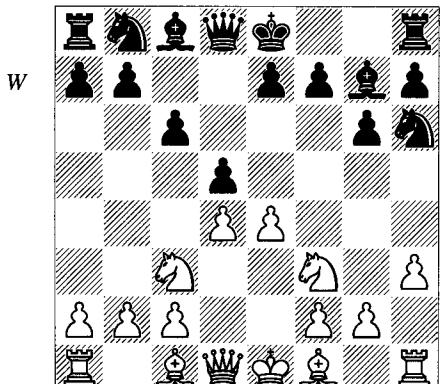
The final mistake. 25...a5 with the idea ...b5 would protect Black's queenside.

**26 ♜e6! ♜xd5 27 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 28 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 29 ♜xe7 ♜a5 30 ♜g7+ ♛f8 31 ♜xg6+ ♛e7 32 ♜g7+ ♛e6 33 ♜xb7 ♜xa2 34 ♜b6+ ♛f7 35 ♜e3 ♜a5 36 ♜h2 h5? 37 ♜d4 f5 38 g5 ♜b5 39 g6+ ♛g8 40 ♜xa6 ♜b8 41 ♛g3 1-0**

Golubev – B. Schneider

Belgian Team Ch 2002/3

**1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♜g7 3 ♜f3 c6 4 ♜c3 d5 5 h3 ♜h6 (D)**

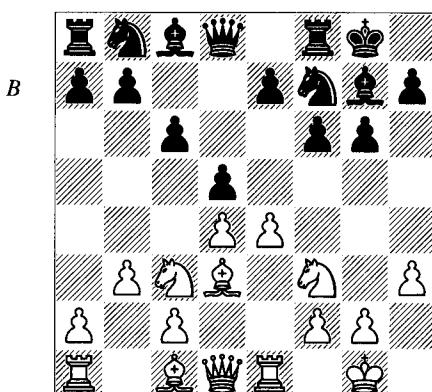


This remarkable knight development is one of Black's favourite methods of working against White's structure. The point isn't immediately clear, since the follow-up ...dxe4 and ...♝f5 won't normally have much impact if White defends his centre by c3. Instead, Black's main idea is an outrageous reorganization by ...f6 and ...♝f7! That looks like a misprint: after all, by playing in this manner Black is using valuable tempi to block off his own bishop on g7, place a knight on the superficially uninspiring

square f7, and weaken the e6-square! Nevertheless, we have to remember that chess is a matter of specifics and timing. It turns out that Black's cluster of pieces on the kingside serves not only the purpose of preventing the advance e5 by White, but of preparing ...e5 for himself. For his part, White is happy to accept the gift of so much time, and will try to show that his opponent's strategy is too slow.

**6 ♜f4**

A good, straightforward developing move. Black plays similarly versus 6 ♜d3: 6...f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♜e1 (8 ♜f4 ♜f7 9 exd5 cxd5 10 ♜e1 ♜c6 with ...e5 next is exactly what Black wants, but 8 ♜e2 ♜f7 9 ♜d1 is a natural alternative set-up for White) 8...♝f7 9 b3 (D) (9 e5 fxe5 10 dxe5 and now 10...e6 intends ...c5 and ...♝c6, or in some cases simply ...♝d7 and ...♝c7; 10...♜e6 is another way to prepare ...c5, when 11 ♜d4 ♜c8 doesn't leave White anything much better than 12 ♜f3, repeating the position).



With 9 b3, White dares Black to make use of his eccentric set-up. He has various ways to do so, none completely clear:

a) It's not obvious how White answers 9...e5. One critical line would be 10 exd5 cxd5 11 ♜a3 e4! 12 ♜xf8 (12 ♜xd5 exd3 13 ♜xf8 ♜xf8 14 c4 is also obscure; the knight on d5 may be more important than preserving a bishop) 12...♜xf8 13 ♜xe4 dxe4 14 ♜xe4 ♜c6, and I suspect that Black's two pieces are the equal of White's rook and two pawns.

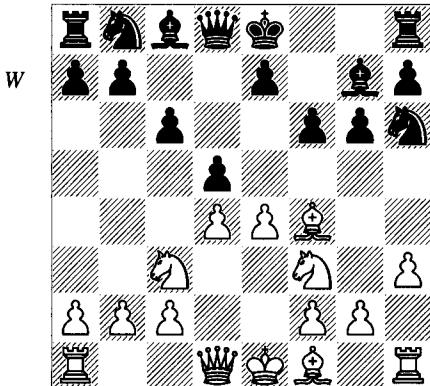
b) 9...a6 (here Black plays a flexible move in the spirit of the Modern Defence: he covers b5 in preparation for ...e5, and may be contemplating ...b5) 10 ♜b2 e5!? 11 dxe5 (White can

get the same material imbalance as in the previous note with 11 exd5 cxd5 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ ?  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  14 dxe5 fxe5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  21 c3, which is equally unclear) 11...fxe5 and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4?$ ! was tried in Zarnicki-Reinaldo Castineira, Internet Chess Club 2003, targeting e5. A simple move such as 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$  is probably better, because Black could have forced White to prove his point by 12...b5! 13  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  14 b4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , when he appears to have no problems.

c) Hraček-Van Mil, Hamburg 2002 saw typical piece deployment for both sides: 9... $\mathbb{W}e8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  a6 11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  b5 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14 a3 e6 (White has a classical position with centralized development, but nothing obvious to do) 15 h4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  16 h5 gxh5 (or 16...g5) 17  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  dxe4!? (17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !?) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , and here 19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  would have kept things level; for example, 20  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  c5.

#### 6...f6 (D)

Black proceeds with the idea of ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , followed by ...e5 if allowed. Continuing 6...dxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  8 c3 0-0 9  $\mathbb{W}d2$  surrenders the centre to no apparent purpose.



#### 7 exd5!

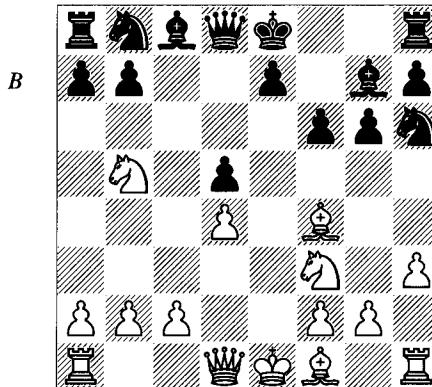
The flexible strategy 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  0-0 9 0-0 was tried in Topalov-Shirov, Linares 1994. Black held his own by playing solid, non-descript moves: 9...b6 10  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12 a4 a6 13 a5 b5 14 exd5 cxd5 15  $\mathbb{W}e6$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}c8$ . Now Shirov suggests 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?, although 16... $\mathbb{W}e8$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  yields dynamic chances (17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !).

#### 7...cxd5 8 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! (D)

White goes for the throat. Black looks relatively safe following 8  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}xb8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$ ) 10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  e6, as in Barlov-Gaprindashvili, Palma de Mallorca 1989.

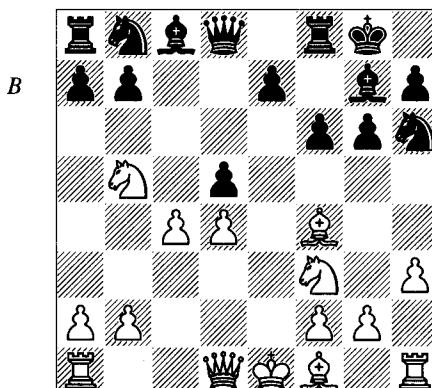


#### 8...0-0-0?

This pseudo-sacrifice is logical. 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  allows 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with real pressure. Then 9...0-0 can be answered variously; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ! is a particularly straightforward choice, intending to meet 10...e6 with 11  $\mathbb{W}b3$ . In Gallagher-Efimov, European Team Ch, Pula 1997, White played 10 cxd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ , when 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  looks best.

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ??

After some forced moves this comes to little. White should play 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! (D).



Then Black seems to have his work cut out for him; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (9...a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  e5 may be best, although 11  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  exf4 12 c5! gives White's knight access to b6 and leaves him with a lead in material; after 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?, 10  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !

creates significant problems, since 10...dxc4 11  $\mathbb{W}xc4+$  followed by 12  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  will win something) 10 cxd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ !? (or 11  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! with the idea 11...g5 12  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ; a little better is 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{W}e4+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , but Black should sacrifice an exchange by 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , since 13... $\mathbb{B}b8$ ?? 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  traps his queen!) 11... $\mathbb{W}a5+$  12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$ + 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14 d5 (or 14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16 d5) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  fxe5 16  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  and White has only a modest advantage, Chebotarev-Novitsky, St Petersburg 2005. Overall, however, Black needs something better versus 9 c4!.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xh6$

After 10  $\mathbb{Q}xa8?$  exf4, the knight won't escape from a8.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !?

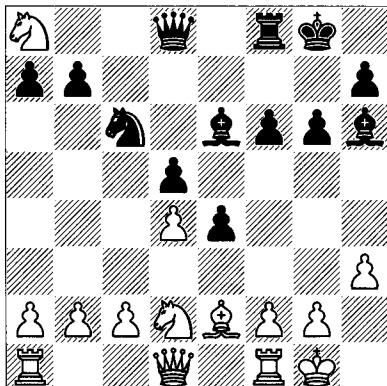
There seems nothing wrong with 10... $\mathbb{W}xc7$ !. The critical line is 11  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12 dxe5  $\mathbb{W}a5+$  13 c3 fxe5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  (or 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 17  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with balanced play, since 19 0-0-0 can be met by 19...d4!.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ e4 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Over the next few moves both sides have reasonable alternatives.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 14 0-0 (D)

B



### 14... $\mathbb{W}xa8$

Golubev gives 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ; still, after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  16  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ !?) 17  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  Black has the bishop-pair and some nice centre pawns to play with.

### 15 c4!?

White is trying to disturb Black's harmonious regrouping, but it's at the cost of weakening his pawns.

### 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

At this point, Black played 18...b5!?, 19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  20  $\mathbb{W}g4$ , with an unclear position. His easier course would have been 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! 19  $\mathbb{W}g4$  f5 20  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  with excellent play.

Black's set-up with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  is ingenious. Nevertheless, White's alternative of 9 c4 in the main game shows that anyone who wishes to play such slow moves needs to be very well-prepared.

## Classical Set-Up

**Geller – Hort**

*Linares 1983*

### 1 e4 g6 2 d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d6 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

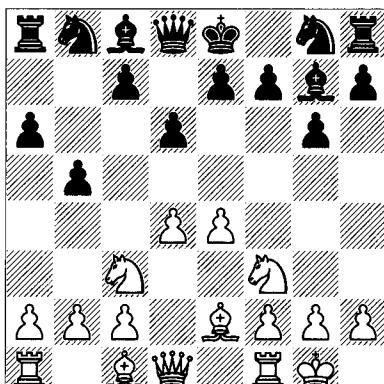
White adopts the classical development of his knights, as we saw in Volume 1 versus the Pirc Defence. He is satisfied with the 'ideal' two-pawn centre and follows the textbook advice of bringing knights into play before bishops. Variations with 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  are by no means harmless, but less frequently seen.

### 4...a6

I'll concentrate upon this modern continuation. Alternatively, 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  returns to the Pirc Defence, and 4...c6, Black's other main option, usually intends queenside expansion by ...b5, but may also revert to a Pirc Defence if White plays slowly and Black chooses ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  at some point.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}e2$ b5 6 0-0 (D)

B



### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

By moving his knight first, Black supports ...c5 and perhaps ...e5, while keeping his bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal for a move, in case e5-e6 becomes bothersome. Nevertheless, 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  has its own drawbacks, and we need to understand the implications of various move-orders. At this junction there are two natural alternatives:

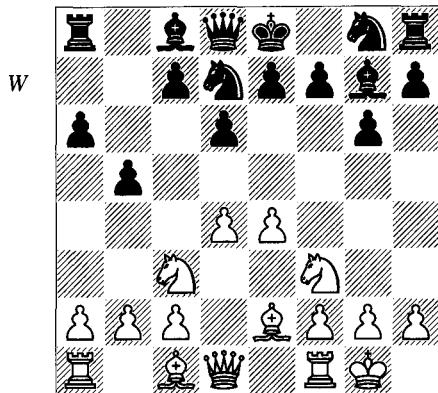
a) Black is behind in development in these ...a6/...b5 lines, and so both sides should be on the lookout for direct attacks. For example, an extremely important attacking theme arises in the variation 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  7 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (7...dxe5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  (or 8 e6!, since 8...fxe6 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  attacks e6 and prepares moves such as  $\mathbb{Q}g4/f3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , and the common defensive idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  gets hit with 10  $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$  intending 10...axb5 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ) 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 and now 9...e6 (to prevent 10 e6) is strongly met by 10  $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ , again with the idea 10...axb5 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . If Black instead plays 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , he comes out on the short end of the long forced sequence 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11 f4 h6 12 fxe5 hgx5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ ; for example, 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ .

b) The obvious alternative is 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when 7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  transposes to the game. In order to counter this move-order, White might try 7 a4. This leads to very complicated play, with White striving for a small advantage; for example, 7...b4 8  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  a5 (perhaps 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  should be played) 9 e5!?  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ ? 10 c3 bxc3 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ . Some of these choices come down to a matter of personal style. For example, even 7 e5!? has been tried, hoping for an effective 8 e6 or 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Then 7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and 7...e6 are solid answers, but the whole game lies ahead.

We now return to 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D):

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

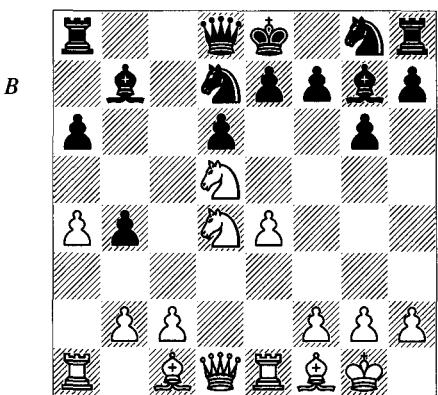
Hillarp Persson asserts that White can claim superiority by 7 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (Black's game after 7...e6 8  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  has an awkward look to it; White might play 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 f4 with ideas of e5 next, when Black is on the defensive) 8  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  9 a3, when he rightly points out that Black has trouble attacking the d5-pawn. But it's still a game, and Black can prepare a pawn-break; for example, 9...0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  or 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , both with



the idea ...e6) 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ? (11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6) 11...c6 12 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  with what appears to be quite an acceptable Sicilian position for Black.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

Black can head for the Sicilian Defence structure straightaway by 7...c5 8  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  cxd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (after 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10 a4! bxa4!?) 11  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  White threatens e5; this seems slightly awkward for Black in spite of White's exposed rook). White's most promising positional path is 10 a4 b4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (D).



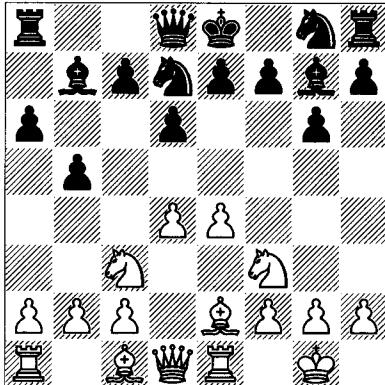
Following 11... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13 c3, it appears that White has a substantial advantage:

a) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14 a5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and White is a good pawn ahead, Kristensen-Welling, Copenhagen 1995.

b) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14 a5  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15 f3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17 c4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  1/2-1/2 Rublevsky-Sakaev, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005. However, White stands much better following 18  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ .

We now return to 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (D):

W



The position after 7... $\mathbb{B}b7$  has been the starting point for a good many Modern Defence battles. It embodies the fight between classical and hypermodern development.

### 8 $\mathbb{B}f1$

White moves his bishop out of the way, both protecting the e4-pawn and strengthening its potential advance to e5. In the next game we'll look at 8  $\mathbb{B}g5$ .

### 8...c5

Black begins his attack on d4. This completes the plan laid out by 4...a6.

### 9 a4

In the Classical Variation, this pawn advance is White's default strategy. White lures Black's b-pawn forward and then attacks it, opening lines for his own benefit.

### 9...b4

9...cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  b4 transposes into the note above on 7...c5; 9...bxa4?! 10  $\mathbb{B}xa4$  not only reduces the pressure on White's centre (via ...b4), but creates weaknesses on Black's queenside, notably on a5 and a6.

### 10 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ (D)

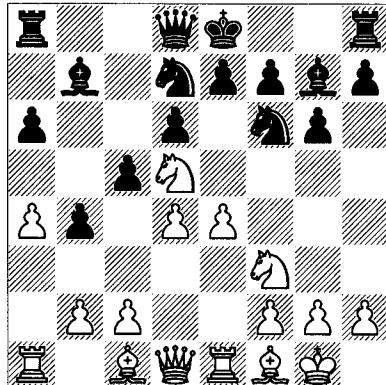
Black can't just toss out moves in this system; for example, 10...e6? 11  $\mathbb{B}f4!$  was already practically decisive in the game Honfi-Vadasz, Kecskemet 1975, based upon 11...exd5? 12 exd5+  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  15 d6, winning.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$

Or:

a) 11 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  resembles a Sicilian Defence. Then the aggressive 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is well-met by 12...0-0! with the idea 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 intending ... $\mathbb{B}e8$  and/or ...f5, when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  favours Black.

W



b) After 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  cxd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , 12...h6! 13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{B}e8$ ! threatens to regain the pawn on e4, which is surprisingly hard to defend. In response to a slow move, ...g5 or ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is good, so a plausible line is 15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  a5 17  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  18 c3  $\mathbb{B}ab8$ ! 19  $\mathbb{B}e2$  e5! 20  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  d5 21 exd5 e4 22  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  with the bishop-pair and activity in return for the pawn.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

11... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  seems playable as well, since the critical 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is unclear after 12...cxd4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  14 c3  $\mathbb{B}c8$ .

### 12 d5

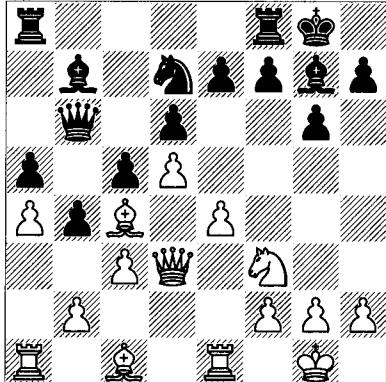
White tries to shut out the b7-bishop and win space at the same time; the drawback is that Black's dark-squared bishop becomes all the more powerful.

### 12...0-0 13 $\mathbb{Q}c4$

White would like to play 13 a5, but then 13...e6! breaks up the centre with active counterplay.

### 13...a5 14 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15 c3 $\mathbb{B}b6$ (D)

W



**16 ♜f4 ♜a6**

Now the play is equal, in part because neither side will be able to break down the other's defences.

**17 e5 ♜xc4 18 ♜xc4 ♜a6 19 ♜e4 bxc3 20 bxc3 c4**

Black would love to play ...d5-d3.

**21 ♜e3! ♜b6**

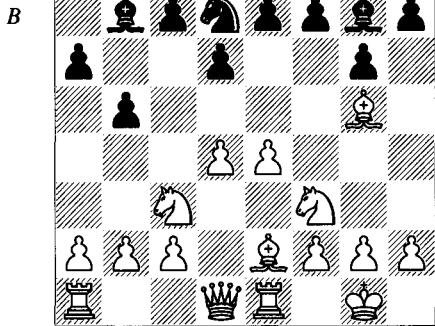
But now 21...d5 22 exd6 exd6 23 ♜h6 ♜d3 24 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 25 ♜d4+ only loosens Black's king position.

**22 ♜e2 ♜a6 23 ♜e3 ♜b6 ½-½**

**Khalifman – V. Popov**

*St Petersburg Ch 1997*

**1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♜g7 3 ♜f3 d6 4 ♜c3 a6 5 ♜e2  
b5 6 0-0 ♜b7 7 ♜e1 ♜d7 8 ♜g5 (D)**

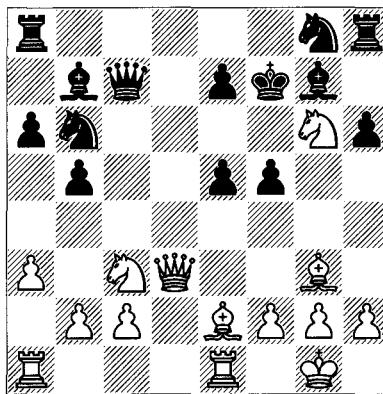


White frequently places his bishop on this active square, from which point it pins the enemy e-pawn, participates in direct attacks, and stays out of the way of White's e-file play (as opposed to 7 ♜e3 or 8 ♜e3, for example). From Black's perspective, the bishop doesn't defend against ...c5, and it can become isolated from the central squares if driven back to h4 by the move ...h6.

**8...c5**

In the Modern Defence, Black always has to have a healthy respect for primitive-looking assaults; for example, 8...h6 9 ♜h4 ♜b6!? 10 a3 c5 (it's safer to attend to development by 10...d5 or 10...g5 11 ♜g3 ♜f6) 11 e5!? cxd4 12 ♜xd4 dxe5 13 ♜e3! ♜c7?! (Black should play 13...d5 14 ♜xe5 and now 14...d4!, defending nicely – but not 14...0-0?! 15 ♜f3)

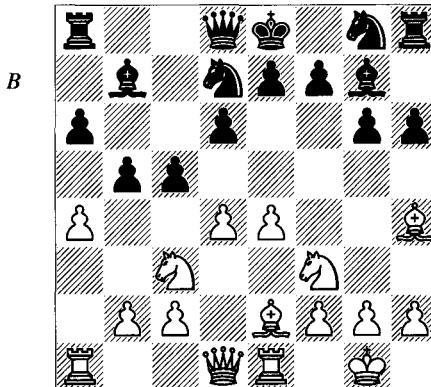
**14 ♜g3 f6? 15 ♜h4 ♜f7 16 ♜d3 f5 17 ♜xg6! (D).**



17... ♜d7 (allowing a cute finish; 17... ♜xg6 is also losing after 18 ♜h5+! ♜f6 19 ♜xe5+) 18 ♜h5 ♜xd3 19 ♜f4+! 1-0 Grünfeld-Soltis, Lone Pine 1979. It's mate in two.

**9 a4 h6 10 ♜h4 (D)**

Hillarp Persson analyses 10 ♜e3 b4 11 ♜d5 ♜gf6 12 ♜xf6+ (12 ♜c4!?) 12... ♜xf6 13 e5 ♜d5 14 e6 0-0 and claims an edge for Black; at any rate, he'll have very active pieces.

**10...cxd4**

Movsesian likes 10...b4 11 ♜d5! g5 12 ♜g3 for White on the basis of 12...e6 13 ♜xd6!, but 12... ♜gf6! solves Black's main problems; for example, 13 dxc5 ♜xc5 14 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♜xe5 0-0! 17 ♜xf6 ♜xd1 18 ♜exd1 exf6 19 ♜d4 ♜fe8 with active pieces and the idea ...e5. So perhaps 10...b4 maintains a balance.

**11 ♜xd4**

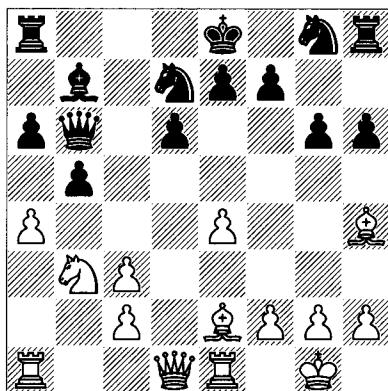
Browne-Benko, Las Vegas 1975 saw the immediate 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , which is also not easy to meet: 11...bxa4 (played reluctantly; 11...g5?! is undesirable because of 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! with the idea 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !? (13  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ !) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (13...e5!?) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  with level chances.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !?**

Probably not the best idea. 12...b4!? seems playable.

**13 bxc3 (D)**

B



**13... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$**

We've seen this trade-off frequently throughout this book: White's c-pawns are exposed along the half-open c-file and Black has potential dark-square weaknesses because of the exchange of his bishop on c3. In this case, he has the additional problem of a target on b5.

**14 axb5**

14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15 axb5 axb5 16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !? is also promising. White goes after the b-pawn and invites the lengthy forcing sequence 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! (hitting b5) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  23 f3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 24  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! 25  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}d1+$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d2+$  30  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  g5 31  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  and Black has a difficult task ahead. It's not clear how he can deviate from all this.

**14...axb5 15  $\mathbb{Q}xa8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

White seems to have the better of it regardless; for example, 16...g5 17  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?? 19  $\mathbb{Q}a1$ !) 19  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !. Perhaps 16...b4 should be tried, but White wins a pawn by 17

$\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! 0-0 18 cxb4 e5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , counting upon 20...g5 21  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  with three pawns and an attack for his piece.

**17  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  g5 18  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  e5 19 f3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

Movsesian mentions the ending 21...0-0 22  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ , but then White has 25 c4 with a powerful passed pawn.

**22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

White is probably winning now, even if his execution isn't perfect:

**22... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  24 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  25 h4! f6 26  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}gh4$ ?? 28  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  29  $\mathbb{Q}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  30  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  31  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  32  $\mathbb{Q}b1+$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  33  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$ ! 1-0**

## Other White Formations

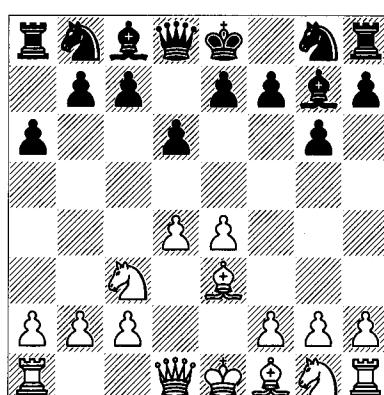
Lines with 4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  are popular versus both the Pirc Defence and Modern Defence, often planning  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  with some combination of f3,  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and h4-h5. In the case of the Modern Defence, however, it's worth mentioning that if Black delays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , the move  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  won't be possible. The following game again illustrates Black's modern strategy of ...a6 and ...b5:

**Xie Jun – M. Gurevich**

*Haarlem 1997*

**1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 (D)**

W



**5  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

Pursuing the above-mentioned plan. Other moves:

a) The insertion of 5 a4 b6 favours Black because White will be less disposed to play 0-0-0, while an attack by e5 isn't so dangerous with White's bishop on e3.

b) White can also play for the big centre by 5 f4, when the game Ramesh-Hillarp Persson, Amsterdam 2000 continued 5...b5 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ? (8 0-0) 8...c5 (Hillarp Persson suggests 8...b4!?) 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ) 9 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  (10...dxc5 11 e5  $\mathbb{W}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !) 11 bxc3 dxc5 12 e5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6$  with unclear play which looks satisfactory for Black.

### 5...b5 6 f3

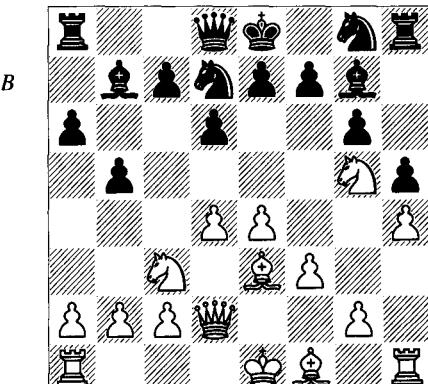
6 a4 b4 7  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  (or 7  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  a5 8 c3) 7...a5 8 c3 is another common approach.

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 7 h4

Direct, and sort of a main line. Obviously there are legitimate alternatives, such as 7 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8 h4 h5 9  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ , when Speelman suggests 9... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  with the direct idea ...c5, reinforcing both Black's attack on the queenside and his pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal.

### 7...h6!?

White's idea after 7...h5 is to use the g5-square (this is often the only reason for Black to avoid ...h5 versus h4): 8  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (8...c5 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and now 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  would transpose; instead 9...b4!?) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  was played in Cheparinov-Sakaev, Dresden 2007, when Black might try 10... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , but 11 dxc5! dxc5 12 0-0-0 keeps up the pressure with the ideas  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ; you can see why Black would like to delay ...b4) 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (D).



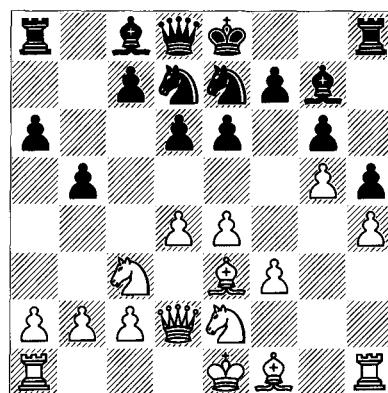
This secures the knight at the cost of some time. Black should start a counterattack: 9...c5

(or 9... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  10 0-0-0) 10 dxc5, Cubas-Leitão, Americana 2007, and now 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !?) is good enough, with a balanced game. Then White doesn't profit from 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  axb5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ .

### 8 g4 h5! 9 g5

9 gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  has the idea of ...e5 and perhaps ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , attacking the weak pawn on h4.

### 9...e6 10 $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D)



Black is cramped, but White's pieces aren't particularly well placed for attack.

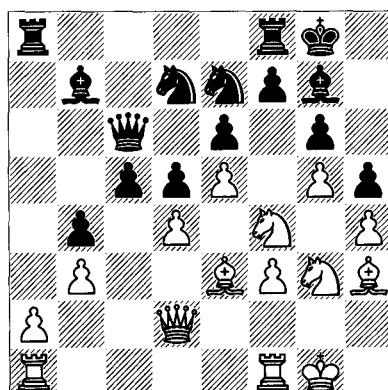
### 11 $\mathbb{Q}g3$ d5 12 $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13 c3 $\mathbb{W}c8$ !?

It's also possible to play 13...c5 directly.

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ c5

Black is exerting pressure on both centre pawns and will begin queenside expansion.

### 15 0-0 $\mathbb{W}c6$ 16 b3!? 0-0 17 e5 a5! 18 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ b4 19 cxb4 axb4 (D)



### 20 $\mathbb{Q}fxh5$ !?

This enterprising attack falls short.

**20...gxh5 21 ♜xh5 cxd4 22 ♜xd4 ♜xe5! 23 ♜xe5**

23 ♜ac1 is met by 23...♜xa2!, and Black is also in charge after 23 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 24 ♜xe5 (24 gxsf6 ♜xd4+ 25 ♜xd4 ♜g6 26 h5 e5) 24...♜d7 25 ♜b2 ♜d6.

**23...♜xe5 24 ♜f4?! ♜c3!**

Now everything is defended; the rest of the game is straightforward.

25 ♜f6+ ♜g7 26 ♜h5+ ♜g8 27 ♜f6+ ♜h8 28 g6 ♜g8 29 ♜xg8 ♜xg6 30 ♜h6+ ♜xg8 31 h5 ♜d4+ 32 ♜g2 ♜f4 0-1

Of course, White has several other ways of setting up against the Modern Defence without playing ♜c3. The following games show a few of these.

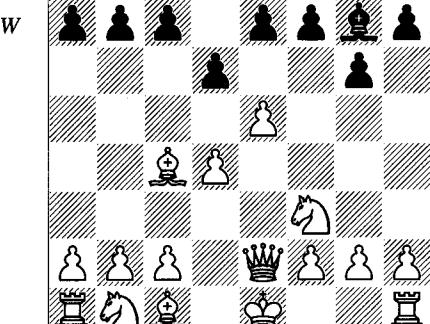
### Bruzon – Bareev

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

**1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♜g7 3 c3**

This is an extremely solid set-up. The players can also reach the position of the main game via 3 ♜f3 d6 (3...c5 is the Hyper-Accelerated Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defence) 4 ♜d3 (4 c3 ♜f6 5 ♜bd2 0-0 6 ♜e2 transposes the note to 5 ♜d3 below) 4...♜f6 5 0-0 0-0 6 c3.

One of the most frequently-used non-transpositional lines with 3 ♜f3 is 3...d6 4 ♜c4 ♜f6 5 ♜e2. White has a simple idea: e5 followed by e6 and/or quick development. In many cases he clears the back rank and castles queenside. In response, Black can play 5...c6, to provide an anchor for his knight on d5 if White chooses to advance his e-pawn. Or, more interestingly, 5...0-0 6 e5 ♜e8 (D).

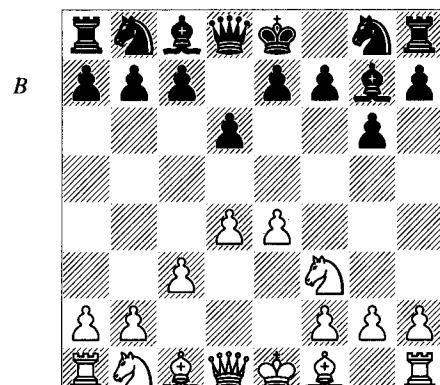


This is a strategy in the spirit of many modern openings: permitting White's centre to advance so as to undermine and break it down. Two examples of contrasting pawn-play and piece-play on Black's part:

a) 7 h3 (White tries to deny Black's c8-bishop any active squares) 7...c5! (taking advantage of the non-developing move h3) 8 c3 ♜c7?! (8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♜c6 10 0-0 ♜c7 11 ♜c3?! dxe5 12 dxe5 ♜d4! 13 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 equals due to 14 ♜e1 ♜e6! 15 ♜xe6 ♜xe6) 9 dxc5 d5! 10 ♜d3 ♜e6 11 ♜e3 ♜d7 12 0-0 ♜c7 (or 12...♜exc5) 13 c4 dxc4 (13...♜xe5) 14 ♜xc4 ♜xe5 15 ♜c3 ♜xf3+ 16 ♜xf3 ♜xc3 17 bxc3 ♜d7 18 ♜xe6 and in Negi-Hillarp Persson, Malmö 2007, Black tried 18...fxe6?!, an interesting attempt to unbalance things, but 18...♜xe6 19 ♜ab1 b6! 20 cxb6 axb6 is also possible, a standard device that we've seen in the Grünfeld Defence and in several other openings.

b) 7 0-0 allows Black to develop piece activity: 7...♜g4 8 ♜d1 (after 8 ♜bd2, the piece-play approach is 8...♜c6 9 ♜e3 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♜d7, intending ...♜f5 or ...♜d8; Black can also use his pawns by 8...c5?!, and if 9 dxc5, Hillarp Persson suggests the typical Pirc Defence sacrifice 9...♜c6 10 exd6 exd6 11 ♜e3 ♜c8) 8...♜c6 9 ♜d5! ♜d7 (or Hillarp Persson's 9...e6 10 ♜xc6 bxc6 11 ♜bd2 c5) 10 ♜c3 e6 11 ♜b3 d5?! (11...dxe5 12 dxe5 ♜e7 looks better) 12 h3 ♜xf3 13 ♜xf3 f6 and in the game Shamkovich-Keene, New York 1980 White missed the chance for 14 ♜xd5! exd5 15 ♜xd5+ ♜h8 16 e6 ♜e7 17 ♜xc6 bxc6 18 ♜xc6 followed by d5.

**3...d6 4 ♜f3 (D)**



4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 

Black more often than not plays ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  to transpose to a Pirc Defence formation against the slow c3. The Pirc move-order 1 e4 d6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 c3 arrives at the position in the game.

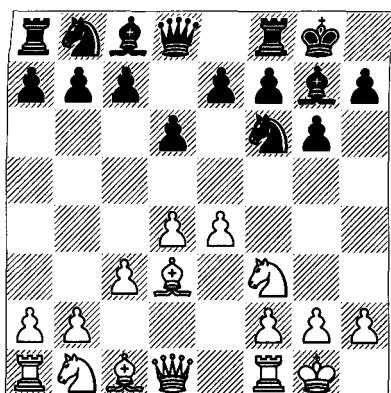
The move we saw so often above, 4...a6, doesn't make as much sense now, because ...b5 can be answered by a4; then there's no knight on c3 to be attacked by ...b4. Naturally, 4...c6 and even 4...e6 are legitimate options, if rather passive ones.

5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ 

5  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is another common piece placement. Black can play the normal array of moves such as 6...c5, 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  and 6...b6, or play in an analogous fashion to our main line: 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7 0-0 e5 8 dx5 (8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  prepares to move the knight from f6 and play ...f5; by comparison with a King's Indian Defence, White is far away from being able to effect a meaningful queenside advance) 8...dx5 (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ !? (White would like to play  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , attacking e5, perhaps followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}e3-d5$ ; another and possibly better version of this would be 9 b4 a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ) 9...a5 10 a4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (this is Black's standard idea: he intends to place his knight on an aggressive post on f4 and slowly increase the pressure on White's kingside) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (11 g3 may improve) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13 h3 h5!? 14  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  g5! 15  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  g4 with a serious attack in Hraček-Hodgson, Neu Isenburg 1992.

## 5...0-0 6 0-0 (D)

B



The attraction of White's formation is that the pawns on c3 and d4 blunt the influence of

Black's bishop on g7. Then White can develop without having to worry over his centre. On the other hand, the formation with c3 is rather passive, putting no real pressure on Black. Thus Black has plenty of leeway in developing. There have been many games with this line over the years (as well as with White's bishop on e2 and queen's knight on d2, as in the previous note), but I'll limit myself to a popular remedy that fits the occasion:

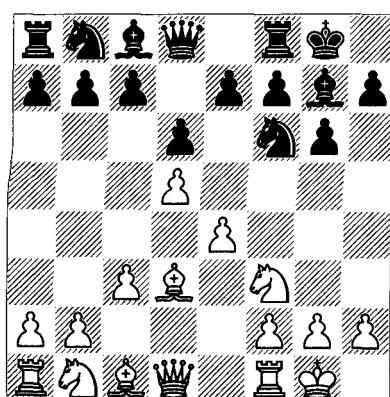
6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 

Although 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  planning ...e5 is perfectly playable, it blocks Black's light-squared bishop and attacks nothing. By means of 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , Black wants to play ...e5 with direct pressure on d4, in order to force a commitment from White. Alternatively, Black has played 6...c5, planning ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with the same end in mind.

7  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ 

This is a natural move, yet it blocks the bishop on c1, so White sometimes waits and brings the knight to a3. To maintain flexibility, White often does that by 7 h3, because it's a move he plays in almost every line anyway, and of course it prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . By looking at the lines which follow, you can see that 7 h3 usually transposes. Other instructive choices:

a) 7 d5 gains time and prevents ...e5 for the time being, but exposes the d-pawn to undermining via ...c6 and/or ...e6 after 7... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (D):



a1) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6, and if White plays 9 c4, then Black's g7-bishop has regained its power on the long diagonal.

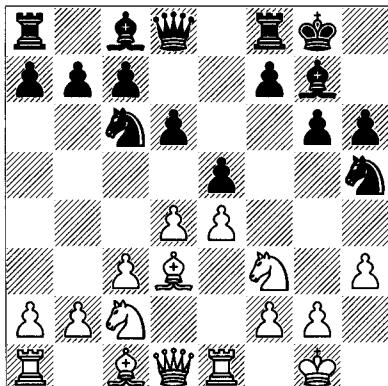
a2) After the immediate 8 c4, 8...c6 is also fine for Black, while 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !? 9 h3!? $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}ac5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$

a5, as in Korchnoi-Sznajk, Lucerne Olympiad 1982, exploits the dark squares and White's passively-placed pieces to counteract his space deficit.

a3) 8 h3 c6 9 c4 cxd5 10 exd5 (10 cxd5 e6! 11 dxe6 ♜xe6 12 ♜c3 ♜c6 leaves Black with an isolated pawn but he has wonderful bishops and the prospect of ...d5; Hillarp Persson continues 13 ♜f4 d5 14 e5 ♜d7 15 ♜e1 and now 15...f6!? 16 exf6 ♜xf6 with satisfactory play, while 15...d4! intending 16 ♜b5 ♜b6 looks better still) 10...a6 11 ♜c3 ♜c5 12 ♜c2 e6 13 ♜g5 exd5 14 cxd5 ♜d7 was equal in Sturua-Yrjölä, Komotini 1992, since 15 b4 ♜a6 16 a3 ♜c7 exposes White's modest weaknesses down the c-file.

b) 7 ♜e1 e5 8 h3 (after 8 ♜bd2, 8...h5 is Black's normal plan, while the game Alekseev-Hillarp Persson, European Team Ch, Kherinosos 2007 continued 8...♜d7, hitting d4; then after 9 ♜b3 simply 9...a5 should give balanced play; for example, 10 a4 exd4 11 cxd4 ♜b4 12 ♜b1 b6 with pressure on White's centre to follow) 8...h6 9 ♜a3 ♜h5 (heading for f4) 10 ♜c2 (D).

B



This has been a very popular position over the years. Now:

b1) 10...♜f4 11 ♜xf4! exf4 12 b4 gives White a good jump-start, especially since the natural attack 12...g5 is countered by 13 b5 ♜e7 14 e5!, grabbing a lot of territory, as in Collinson-Chabanon, Oakham 1992.

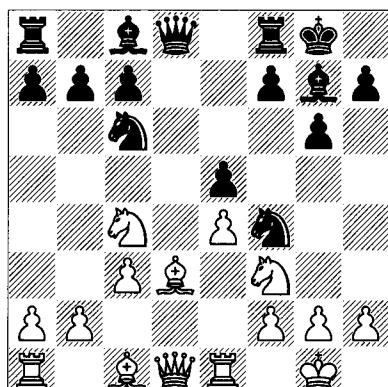
b2) On the other hand, the calm 10...♜d7 11 b4 a6 12 a4 ♜e8!? (maybe 12...♜f6 is a simpler solution) 13 ♜b1 ♜a7 neutralized the queen-side in Bakhtadze-Külaots, Chemnitz 1998.

b3) The instructive encounter Gausel-Hillarp Persson, Sweden-Norway match, Karlstad 2005 continued 10...a6!? 11 a4 (after 11 ♜d2, 11...g5 is possible, since White has no indirect attack on h5) 11...♜f6!? (Black's primitive idea is to play ...♜f4 and attack by advancing the king-side pawns; nevertheless, the queen can become exposed here) 12 a5 (12 ♜e3! may favour White somewhat in view of 12...exd4 13 ♜d5 ♜d8 14 cxd4 with the idea 14...♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 16 ♜xh6 ♜e8 17 ♜d2) 12...♜f4 13 ♜f1 g5 (this leaves a hole on f5; Black hopes that White won't be able to exploit it in time) 14 d5 ♜e7 15 ♜e3 ♜g6 (now Black is ready for either ...f5 or ...h5 with ...g4) 16 g4!? (putting a stop to ...f5) 16...♜xe4! (Black decides not to wait around, and trades the queen for sufficient material) 17 ♜f5 ♜xf5 18 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 19 c4 c6 20 dxc6 ♜xc6 21 ♜xd6?! (a little greedy; 21 h4 improves) 21...♜eg6 22 ♜e1 ♜ad8 23 ♜a3 e4! 24 ♜e3 ♜e5 25 ♜b3 ♜d7 26 ♜d1 ♜fd8 27 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 and Black obviously had a good deal of pressure in view of White's many weaknesses.

c) 7 ♜a3 (intending either ♜c4 or ♜c2 and keeping the diagonal open for his bishop on c1) 7...e5 8 ♜c2 ♜g4!? 9 h3 ♜xf3 10 ♜xf3. Here 10...d5!? would strike back in the centre before White completes his development and consolidates the position to the benefit of his bishop-pair; for example, 11 ♜g5! exd4 12 cxd4 dxe4 13 ♜xe4 h6 14 ♜xc6 bxc6 15 ♜d2 ♜d5. Then Black has a strong knight blockading the isolated d-pawn, although White can still play for pressure down the c-file.

7...e5 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 ♜c4 ♜h5 10 ♜e1 ♜f4 (D)

W



**11 ♜xf4!?**

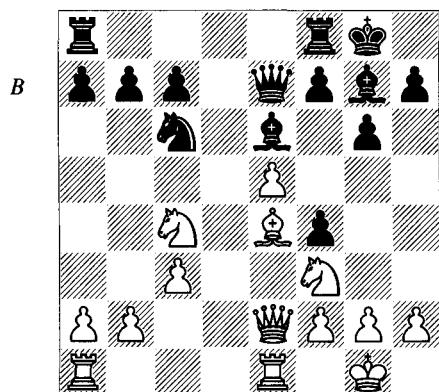
White gives away his good bishop to rid himself of the intrusive knight on f4 and gain the initiative in the centre. This doesn't yield anything; nor did 11 ♜f1 ♛xd1 (or 11...♛e7) 12 ♜xd1 ♜g4 with an equal position, as played in Wagner-Kasparov, Internet blitz 1998.

**11...exf4 12 e5!?** ♜e6!

White's idea was probably 12...♜g4 13 ♜e4!.

**13 ♛e2 ♛e7 14 ♜e4!?** (D)

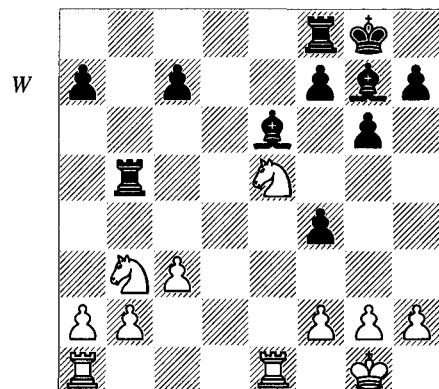
14 ♜e4 hits the f-pawn, but 14...♜ad8 15 ♜ad1 ♜h6! followed by ...♜d5 or ...♜f5 and ...♜g7 leaves White's own e-pawn vulnerable.



**14...♜c5! 15 ♜cd2 ♜xe5 16 ♜xb7 ♜ab8 17 ♜xe5 ♜xb7! 18 ♜b3 ♜b5 19 ♜xb5!?**

It's always risky to go into a two knights vs two bishops position when the board is open and queens have been exchanged.

**19...♜xb5** (D)



Black attacks the knight on e5 and contemplates ...a5-a4. In the next few moves we see

how dangerous the bishop-pair is in spite of Black's multiple pawn weaknesses.

**20 ♜c6 ♜b6 21 ♜cd4 ♜d5**

21...♜xd4! 22 cxd4 ♜d8! is an excellent alternative, because White is tied down and ...a5-a4 looms. As the old saying goes, part of the advantage of having two bishops resides in the ability to exchange one of them advantageously. This opportunity arises more often than the chance to exchange a knight because the bishop has a longer reach.

**22 ♜e7 ♜c8!?** 23 ♜d7 ♜a8 24 ♜d1 ♜f6 25 ♜d2?

White can only play solidly and hope to stay within drawing range; for example, 25 f3! c5 26 ♜e2 c4 27 ♜bd4 ♜xb2 28 ♜xa7.

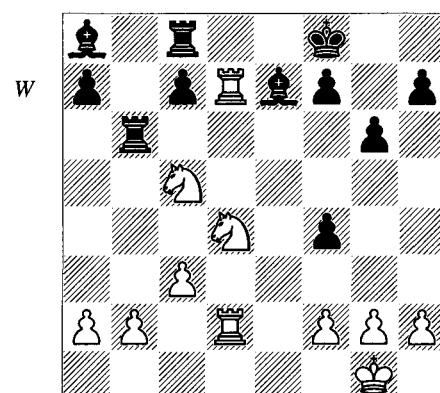
**25...♜f8?**

Black has successfully used the 'Steinitz Restriction Technique' of White's knights, denying them any forward squares. Now is the time to drive them away from the defence: 25...c5! 26 ♜f3 (26 ♜e2 f3 is clearly undesirable) 26...c4 27 ♜bd4 ♜cb8! 28 ♜xa7 ♜xf3 29 ♜xf3 ♜xb2, etc.

**26 ♜c5?**

White holds steady after 26 f3 c5 27 ♜e2.

**26...♜e7!?** (D)



Now Black threatens the knight on c5, as well as 27...♜d6, trapping the rook.

**27 ♜xe7?!**

Desperation. Nevertheless, 27 ♜db3 ♜d6 28 f3 ♜c6 29 ♜7xd6 cxd6 30 ♜xd6 ♜e8 isn't enough of an improvement.

**27...♜xe7 28 ♜e2+ ♜d6 29 b4 ♜c6 30 h4 a5 31 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 32 a3 ♜d5**

and Black went on to win.

## Averbakh Variation

Finally, we take a brief look at 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♘g7 3 c4, which is sometimes called the Averbakh Variation (not to be confused with the Averbakh System in the King's Indian, which arises after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♘g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘e2 0-0 6 ♘g5). This is White's most important alternative to the lines above, and in fact, for some players 3 c4 has been a disincentive to using 1...g6 at all. It's a set-up that may well appeal to those who play 1 d4, since 1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♘g7 3 c4 leads to the same position, and the resulting pawn-structures will be familiar to most of them. In fact, the game will very often transpose to a King's Indian Defence (if Black plays an early ...d6 and ...♘f6) or a Benoni-related defence if Black plays ...c5 and White replies d5; then Black may continue ...d6, ...e6 and ...exd5 as in the Modern Benoni and offshoots, or ...d6 and ...e5, a structure from various lesser-used lines. In addition, Black can choose from a variety of unique, non-transpositional lines, a few of which we'll identify in the following game.

**Sashikiran – Kakageldiev**  
Asian Team Ch, Esfahan 2005

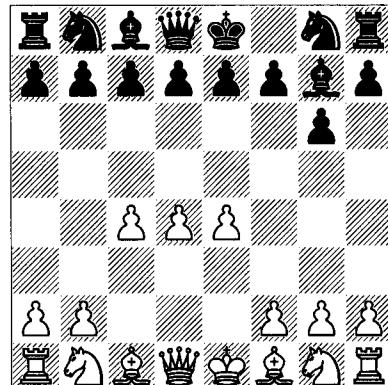
### 1 e4

Another way to get to our main line is 1 d4 g6 2 c4 (or 1 c4 g6 2 d4) 2...♘g7 3 e4. If White plays 3 ♘c3 instead, 3...c5 4 d5 ♘xc3+!? 5 bxc3 f5 is one of those eccentric variations that has been around for many years. Black tries to show that his knight-pair and White's weaknesses are sufficient compensation for his opponent's bishop-pair and influence on Black's vulnerable dark squares. This line has never really caught on at the top levels, but can make for creative and instructive chess if you're looking to experiment.

### 1...g6 2 d4 ♘g7 3 c4 (D)

#### 3...d6

After 3...c5, 4 ♘f3 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 ♘c6 is a Maroczy Bind Sicilian Defence, and 4 d5 d6 may transpose into some form of Benoni. In the latter case, Black may not arrive at one of the more dynamic lines, however, particularly because if he plays the moves ...e6 and ...exd5,

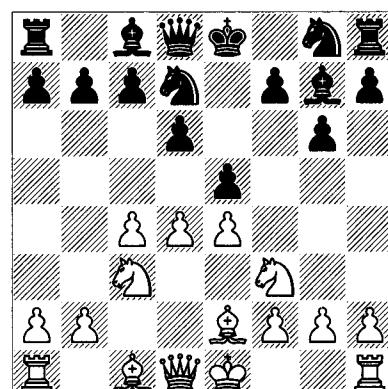


B

White has the option of recapturing with his e-pawn.

### 4 ♘c3 ♘c6

4...♘f6 directly transposes to the King's Indian Defence. 4...♘d7 can go every which way; the most important reaction is 5 ♘f3, if only because in many cases, the move ♘f3 has already been played on one of the moves 1-4. Then there are some unique lines after 5...e5 6 ♘e2 (D).

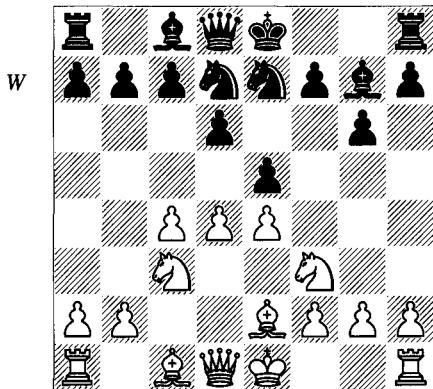


B

Now 6...♘gf6 will almost certainly transpose to a line of the Classical King's Indian Defence. Alternatively:

a) 6...h6?! might be a handy way to support ...f5, but it runs into 7 h4!. It's always important for Black to watch out for this move when he can't respond to it by ...h5 or ...h6 (in order to answer h5 with ...g5). There can follow 7...f6 (7...exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘f6 9 h5 doesn't solve anything) 8 h5 (8 ♘xh6 ♘xh6 9 h5 is also good; White has ideas of ♘h4 and ♘g4) 8...c6 9 d5 ♘f7 10 ♘h4 and White has space and pressure on the light squares.

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (*D*) has been used a lot over the years, but White has generally done well.



Black's idea is to enforce ...f5 without playing ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and then having to move the knight again before being able to move the f-pawn. Alternatively, he can play for ...exd4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . The strategy is in itself logical enough, but without a knight on f6, White's centre isn't subject to much pressure and Black's pieces are a bit cramped; for example, his queen can't use the e7-square. In addition, White gains ideas of h4-h5, whereas the useful move  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (perhaps planning dxe5 and c5 at some point) isn't subject to counterattack by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . Here are a few, brief, examples of the main lines:

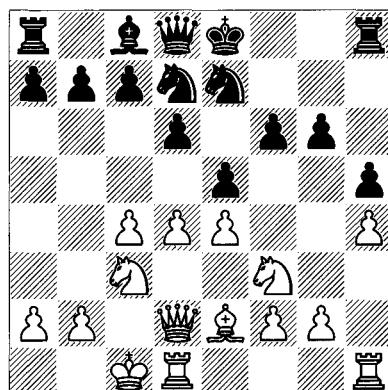
b1) 7 0-0 0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h6?! (8...f5?! is risky when  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is available; for example, 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 dxe5 dxe5 11 c5!  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}axd1$  and White stands significantly better; the uninspiring 8...exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  may be Black's best) 9  $\mathbb{W}c2$ !? (not bad, but 9 dxe5! is strong regardless of how Black recaptures; for example, 9...dxe5 10  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{W}c2$ ) 9...f5?! 10 dxe5 dxe5 11  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  f4 12  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14 c5!) 14 c5 (opening up the a2-g8 diagonal) 14... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , Ilyin-Zemtsov, Kaluga 2005. White has space and activity, and among other moves, 16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  lands Black in an utterly passive position.

b2) 7 d5 0-0 8 h4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (8...h6 9 h5 g5 10 g4! dooms Black to suffering on the queenside, where White has a natural advantage; notice how White's pawns on d5 and h5 prevent a knight from getting to f4) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  h5 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (this is White's basic idea: the

knight can't be kicked away from g5 except by ...f6, after which the move  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  forces ... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  and creates very serious light-square weaknesses in Black's camp) 11...c6 12 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  cxd5 14 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}d2$  a6 16 0-0-0! with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ , when White controls the play on the queenside, Kiselev-Kantsler, Ljubljana 1992. The theme of 0-0-0,  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  is common in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian Defence.

b3) 7 h4 h5 (7...h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exploits the trade-off h4 vs ...h6, because the pawn on h6 is a target) 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  (we've seen before that exchanging one's bad bishop by ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , while sometimes effective, can also weaken squares of its colour and interfere with castling; in this case, the negatives outweigh the positives) 11  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  12 0-0-0 (*D*).



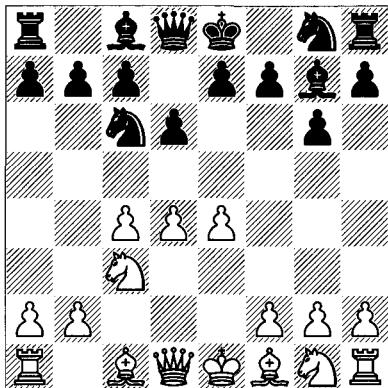
Black has his usual deficit in territory. Prusikhin-Burnett, Budapest 2003 continued 12...b6 (played to stop c5; for example, 12...c6 13 c5! exd4 14  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  dxc5 15  $\mathbb{W}d6$ !, when White has a dominant position, with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}c4-e6$ , e5 and in some cases  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ) 13 dxe5 fxe5? (after 13...dxe5, 14  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  is one good continuation) 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16 c5!. Black's position is being torn apart, especially in view of the line 16...bxc5 17  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  19 fxe5.

We now return to 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (*D*):

5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

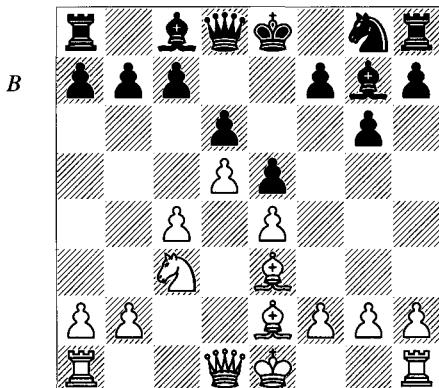
5 d5 allows 5... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with the idea 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5, which is a complex and theoretically unclear variation. 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  prevents that.

5...e5 6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$



Black wants to play ...f5 quickly, since his f-pawn isn't blocked by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , as in the King's Indian Defence. But ...f5 lacks punch without a piece controlling e4, and White is able to carry out c5 much faster than in the corresponding King's Indian positions.

After 6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ , Black can't maintain his knight on the outpost and has to grant White a lead in space and development after 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  (D).



8...f5?! (8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 c5!) 9 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ?! 10 g4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11 h4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! b6 13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}hg1$  h5 15 gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ?! 0-0-0? (or 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ !) 17 c5!! dxc5 18 d6!, Meduna-M.Konopka, Czech Ch, Lazne Bohdanec 1999. White wins in view of 18...cx $\mathbb{Q}$ d6 19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (19... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ + axb6 21  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ ) 20  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , etc.

#### 7 g4

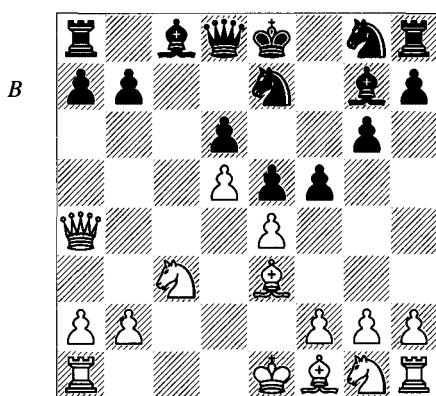
The point of this move is to discourage Black's essential break ...f5. White has numerous alternatives here, including 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , 7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ,

7  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  and the attractive 7 f3, when 7...f5 8 g4 transposes to 8 f3 below. However, the most uncompromising choice is 7 c5, with the kind of accelerated queenside attack that Black is subject to in the Modern Defence. Nevertheless, White's own centre also comes under fire after 7...f5 8 cx $\mathbb{Q}$ d6 cx $\mathbb{Q}$ d6. Then:

a) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ +  $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! 10 f3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  gives Black the better bishop and a solid game, unless White makes an early pawn-break f4; then things become extremely complex and often tactical. Whatever the correct assessment, Black has held his own in practice.

b) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?! is another option for White (of many), with the idea 9...a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ .

c) 9  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ + (D) has scored very well for White over the years. Black will soon have to move his king, but the fight continues:



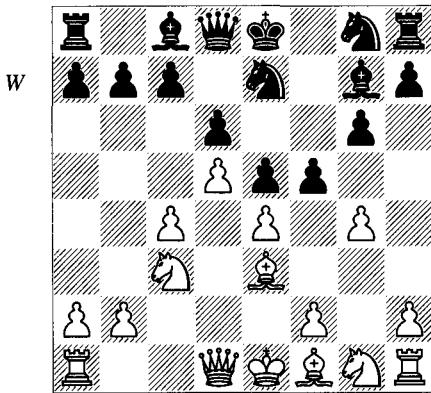
c1) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ?! 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ + followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 10...h6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! fx $\mathbb{Q}$ e4 (13...f4 14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  left White with better piece placement and targets in Gausel-A.Karlsson, Gausdal 1997.

c2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! 10  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11 f3 fx $\mathbb{Q}$ e4 12 fx $\mathbb{Q}$ e4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?! (13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 14 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ + 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is fairly solid; then White does well to attack on the queenside) 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ! leaves the knight stranded on g4) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (a direct attack on d6 and c7; the alternative is 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , when White can play on either side of the board) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ , Hellborg-Chernin, Stockholm 1997.

This position is quite awkward for Black in view of ideas such as  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

c3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  has only been played in a couple of low-level games, but is definitely worthy of consideration; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $fxe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is unclear; 10  $\mathbb{W}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  has the idea 11  $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $fxe4$  with ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  next; this seems satisfactory for Black) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  11  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13 f3 with unclear prospects.

7...f5 (D)



### 8 gxf5

8 f3?! (or 7 f3 f5 8 g4) is an interesting twist. The idea is prophylactic: Black is challenged to find a way to make progress on the kingside, whereas White, after suppressing his opponent's play on that wing, can eventually turn to the other. Karpov-Werk, Hockenheim (simul) 1994 went 8...f4?! (closing the kingside is at best a pessimistic strategy; 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  seems a better option, when there might follow 9 g5!?,  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10  $\mathbb{W}b3$  0-0 11 0-0-0 with the eventual idea of c5,  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10 h4! (claiming more space before turning to the queenside) 10...h6 11 b4!? (11  $\mathbb{W}c2$  a5 12 0-0-0 b6 13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  leaves Black short of options, and 11 c5 is also good) 11...b6 12 a3 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  a5 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}hb1$ . White has plenty of time to expand and break through on the queenside.

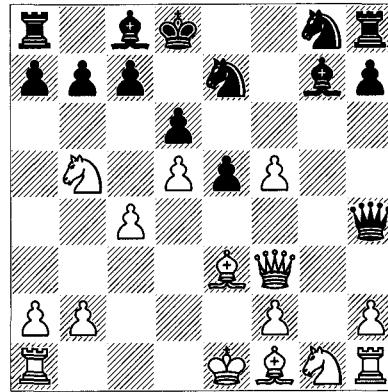
8...gxf5 9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$ !

9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{W}f3$  is positionally undesirable for Black.

### 10 exf5 $\mathbb{W}h4$ 11 $\mathbb{W}f3$ !

Many games have shown that 11  $\mathbb{W}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  is satisfactory for Black.

11... $\mathbb{Q}6e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (D)



### 13 $\mathbb{W}g2$ !

White has tried several moves here, but this one stands out.

13... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  15  $\mathbb{E}g1$ !?

15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! is a strong alternative: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  16 h4  $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18 0-0-0 gives White the safer king and greater control of the board, Acevedo Villalba-Bjazević, ICCF email 2007.

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ??

15... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ ! is more natural; perhaps White stands a bit better after 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  17  $\mathbb{W}xg5$ , but this looks quite manageable.

16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 0-0-0  $\mathbb{E}f8$ ?

17...a6 is best, although White stands well after either 18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  or 18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with the idea c5 and  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

18 c5!  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  h6 21  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xg2$  23  $\mathbb{W}xg2$

White has an extra pawn and the better game.

In this game and notes, we see various irregular set-ups for Black versus the 'Averbakh' formation with c4, d4 and e4. While playable, they all suffer from the same defect: a lack of space. Whether Black stands objectively worse or not, most leading players don't want to deal with the difficulties that this presents in practice, and either avoid it, or take the opportunity to transpose to the King's Indian.

# 4 Modern Queenside Fianchetto

In this chapter I'll be examining modern queen-side fianchetto systems, primarily those with ...b6 on one of the first two moves, but also 1 b3. These aren't extremely popular at the very top levels, but they have been played consistently by strong grandmasters as well as masters. With ...b6 and ... $\mathbb{B}b7$ , Black's play tends to be concentrated upon controlling the central light squares with moves such as ...e6, ...f5, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6/e7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ; if he succeeds in doing so, his bishop on b7 will gain in strength. White will often challenge those squares and try to limit the bishop's influence by d5, e4 and/or f3, supported by  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and  $\mathbb{W}e2/c2$ .

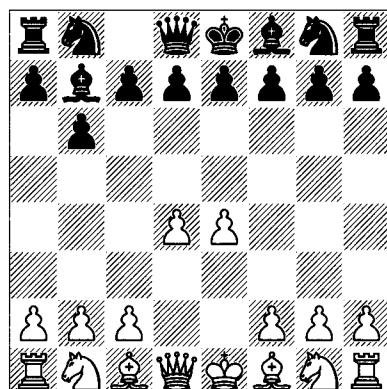
A comparison with 1...g6 of the last chapter is interesting. Perhaps the most significant difference is that ...b6 doesn't contribute to early castling, which is a traditional opening priority. On the other hand, in the critical lines, 1...b6 and an early ... $\mathbb{B}b7$  attacks an undefended pawn on e4. This imparts a certain forcing quality to it and limits White's options. By contrast 1...g6 and 2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  attacks a pawn on d4 that is naturally protected by the queen on d1, so White is afforded more leeway in his development.

When White plays 1 b3, his opponent doesn't necessarily feel obliged to play for an initiative and frequently refuses to present the broad target that White usually does versus 1...b6. You should remember that White's view of the chess opening is different from Black's, in that he doesn't want to arrive at an equal position at too early a stage of the game. Therefore 1 b3, while respectable and sporting a considerable body of theory, isn't used as often as one might expect by the same leading players who are willing to enter into ...g6 and ...b6 systems as Black. Nevertheless, a loyal band of 1 b3 devotees have developed ways to emerge from the opening with unbalanced positions. That outcome will satisfy players who are more concerned with having an original game than achieving an advantage from the opening.

## Owen Defence

### 1 e4 b6 2 d4 $\mathbb{B}b7$ (D)

Obviously White could have begun with 1 d4 as well, and in fact many games go 1 d4 e6 2 e4 b6 (2...d5 is a French Defence) and 3... $\mathbb{B}b7$ . With either move-order, playing ...b6 and ...e6 on the first two moves has a few subtleties, as we'll see in the first few games.



In the eyes of traditional theory, 1...b6 has a varying reputation depending upon White's first move. For example, 1 c4 b6 (the English Defence) is a respectable unbalancing continuation. There have been thousands of master games with it, and recent theory is extensive, with books and lengthy articles devoted to its intricacies.

1 e4 b6, the Owen Defence, is a different matter. It was looked at askance by masters for most of the 20th century, in spite of having theory associated with it which goes as far back as the 19th. Even after the kingside fianchetto of the last chapter, 1 e4 g6, achieved respectability, the queenside fianchetto was still frowned upon when White retained full freedom with his central structure. In the past two decades, however, 1 e4 b6 2 d4  $\mathbb{B}b7$  has been used by a fair number of strong grandmasters and has received renewed attention from theoreticians.

As mentioned above, White's e-pawn is under attack. In the majority of cases, he will defend it while developing by 3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  or 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Assuming that White doesn't follow 3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with an early  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , these two methods are fundamentally different, although they often lead to types of positions that you may recognize from other openings.

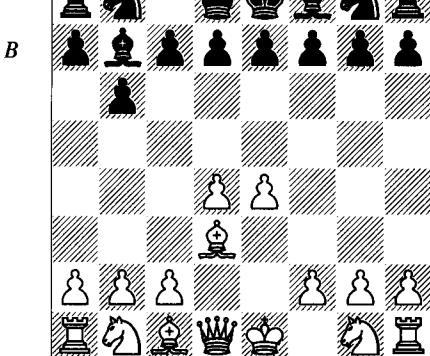
Let's begin with a classic game. I've adjusted the opening move sequence so as to address some basic move-order issues straightforwardly.

### Dorfman – Miles

Tilburg 1992

#### 1 e4 b6 2 d4 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 3 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (D)

3 d5 e6 isn't dangerous, because Black will succeed in breaking up White's centre (with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ...c6, if necessary), but I'm surprised that I can only find a handful of very low-rated games with 3 e5, since 1 b3 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  e4 is a legitimate line in which ...d5 is played soon thereafter. The idea is that after 3 e5 d6 (to dissolve the cramping e-pawn) 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , Black's queenside light squares are weakened. Finally, 3 f3 is logical, erecting a barrier against the b7-bishop. Then Black has many ways to go; for example, 3...e6 (3...g6!?) 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (4 c4 is a line of the English Defence, examined below) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (4... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? intending ...f5) 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and now 5...c5 or 5...d5.



#### 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

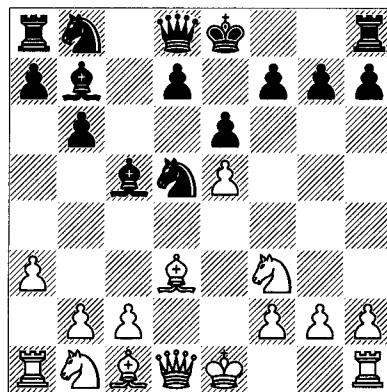
The ...b6 systems are flexible, so you see a wide variety of moves at nearly every juncture. This move and the main alternative, 3...e6, contest the light squares, which is consistent with

Black's strategy as a whole. The differences between them are important enough to warrant a fairly lengthy digression, and Black has a couple of other options. As always, it's important to understand move-orders in order to get the position you want:

a) 3...c5?! is positionally suspect due to 4 d5, hemming in Black's queen's bishop. Black has forfeited the option of attacking d5 by means of ...c6.

b) Black plays 3...e6 more frequently than 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . It can variously transpose to any of the next few games. Importantly, however, it gives White the option of 4 c4, which is the main line of the English Defence section below (1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ). An independent line after 3...e6 is 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , and now:

b1) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! (probably too provocative) 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  6 a3! c5 7 dxcc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (D).

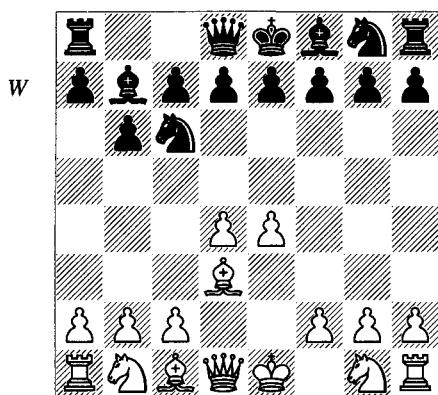


This resembles the note to 8 a3 below, except that White hasn't played c3 and therefore can play c4 in one move rather than two. One example went 8 0-0 (8 b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 c4 is also good) 8...f5!? 9 c4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? (10 b4!) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ? (12... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  looks fine) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! a5 (versus b4) 15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$  a4 17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}bd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and there's nothing good to be done about  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , Cullip-Ravikumar, British Ch, Eastbourne 1990.

b2) 4...c5 is potentially important, when 5 c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  transposes to our main game. Alternatively, White can play 5 0-0 and allow the Sicilian variant 5...cxsd4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ . In that case, 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  leaves White better developed.

c) 3...f5? was debated for many years but now it's established that 4 exf5 ♜xg2 leads to a losing position after the sequence 5 ♜h5+ g6 6 fxg6 ♜g7, and here the 'traditional' refutation is 7 ♜f5 ♜f6 (7...♜f6? 8 g7 ♜xg7 9 ♜g5 forks the bishops on g2 and g7) 8 ♜h6!! This does in fact lead to a winning position after 8...♜xh6 9 gxh7, but the analysis is complicated, and Spin-hoven shows that 7 gxh7+! ♜f8 8 ♜f3! is clearer; for example, 8...♜f6 (8...♜xh1 9 ♜e5! ♜xe5 10 dxe5) 9 ♜g6 ♜xf3 (9...♜xh1 10 ♜h6 ♜xh7 11 ♜g5) 10 ♜g1 ♜xh7 11 ♜g3 ♜e4 12 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13 ♜f3+ ♜g8 14 ♜xe4 d5 15 ♜e6+ ♜h8 16 ♜c3 c6 17 ♜f4.

d) An original and infrequently-tested variation (which has been analysed at length by Maurits Wind in *Kaissiber*) is 3...♜c6 (D), attacking the d-pawn and intending ...e5. Notice that this is a dark-square strategy, unusual for the Owen Defence.



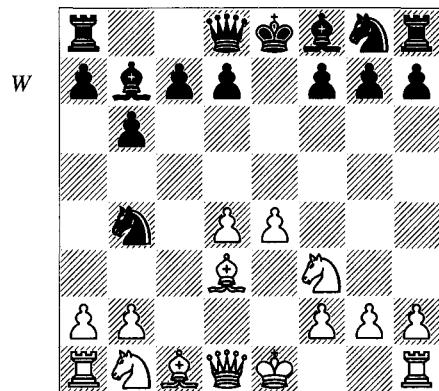
White has an array of responses to this move, and I'll leave it to the reader to investigate it in depth. Some ideas:

d1) 4 d5 ♜e5 5 ♜e2 e6 breaks up White's centre. If he overextends by 6 f4?! ♜g6 7 c4, then among other good moves, 7...♜b4+ 8 ♜d2 ♜e7 leaves White's centre further exposed.

d2) 4 ♜e2 ♜b4 forces the exchange of White's bishop; considering his extra space, this is not bad for White (for example, 5 c4 e6 transposes to the English Defence, discussed below), but ceding the bishop-pair may not be to his taste.

d3) 4 c3 (Martin gives this an '!') 4...e5 (the point) 5 ♜f3! (5 d5 ♜ce7 goes back to the games of Owen in the 1890s! Black intends

...♜g6, ...♜c5, ...♜f6 and ...c6 in one order or another; 5 ♜e2 d5! is Wind's idea, so as not to cede White the powerful centre and smooth development that would result from 5...exd4 6 cxd4 ♜b4 7 ♜bc3 ♜xd3+ 8 ♜xd3; after 5...d5 6 0-0, both 6...♜f6 and 6...♜ge7 are playable) 5...exd4 6 cxd4 ♜b4 (D) and now:



d31) 7 0-0 ♜xd3 8 ♜xd3 ♜f6 9 ♜c3 and after 9...♜e7, as played in Blackburne-Owen, Manchester 1881, 10 d5! would have been strong. Wind suggests 9...d5; then Black is walking a narrow path after 10 exd5 ♜xd5 11 ♜e1+ ♜e7 12 ♜e2 ♜d7 13 ♜xd5 (13 ♜e5 ♜e6) 13...♜xd5 14 ♜d2 ♜xf3! 15 gxf3 ♜f8, but with the moves ...♜d6 and ...h5, he obtains equal chances.

d32) 7 ♜e4! d5! (after 7...♜xe4, 8 0-0 is "enormously strong", according to Wind, although 8 ♜c3! may prove to be even better, since 8...♜c2+ 9 ♜f1 is turning sour for Black) 8 exd5 ♜xd5 9 ♜e2! (after 9 ♜xd5 ♜xd5, neither 10 ♜c3 ♜xc3 11 bxc3 ♜d6 nor 10 0-0 ♜d6 11 ♜e1+ ♜ge7 is dangerous for Black) 9...♜b7?! 10 a3 ♜d5. Now Bucker analyses 11 ♜e5?! to a moderate advantage for White after 11...c6 (11...♜ge7 12 ♜g4!) 12 0-0 ♜d6 13 ♜h5?! g6 14 ♜e1 ♜f8 15 ♜f3 f6 16 ♜c4 ♜c7 17 ♜c3 ♜g7.

d4) 4 ♜f3 ♜b4 also appears to eliminate a bishop, but 5 ♜c4! escapes, in view of 5...♜xe4 6 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 7 ♜g5+ ♜e8 8 ♜xe4, etc. So the normal response would be 5...e6. Now Wind analyses 6 ♜c3 (Martin gives only the relatively harmless 6 c3 d5 7 exd5 ♜xd5, although after 8 0-0, his 8...♜gf6 allows 9 ♜e5!, so 8...♜d6 is better; 6 ♜e2 can be met by

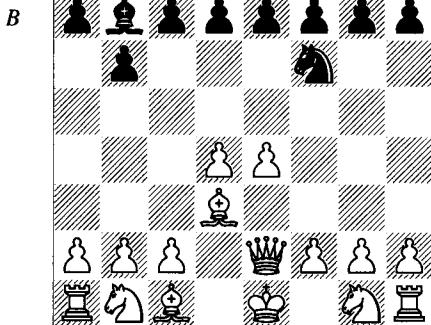
6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !? 7  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  d5 8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  dx $c$ 4) 6...d5 (perhaps 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 a3 d5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is the best Black can do) 7 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (unfortunately, White also has 8  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3 with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  and  $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{W}f3$ ! f6 11  $\mathbb{W}c6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc4$ !) 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  (or 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  11 0-0) 10...c6 11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with the idea 11... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  with great complications.

Black could use some improvements here. You might want to compare 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  below.

Let's return to 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

#### 4 $\mathbb{W}e2$ (D)

White definitely should avoid 4 e5?  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ . We shall see 4  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  in the next game, and 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 transposes to lines covered via 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  below (in the game K.Nikolaidis-Minasian). 4  $\mathbb{W}e2$  causes unique problems.



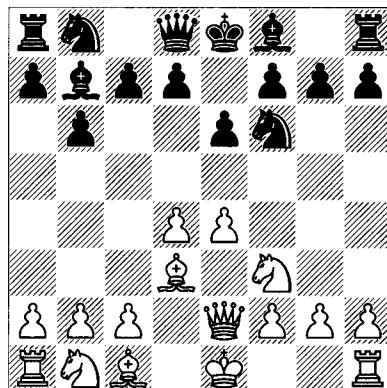
#### 4...e6

Black has some move-order issues to worry about. He can try 4...c5, when 5 c3 e6 heads for the game. If White plays 5 d5 e6 and follows up with 6 c4, Black can reply 6...d6 with the idea of ...exd5; for example, 7 f4 exd5 8 cxd5 g6 sets up a sort of Benoni in which neither ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  nor  $\mathbb{W}e2$  are particularly good moves; this should be perfectly playable for Black. Alternatively, he can try 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with the idea ...0-0. White can instead play 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and transpose to the note to 6 c3 below.

The developing move 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? threatens d4 and has the idea of winning White's bishop by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ . What is presently the main line runs 5 c3 e5 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8 0-0 c6 9 c4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  with equality due to Black's relatively free piece-play, A.Stein-A.Ivanov, Foxwoods

2005) 6...exd5 7 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !. Then I think 8... $\mathbb{Q}de7$ ? 9 cxd5 d5 yields attractive counterplay; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  g6 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  12 0-0 0-0 13 a3 (versus ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) and now 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  or 13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ . As usual, you have ample opportunity to expand upon such raw material.

#### 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ (D)



#### 5...c5!?

5...d5 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  introduces variations from the next game, but allows 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Then Black may stand all right, but has to know very specifically what to play; see the notes there.

#### 6 c3

White can play 6 d5! here, threatening c4 with a bind. This seems to leave White with the better game; for example, C.Bauer-Minasian, New York 2000 continued 6...exd5 7 exd5+  $\mathbb{W}e7$  8 c4 b5?! (however, 8... $\mathbb{W}xe2$ + 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  puts pressure on Black's position) 9 b3  $\mathbb{W}xe2$ + 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  b4 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with space and initiative.

Black may be able to improve upon this; otherwise he might want to use a 3...e6 move-order, or look into deviations from the game such as 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  or 5...d5.

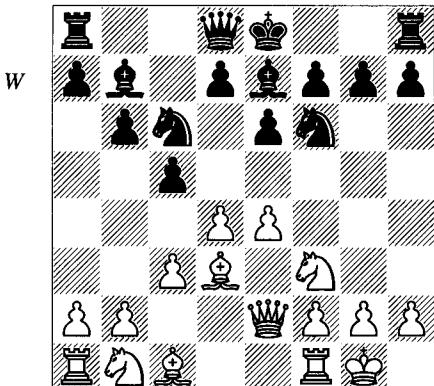
#### 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This position too can arise via several move-orders.

#### 7 0-0

To confuse matters, White can play  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  from move 3 onwards. At this point, 7  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  d5 (7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 a3 is the game) 8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  transposes into the next game.

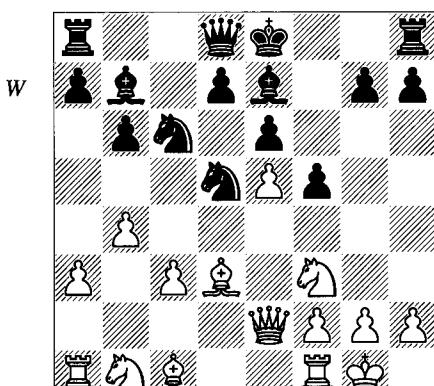
#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

**8 a3!?**

Playing this move before  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  has certain advantages (see the next note). It also has drawbacks, however, in particular the weakening of b3. Instead, 8 e5 (8 dxc5 transposes if, after either recapture by Black, White plays 9 e5) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9 dxc5 has done well for White, but with accurate play, Black's development and central pawns should more or less make up for his structural problems, as follows:

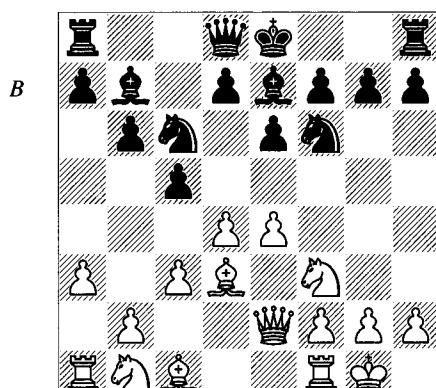
a) After 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  10 c4, Bauer analyses 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  f5!?) 12...g6 13  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , which might mildly favour White following 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! (14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f6!) 14...d6 15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ , but 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !? keeps things within bounds; for example, 18  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  and the opposite-coloured bishops help Black.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  10 b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 a3 is more interesting. White intends c4 and  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  and has more space. Black should challenge his central control by 11...f5! (D).



With his cramped position, Black wants to stake out some kingside territory. 11...f5 covers the key e4-square and cuts off White's light-squared bishop from a potential kingside attack. Whether this works against White's considerable space advantage is another matter; I suspect that Black gets just enough play. The instructive game Rosandić–Filipović, Zadar 2001 continued 12 c4 (12 exf6?!  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and ...0-0 gives Black two long diagonals, centralized knights and the f-file to make up for his lack of space) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  g5! (a theme to remember in this variation, and in fact in various other openings with this ...e6/...f5 pawn-structure) 15  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  g4 16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (clearing e7 for his knight) 17 b5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! (18 a4!) 18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  19 g3 (versus ... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 19...h5 20 a4 h4! 21 a5 (21 f3?  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! with the idea 22 fxg4? hxg3! 23 gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ! 24 fxg6?  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ +) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  23 axb6 axb6 24  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  hxg3 26 fxg3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}dd1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! 29 gxh5  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ , winning due to the threats of both 30...g3 and 30... $\mathbb{Q}xh2$ .

We now return to 8 a3 (D):

**8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !**

Black threatens to occupy b3. Setting up a French structure with 8...d5 is thematic in these positions, but watch out for the timing: 9 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10 b4! and Black has neither ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  nor ...a5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  to exploit the queenside holes, nor even ...c4 and ...b5-b4. In the French Defence, Black might play ...f6, but here the bishop is on b7 and doesn't defend e6, so after 10...f6? 11 exf6 White wins the e-pawn.

**9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c4! 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$**

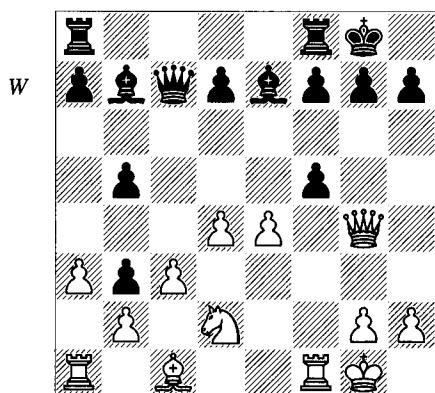
10  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  cedes a centre pawn for a flank pawn, which tends to be undesirable, although White does command more space following 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  11 e5!? (11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0 and ...d6 is solid) 11...d5!? 12 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ !? (13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  confers a nominal edge, but no more) 13...dxc4 14  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15 gxf3 0-0 and Black has structural compensation for the pawn.

10... $\mathbb{W}c7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  b5 12 f4 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  14  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ !

Instead, 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ ?! cxb3 16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 leaves Black ahead in development with much the better bishop.

Up to this point, Dorfman had been following the game Ki.Georgiev-Miles, Biel 1992: 15  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ ! (White's knight is more valuable than his bad bishop) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 18  $\mathbb{W}f3$  fxe4 19  $\mathbb{W}xe4$ . Now Miles should have prevented his opponent from playing f5, since that's White's best way to free his problem bishop, by 19...g6!; for example, 20  $\mathbb{Q}be1$  (20 d5?!  $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ !) 20... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  with no defensive problems.

15...cxb3 16 f5 exf5 (D)



17 exf5??

Or:

a) Upon the obvious 17  $\mathbb{W}xf5$ , Black has the shot 17...d5! 18  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  (18 exd5 can be met by 18... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  or 18...g6!?) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19  $\mathbb{W}f4$  (19  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20 exd5  $\mathbb{W}c4$ !) 19... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ! 20 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with the idea 21  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !  $\mathbb{W}c4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e2$ ! 23  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  24 gxf3 g6 25  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  f6!.

b) White should settle for 17  $\mathbb{W}xf5$ !, when after 17...d5?! (17... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ! 18 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f6 is better, with compensation)

18 e5 f6 19  $\mathbb{W}e6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  22  $\mathbb{W}d3$  he wins a pawn without apparent retribution.

17... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ??

It's premature to cede a pawn. True, Black is taking control after 18 h3?  $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ , and his bishop-pair gives him a plus after 18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f6! 19  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}ff8$ . Probably 18  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  is the best course.

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$

Black went on to convert his extra pawn, in spite of some inaccuracies:

22 a4  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g5!? 25 g4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  26 axb5  $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  28  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}ee2$  30 b6  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  31 bxa7  $\mathbb{Q}g2+$  32  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}bf2+$  33  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g1+$  0-1

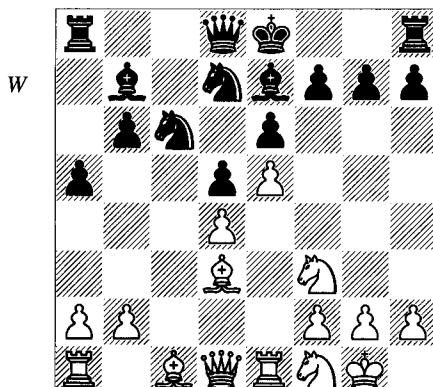
In the following games, Black plays ...d5, to establish a position much like the French Defence.

### Bakre – Popchev

Belgrade 2001

1 e4 b6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{W}e2$

4  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e6 5  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$  d5 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  is very similar to the game, although the substitution of  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  for  $\mathbb{W}e2$  makes some difference after 7 0-0 c5 8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !? (after the more common 8 c3, rather than 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , Black can reply 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , when his better bishop at least partially compensates for White's space) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (a very common plan in the analogous French positions: White swings his pieces over for a kingside attack) 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 a5 (D).



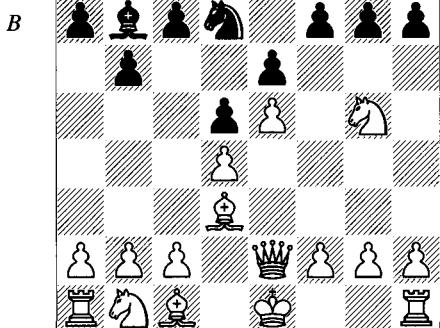
Black would like to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ . Exchanging his bad bishop in this fashion is a major theme in the ‘French-Owen’, and White usually makes sure to prevent it: 12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  14  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! (heading for f4 and g4) 14...a4! (fixing the light squares) 15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (15  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !) 15...b5 16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and Black played the relatively solid 16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  in Trygstad-Gawehns, Bergen 2000. He might have tried 16... $\mathbb{B}b6$ , in order to attack the d-pawn and prepare ...b4; for example, 17  $\mathbb{W}f4$  h6 18  $\mathbb{W}g4$  g6 with ...h5 to follow. In general, the play looks balanced in this line.

#### 4...e6 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ d5

If Black is heading for ...d5 structures, this is the obvious timing, but not risk-free. We saw 5...c5 6 d5! in the notes to the previous game. Again, it may be that Black should prefer a move-order with 3...e6 and an early ...c5 if he wants to avoid the problems described in the note to White’s 7th move.

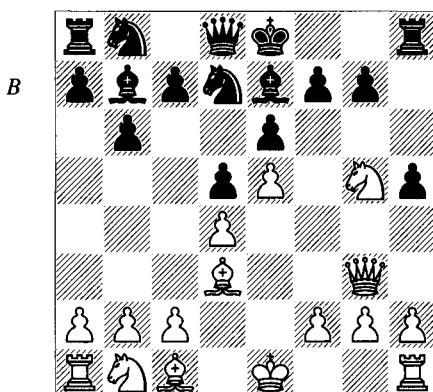
#### 6 e5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ 7 c3

A critical juncture. 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (D) is both aggressive and logical.



White not only brings the queen to the kingside to create threats, but he frees his f-pawn to advance.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is another move that pops up repeatedly in the French Defence, but in that opening Black’s attack on the centre or queen-side is already underway. After 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , White has the immediate threat of 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ . Black is really forced to play 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (7...h6? 8  $\mathbb{W}h5$  threatens f7 as well as 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ , but after 8... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ? 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ! wins anyway) 8  $\mathbb{W}g4$ ! (8 h4 c5 9  $\mathbb{W}h3$ ?! is an alternative, after which Gawehns analyses 9... $\mathbb{B}c8$  and 9... $\mathbb{C}xd4$

10  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  12  $\mathbb{W}f3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  to equality) 8...h5 (White was threatening  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  followed by  $\mathbb{W}xg7$ , and a cute line is 8...c5? 9  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  10  $\mathbb{W}xe6$ ! fxe6? 11  $\mathbb{Q}g6#$ ; Gawehns suggests that the strange-looking 8... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  might be OK – the idea is to stabilize the kingside and get in the favourable move ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ; for example, 9 0-0 h5 10  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  or 9  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  10  $\mathbb{W}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) 9  $\mathbb{W}g3$  (D).

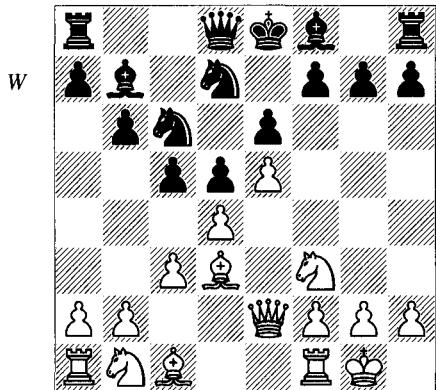


9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! (Conde-Gawehns, corr. 2003 saw the modest but real improvement 9...h4! 10  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 12 h3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ; Black has a little more kingside room in that case and later played ... $\mathbb{W}h5$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g8$ ) 10 0-0 (Khalifman’s suggestion 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is also promising; then 10...g6 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  wins the dark squares; the inclusion of 9...h4 would also help in that case because ... $\mathbb{W}h5$  challenges the g5-square) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 11  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  12 c3 c5 13  $\mathbb{W}d1$ !? (13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ) 13...c4?! (13... $\mathbb{B}c8$ ) 14  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  15 h4 and in Deep Junior-Akopian, Dortmund 2000, the computer was happy.

The line with 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is promising for White; Black can examine ideas such as 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , or 9...h4! in the main line, although the whole position is difficult and requires preparation. One interesting point made by Gawehns is that with the moves ...c5 and c3 included, 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{W}g4$  isn’t so intimidating due to 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !; in fact, a little analysis will indicate that this is acceptable for Black. So if Black isn’t happy with the lines in this note, he might want to go back and look at those ...c5 move-orders from the previous game; for example, 3...e6 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5.

#### 7...c5 8 0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$ (D)

We see 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  in the next game, with many of the same ideas.



### 9 a3

After 9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ , 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  may well transpose. 9... $cxd4$  10  $cxd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  also has to be considered, but 11  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$  is a good reply, as 11... $a6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14 b4 is comfortable for White. A better choice is 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  13  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  a6! 14  $\mathbb{We}2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 17  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$  with only a small pull for White.

The most important thing to remember about all lines with ... $cxd4$  is that Black gives up the option of a later queenside attack by ...c4. Such attacks tend to be important in these variations, so you need to be sure that ... $cxd4$  accomplishes something concrete before playing it.

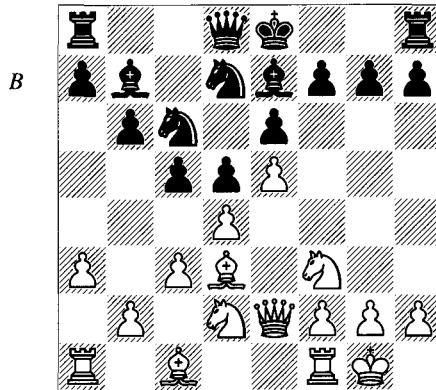
### 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Note that 9...c4 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  should probably be followed by 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  anyway, because after 10...b5 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  White threatens various kingside attacks.

### 10 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (D)

10 b4 is met most naturally with 10...0-0, which can be followed up by ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  and ... $\mathbb{W}c7$ , while ... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  and ... $f6$  is a possible alternative strategy. Black can instead lash out with 10... $g5?$ , as in the main game; this has been analysed in some depth. A brief extract is 11 b5 (11  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c4 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , as does 11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  c4 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ; different possibilities arise from 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 b5?  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c4 14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  h5, which is analysis by Herbrechtsmeier) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c4 13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ . Thus far Khalifman. Now Gaweihns suggests the familiar 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and appends 14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  with the idea 15  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$ . This seems

reasonable, and in general, these lines look fun to play for both sides.



### 10... $g5!$ ?

This advance comes up repeatedly in the 'French-Owen', just as it does in the related French Defence positions. Black is not merely launching a kingside attack, but preparing to reorganize his pieces. In particular, ... $\mathbb{Q}f8-g6$  can be surprisingly effective, as in the previous note. Be aware, however, that the corresponding attack with ... $g5$  in the French Defence is backed up by moves such as ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , making ... $g4$  a continual threat to win White's d-pawn. That's not true in the Owen version, so the threat to White's centre is minimal. On the other hand, Black has one significant advantage here: if White plays  $dxc5$ , he doesn't gain the d4-square for a piece because Black can reply with ... $bxc5$ . This is all hard to assess, but it's worth noting that the safer 10...0-0 is also playable.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}e3$

White might look into 11 b4 h5!? 12  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ .

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ g4 13 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $cxd4$

The less committal 13...h5 may be a slight improvement.

### 14 $cxd4$ $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ 15 $\mathbb{W}e2$ h5 16 $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}a6?$

17  $\mathbb{Q}xg6?$  fxg6 18  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19 g3 favours White slightly due to Black's loose kingside.

### 17... $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ 18 $\mathbb{W}xa6$ 0-0 19 $\mathbb{W}b7$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ $\mathbb{W}xg5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

Now White faces some challenges.

### 22 $\mathbb{Q}a6?$ $\mathbb{Q}c7$

Here 22...f6! 23 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  exerts real pressure, because both ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7-f5$  (targeting d4) and ...h4-h3 are dangerous ideas.

**23  $\mathbb{B}c3 \mathbb{Q}b8$**

Perhaps the last chance to gain a pull was 23... $\mathbb{A}fc8!$ .

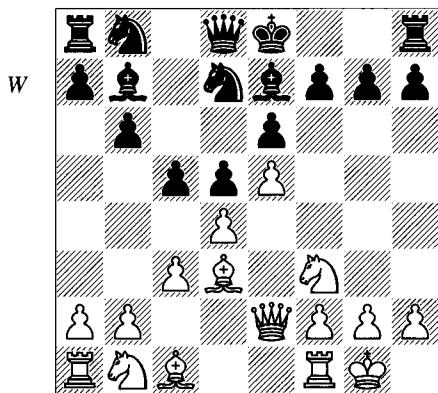
**24  $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{A}fc8$  25  $\mathbb{B}dc1$**

The game is even now, and a draw eventually resulted.

**Dautov – C. Bauer**

*European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005*

**1 d4 b6 2 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{W}e2$  e6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  7 c3 c5 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (D)**



Black reasons that he'll make this move in any case, so why not now? The knight on b8 might still be used to support ... $\mathbb{A}a6$ .

**9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

White gets his bishop out before blocking it by  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ . Otherwise:

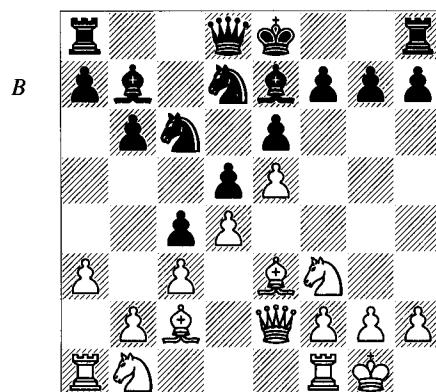
a) Grosar-Filipović, Ljubljana 2000 saw 9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}c6$  10 a3 (with the idea b4), and now we see the standard queenside attack 10...c4! 11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  b5 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !? (McDonald mentions 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !?, g6!?, 13 f4, when 13...a5 with the idea ...b4 offers possibilities for both sides) 12...a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  b4 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d2 h5! 15 f4 g6 and Black has blocked the kingside, so he can turn to the other wing.

b) Similarly, 9 a3 can be answered by 9...c4. Instead, 9...a5 10 a4! secures the b5-square and ruins Black's queenside play; this positional trick is worth filing away.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10 a3 c4**

In the last game, we saw lines with ...g5, and the move is playable here as well. But the text-move is more careful, and guarantees queen-side play.

**11  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (D)**



**11...b5**

Black can also clamp down on White's queenside by 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and then prepare for ...0-0-0 by ...h6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ .

**12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

White prepares f4-f5, the thematic kingside attack.

**13...h5!**

This all-purpose move prevents  $\mathbb{W}g4$  and  $\mathbb{W}h5$ , and also prepares to block the advance of White's f-pawn by preventing g4.

**14 f4 g6 15  $\mathbb{Q}ef3$  b4 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?**

White will try to exploit Black's newly-created dark-square weaknesses resulting from ...g6 and ...h5.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  17 fxg5 b3!?**

A big decision: by closing the queenside, Black announces that he's content with a draw. The alternative was to protect the kingside and play for open lines on the queenside, but White has enough resources on that side of the board to hold his own.

**18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19  $\mathbb{W}f7$  20 g4 hxg4 21  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$**

Ultra-safe.

**23  $\mathbb{W}f6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}ah8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  26  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  27  $\mathbb{Q}c1$**

Neither side can do much against careful defense, and indeed the game was drawn after further manoeuvring.

Black can enter an entirely different French-like set-up if White plays  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . This time the resulting structures will be a mix of the Winawer and Classical Variations of the French, along

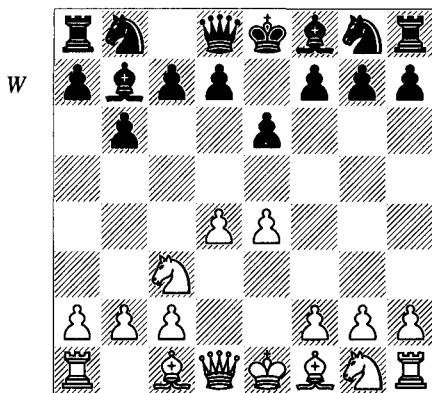
with a couple of formations that more resemble a Trompowsky Attack (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ).

**K. Nikolaidis – Minasian**  
Panormo Zonal 1998

**1 e4 b6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

The defensive-looking move 3 f3 is remarkably rare, perhaps because it gives Black too much leeway. I'm going to leave it to the reader to think about, but you should know that 3...e6 is normal, when the obvious ...d5 soon thereafter has the advantage that if White plays e5, the pawn on f3 will have to move again to f4, both to support e5 and to clear f3 for the king's knight. That constitutes a loss of tempo, although it has compensating benefits. An interesting alternative to ...d5 is to combine ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and ...f5, or ...g6, ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , delaying the choice of pawn-breaks. In fact, 3...d5?!? is also a reasonable reply. Then Black intends to answer 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with 4...e6, which has the positional ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , as well as an opportunistic ... $\mathbb{W}h4+$  to disturb White's build-up. Versus 4 exd5, Black can play 4... $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ; e.g., 5 c4  $\mathbb{W}d7$ . Finally, the move 4 e5 can be logically answered by 4...e6 or 4... $\mathbb{W}d7$ !?, with an eye towards ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and/or ...c5.

3...e6 (D)



When White plays 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , he develops more freely than in lines where he supports his centre with c3 and plays  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ . For one thing, his dark-squared bishop doesn't have to wait for the middlegame to come into play. In addition, Black has to be aware that an early ...c5 can often be answered by d5, and that in some cases

the move ...d5 can be favourably countered by exd5.

On the flip side, the knight on c3 can be pinned by ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , which adds to the pressure on e4 exerted by Black's queen's bishop. Furthermore, White's inability to bolster the centre with c3 means that a properly-timed ...c5 can create more difficulties than we saw in the previous two games.

**4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

There are two important alternatives for White here:

a) 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (the other move-order is 3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e6 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , which gives Black the option of 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , as above). Now:

a1) 4...g6 (as used by Spassky) is a legitimate way to play chess and avoid theory; Black often sets up the 'Hippopotamus' formation with ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , ...d6 and so forth. Not surprisingly, most top players will prefer White in that case: he has space, development, and no weaknesses. Nevertheless, several grandmasters have shown that it's not easy to crack Black's position.

Black has two more conventional approaches after 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ :

a2) The straightforward 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  can be answered by 5  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ , when Black is faced with the question of how to challenge the centre: 5...d5?!? (5...c5 6 d5! should become a familiar theme to you; if Black grabs the d-pawn by 6...exd5 7 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , both 9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e7+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and 9 0-0 followed by 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  are promising) 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ ! (Gawehns prefers 6... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ !, when the direct 7 f4 looks appropriate) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !, threatening 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ !. Peters-Šahović, Lone Pine 1977 continued 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{W}g4$  g6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ! fxe6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$  hxg6 11  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ . Now the game's 12 h4 with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  wasn't clear, but Gawehns analyses 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14  $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{W}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16 h4! with a strong attack.

a3) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! reserves the possibilities of ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (perhaps with ...f5 to follow in the latter case): 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  transposes to the main game), and then:

a31) 5...d5 6 0-0 is an important point of 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , with an edge for White.

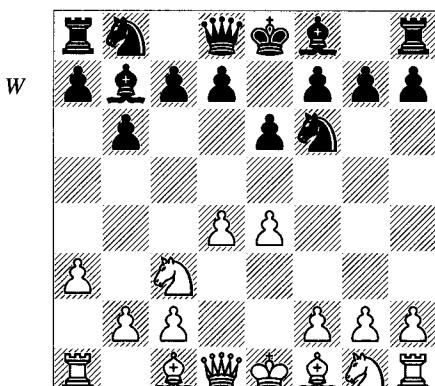
a32) 5...c5?! can be comfortably answered by R.Lutz's suggestion 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  cxd4 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$  d6 9  $\mathbb{W}g4$ ! with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

10  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+!$ , or by 6 d5! exd5 7 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  8 0-0 with moves like  $\mathbb{E}e1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  to come.

a33) After 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5!? 7 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ , Flear points to Black's potential breaks ...c6 and ...f5. He gives 8 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ! bxc5 10 0-0 with the idea f4 may well improve) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  10 b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{W}c1$  h6, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . In general, however, White's chances look better after 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ .

a34) Probably 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! is best, after which White's greater command of territory confers an edge, but the plan of ...0-0 and ...f5 is in the air.

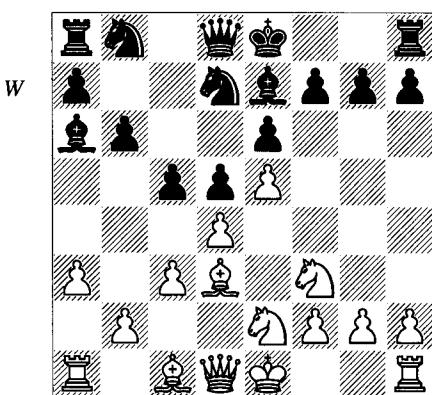
b) 4 a3 prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and has gained a following. 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (*D*) (here's a case in which 4...g6 is more attractive than usual, because White's a3 plays no significant part in the resulting position; in contrast, White has clearly the superior pawn-structure after 4...d5?! 5 exd5! exd5).



The play can go in many directions now, but the following seem particularly instructive:

b1) 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  resembles the Trompowsky Attack variation 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e6 3 e4 h6 4  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b6; in such a position, a3 is virtually wasted and Black can set up by some combination of ...d6, ...a6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . Now 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 with the idea ...g5 is one possibility, while a natural-looking sequence after 7  $\mathbb{W}d2$  is 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 e5!?

b2) 5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d5 6 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (if White plays 7  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ , in order to shore up his centre with c3, Black does well to offer the exchange of his queen's bishop; compare what follows) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 9 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (*D*).



It's always difficult to tell whether this 'bad bishop' exchange is productive or seriously weakens the queenside light squares. In this case, the latter cannot be exploited: 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ) 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$ ! 11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  13  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , Ehlvest-Blatny, New York 2004, and now simply 14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  followed by ...0-0 is fully satisfactory.

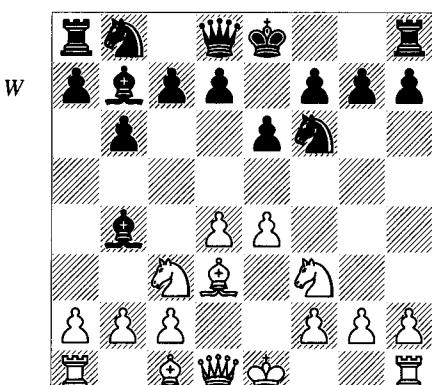
b3) 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (6  $\mathbb{W}f3$  d5 7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !?) c6! 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4!?

9  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  with the idea of an early ...c5 and ...cx4 gives Black good compensation) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (7  $\mathbb{W}e2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and 0-0-0 is a more enterprising idea) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !?

d6 9 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ !?

(Tisdall mentions 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  10  $\mathbb{W}g4$  0-0, when Black is doing fine) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{W}g4$  0-0-0 12 0-0-0, Mrđa-Lovrić, Montecatini Terme 2001, and now 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  leaves Black with at least equality.

4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (*D*)



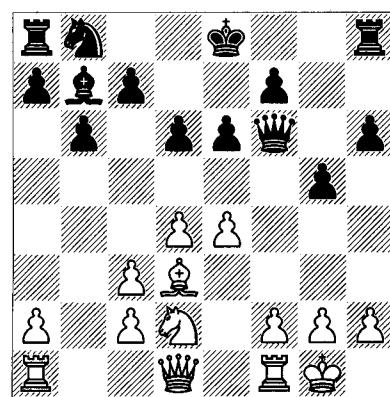
6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The main alternative is 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  d5 7 e5 (7 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3 0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  c5 12 dxc5  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  13 c4  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  equalized in Bareev-C.Bauer, Enghien-les-Bains 2001) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (8 0-0!?) can be answered safely by 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , intending to return the pawn in order to gain the light squares after 11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  ( $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3, and now 9...c5 or 9...h6 looks satisfactory, whereas Gaweñns's more daring 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  13 g4 0-0-0 yields a lot of compensation for a pawn) 9  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 h4!?,  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (the natural 10...c5 11 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  equalizes) 11  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  12 cxd3 c5 13 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with mutual chances, E.Berg-Blatny, Bermuda 2003.

6...h6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3 d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ? g5? (D)

This may seem strange, but it discourages White's main plan of f4. Next, Black will play ...e5 to try to force a decision from White about what to do with his d4-pawn.

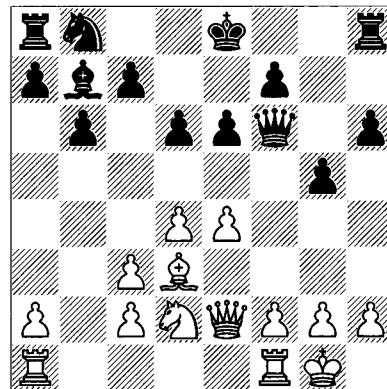
The alternative 10...e5 11 f4! has been thoroughly tested, with an almost certain advantage for White if the game proceeds 11...exd4?! 12 e5!. Instead, 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  has a decent reputation; for example, 12  $\mathbb{W}g4$ ! 0-0 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and instead of 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !, when Black should have been in trouble in A.David-C.Bauer, French Team Ch, Port Barcares 2005, Black can play 13...exd4 14 cxd4 b5 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? with the idea 16 d5 f5! 17 exf5  $\mathbb{W}e3+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ . White can probably find a modest advantage somewhere in this line, but it shouldn't amount to much.



11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (D)

Nothing else is terribly impressive here:

- a) 11 f4 gxf4 12 g3 (12  $\mathbb{W}g4$  e5) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  e5.
- b) 11 e5?! appears too ambitious after simply 11...dxe5 12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and either 12... $\mathbb{W}g7$  or 12... $\mathbb{W}e7$  13 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .
- c) 11 a4 is slightly irritating, but Black can cope after 11...e5 (11...a6? 12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

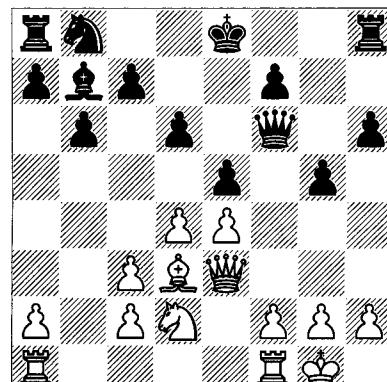


11...e5 12  $\mathbb{W}e3$  (D)

Or:

- a) 12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is a clever concept: the idea is  $\mathbb{Q}e3-f5$ . The f5-square is potentially a significant advantage, although White's bad bishop and Black's solid position are compensating factors. Black may want to clarify matters by 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd4! 14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15 exd5+  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  with a dynamic balance.

- b) 12 dxe5 dxe5 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  cedes the c5-square to Black's knight when no piece can challenge it, with the likely follow-up 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16 a4 a5.



**12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ?**

Bauer mentions 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ , which is more pointed. If White counters the threat on d4 by 13 d5, 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 a4 a5 15  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is safe, and White has no way through on the queen-side. Black proceeds with moves such as ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , with ...h5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  as needed.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0-0**

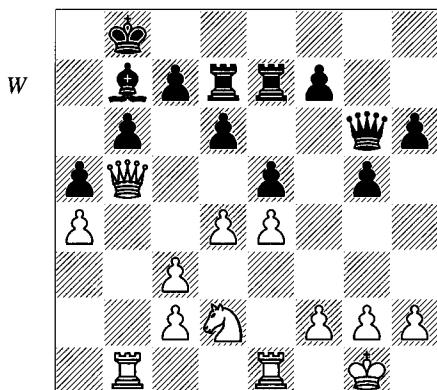
A little risky; the alternative was 13...c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0.

**14 a4 a5 15  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}he8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$ ?**

Gawehns analyses 18  $\mathbb{Q}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  19 dxc5 dxc5 20  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with a positional plus for Black.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}ee7?$  (D)**

This proves to be too slow. 19... $\mathbb{Q}de7!$  threatens ...exd4 and a capture on e4. Then Nikolaidis gives the by no means compulsory 20 d5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  with complications; it's not clear what White's plan would be.



**20  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  exd4 21  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$**

White also has the upper hand after 21 cxd4 d5 22  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ .

**21...d5**

21... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  22 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  23 d5! threatens  $\mathbb{Q}c6+$ .

**22  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  23 exd5?**

23 cxd4! (with the idea e5) is extremely strong, in view of 23...dxe4?! 24 d5! with the idea a5.

**23... $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25 a5?!  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  26 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  27 a6+  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  f5 29 h3 g4 30 hxg4 fxg4**

Now the game is equal; it was eventually drawn.

## English Defence

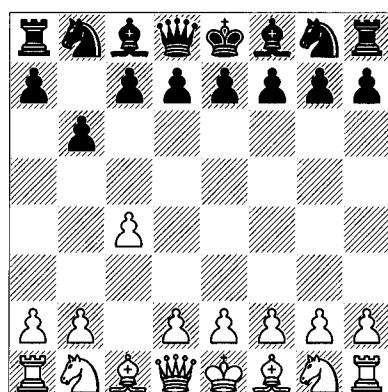
The English Defence is defined by the moves ...b6 and ...e6 versus White's c4. In the great majority of cases, Black also plays ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and White d4, but occasionally Black plays ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , and White sometimes foregoes d4 in order to avoid central exposure.

In general, I would characterize the English Defence as one of the most exciting and instructive modern fianchetto openings. It embraces an extraordinary number of highly tactical variations, which unfortunately requires a lot of preparation from Black (and an unusually detailed exposition on my part). However, most of those tactics grow out of distinctive positional roots. What's more, the hypermodern theme of attacking an occupied centre from the flank will seldom express itself more clearly.

**1 c4 b6 (D)**

1...b6 is more popular versus 1 c4 than 1 e4 or 1 d4, for reasons that become clear next move. Nevertheless, I should note that 1 d4 e6 is appropriate for a French Defence player, because 2 e4 d5 leads to the French Defence itself and 2 c4 b6 brings us back to the English Defence.

The other popular move-order after 1 c4 is 1...e6; for example, 2 d4 b6 transposes to the main line. 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is an independent move-order that often transposes to another opening; for example, 2...d5 (Queen's Gambit or Réti), 2...c5 (Symmetrical English), 2...f5 (Dutch), or various Indian formations with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (notice that this kind of transposition isn't possible after 1 d4 b6 2 e4).



**2 d4**

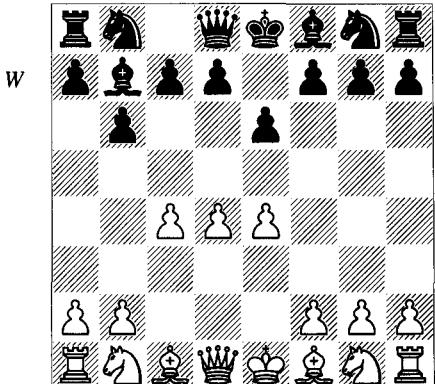
The alternative 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  is discussed below, in the notes to Marjanović-Ivanisević.

**2...e6**

Of course, 2... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is playable as well. With 2...e6 Black leaves himself ready to play an early ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ . He might also want to hold off on 2... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  in order to retain options for the bishop if White plays slowly. For example, 2...e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is a Queen's Indian Defence, when the modern main lines involve the move ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ . Furthermore, the move 3 d5?!, which would directly block off the bishop after 2... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , can now be answered by 3... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (4 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ ), 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 a3 (to avoid ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ) 4... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , or the bizarre-looking 3... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (hitting c4), whose theoretical reputation is not bad.

**3 e4**

If there's a way for White to get a substantial advantage against the English Defence, this has to be it. Establishing a broad centre conforms with our usual 'stress test' of any black defence that doesn't itself establish a central pawn presence. I should say that the slower approach with 3 a3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (equivalent to 1 c4 b6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 4 a3, with minor move-order issues) has been a deterrent to some prospective players of the English Defence, particularly at grandmaster level, because it's easy to fall into a cramped position. Nevertheless, Black has plenty of ways to develop his pieces and will not have to fear being steamrollered by pawns, so the a3 lines are not to be feared in the way that 3 e4 is. I'll take this up in a game below (Sher-Lempert).

**3... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (D)**

This position constitutes the starting point for the most frequently-played and most challenging variation of the English Defence. Black is in the strange circumstance that he has a remarkable number of moves at his disposal for each of his early moves, but that they tend to be the same moves: ... $\mathbb{Q}b4(+)$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}h4(+)$ , ...f5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , normally not before ...f5). Naturally, Black makes other piece moves and pawn-breaks (sometimes the light-squared break ...d5, for example, but rarely ...c5 or ...e5). Nevertheless, the basic attacks on White's centre are strangely similar for a move as noncommittal as ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

The implementation of these moves depends upon White's own set-up, of course, but right at this moment he settles much of the question by his choice, which is usually either 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  or 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . White's general strategy is straightforward: support of his centre, development, and a pawn advance. He can play f3 or  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  to further the first goal, although the latter move tends to be ineffective. Pressing forward with d5 cuts off Black's bishop on b7, but it uses a valuable tempo and opens up some squares for Black's pieces – see the next note. The prospect of White's d5, however, accounts for the fact that Black seldom commits to ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  before ...f5; that is, he wants to have the move ...f5 available to break down White's c4/d5/e4 phalanx.

**4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$** 

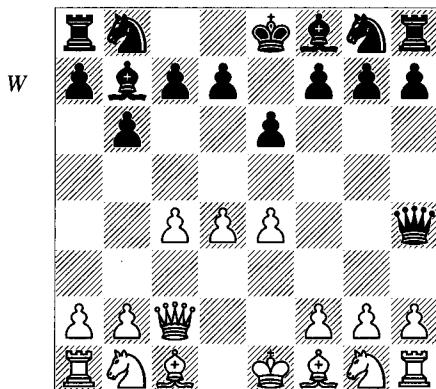
This bishop development is the most important move, although 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  has been played more often and is discussed in games to follow. The drawback to 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is that it grants Black's dark-squared bishop an immediate and effective role following 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ . By contrast, 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  lets White avoid doubled pawns by 5  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and can even speed his development; 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  is a rare choice for Black, but a legitimate one with its own ideas, and we'll cover it in the next game.

Some lesser continuations:

- a) 4 d5 has more than one good reply, but an attractive one is 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , recommended by Langrock, because Black takes the initiative. Then 5 e5?!  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , and 5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  exd5 6 exd5 c6 or 6 cxd5 c6 is easy for Black to play. That leaves 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , which may even leave White in the worse position: 6...exd5 7 cxd5 (7 exd5 c6 8 dxc6?!

$\mathbb{Q}xc6$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!?$  8  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 10 c4  $\mathbb{M}e8$  11 f3 c6!; this leaves White no good way to defend against a double capture on d5, unless he tries 12  $dxc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ , when Black has the possibility of an opportunistic ...d5 and, failing that, ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ .

b) 4  $\mathbb{W}c2$  can lead to various traps after the primitive 4... $\mathbb{W}h4!$  (*D*), attacking e4 twice and pinning the f-pawn that might otherwise protect it.



Then 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is seen below under the move-order 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  5  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}h4!$ . Otherwise:

b1) 5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ? is actually a bad mistake in view of 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ , which threatens not only 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , but also 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$ , winning the e-pawn! Since 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  attacks g2 as well, and 6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  7  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is a double attack on f2 and e5, only 6 g3  $\mathbb{W}f6$  7 d5 seems playable, until you find that 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6!$  wins. An amazing example of pure piece-play, which triumphs without any help from the pawns!

b2) 5  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is best. After 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , 6...f5!? 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}xg2$  10 0-0-0 fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is a much-played gambit. Upon 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , Odessky suggests 12  $\mathbb{W}hg1!$   $\mathbb{W}xh2$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ . Because playing in this manner is so risky for Black, it seems better – or at least more practical – to play 6... $\mathbb{W}g4$ , hitting the g-pawn immediately: 7  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (7 g3 f5 8 f3  $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) 7...f5 8 f3 (8  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd2??$  fxe4 10  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}xg2+!$ ; 8 h3  $\mathbb{W}g6$  is difficult to assess or work out) 8... $\mathbb{W}h4$  9 exf5, Levitt-Ehlvest, New York 1994, and here 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  10 fxe6 dxe6 gives Black at least adequate compensation

according to separate analyses by Levitt and Odessky.

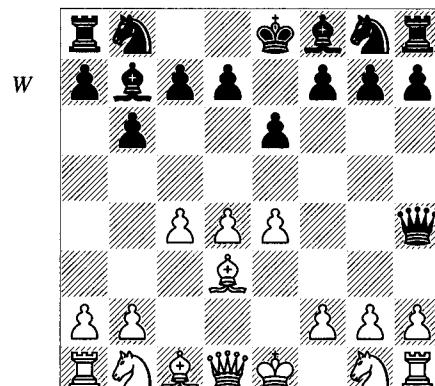
c) 4 f3 can be answered by the typically dynamic 4...f5! 5 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  (this resembles 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  5 f3 f5 6 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  below), a gambit based upon 6 fxe6  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  with an attack. Instead, 6  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$  7 g3  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  wins the dark squares; for example, 8 fxe6  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  0-0 with a strong initiative.

After 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , Black's main replies are 4...f5 and 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Let's begin our investigation with a game that came 20 years after the same opponents brought attention to 4...f5 on the international scene:

**Browne – Miles**  
*Reno 1999*

**1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5**

This leads to wild and forcing play. We'll see 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  in the next game. Periodically writers recommend 4... $\mathbb{W}h4$  (*D*), but there are at least two good answers:

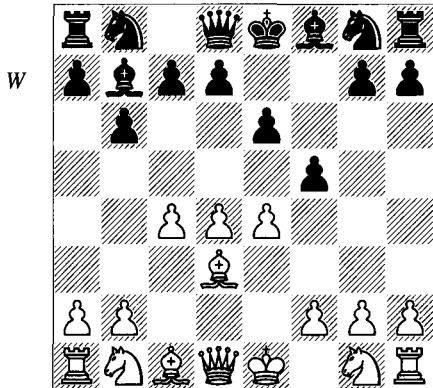


a) White can sacrifice a pawn with 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , which yields a powerful attack, Plaskett-Forintos, Ramsgate 1981.

b) 5  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  wins time by attacking the queen; for example, 5...f5 (5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd2!$  is awkward, since White wins after 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4??$  9 h3  $\mathbb{W}f5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 12 cxd5 exd5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ ) 6  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (or 7...fxe4 8 h3  $\mathbb{W}f5$  9 g4!  $\mathbb{W}g6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , when 10... $\mathbb{W}h6?$  fails to 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xh3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  14  $\mathbb{W}f3!$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 9 h3  $\mathbb{W}f5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  is also very

strong) 10... $\mathbb{W}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 12  $\mathbb{W}a4+!$  c6 13 cx d5  $\mathbb{W}xh4$  14  $\mathbb{E}e1$  with a killing attack.

We now return to 4...f5 (D):



### 5 exf5!

White takes up the challenge. Otherwise Black just piles up on the e-pawn by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , whereas 5 f3?! fxe4 6 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! has the idea 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$ .

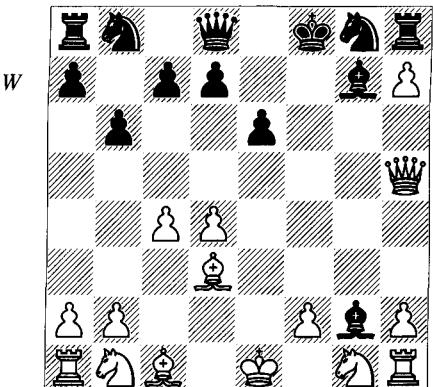
### 5... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

Black in turn wins the rook on h1, knowing that he will face a dangerous attack. We'll see 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  in the next game.

### 6 $\mathbb{W}h5+$ g6 7 f x g6 $\mathbb{Q}g7$

Forced. First, 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  will lose if White finds 8 g7+  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  9 gxh8 $\mathbb{W}$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  10  $\mathbb{W}xh7$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , etc. And 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4+?$ , leaving g7 undefended, is no better: 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}h6+!$  (or 9 g7+  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10  $\mathbb{W}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11  $\mathbb{W}xg2$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  10  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{W}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{W}xg2$  threatening  $\mathbb{W}xa8$  and g7.

### 8 $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ (D)



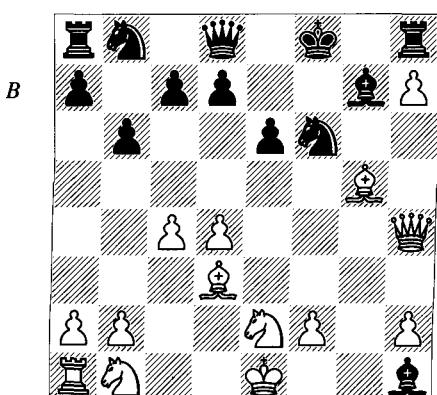
The key starting position for what has been called the 'Whole Hog Variation', in honour of Black's unashamed greed. White is about to be a rook down for two pawns, in return for obvious attacking chances against Black's loose king. This extraordinarily tactical line has long been a theoretician's nightmare, and I'll try to show a complete solution with a minimum of details.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

White develops and forces Black to capture on h1; this knight will head for f4. I won't go into the details about 9  $\mathbb{Q}xg8+?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$ , but Black's activity gives him at least equality.

9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is sometimes regarded as more accurate than 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , often transposing after 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ . In fact, this was the actual move-order Browne used in the game. Instead, 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  prevents the tricky move ... $\mathbb{Q}f3$  that we see below. But 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  in turn forfeits the opportunity for  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  at some point, which contributes to White's victory in our main game. Fortunately (for simplicity's sake), it turns out (at least in my opinion) that Black is essentially lost after either 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  or 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , and that 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is therefore just as strong as 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ . A key transposition to lines below is 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (13 0-0-0 isn't as good due to 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ !).

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 11 $\mathbb{W}h4$ (D)



### 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

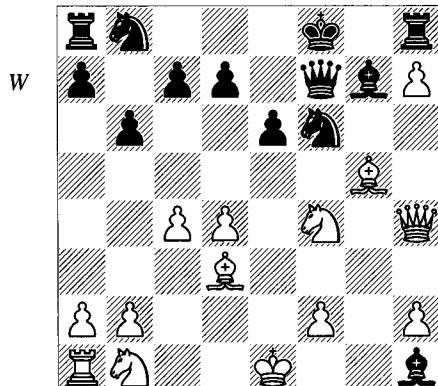
Often cited as the toughest defence. Other moves:

- a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f3$  was long thought to be adequate (although the 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  line with 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  would prevent it anyway), but some lengthy forcing

lines have apparently put it to rest: 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16 dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  ex $f$ 5 18 ex $f$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  20  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  and here the game Baginski-Miles, Philadelphia 1999 concluded in a draw following 21  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  22  $\mathbb{W}h6+$ . However, various analysts (including Yermolinsky) found that 21  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  wins. Without going into detail, the main line is 21... $\mathbb{W}e8+$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  23  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e4$  24  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}xh7!$  26  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}h1+$  28  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b1$  29  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$   $\mathbb{W}xb2+$  30  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  31  $\mathbb{W}xf5+$  and White wins.

b) After 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , the stem game Browne-Miles, Tilburg 1978 went 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f7??$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xh7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}xh2!$  seems fine for Black) 13  $\mathbb{Q}g6+!!?$   $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}f8!!$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e $5$  16 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17  $\mathbb{W}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18 f $4$  and White won easily. In view of Black's improvements in this line, the correct move is 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ , which has been analysed exhaustively for many years, leading to a substantial advantage for White. To get the whole story, you'll have to refer to the books, but one tricky line goes 12...b $5$ !? (Black produces some chaos; after 12...e $5$  13 0-0-0! e $4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xh7$  16  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , 17  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  is easiest) 13 cxb $5$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is also good) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  17 d $5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and White is winning, Flear-Plaskett, British Ch, Torquay 1982.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  (D)**

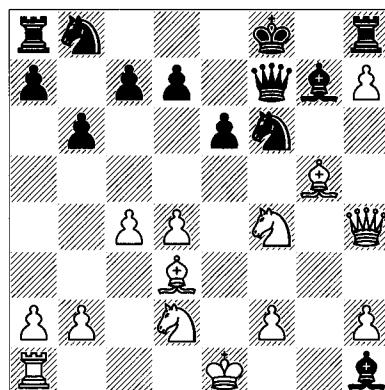


**13  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$**

This probably supersedes other moves at this stage, but 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  in particular is important as White could already have played  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  earlier:

a) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is a comparatively recent development: 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 14  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  16 0-0-0 and instead of 16... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ?? 17  $\mathbb{Q}g1$ !, as in Dorić-B.Kovačević, Rijeka 2006, Black has to try 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when White can keep up the pressure with 18 d $5$ .

b) 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ?! (D) is a position that can also arise from the move-order 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}xh1$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .



Objectively, Black should play 13... $\mathbb{W}xh7$ !, when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  led to a draw in W.Taylor-Haugen, corr. 1995. Some writers have held out hope for Black after 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?, since 14  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  gets hit by 14... $\mathbb{W}xh7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ ?? (15  $\mathbb{W}g3$ !  $\mathbb{W}g8$  16 0-0-0 with an attack – Odessky) 15... $\mathbb{W}xh7$  16  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! with a dynamic balance, Vegh-Zlovilov, Sankt Augustin 1990. But White can play 14  $\mathbb{Q}g6+!!$ , when I see nothing better than 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  16 0-0-0 (16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !?) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (otherwise the bishop has no good squares) 17  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18 d $5$ ! with the idea 18...exd $5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! and  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

Let's return to the game:

**13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  d $6$  16 0-0-0!**

(D)

**16...dx $e$ 5**

Widely criticized, but the purported improvement 16... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is refuted outright by Bücker's 19 d $5$ ; for example, 19...e $5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f5xd7$  follows.

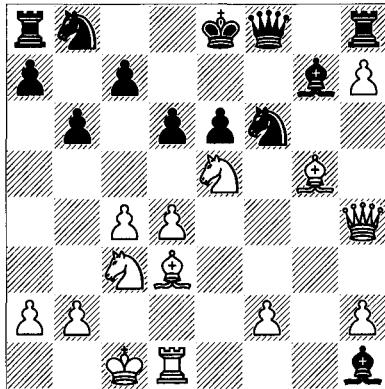
**17 dx $e$ 5**

White is winning.

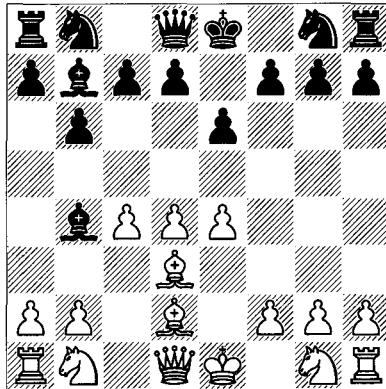
**17... $\mathbb{Q}e7??$**

But 17... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  18 ex $f$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19  $\mathbb{W}xh1$  is only a small improvement. Over the course of

B



B



the next 15 moves, neither side plays perfectly, but White's superiority isn't in doubt:

18  $\mathbb{E}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  19  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20  $\mathbb{E}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$   
21  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{E}e7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  24  
 $\mathbb{E}xe6$

24  $\mathbb{E}e3!$  intending  $\mathbb{E}f3$  is cleaner.

24... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6??$  26  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}xe6$  27  
 $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  28  $f4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  29  $\mathbb{W}g8+$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  30  $\mathbb{Q}e7!$   
 $c6$  31  $\mathbb{W}e6!$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  32  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  33  $\mathbb{W}e7+?$

A catastrophe in time-trouble. One win for White among others was 33  $a3$   $\mathbb{W}xh2$  34  $\mathbb{W}f7+!$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  35  $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  and White has too many threats.

33... $\mathbb{W}c7$  34  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  35  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  36  
 $\mathbb{Q}g8$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  37  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $a5$  38  $a3?$

The opposite-coloured bishops may draw anyway, but 38  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  would at least keep the king from  $e8$ .

38... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  39  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  40  $b4$   $axb4$  41  $axb4$   
 $\mathbb{E}xg8$  42  $hxg8\mathbb{W}+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg8$  ½-½

The variation with 4... $f5$  5  $exf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  is a testament to the creativity of brilliant players and analysts. Theory seems to indicate that it comes up short for Black (in fact drastically so), although I suppose that in the masses of variations he may yet find a saving grace.

Likavsky – Bunzmann

Jenbach 2008

1  $c4$   $b6$  2  $d4$   $e6$  3  $e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $f5$

The much less radical 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  is played fairly often, although it doesn't immediately break up White's centre after 5  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (D) (instead of 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , which we'll see later by transposition).

White seems to have a small, conventional advantage; however, there's much that remains

to be discovered here, as in any such ultra-flexible line:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  6  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  (or 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  with the idea 6... $\mathbb{W}g5?!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}gf3!$ , and after the consistent 7... $\mathbb{W}xg2?!$ , White establishes a meaningful lead in active development following 8  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}h3$  9  $\mathbb{E}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  10  $\mathbb{E}g3$ ; 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  improves, and I'd assess White as marginally better for classical reasons, but modernists may wish to dispute that) 6... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (6... $f5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  falls slightly short of equality following 8  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $exf5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $c5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ ; for example, 12...0-0 13  $fxe6$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  or 12... $\mathbb{W}e7$  13  $fxe6$  with the idea 13...0-0 14 0-0  $dxe6$  15  $\mathbb{W}e5$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $f5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 and now both 9 0-0 and 9 0-0-0 favour White.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  has the point that 6  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  will force the exchange of White's bishop on  $d3$ . But in the first place, 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  should give White some pull; for example, he stood better after the forthright 6... $\mathbb{W}f6$  7  $d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  in Dautov-Speelman, Lippstadt 2000. And has Black gained anything from 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  if White plays 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2?$  For example, 6... $\mathbb{W}f6$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  8  $d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  9 0-0) 7  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  and 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  is a slightly improved version for White of the main line, whereas 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b1!?$  0-0 10  $a3$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  11 0-0 looks promising.

I should emphasize that both sides have tried other moves in the lines following 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ , and although I lean towards White, it's not clear that Black can't keep things approximately level if he employs the proper move-order and strategy.

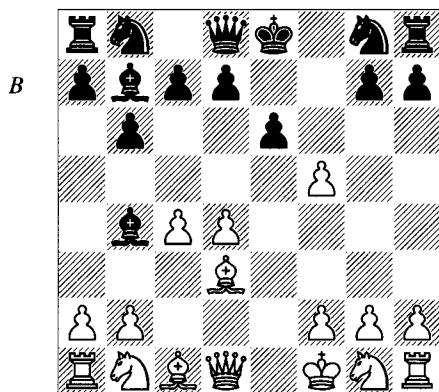
5  $exf5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

In this manner, Black manages to steer clear of White's terrifying attack in the previous

game, and initiate some aggression of his own. But he'll have to give up some material to do that.

### 6 ♜f1 (D)

White protects his g-pawn. It's easy to confirm that if White interposes a piece, say, 6 ♜d2?, Black can exchange and play 7...♜xg2. Then 8 ♜h5+ is wholly insufficient because of 8...♚f8.



### 6...♜f6

Apparently Black has to sacrifice at least a pawn to keep things moving:

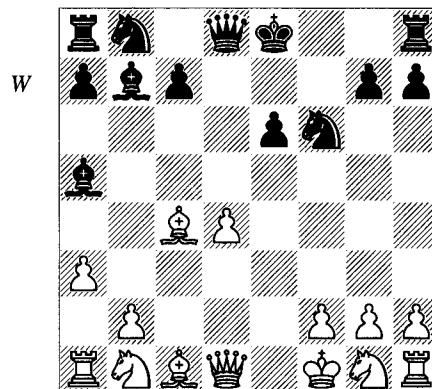
a) 6...exf5? is positionally disastrous: 7 c5!? (7 ♜xf5 ♜f6 8 c5! is an alternative, with the idea 8...bxcc5 9 a3) 7...bxcc5 8 a3 c4 9 ♜xc4 ♜d6 10 ♜c3 ♜f6 11 ♜f3 ♜e7 12 ♜h4! g6 13 ♜b3 ♜e4 14 f3, Peuraniemi-Nordfjord, corr. 1997, and White wins material in view of 14...♜g4 15 g3.

b) 6...♜h4?! has been suggested and played a few times, but it falls short: 7 ♜f3 (alternatively, 7 fxe6 has the idea of d5; then 7...dxe6? is hopeless after 8 ♜a4+ ♜c6 9 ♜f3) 7...♜h5 8 a3! ♜d6 9 ♜c3?! (again, 9 fxe6! is perfectly safe for White; for example, 9...dxe6 10 ♜e2 or 10 ♜e2) 9...exf5 10 ♜b5 ♜f6?!, Estremera Panos-Rausis, Seville 2003, and now 11 ♜e2+ ♜d8 12 ♜g5! is best.

### 7 ♜f3

White wants to accumulate positional gains based upon better-placed pieces. This is a favourite way to treat the position today, and seems to give White a small edge. But in order to truly punish this system, you need to enter into a riskier bargain. And it's another of those times that positional understanding gives way to loads of concrete analysis:

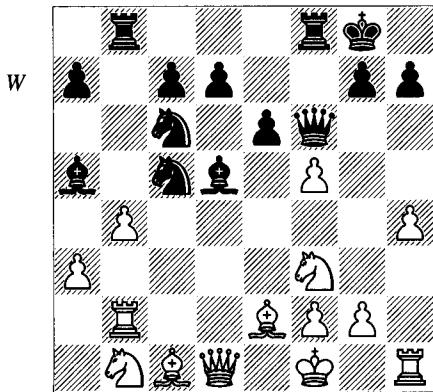
a) 7 c5 bxc5 8 a3 is a radical and well-tested line. It is utterly chaotic in a number of variations, but should favour White if he's careful. I'll show a couple of important lines, then let you research on your own: 8...c4! (8...♜a5 9 dxc5 threatens b4; then 9...c6 10 ♜f3 clearly favours White) 9 ♜xc4 ♜a5 (9...♜e7 10 fxe6 doesn't hold; if Black goes for accelerated development by 10...0-0, then 11 ♜b3 ♜e4 12 ♜c3 is a good way to play it) 10 fxe6 dxe6 (D).



11 ♜f3 (analysis by Bücker and Wind goes 11 ♜xe6 ♜e7 12 ♜c4 ♜c6 13 ♜f3 0-0-0 14 ♜c3 ♜he8 15 ♜e3 ♜xd4 16 ♜xd4 c5 17 ♜f5! ♜xd1+ 18 ♜xd1 ♜e5 19 ♜d6+ ♜b8 20 ♜xe8 ♜xe8 21 ♜d3!? ♜xc3 22 bxc3 ♜f6 23 h4 and White has a small edge) 11...0-0 12 ♜c3 ♜h8 13 ♜g5! ♜d6 14 ♜e2 ♜bd7, Graf-Bunzmann, Herringsdorf 2000, and now Odessky thinks that White should grab the pawn by 15 ♜xe6 with the better game. He gives 15...♜ae8 16 ♜f4 ♜xe6 17 ♜xd6 ♜xe2 18 ♜xf8 ♜xb2 as best, but after 19 ♜d1 ♜c2 20 ♜e3 ♜xc4 21 ♜xc4 ♜a6 22 ♜c1, White's two rooks and pawn will outweigh what is about to become three pieces.

b) 7 ♜e2?! threatens ♜h5+ and c5, but Black has dynamic chances: 7...0-0 (Wind analyses 7...♜e7! without finding any great fault in it; one point is that 8 ♜h5+ ♜xh5 9 ♜xh5+ ♜f7 10 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 11 fxe6+ dxe6 offers Black compensation) 8 c5 bxc5 9 a3 ♜a5 (the point of 7 ♜e2 is that Black lacks the ...c4 resource that we saw in line 'a') 10 dxc5 ♜e4 (after 10...♜d5 11 ♜f3 ♜xf5 12 b4 ♜f6 13 ♜a2 ♜xb4 14 axb4 ♜xb4, Wind prefers 15 h4!, intending ♜h3) 11 b4 ♜f6 12 ♜a2 ♜d5 13 ♜b2 ♜c6 14 ♜f3

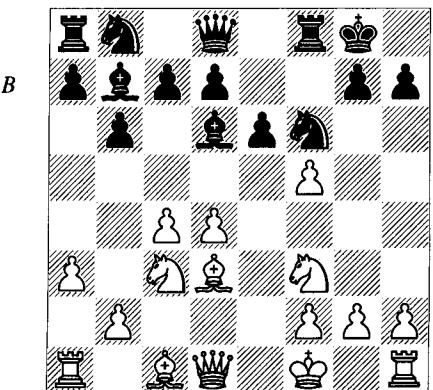
(Wind's suggestion 14 f3 is more promising)  
 14... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  15 h4!? (15  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  is another can of worms) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5!$  (D).



16  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17 bxa5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?! (18  $\mathbb{W}d3$  or 18  $\mathbb{W}d1$  leaves everything to be played for) 18... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , Lindinger-Langrock, Hamburg 2005, and the game's 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ ! should suffice for a draw, but 19... $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ! 20 fxg3  $\mathbb{B}xb2$ ! is even better: 21  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{B}xf5+$  22  $\mathbb{W}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! 23  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{exf5}$  25  $\mathbb{Q}h2$  c5 and Black's pawns hope to carry the day.

Apologies for all the convoluted lines; they go with the territory. White has an awfully stark choice in this variation: the relative sanity of 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  versus the craziness (but real promise) of 7 c5.

7...0-0 8 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D)



White's pieces are harmoniously placed and he has an extra pawn, but with that poorly-placed king on a potentially half-open file, he has to play carefully.

9... $\mathbb{W}e8$ !

Apparently White keeps some edge in any case, although hardly an overwhelming one:

a) 9... $\mathbb{exf5}$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (10... $\mathbb{W}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{B}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ .

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  11  $\mathbb{fxe6}$ !  $\mathbb{dx6}$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{B}xf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  14  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  and Black is tied down, Dautov-B.Filipović, Swiss Team Ch 2004.

10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?

10  $\mathbb{fxe6}$ ! looks risky because of the open f-file, but in fact it opens lines for White as well; for example, 10... $\mathbb{dx6}$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  with the ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , and if 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , then 13  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{B}xf6$  15  $\mathbb{W}e4$ .

10... $\mathbb{exf5}$ ! 11  $\mathbb{c5}$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

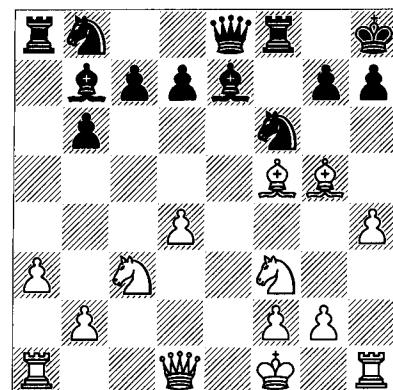
Not 11... $\mathbb{bxcc5}$ ?? 12  $\mathbb{W}b3+$  and  $\mathbb{W}xb7$ .

12  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$

Or 12... $\mathbb{W}h5$ ! 13 h4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  (14  $\mathbb{gxf3}$   $\mathbb{bcx5}$  15  $\mathbb{dxc5}$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is a decent option) 14... $\mathbb{W}xf3$  15  $\mathbb{gxf3}$   $\mathbb{bcx5}$  16  $\mathbb{dxc5}$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and White probably has some advantage with his active bishops, but it can't amount to much.

13  $\mathbb{cxb6}$   $\mathbb{axb6}$  14  $\mathbb{h4}$ !? (D)

14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  15 h4 looks more accurate. White stands a bit better in these lines.



14... $\mathbb{W}d5$ !?

14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! finally achieves the trade on f3 that Black has been seeking. Then 15  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16  $\mathbb{bxc3}$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{gxf3}$  g6 18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  19  $\mathbb{d5}$  is still unresolved.

15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White has consolidated and remains with a healthy extra pawn.

17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{gxf6}$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$ !?

20  $\mathbb{Q}g3!$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is safe and sound.

20... $\mathbb{W}g4?$

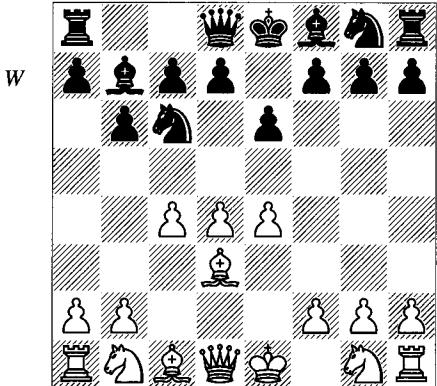
20...fxg5 21 hxg5  $\mathbb{W}f7$  22 g6! is very dangerous for Black, but 20... $\mathbb{E}g8!$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  gives Black some chances.

21  $\mathbb{W}d3!$  f5 22  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{A}d5$  23  $\mathbb{A}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  24 d5  $\mathbb{A}a5$  25  $\mathbb{A}a2$  h6 26 b4  $\mathbb{W}g8$  27 bxa5 hxg5 28 hxg5 1-0

After all those tactics, let's turn our attention to a positional answer to 3 e4 and 4  $\mathbb{A}d3$ :

**Shirov – Kengis**  
Gausdal 1991

1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4  $\mathbb{A}b7$  4  $\mathbb{A}d3$   $\mathbb{A}c6$  (D)



This move looks rather silly until you realize that if White defends his d-pawn with a piece, 5... $\mathbb{A}b4$  exchanges his bishop on d3 and wins the bishop-pair. On the other hand, this leaves White with a clear lead in space and development. In other words, a typical opening trade-off.

5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

This is often considered inferior to 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (see the following game), because it blocks the f-pawn. Still, White has more central control and decent chances for a pull.

a) A clever suggestion (of what origin I'm unsure) is 5  $\mathbb{A}e2?$ , protecting d4 with the queen and avoiding the exchange of the king's bishop. Then anything goes; for example, 5... $\mathbb{A}a5?$  hits e4, an attack that can be fortified by ... $\mathbb{W}h4$  and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , while ...f5 can be a theme.

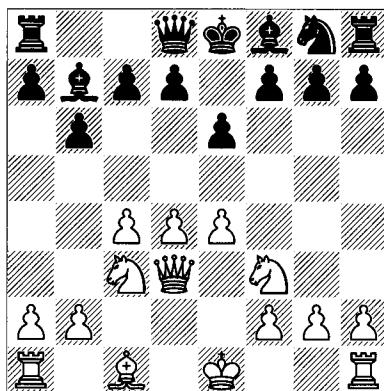
b) After 5 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  6  $\mathbb{A}e2?$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ), 6... $\mathbb{W}h4!$  hits the e-pawn and White already has to be

careful: 7  $\mathbb{W}c2?$ ! (7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{A}b4$  8  $\mathbb{W}d4!$  d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  10  $\mathbb{A}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  stays level) 7...f5! 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{A}b4$ , Bosboom Lanchava-Stefanova, Groningen (women) 1999. Black is winning the e-pawn, so White should mix it up by 9  $\mathbb{A}d2$  fxe4 10 0-0-0.

5... $\mathbb{A}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This is the most important move, because now White retains the choice of castling on either wing. 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  is sound for Black, who develops his pieces and plans to establish a central presence later.

6... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd3$  (D)



7...d6

Black's calmest move, but not necessarily his best:

a) The ... $\mathbb{Q}e7-g6$  manoeuvre doesn't seem to work so well here in view of 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 d5 (Elianov-Ponomariov, Kharkov 2009 saw White trying to stop ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  by 8 h4, but 8...d5! 9 cxd5 exd5 10 e5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  11 h5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12 a3 f6 13 exf6 gxf6 14  $\mathbb{A}f4$  0-0-0 gave Black enough play) 8... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9 h4!. At this point, Scherbakov-Gorbacov, Dečin 1996 went 9... $\mathbb{A}d6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !? (or 10 h5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{A}xe5$  12 f4  $\mathbb{A}xc3+$  13  $\mathbb{W}xc3$ ) 10... $\mathbb{A}b4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  12  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  a6 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6?! 14 h5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 16 h6 g6 17 0-0-0 with more territory and the upper hand.

b) 7... $\mathbb{A}b4$  is Odessky's recommendation, intending ... $\mathbb{A}xc3+:$  8 d5 (8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{A}xc3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  d5! immobilizes the bishop on c3, Cherepov-Bokiej, Ostroda 2006) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 10 a3?! (White uses valuable time; 10 0-0! is more determined) 10... $\mathbb{A}xc3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  c6! 12 h4 (12 d6  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13 0-0 c5 is unclear; 12

$\mathbb{W}d4$  may be best) 12...cxd5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g5?$  (15 0-0-0 is necessary) 15...h6, Scherbakov-Bischoff, Linares 1996. White had probably missed that 16  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  fails to 16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , but after 16  $\mathbb{W}f5?$  hgx5 17 hxg5  $\mathbb{W}e8$  18  $\mathbb{W}h3$  d6, he ended up with no attack.

### 8 0-0

White could consider 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9 h4!?, preserving the option of 0-0-0, or 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 h3, doing the same.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 d5! has the points 9...e5 10 c5! and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ . Another idea is 8...g6, since after 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5?$ , 9... $\mathbb{W}d7!$  is possible, rather than 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ .

### 9 d5! e5?

9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  11  $\mathbb{W}g3$  is promising for White, but 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  may improve.

### 10 c5! $\mathbb{Q}f6$

10...dxc5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  gives White much too strong a centre. The other logical idea is to preserve castling rights by 10...a6!? 11 c6  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , but you have to like White.

11  $\mathbb{W}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 c6  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13 a4 a5 14  $\mathbb{W}e2$  g6 15  $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White also stands better following 15  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16 h3.

15... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17 f4! exf4 18  $\mathbb{W}xf4$  h5 19 h3 h4 20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d4+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  22  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b5$

White is fully in charge, although the game later got out of control.

**Ehlvest – Kraai**  
Philadelphia 2003

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (D)

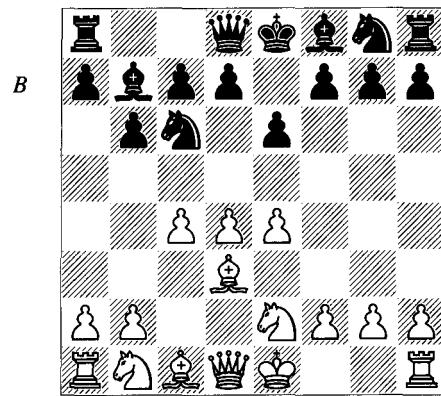
This is the more popular modern move, leaving White's f-pawn free to advance. That will prove relevant in some lines that follow.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

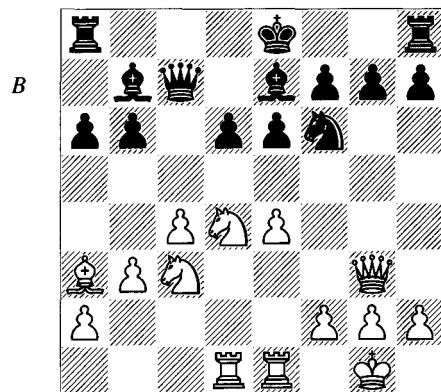
If Black doesn't gain the bishop-pair, his set-up doesn't make sense.

### 6 $\mathbb{Q}bc3$

Epishin-Ehlvest, Novosibirsk 1993 saw some typical themes for White: 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd3$  d6 (innocent-looking, but ...d6 is often slightly weakening; 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is more flexible) 8  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 d5!  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  11 b3!?(11  $\mathbb{W}g3$ ?)



also gives White some advantage, with the idea 11...0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13 f4! or 11...c5! 12 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  11...c6 12 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  (15...0-0? 16 e5) 16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  (D).



It's useful to compare this to the Hedgehog Variation of the English Opening and similar formations in the Sicilian Defence. In fact, all the differences favour White. First, his bad light-squared bishop is gone, which is a huge plus. Then he is ahead in development in comparison with those variations, and his queen on g3 is beautifully placed. Finally, Black's pawn on d6 is much weaker than usual. The game continued 16...g6 (Epishin analyses the depressing alternative 16...0-0 17 e5 dxe5 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  19  $\mathbb{W}xe5$ ; and after 16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  17  $\mathbb{W}g4$  g6?, 18 e5! dxe5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ! fxe6 20  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  can't be defended by Black) 17 e5  $\mathbb{Q}h5??$  (but White is in charge anyway; e.g., 17...dxe5 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  with the idea 18... $\mathbb{W}xe7$  19  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  0-0 20  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  (18... $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  20

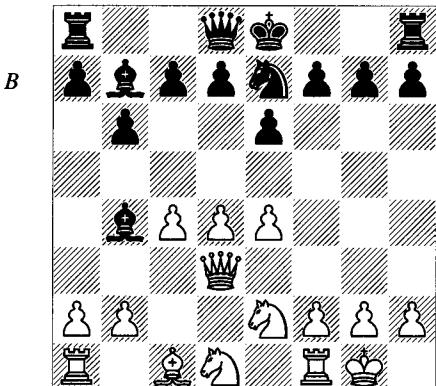
hxg3 leaves White a pawn up with much the better position) 19  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{A}xd6$  20 exd6 0-0 21  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ ?  $\mathbb{H}ae8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  23 d7  $\mathbb{E}e7$  24  $\mathbb{W}d4!$  and Black could have resigned.

**6... $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{A}b4$**

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and 7...g6 are alternatives, although in the latter case 8 h4 looks bothersome.

**8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$  (D)**

A creative move that leaves the bishop looking silly out on b4, and also threatened with capture by 10 a3 and e5. 9 a3 is a little slow, and Black seems to get good counterchances following 9... $\mathbb{A}xc3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  0-0; for example, 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d5 13 f3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{H}fd1$   $\mathbb{A}a6$  15 b3  $\mathbb{H}ad8$ , Chuchelov-Teske, Cappelle la Grande 1998.



**9... $\mathbb{Q}g6?$ !**

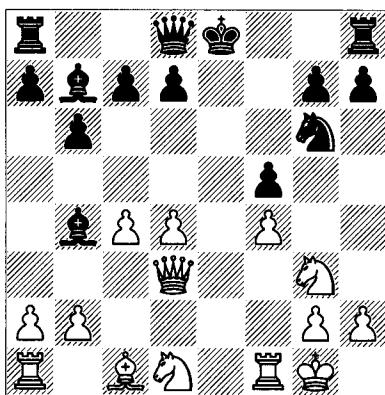
This doesn't appear to work out. Langrock provides analysis of this otherwise untested position:

a) Versus 9...f5, he suggests 10 f3! (10 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  holds together; White mustn't overextend by 11 a3  $\mathbb{A}e7$  12 f4 0-0 13 d5 d6!, when his big centre crumbles) 10...fxe4 (versus 11 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12 e5) 11 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  12 c5!? (12  $\mathbb{Q}dc3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  and ...0-0-0 might drum up some counterplay) 12...bxc5 13 a3 c4 14  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  15 d5 exd5 16 exd5 and Black still can't castle.

b) Thus Langrock recommends that Black play 9...c6, freeing c7 for his bishop in the event of 10 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11 e5. Play might continue 10 e5!? (White has a good alternative in 10  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11 a3  $\mathbb{A}e7$  12 f4) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11 f4!? 0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  (12...f5! looks better) 13 f5 exf5 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  d6 (thus far analysis by Lindinger) 15 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}eg3$   $\mathbb{A}c8!$  (16...c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$

$\mathbb{W}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 17 b3 f6 18  $\mathbb{A}b2$  with a small advantage for White.

**10 f4 f5 11 exf5 exf5 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (D)**



**12...0-0?**

12... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  comes up short to 13 a3 (or 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$ ) 13... $\mathbb{A}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with the idea 14...g6? 15 d5! 0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  followed by g3. 12... $\mathbb{W}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  0-0 14 a3  $\mathbb{A}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  also favours White, but Black has the bishops and a certain amount of counterplay.

**13 c5! a5**

13...bxc5 14 a3  $\mathbb{A}a5$  15 dxc5 threatens both 16 b4 and 16  $\mathbb{W}b3+$ , so 15... $\mathbb{A}e4$  is forced, losing a pawn after 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 17  $\mathbb{W}c4+$  d5 18 cxd6+.

**14 a3  $\mathbb{A}a6$  15  $\mathbb{W}b3+$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  16 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}e7??$**

But two pieces for a rook was too much anyway.

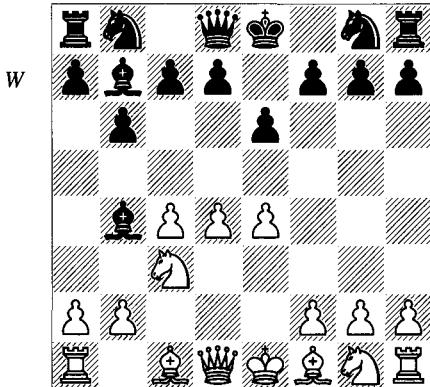
**18 bxa5 bxa5 19  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

and White had no trouble converting his material lead into victory.

The most investigated lines in the English Defence (although no longer the most important) begin with 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , about which a fair-sized book could be written. I'll make the not-so-bold claim that Black's play is adequate in every line, and therefore show only one full-game example. However, because this variation is so thoroughly dependent upon specifics, you might want to supplement this coverage with other books and database searches, particularly if the English Defence becomes one of your primary weapons.

**Gorbatov – Ehilst**  
St Petersburg 1994

1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 e4 ♜b7 4 ♜c3 ♜b4 (D)



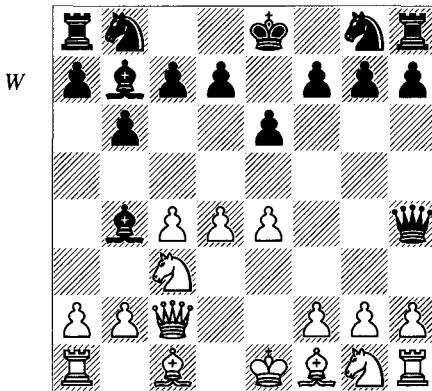
The funny thing about this position is that White goes into it more than any other, and yet it is the easiest for Black to play and the most difficult for White to defend. The trade-off of ♜c3 for ...♜b4 seems to favour Black, since ...♜b4 clears the way for ...f5 (with f8 free for the king, White's exf5 and ♜h5+ attack is no longer strong), and brings Black closer to castling. In the meantime, White's knight on c3 doesn't add to the defence of e4, and is subject to capture with the attendant doubled-pawn issues. It's worth comparing this with the Nimzo-Indian Defence, in which Black plays the same move with the idea of controlling and sometimes occupying e4. The biggest difference is that in the Nimzo-Indian, White has no pawn on that square to defend, and thus needn't tie his pieces to it. In the English Defence, White has to scramble to ward off the direct attack on e4 and can't find time to pursue other goals.

### 5 ♜d3

This is the most-frequently played move by some margin. Here are the major alternatives; notice how many traps White has to be wary of:

a) 5 ♜c2 was popular when the English Defence was first played, but the primitive attack 5...♝h4! (D), hitting the e-pawn and preventing its defence by f3, caused it to fade from the scene. The tactics are entertaining:

a1) 6 ♜d3 f5 7 g3 ♜h5 (7...♝e7!?) 8 f3 ♜c6!? forces White to do something about d4,



and the natural 9 ♜e3?! fxe4 10 ♜xe4 ♜f6 leaves Black with the better of it.

a2) 6 d5!? isn't as bad as it has been made out to be, but Black should equalize after 6...♜xc3+ (6...f5!?) 7 exf5 exd5 8 ♜f3 ♜e4+ 9 ♔d1! ♜xc2+ 10 ♜xc2 7 bxc3 f5 (7...♝e7!?) 8 exf5 exd5 9 cxd5 ♜xd5 10 ♜e2 ♜e7.

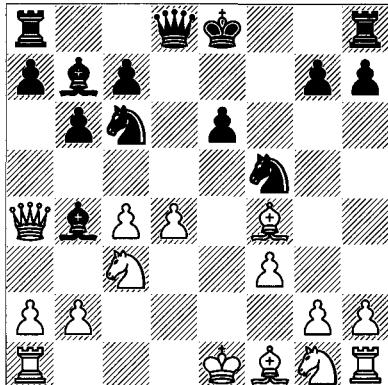
b) 5 d5 is well answered by 5...♝e7! 6 ♜e3 (6 ♜e2 exd5 7 exd5 ♜f6; 6 ♜e2 ♜f6 7 f3 exd5 8 cxd5 c6 9 dxc6 ♜xc6 10 ♜h3 d5 11 exd5 0-0-0 with more than enough attack) 6...f5! 7 exf5 exd5 8 cxd5 (8 ♜h5+ ♔f8) 8...♜f6, winning back material with the initiative; the key line is 9 ♜c4 ♜e4! 10 ♜e2 ♜xg2 11 ♜d4+ ♔d8.

c) 5 f3 is White's most important alternative to 5 ♜d3; it serves both to strengthen White's centre and to reduce the effect of Black's bishop on b7. There's nothing wrong with 5...♜e7 (intending ...f5 or in some cases ...d5), but the most aggressive reply is 5...f5 6 exf5 ♜h6! (a gambit, with the idea ...♝(x)f5, which in turn threatens ...♝h4+ and the pawn on d4; 6...exf5 is also playable, if duller) and now:

c1) 7 ♜xh6 ♜h4+ 8 g3 ♜xh6 gains the bishop-pair with pressure on the dark squares like e3 and d4; for example, 9 ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 10 ♜xd2 ♜c6! 11 ♜ge2 (Heimberger-Teske, Linz 1995) and now Odessky suggests 11...0-0-0 with the idea 12 fxe6 dxe6 13 ♔e3 ♜xd4! 14 ♜xd4 ♜c5.

c2) After 7 fxe6 ♜f5 the highly-charged main line runs 8 ♜f4! (to counter ...♝h4+; 8 exd7+ is not necessarily unplayable, but hardly anyone will want to fall so far behind in development after 8...♜xd7) 8...dxe6 9 ♜a4+ ♜c6 (D).

W



c21) After 10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b5??$  0-0! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ , Odessky finds adequate counterplay in 12... $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  13 f4  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$ .

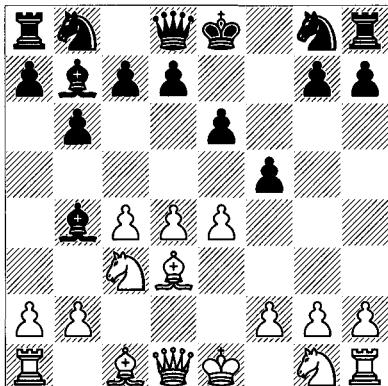
c22) 10 d5 exd5?!(10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  11 bxc3 exd5 12 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  looks safer) 11 0-0-0 d4!?

12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14 c5 (14  $\mathbb{Q}h3!?$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  with a satisfactory game (Odessky).

All this is extremely messy, and indicates that f3 is one direction for White to look in if he wants something different. Black can avoid this level of brinkmanship with 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ .

5...f5 (D)

W



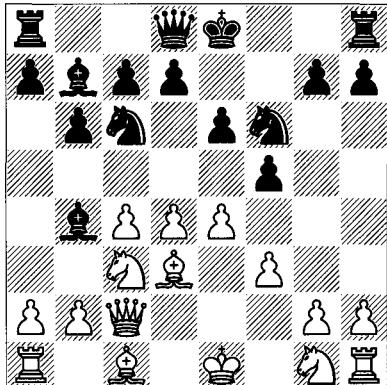
Black is naturally willing to play this when 6  $fxf5??$  truly loses the rook to 6... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ .

6  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$

This check gets Black to weaken himself by ...g6, but that move also strengthens his hold on f5, so the trade-off isn't easy to assess. White has many alternatives here, of which 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is the most important. None of the others are terribly impressive:

a) 6  $\mathbb{Q}c2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  (D).

W

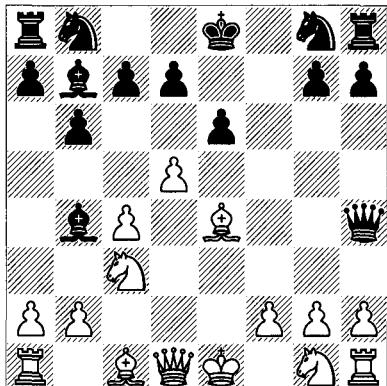


8  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  (not great, but everything else practically loses on the spot! An incredible line is 8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!!$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  11 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ , and 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  fails to 8...fxe4 9 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}g4!!$  8...fxe4 9 fxe4 e5! 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  0-0 and Black has very active pieces; he is aided by the idea 12 0-0?  $\mathbb{Q}g4!!$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf1+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and Black wins.

b) 6 f3  $\mathbb{Q}h4+!$  7 g3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  puts pressure on the long diagonal and is unpleasant for White.

c) 6 d5 fxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  (D) already places White in a precarious spot:

W



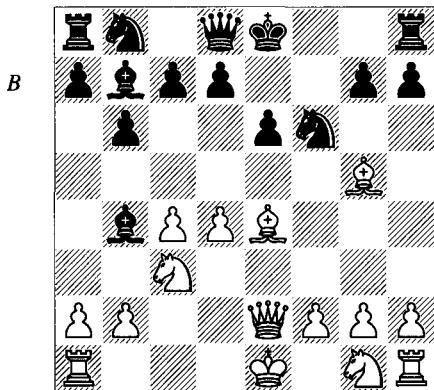
Now White should certainly avoid 8  $\mathbb{Q}f3?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  9 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ , 8  $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0 and 8  $\mathbb{Q}d4?$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0. A more serious option is 8  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  exd5, when White should avoid 9 cxd5?!

$\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 11 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e8+$ , and play instead 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  c6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ; then Black is only slightly better. Also after 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 White is still behind in development and Black threatens to

open the e-file by ...exd5, while 10 dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  is also tough to handle.

d) 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is often played; it's vital to know the specifics:

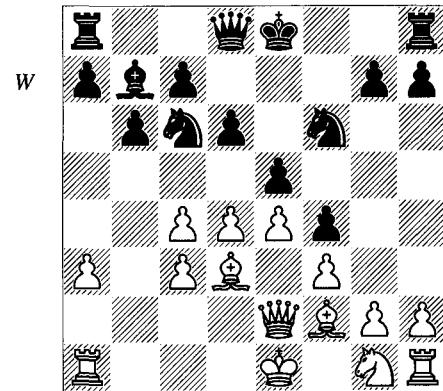
d1) 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  fxe4 (7...0-0 is a playable alternative, and even 7...h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  secures a fair share of the play) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (D) (not 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6??$  exd3! 9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6).



8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?! (this sacrifice is often recommended, but is perhaps too speculative; instead, 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  10  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}f5$ ! has proven to equalize for Black) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10  $\mathbb{W}g4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}a4+$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ + 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12 f3) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14 gxf3 and Black is coming up a little short.

d2) 7 f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (8 e5?! introduces a famous trick: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! 9  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ??  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 8...f4? (or 8...fxe4 9 fxe4 e5 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  – compare the game) 9  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{W}d2$  is structurally sounder; Black nevertheless develops quickly after 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  0-0) 9...e5! 10 a3? (10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  11  $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 is roughly level after 12  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ !) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 11 bxc3 d6 (D).

For Black, this is a pleasant version of a Sämisch Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, since White is unable to do anything on the kingside. In Bercys-Rahman, Philadelphia 2004, White tried to free his passively-placed bishops by 12 c5? dxc5 13 dxc5, but his queen-side weaknesses showed after 13...0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 17 cxb6 axb6 18 a4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (Black is taking over the light squares) 20  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  21 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ ! 22



$\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with an obvious positional superiority.

6...g6 7  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 f3

8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is similar to the line 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  above, but this time, apart from the normal move 8...h6, the queen sacrifice 8...fxe4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exd3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is sound; for example, 11 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  might follow.

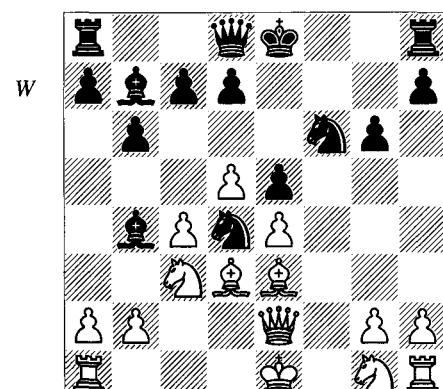
8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

9 e5?  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! 10  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! 11  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ??  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  actually occurred in Adorjan-Spassky, Toluca Interzonal 1982.

9...fxe4 10 fxe4 e5 11 d5

11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  exd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0 13 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}e7$  puts pressure on e4 and secures an outpost on e5.

11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (D)



12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

It's a pity to give up this good bishop, but White is faced with some poor options:

a) 12  $\mathbb{W}d1?$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  15  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $exd4$  17  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  0-0+ 18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  (or 18... $\mathbb{W}xf3+!$ ) is simply winning; White's pawns are too weak and his pieces can't coordinate.

b) 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  followed by ...0-0 leaves Black with much the better pieces, and it's hard to expel the knight on d4 without concessions, as shown by the line 15  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $exd4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 18  $dxc6$   $dxc6$  19 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ .

**12...exd4 13 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  14 bxc3  $dxc3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0**

At first sight, White's centre looks dangerous, but it is vulnerable along the e-file, and in the meantime, White is still a pawn down.

**16 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  17 e5**

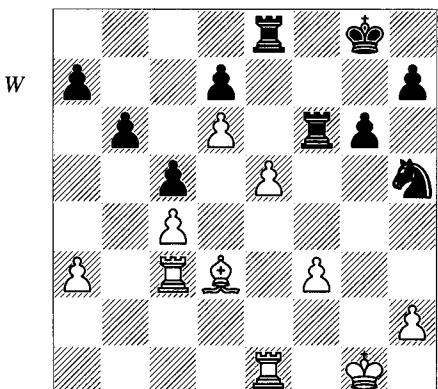
Else ... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  will force this advance anyway.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{W}c5+$**

Or 18... $\mathbb{W}xa3!$  with the idea 19  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}c5+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$ !.

**19  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{W}xf2+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c6! 22 d6 c5 23  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  24  $gxf3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6? (D)$**

Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  and is already foreseeing a productive exchange sacrifice. Nevertheless, 24... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  was probably more practical, when moves such as ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}f4-e6$  keep a firm grip.



**25  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  26  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  28  $cxd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$**

White's d-pawn will fall. The play now becomes a little wobbly.

**29  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  a5?**

29... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  leaves Black with two passed pawns in the centre.

**30  $\mathbb{Q}b8?!$**

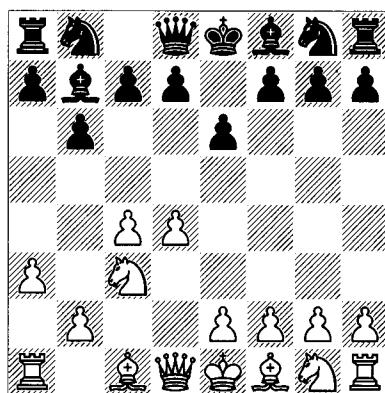
30  $\mathbb{Q}a6!$  would just about equalize.

**30... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  31  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  g5 32 a4**

Now, instead of the game's 32... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ , Black could have played 32... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ , gaining a third pawn for the exchange. Perhaps he feared the pin with 33  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , but there's no way to exploit it after 33... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ . As the game went, White escaped with a draw after some inaccuracies.

The whole variation after 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  contains many specific points that have to be known by Black, but White should probably look elsewhere for his weapon versus the English Defence.

White's best 'slow' strategy after 1  $c4$   $b6$  2  $d4$   $e6$  is 3 a3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D), which is equivalent to 2... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $e6$  4 a3.



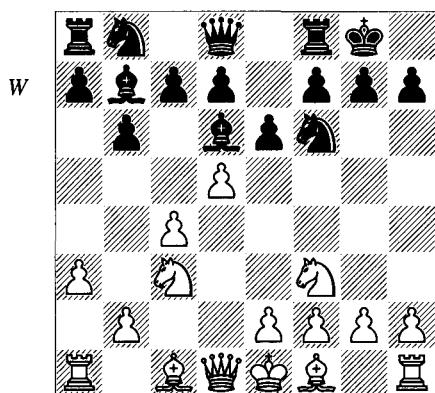
As mentioned in the first game of my coverage of the English Defence, some players are discouraged by the lack of prospects for Black after these moves, although the evidence is mixed in that regard. White's idea is to play d5, gaining space while limiting the range of Black's bishop. It's easy to see that allowing Black to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  robs that advance of its effectiveness by making the d5-pawn a target; hence the preliminary a3. For his part, Black can argue that a3 does little in lines where Black plays ...g6, and indeed, 4...g6 is a popular way of returning the game to a long-term struggle between White's space and Black's attempts to chip away at the centre. In this context, I should mention that with the move-order 1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 a3, Black will sometimes play 3...g6 and 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , delaying the development of his queen's bishop, which may end up on a6 or elsewhere.

I suspect that White retains some theoretical advantage in the ...g6 set-up, which probably doesn't mean much in practice. Here's a game which illustrates a more confrontational strategy by Black:

**Sher – Lempert**  
Erevan open 1996

**1 c4 b6 2 d4 e6 3 a3 ♜b7 4 ♜c3 f5**

The most aggressive players are attracted to this move. 4...d6 also stops 5 e4. Then 5 ♜f3 is a Queen's Indian Defence (Petrosian Variation), but 5 d5 is a more ambitious idea. It is often answered by the quick-developing 5...d6 (with the idea ...e5 and ...x3) 6 ♜f3 0-0 (D).



In practice, Black has gained equal play here; for example:

a) 7 g3 c6 8 ♜g2 cxd5 9 cxd5 exd5 10 0-0 ♜a6 11 ♜h4 ♜c7 12 e4?! (12 ♜f5 should maintain the balance) 12...e5 13 ♜xd5, Marin-C.Bauer, European Team Ch, Batumi 1999, and here 13...♜fxd5! 14 exd5 ♛f6 gives Black the upper hand.

b) 7 e4 exd5 8 exd5 c6 9 ♜e2 cxd5 10 cxd5 ♜a6 11 0-0 ♛e8 12 ♜g5 h6 13 ♜h4 ♜c5 14 ♜d4, Knaak-Planinc, Polonica Zdroj 1979, and now both 14...♜ce4 15 ♜xe4 ♛xe4 16 ♜f5 ♜e5 and 14...♜c8 15 ♜f5 ♜f8!? are complex but look perfectly satisfactory for Black.

**5 d5 ♜f6**

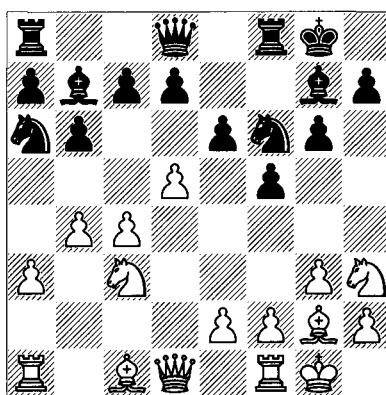
After 5...e7 6 g3 ♜f6 7 ♜d2 ♜e7 8 ♜g2, Chernyshov came up with the rather bizarre manoeuvre 8...♜c8!?, 9 ♜h3 ♜d6 10 b3 ♜a6 followed by ...♜c5 controlling e4. Worth a try!

**6 g3**

White intends ♜g2 and either ♜f3-d4 or ♜h3-f4.

**6...♜a6**

6...g6 is a standard English Defence response to d5, since White has cleared the long diagonal for Black's g7-bishop, but here (unlike the lines below with ...d6-e5), Black's bishop has no direct contact with c3, which means that the crucial manoeuvre ...♜a6-c5 is no longer possible after 7 ♜g2 ♜g7 8 ♜h3! 0-0 9 0-0 ♜a6 10 b4! (D).



The knight on a6 has no moves: 10...♜e4 (White is about to play ♜b1 or ♜b2 with spatial domination, and 10...♜xd5 11 ♜xd5 exd5 12 ♜xd5+ ♜xd5 13 ♜xd5+ ♛h8 14 ♜g5 doesn't help matters) 11 ♜xe4 fxe4 (11...♜xa1 12 ♜g5 ♛e8 13 ♛xal fxe4 14 ♜h6 ♜f7 15 ♜d1! threatens ♜g5, ♜xe4, dx6 and general mayhem; the knight on a6 is useless) 12 ♜b1 exd5 13 cxd5 ♛e7 14 ♜g5 ♛h8 15 ♜xe4 with an extra pawn and positional superiority, Piket-Plaskett, Mondariz 2000.

**7 ♜g2**

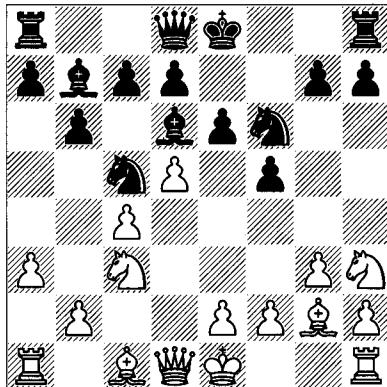
Now White can't deny the knight c5 by 7 b4 without allowing Black dynamic counterplay by 7...exd5 (or 7...c5) 8 cxd5 c5!, intending 9 b5? ♜c7 10 ♜g2 ♜d6. A pawn will soon fall after ...e5, or ...♛e7 and ...e5.

**7...♜c5 8 ♜h3**

White keeps d5 directly supported by the g2-bishop and plans ♜f4 at some point. He tried the older 8 ♜f3 in Elianov-Delchev, French Team Ch, Gonfreville 2006, but it cedes e4, and Black reached easy equality by 8...♜ce4 9 0-0 ♜xc3 10 bxc3 ♜c5 11 ♜d4 0-0! 12 dx6 ♜xg2 13

$\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{W}e7$  14 exd7  $\mathbb{W}xd7$ , with more than adequate compensation.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (D)



9 0-0

Two valid alternatives are 9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10 f4, the latter winning the bishop-pair, albeit with a loss of time.

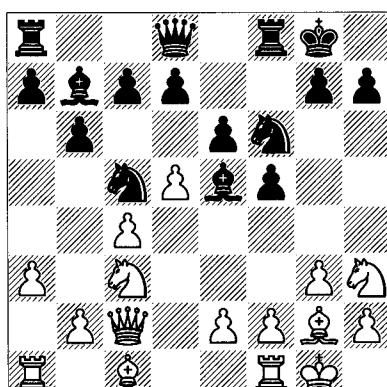
9... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The point of ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ . Now White always has to be on the lookout for ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  and ...exd5.

10  $\mathbb{W}c2$

There are legitimate alternatives at this juncture as well, such as 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?! with the idea 10...a6?! 11 f4!.

10...0-0 (D)



We have arrived at a kind of main line for the 4...f5 variation, and it has been played in a remarkable number of games. White shouldn't ignore earlier options, however, since Black seems to hold his own here.

11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$

White sometimes plays 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , but his most common alternative to the text-move is 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$ ?! (Black should avoid positions like 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6?! 13 dx6 dx6 14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  15 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}a1$ ! with an unopposed bishop on the powerful long diagonal, I.Sokolov-Rahman, Istanbul Olympiad 2000) 12  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  a5! 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4  $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  and everything gets liquidated: 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 17  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exd5 19  $\mathbb{W}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}axe8$  20 cxd5 d6 21  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}bc2$   $\mathbb{Q}ee7$  24 f3 h6 ½-½ Miladinović-C.Bauer, Nancy 2005.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ??

A simple and clever idea: White wants to prop up d5 but also oppose Black's bishop by  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  at the right moment.

12... $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ !?

Morozevich came up with the typically creative 12... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ , simply defending b8, versus Kasparov (Frankfurt rapid 2000), and equalized nicely after 13  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}ce4$ ?! (13...a5! looks more accurate) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! fxe4 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 15...c5! 16 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18 f3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

Odessky analyses 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 15  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  at length and thinks that best play is 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ !) 18 f4 (18 d6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ !) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19 g4  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  20 fxg5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  with extremely active pieces; for example, 21 a4  $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! threatens 22...exd5.

14...c5! 15 dxe6 dxe6 16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5! 18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g5!

Not precise, but bold and effective. The simple 18... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  would leave Black with the more comfortable position.

19  $\mathbb{Q}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ ??

Heading for an inferior endgame. 20 f3! forces the pace: 20...f4 21 fxe4 fxe3 22  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ , and White should hold the balance.

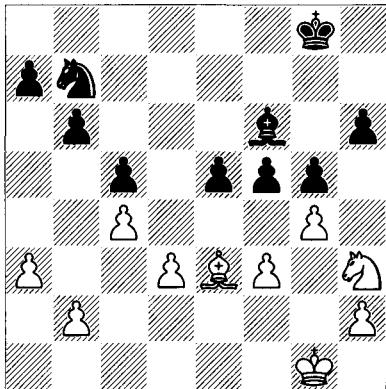
20... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h6 23 g4?

An oversight. Odessky suggests 23  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  24 f4 exf4 25 gxf4 g4 26  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  29 b3, but this is pretty awful after 29... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  30  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ . Maybe 23  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is best, if somewhat depressing.

23... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ ! 24 exd3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  26 f3 (D)

Black's point is 26 gxf5? g4.

B

**26...e4! 27 gxf5**

Or 27 fxe4 fxe4 28 b3 exd3 29 ♜f2 ♜a5.

**27...exd3 28 ♜f2 ♜xb2 29 ♜xd3 ♜xa3 30 h4 ♜d6 31 hxg5 ♜xc4 32 ♜f4 hgx5 33 ♜xg5 ♜d6 34 f6 c4 35 ♜e5 c3 36 ♜f2 ♜f7 37 ♜c4 ♜c5+ 38 ♜e3 c2 0-1**

Certainly 4...f5 qualifies as the most dynamic and perilous of Black's 4th-move choices versus 3 a3, while 4...♜f6 looks less exciting but more reliable. Theory shuttles back and forth between verdicts of equality and a modest advantage for White. The main appeal of 3 a3 is that it steers clear of the dramatic counterattacks that Black can play versus 3 e4. For his part, Black will have a relatively safe position, but he will often have to be satisfied with operating from a position with less space and fewer tactical possibilities. You'll find that positional skill is at a premium in these lines.

Finally, White can head for many other set-ups if he plays 2 ♜c3 or 2 ♜f3, as seen in the following game:

**Marjanović – Ivanisević**  
Yugoslav Ch, Subotica 2000

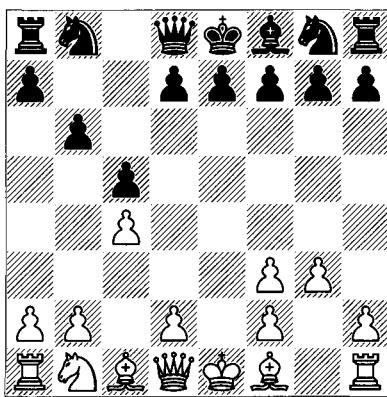
**1 c4 b6 2 ♜c3**

Upon 2 ♜f3 ♜b7, Black can always opt for a Queen's Indian set-up with ...e6 and ...♜f6, or enter into a Symmetrical English with ...c5. However, he has an important alternative plan when White plays g3 on this or the following move:

a) 3 g3 (this is equivalent to 2 g3 ♜b7 3 ♜f3) and now 3...♜xf3!? 4 exf3 cedes the bishop-pair for positional compensation. Black

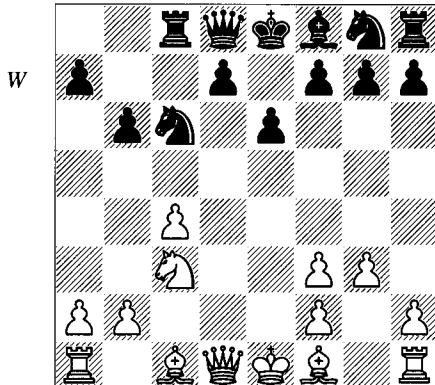
usually continues with 4...c5 (D) (he can also play 4...e6, with ...c6 and ...d5 to come).

W



I won't go into the very lengthy details, but 3...♜xf3 can be a good psychological weapon because it interferes with White's common intention to play a 'simple' English set-up with g3, ♜g2, ♜c3 and e3 or e4. The advantage of 4...c5 is that it controls the weak point on d4. In response, White can develop by some combination of ♜c3, ♜g2 and 0-0, but in doing so, he allows Black to fortify his grip on d4 and gain a strong outpost there by, for example, ...♜c6, ...g6 and ...♜g7. Since that is highly unattractive, White almost always plays 5 d4!. Now 5...cxsd4 6 ♜xd4 ♜c6 transposes to line 'b', or something very similar, but Black has the option of 5...♜c6!?, a provocative attempt to contest d4 directly. Play usually goes 6 d5 ♜d4 7 ♜e3 ♜f5. While White has tried several moves here, Black seems to equalize versus all of them, including the most frequently-seen 8 ♜d2 g6 9 ♜c3 ♜g7 10 ♜xg7 ♜xg7; for example, Knott-Summerscale, British Ch, Millfield 2000 went 11 ♜h3 ♜h6 12 0-0 ♜hf5 13 ♜a3 ♜d4 14 ♜c2 ♜gf5 15 ♜e3 ♜d6! 16 f4 0-0 17 b4 ♜c7 18 a4 f5 19 ♜a3 ♜e4 20 ♜d3 e5 with a fine position for Black.

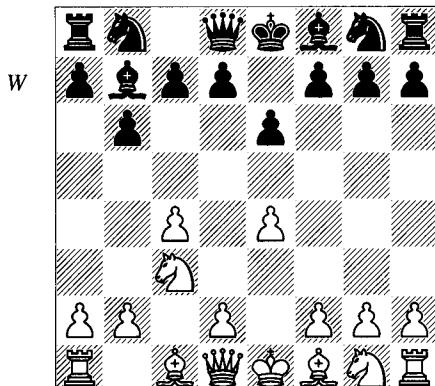
b) 3 ♜c3 (this is thought to be more precise than 3 g3) 3...e6 4 g3 ♜xf3!? (again, conceding a bishop to gain more control over d4; 4...♜f6 5 ♜g2 c5 would transpose into one of the Hedgehog lines of the English Opening – see Volume 3) 5 exf3 c5 6 d4! cxsd4 (this time 6...♜c6 7 d5 ♜d4 is regarded as inferior after 8 ♜e3 ♜f5 9 ♜h3!) 7 ♜xd4 ♜c6 8 ♜d1 ♜c8 (D) (not the only move, but it indirectly targets the c4-pawn).



Again we have a case of White having the bishop-pair and open e- and d-files, which offset his weaknesses (the doubled f-pawns and the central squares d3 and d4). Play can continue 9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10  $\mathbb{R}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  11 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  12  $\mathbb{R}xc3$ , as in Fridman-Mainka, Recklinghausen 2002. Now the easiest course is 12...0-0!, emphasizing Black's lead in development and planning ...d5. White should stop that with 13  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !  $\mathbb{R}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (to prevent 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 15  $\mathbb{R}d3$ , when Black can equalize with either 15... $\mathbb{R}c6$  or 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  (16 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{R}xd6$   $\mathbb{R}c6$  18  $\mathbb{R}d3$  d5 19  $cxd5$   $\mathbb{R}xc3$  20  $\mathbb{R}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  gives Black a strong knight) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  17 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 18  $\mathbb{R}c2$  a5, intending to meet 19 b4? (19 f4 a4 20  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ) with 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 20 bxa5 bxa5 and Black has the c5 outpost in front of the isolated pawn.

Black's primary motivation in this line is that White doesn't get to play mechanically with g3,  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 0-0, etc., as he may like to do versus other set-ups.

2... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3 e4 e6 (D)



4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Or:

a) 4  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  tempts White into 5 e5?!  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! with the idea 7 g3?  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (8  $gxh4$ ??  $\mathbb{Q}f3\#$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f3+$  9  $\mathbb{R}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ .

b) 4 g3 f5 5  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 d3 fxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! equalizes, Smejkal-Kengis, Bundesliga 1999/00.

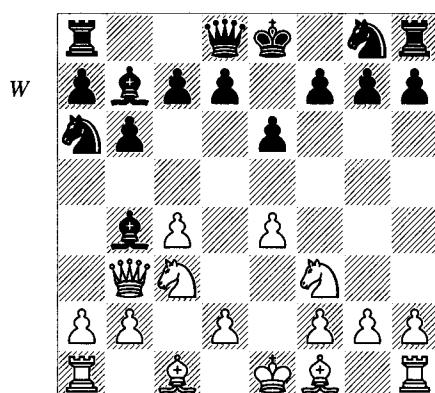
4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

As usual, Black wants to put pressure on e4 immediately. 4...c5 5 d4 cxd4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is a kind of Sicilian offshoot.

5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$

With this move, White signals his intention to play  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and d4.

5  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! (D) can lead to a cute trick and in any case to double-edged action:



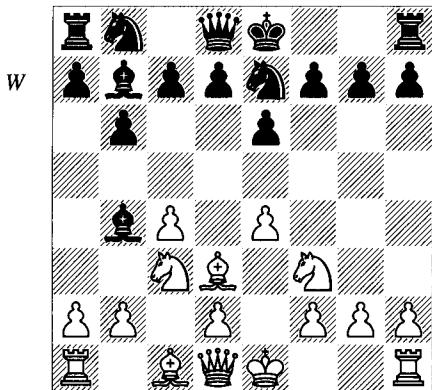
a) 6 a3?! falls into 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 7  $\mathbb{R}c2$  (7  $\mathbb{R}xb4$ ?? a5 8  $\mathbb{R}b5$  c6 traps the queen!) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8  $\mathbb{R}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9  $\mathbb{R}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{R}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}gxf6$  with pressure; for example, 11 b4 a5! 12  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  axb4 13 axb4  $\mathbb{R}xa1+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  intending ... $\mathbb{R}a8$  next, when the activity of Black's pieces is more important than White's bishop-pair.

b) 6 d3 is a bit slow and might allow Black to attack via 6...f5 7 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! 9 fxe6 0-0! 10 exd7  $\mathbb{R}xd7$  with compensation for two pawns in the form of outposts, development and play against White's weaknesses.

c) 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (better than 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $\mathbb{R}xc3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ? 8 d3!  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9  $\mathbb{R}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !, when White wins material – a common tactic) 7 0-0 0-0 8 d3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (8...d5 9 exd5 exd5 10 d4!) 9 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 10  $\mathbb{R}c2$  (not 10  $\mathbb{R}xb4$ ?? a5) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $\mathbb{R}xc3$  d5! (with two knights versus a bishop-pair, you will often want to blast open the

position) 12 cxd5!? exd5 13 e5 d4! 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with dynamic counterplay.

5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (D)



As often happens in the English Defence, Black wants to attack White's centre with ...f5.

6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?

This actually threatens to win Black's bishop by 7 a3!  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8 e5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  10 dx7, etc. Nevertheless, the healthier choice is 6 0-0 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ! with the idea of d4. That has various possible replies, including the thematic 7...f5, 7...c5!? and the Indian-like 7... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9 bxc3 d6 intending ...e5. Then 10 h4!  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 12  $\mathbb{W}h5$  is a lively response; for example, 12...hxg5 (12...e5 can be met by 13 c5!? or 13  $\mathbb{W}xh4$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  15  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and White gets the nod.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ !?

6...f5 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !? is double-edged.

7 a3

Or:

a) 7 0-0 0-0 (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f5! has the idea 9 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ .

b) Agrest-Atalik, Bled Olympiad 2002 saw 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  8 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}xh4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , when both 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and 10...f5 yield equal and double-edged play.

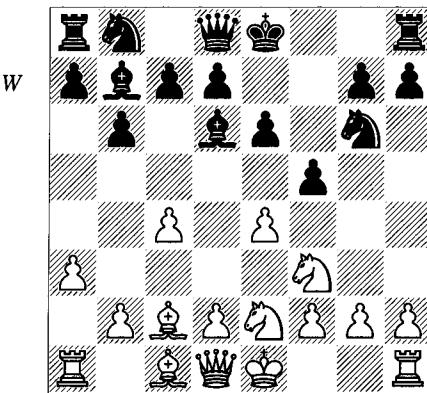
7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f5! (D)

This standard break once again increases the power of Black's queen's bishop, the heart of the English Defence.

9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Or:

a) 9 exf5?!  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}xh4$  11 d4 0-0 12 d5 exd5 13 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and ... $\mathbb{W}ae8$  leaves Black too active.



b) Sorokin-Lalić, Calcutta 2000 went 9 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 with an easy game for Black.

9... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! 10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ + 11  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  12 g3  $\mathbb{W}h3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14 0-0-0!?

After 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 16  $\mathbb{W}e3$ , Black has 16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !? 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! fxe4 19 b4  $\mathbb{W}g2$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , with ...e5 coming and in some cases ... $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

14...fxe4 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ??

But 15  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16 d5  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  is comfortable for Black.

15...0-0-0! 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 17  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}he1$

Play is forced after 18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ! 20  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! 22  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23  $\mathbb{W}c3$  d6.

18... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  19 c5

19 b3?? loses to 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ !

19...dxe5 20  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$

Black is simply winning.

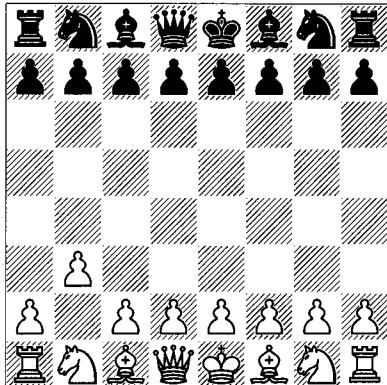
23 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 25  $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{W}f1$ + 26  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  27  $\mathbb{W}d4$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  0-1

## Larsen's Opening: 1 b3

1 b3 (D)

White himself may wish to take advantage of the benefits of a queenside fianchetto by playing 1 b3, sometimes known as Larsen's Opening, or the Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack. As I've mentioned, the top-level players use this move relatively infrequently, because Black has conservative set-ups which neutralize White's possibilities. Nevertheless, we'll look at a few of

B



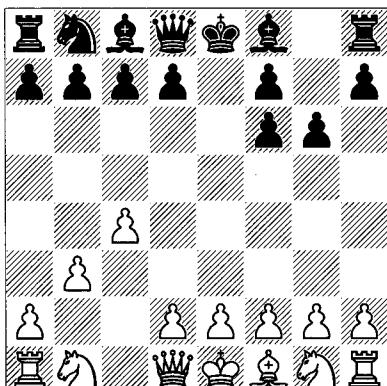
the more lively lines, with a couple of games that illustrate the paradoxes inherent in reversed positions. But first, let's walk through some initial moves.

**1...e5**

If Black can play this most cooperative of moves and get away with it, especially in conjunction with ...d5, that's not a good sign for White's ambitions as a whole. We'll test that theory in a couple of games. But first, let me describe, without serious analysis, just a few of the many other ways that play can develop, with an emphasis on themes that cross over from opening to opening:

a) 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  g6 (not the only move, of course) 3  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ ? (most other moves allow a comfortable King's Indian position following ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , ...0-0 and ...d6) 3...exf6 4 c4 (*D*).

B

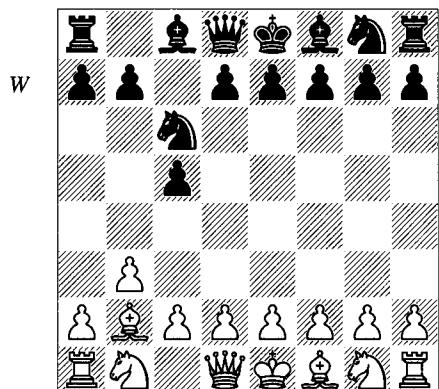


Compare this position with the English Defence variation 1 c4 b6 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  4 exf3 c5! from the previous section. In that case, Black had a more interesting game than

White does here, because d4 was a weakness and White had some looseness in his position. This happened because of White's move c4, whereas ...c5 isn't present in our reversed line. I should also mention that 1 b3 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 c4 g6?! (more commonly arrived at via 1 c4 c5 2 b3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  g6?!) 4  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$  exf6 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  followed by g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  combines the best of both worlds for White, because Black cannot carry out ...d5.

Anyway, in the diagram position after 4 c4 (in the 1 b3 version), White's position is sound enough. Nevertheless, Black has no serious weaknesses, and can develop naturally by ...f5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  or even win space by 4...d5? 5 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , as played successfully in several contests.

b) 1...c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (*D*) and now:



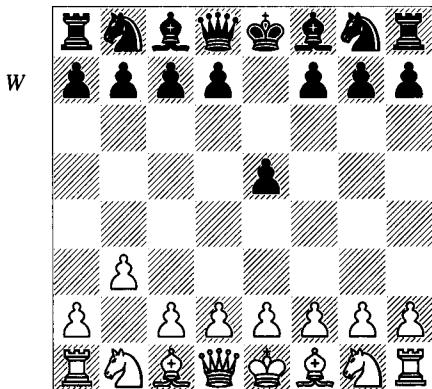
b1) 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 4 d4 (otherwise 4...e5) 4...cxd4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and now 6 g3?! permits the advance 6...e5! with the idea 7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ + 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5! 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  and White is in trouble, because ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and ...a6 is threatened. That illustrates the danger of permitting your opponent a central majority.

b2) 3 e3 d6 (3...e5 4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  and 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  are also options) 4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (Odessky's recommendation, rather than 4 d4 cxd4 5 exd4 d5!) 4...e5 (after 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 d4 cxd4 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5 or 6...g6, Black has few problems and his central majority may come into play) 5 d4. Now 5...cxd4 6 exd4  $\mathbb{Q}a5+?$  with the idea 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is one route. Another is 5...exd4 6 exd4  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ , since 7 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and sometimes ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  looks good, but so does 7 dxc5 d5!, with the kind of isolated pawn position in which

Black's activity is at least sufficient for equality.

c) 1...d5 2  $\mathbb{A}b2$  has another large complex of possibilities attached to it; we shall examine just a couple. White would often like to see something along the lines of 2...c5?! 3 e3 (3  $\mathbb{A}f3$ ?! f6! is a famous positional trick, when Black achieves ...e5; then 4 d4?! is a poor response in view of 4...cx $d$ 4 followed by ...e5) 3... $\mathbb{A}c6$  4  $\mathbb{A}b5$ , with a reversed English Defence a tempo up in which he reserves the options of  $\mathbb{A}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{A}e2$  and/or f4. After 2...c5, we often get positions resembling those of the Nimzo-Indian and Queen's Indian Defences. Of course, 2... $\mathbb{A}f6$  is safe and sound, as is 2... $\mathbb{A}f5$ ; play may enter the realm of the Réti Opening if White combines g3 and c4. Another popular defence begins with 2... $\mathbb{A}g4$ ?, trying to get the bishop out in front of the pawn-chain following ...e6. This can go in many directions, such as 3 g3 c6 4  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}f6$  5  $\mathbb{A}f3$ , when 5...e6 6 0-0  $\mathbb{A}bd7$  7 c4 leads to a Réti Opening, with an optional d4. But Black can also play independently for ...e5; for example, 5... $\mathbb{A}bd7$  6 0-0 (6 d4) 6... $\mathbb{A}xf3$ !? 7  $\mathbb{A}xf3$  e5. Finally, Odessky analyses the rare gambit 3 f3 with the idea e4; for example, 3... $\mathbb{A}h5$  4 e4 dx $e$ 4 5  $\mathbb{A}e2$ ! threatening to win a piece with 6  $\mathbb{A}b5+$ . Apparently this was even played by Kasparov!

Let's return to 1...e5 (D):



**2  $\mathbb{A}b2$   $\mathbb{A}c6$**

Naturally, 2...d6 can't be bad; then 3 e3  $\mathbb{A}f6$  4 c4 (4 d4 exd4 and after 5 exd4 d5 White's bishop is not happy on b2, but following 5  $\mathbb{A}xd4$   $\mathbb{A}c6$  Black will win the bishop-pair or gain more time; 4  $\mathbb{A}f3$  c5?!? has the idea 5 d4?!?

cx $d$ 4 6 exd4 e4 7  $\mathbb{A}fd2$  d5) 4... $\mathbb{A}c6$  5  $\mathbb{A}c3$  g6, and White will want to develop slowly, since 6 d4?! exd4 7 exd4 d5 or 7... $\mathbb{A}g7$  is at least equal for Black.

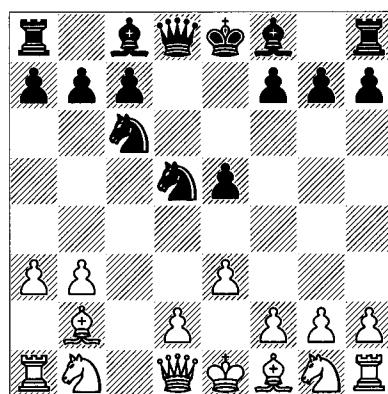
**3 e3**

3 c4 is of course possible; it is an English Opening with the less-than-inspiring b3 and  $\mathbb{A}b2$  thrown in.

**3...d5**

3... $\mathbb{A}f6$  is a well-known continuation. A few ideas:

a) 4 c4 d5 5 cx $d$ 5  $\mathbb{A}xd5$  6 a3! (D) prevents ... $\mathbb{A}db4$  and is a useful Sicilian Defence move in its own right.

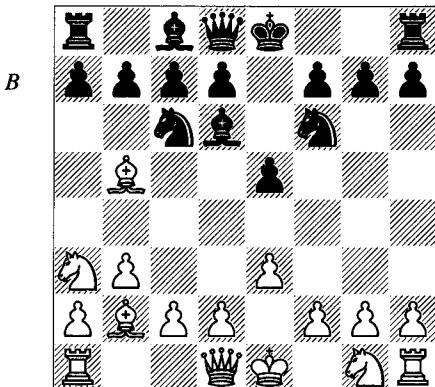


a1) Here I think that 6...g6! has been underrated. White is supposed to gain the upper hand by 7  $\mathbb{A}b5$   $\mathbb{A}g7$  8  $\mathbb{A}f3$ , putting direct pressure on e5 and c6. A few games have proceeded 8... $\mathbb{A}g4$ , when both 9  $\mathbb{A}c2$  and 9 h3 favour White. But here the pseudo-sacrifice 8...0-0! turns things around; for example, 9  $\mathbb{A}xc6$  bx $c$ 6 10  $\mathbb{A}xe5$  (10  $\mathbb{A}xe5$   $\mathbb{A}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{A}xe5$   $\mathbb{A}g5$  12  $\mathbb{A}f3$   $\mathbb{A}xg2$  13  $\mathbb{A}g1$   $\mathbb{A}h3$  14  $\mathbb{A}g3$   $\mathbb{A}d7$  15  $\mathbb{A}c2$   $\mathbb{A}e8$  and White's light squares are weak) 10... $\mathbb{A}g5$  11  $\mathbb{A}f3$   $\mathbb{A}xg2$  12  $\mathbb{A}g1$   $\mathbb{A}h3$  13  $\mathbb{A}xg7$   $\mathbb{A}xg7$  14  $\mathbb{A}g3$   $\mathbb{A}f5$ , and the combination of ... $\mathbb{A}a6$  and ... $\mathbb{A}fe8$  causes White difficulties.

a2) The main line goes 6... $\mathbb{A}d6$  7  $\mathbb{A}c2$  0-0 8  $\mathbb{A}f3$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  9 d3 f5 10  $\mathbb{A}bd2$   $\mathbb{A}h8$ ! (10... $\mathbb{A}d7$  11  $\mathbb{A}e2$   $\mathbb{A}ae8$ ) 11  $\mathbb{A}e2$   $\mathbb{A}d7$ , and here instead of 12 0-0  $\mathbb{A}ae8$ , Odessky recommends 12  $\mathbb{A}c4$  with a kind of dynamic equality. Some players will enjoy this Sicilian Defence structure as White.

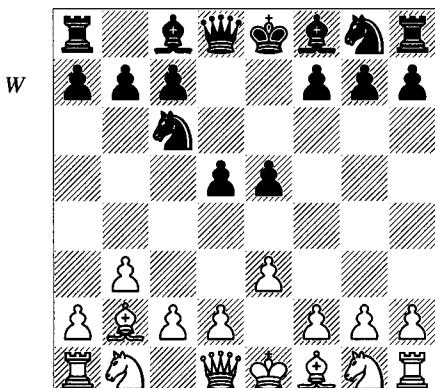
b) 4  $\mathbb{A}b5$   $\mathbb{A}d6$ ! (a surprising number of games and much analysis have been devoted to this move; although I should say that 4...d6 5

$\mathbb{Q}e2$  {so as not to block the f-pawn} 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is satisfactory for Black, with the idea 6 0-0 g6; upon 6 d4, Black can play 6...exd4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  or 6... $\mathbb{W}e7$  7 0-0 g6) 5  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (D) with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .



Now there are all kinds of crazy lines with 5... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !? (to stop  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ) 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a6 7 c4 0-0, and 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e4. In Walti-Shabalov, Suhr 1992, Black played the fascinating move 5...e4!? (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ), leading to 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! and ...a6 or ...c6) 7...bxc6 (7...dxc6 gives active play and equality) 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ?! (Odessky suggests 9 d3 d5 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) 9...d5 10  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ ?! (10... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  may produce some advantage) 11 f4!  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , and now 12 c4! with the idea 12...f6?! 13 c5!  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  would favour White slightly.

Let's return to 3...d5 (D):



Here we have the Owen Defence Reversed, surely a position in which White can play for

advantage. Of course, as with many reversed openings, you'll find that White's extra move will sometimes tip Black off to the appropriate defence. For a more thorough discussion of this phenomenon, see Chapter 6.

#### 4 $\mathbb{Q}b5$

This pin is consistent with everything we learned from the Owen. If White is reduced to 4 c4 d4 (4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is a playable Reversed Sicilian), then he's admitting to having achieved nothing with 1 b3. And 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  can be met by 4...f6, or simply 4...e4 5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  a6!? (versus  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ +, which would follow if Black played 6...c5) 7 d3 (7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}g5$ !) 7...c5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0 0-0, with even chances.

#### 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 5 f4

This is certainly the usual continuation in both the Owen and English Defences: when the f-pawn can't be captured, it makes sense to use it to break up the opposing centre. If Black defends e5 with pieces, then an exchange on e5 establishes a central majority. However, with the advance f4 come some problems, namely, a lack of development and exposure of the king-side, so it's worth noting that White has several less critical and less explored moves:

a) 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f6 6 c4 (6 d4!? is interesting; for example, 6...e4 7  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  f5 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !? with the idea 8...dxc4 9 d5) 6...a6 7 cxd5?! (7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  + bxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 7...axb5 8 dxc6 bxc6 with the bishop-pair and good central control.

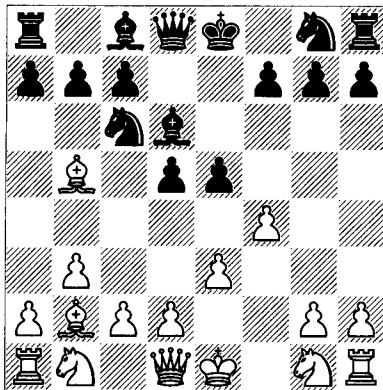
b) 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 0-0 0-0 7 f4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  f6 and both sides have plenty of play. In fact, 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  would be a good starting point for your investigations.

c) 5 c4 dxc4 (or 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ) 6 bxc4 (6  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}g5$ !?) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  is an interesting set-up) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !? (6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is also logical and sound) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !? (a remarkable move that seems to work; Palliser disapproves of 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  8 c5!  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , when White has a central majority, but Black has a bishop-pair after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and this really isn't much) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  +  $\mathbb{W}xd7$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! 10  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and the exciting 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$  e4! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ ? exf3! gave Black a superb attack in Van Arkel-Posch, corr. 1987. Instead, 11  $\mathbb{W}c3$  needs to be tested, to which the best response is again 11...e4!, when a long forcing line would be 12  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! (12  $\mathbb{W}xg7$  exf3 13  $\mathbb{W}xh8$  0-0-0 gives obvious compensation)

12... $\mathbb{W}f5!$  13  $\mathcal{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  14  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  15 h3  
 0-0-0 16  $\mathbb{W}xh8$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  17  $\mathbb{W}f6$   $\mathcal{Q}f5!$  18 f4!  $\mathbb{W}g8$   
 19  $\mathbb{W}h2!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  20  $\mathbb{W}e5$   $\mathbb{W}xg2+$  21  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathcal{Q}h4+$   
 22  $\mathbb{W}h1$   $\mathbb{W}e2$  23  $\mathbb{W}g1$   $\mathbb{W}f3+$  24  $\mathbb{W}h2$   $\mathbb{W}f2+$  25  
 $\mathbb{W}h1$   $\mathbb{W}f3+$  with a draw by repetition.

We now return to 5 f4 (D):

B



After 5 f4, we'll look at two different games, each with defences borrowed from the white side of the Owen and English Defences.

### Hässler – Pineault

corr. 1988

#### 5...f6 6 $\mathbb{W}h5+$

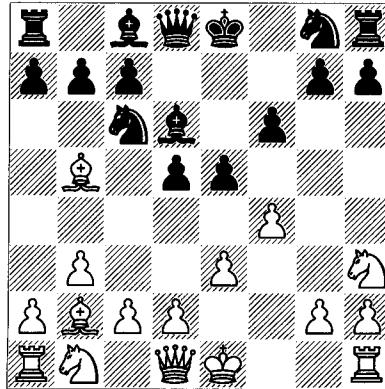
White seeks to weaken Black's kingside and at the same time soften up the a1-h8 diagonal. However, this is not necessarily his best course:

a) 6 fxe5?! fxe5 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5??$  is a blunder: 8... $\mathbb{W}h4+$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ ) 9 g3  $\mathbb{W}e4$  10  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}xh1!$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathcal{Q}c3!$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  12  $\mathbb{W}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  13  $\mathcal{Q}xd1$  is almost equal!) 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and White can't make his attack work, especially because 12  $\mathbb{W}f2$  fails to the cute 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg3+!$ .

b) 6  $\mathcal{Q}h3$  (D) is completely logical, developing and defending f4 without getting in the way of the queen's path to h5.

If you've looked at the English Defence lines above, you'll recognize that after 6... $\mathbb{Q}xh3?!$  7  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 8  $\mathbb{W}xh3$ , White controls the light squares and has good chances. Versus 8...exf4, Odessky's 9  $\mathcal{Q}c3!$  fxe3 10 dxе3 (10  $\mathbb{W}xe3+!$  looks better still) with the idea 0-0-0 gives White more than enough for the pawn. Unfortunately, Odessky ultimately (and overdramatically) gives 6  $\mathcal{Q}h3$  a '?' because of the line

B



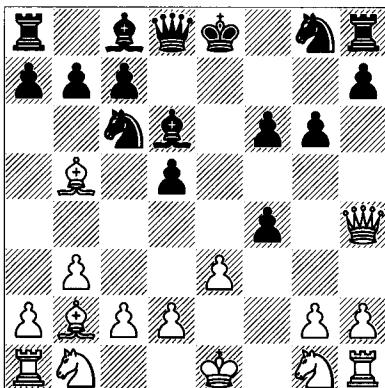
6... $\mathcal{Q}ge7$  7 fxe5 fxe5 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ , which he thinks can't be cracked. Surely White can get as much play here as in any other equal position. True, Odessky is convincing in his dislike for 9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  10  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$ ; nor is he a fan of 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 10  $\mathcal{Q}f2$  0-0 11 d3  $\mathcal{Q}g6$  12 e4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ . But White should attack the centre by 9 c4 a6 (9...0-0 10 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11  $\mathcal{Q}f2!$  a6 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 and now 11 d4?!, threatening c5, or 11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 12  $\mathbb{W}h4$ . As far as I can see, 6  $\mathcal{Q}h3$  is one of White's best opportunities in this 5...f6 line.

#### 6...g6 7 $\mathbb{W}h4$

Now White has potential or actual threats to win the e5-pawn, which Black usually liquidates right away:

#### 7...exf4 (D)

W



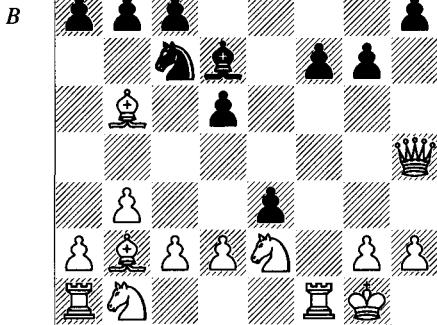
#### 8 $\mathcal{Q}f3$

This move hasn't scored brilliantly. Two alternatives are critical, and perhaps better:

a) 8 exf4  $\mathbb{Q}f7?!$  9  $\mathcal{Q}f3?!$  (a big decision; 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6?!$  bxc6 10  $\mathcal{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7!$  11 0-0  $\mathcal{Q}h6$  with the

idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  already favours Black, but speeding things up by 9  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 11 0-0-0 looks absolutely playable, and could even make Black uncomfortable) 9... $\mathbb{Q}ce7?$ ! (here 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  looks promising; Black neglects his development, but attacks c2 and prepares to kick the bishop with ...a6, in some cases followed by an early ...c5) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e5+?$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11 0-0! is very unclear) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , Gonsior-Novak, Czechoslovakia 1979. Suddenly Black threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and he's also ready to fortify the centre with ...c6; the knight on e5 isn't doing much.

b) Odessky suggests that 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  may be best. Then Fontana Sotomayor-Palomar, Aragon 1992 was a short affair: 8...fxe3! (8... $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  prevents  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  and intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , but Black has to be careful following 9 0-0! g5 10  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ) 9 0-0 (D) (9 dxe3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  holds the pawn comfortably).

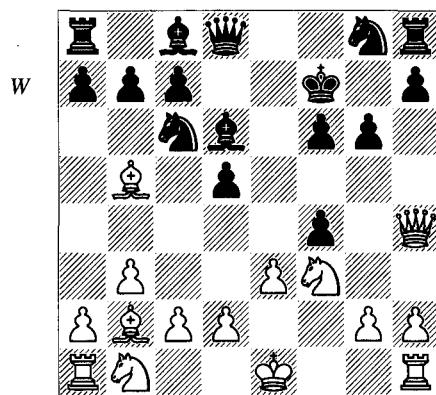


Let's look at the game first: 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ! 10 dxe3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6?$ ! (Black should stand well enough after 11...a6 or 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0-0 with the idea 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5??$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  0-0?? 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ef4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and White won shortly.

The problem with this line (and, perhaps, with 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ) is 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ , which frees the knight to go to e5 or b4 while clearing the way to castle queenside. A sample line would be 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (10 dxe3?  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ ; 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf6??$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  e2 13  $\mathbb{Q}el$  0-0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15 h3  $\mathbb{Q}c5+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h1$ , and Black keeps the upper hand after 16... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , or by 16...h5 with the idea 17  $\mathbb{Q}xg4?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3?$   $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ .

8... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$ ! (D)

8...fxe3 9 0-0 increases the pressure on f6, but Black is temporarily two pawns up and may be able to consolidate: 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  10 dxe3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is unclear) 10  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  (or 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11 dxe3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11 dxe3  $\mathbb{Q}ge7!$ , returning one pawn for development.



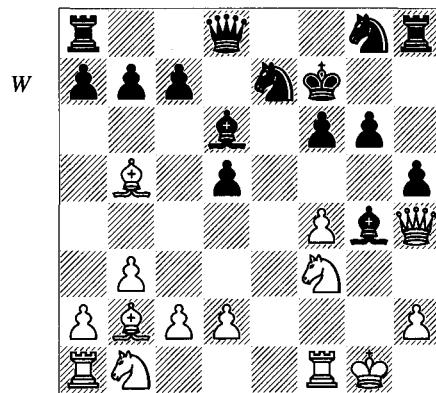
9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ce7?$ !

9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  is a good option, hitting c2 but also preparing ...a6.

10 g4+!

To guard f5, but 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  is much better, giving White fully-fledged chances.

10...h5! 11 exf4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (D)



12  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$

White didn't fare better with 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5+?$  in Cataudella-Loiacono, corr. 1983: 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (or 12...fxg5 13 fxg5+  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}gh6!$ ) 13 f5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5!$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  fxg5 17  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5+$  18 d4  $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$

20 dxc5 d4 21 ♜xd4 ♜h3+ 22 ♛h1 ♜f8 23 ♜d2 ♜d5+ 24 ♛g1 ♜f4 0-1.

**12...♝g7 13 ♜xg4 hxg4**

Black also has the better game following 13...♝f5.

**14 ♜xg4 ♜f5 15 ♜c3 ♜h4 16 ♜g2 ♜xf4?**

Now things become unclear. Black is virtually winning after 16...c6! 17 ♜d3 ♜gh6 (threatening ...♜g4) 18 ♜xf5 ♜xf5 with ideas of ...♜b6+ or ...♜c7 and ...♜ah8.

**17 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 18 ♜xd5 ♜h4 19 ♜d3 ♜h7**

At this point, 20 ♛h1 ♜g3+ 21 ♛g1 ♜f5 draws by repetition, as does 20 ♜e3! ♜gh6 21 ♜d5 ♜g8. In the game, Black gained a small advantage and eventually won.

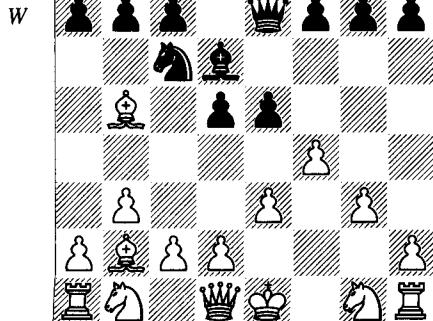
Now let's see a positional variation, with results that are more to White's taste.

### Ljubojević – Portisch Teesside 1972

**1 b3 e5 2 ♜b2 ♜c6 3 e3 d5 4 ♜b5 ♜d6 5 f4 ♜h4+**

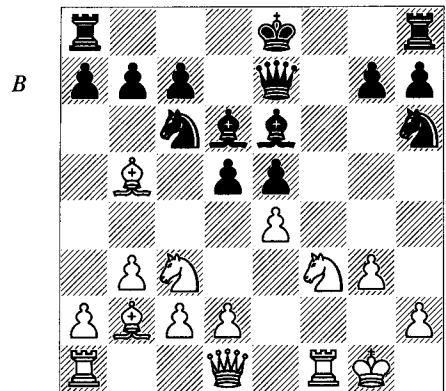
Apart from the 5...f6 of the previous game, 5...♜e7 is also played, with the same ideas as in this game. There are trade-offs, but I suspect that 5...♜h4+, weakening White's kingside, is slightly better.

**6 g3 ♜e7 (D)**



**7 ♜f3 ♜g4**

7...f6 is widely-played and recommended, but I think that the English Defence/Owen Defence idea 8 ♜c3! is harder to meet than has been evident in actual games: 8...♜e6 9 0-0 ♜h6 (the only move played in practice) 10 fxe5 ♜xe5 11 e4! (D).



11...d4 (11...dxe4 can be answered by 12 ♜xe4 0-0 13 ♜e2 or 12 ♜xc6+ bxc6 13 ♜xe4 0-0 14 ♜e2 with a pleasant positional advantage in both cases; for starters, note Black's isolated e-pawn and the outpost on e4) 12 ♜d5 ♜d7 (12...♜d8?? is met by the pretty combination 13 ♜xe5! ♜xe5 14 ♜h5+ ♜f7 15 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 16 ♜xe5+, and now 16...♜f8 17 ♜a3+ or 16...♜d7 17 ♜xg7 ♜f8 18 ♜xd4, etc.) 13 ♜g5! (or 13 c3) 13...♜g4 (13...0-0-0 14 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 15 ♜h5) 14 ♜e2 ♜xe2 15 ♜xe2 0-0-0 16 c3 with a central attack. This isn't hopeless for Black, but he has a hard time getting his pieces to decent squares.

**8 fxe5**

8 h3 ♜xf3 9 ♜xf3 ♜f6 saves Black a tempo.

**8...♜xe5**

Watch out for the trick 8...♜xf3?? 9 exd6 ♜e4 10 ♜c3!, with the idea 10...♜f5 11 ♜f1 ♜xd1 12 ♜xf5 ♜xc2 13 ♜f2! (Odessky's move), or 10...♜g4 11 ♜e2 ♜xe2 (11...♜e5 12 ♜b5!) 12 ♜xe2 ♜xe2+ 13 ♜xe2 ♜f6 14 ♜b5 (or 14 dxc7).

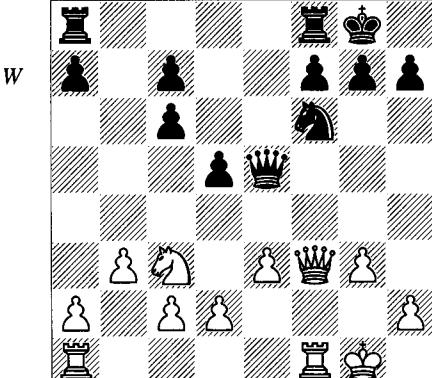
**9 ♜xe5 ♜xf3 10 ♜xf3 ♜xe5 11 ♜c3 ♜f6**

**12 ♜xc6+ bxc6 13 0-0**

Zurek-Krajina, Czech Team Ch 1997/8 went 13 ♜f4 ♜xf4 14 gxf4 d4! 15 exd4 0-0-0 16 ♜e2 ♜h8 17 c3 c5! 18 dxc5 ♜e4! 19 ♜d1! (the only reasonable move) 19...♜d3! with the idea of ...♜f3 and ...♜f2, among others. Then 20 ♜g1! ♜f3 21 ♜xg7 ♜f2 22 ♜a1 ♜d3+ 23 ♜d1 ♜f2+ would have drawn.

**13...0-0 (D)**

This position has arisen many times over the years and gives White the kind of positional plus that he usually aims for when playing 1 b3. The hope is to win an endgame by exploiting

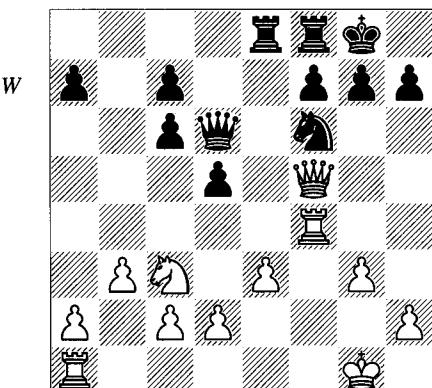


Black's doubled c-pawns and isolated a-pawn. White's f-file is useful in that regard, with ideas such as  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ -a4 in waiting. Black is certainly nowhere near losing, but he needs to be opportunistic.

#### 14 $\mathbb{Q}f5$

14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  has occurred more often. Then one of Odessky's anonymous Internet games shows typical themes: 14... $\mathbb{W}d6$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  15  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}af1$ ) favours White, in part because Black can't enforce ...d4; for example, 17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ ; 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  has also been played) 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{B}ae8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}af1$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$ ) 17... $f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (18  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  h6 intending ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , with near equality.

#### 14... $\mathbb{W}d6$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ $\mathbb{B}ae8$ (D)



#### 16 $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$

Odessky characterizes this as risky, as it grants Black the prospect of ...d4 in return for the a-pawn. 16  $\mathbb{Q}af1$   $\mathbb{B}e5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$   $\mathbb{B}xg3+$  19  $hxg3$   $\mathbb{W}xg3+$  was drawn in

Prusikin-Bossert, Rieden 1966, but White didn't have to permit all this.

#### 16... $\mathbb{C}5!?$

16... $\mathbb{W}c5$  isn't necessarily bad, but the text-move is more aggressive.

#### 17 $\mathbb{H}f1$

Odessky analyses 17  $\mathbb{B}xa7$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  d4 at length, with good counterplay for Black.

#### 17... $\mathbb{D}4!?$

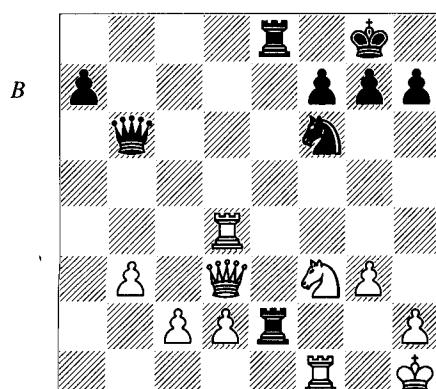
Probably too aggressive. 17...a6 is safe, preventing  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  as well as  $\mathbb{B}xa7$ , and meeting 18  $\mathbb{W}d3$  with 18... $\mathbb{B}e6$ .

#### 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{C}xd4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 20 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{C}5$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{C}4+ 22 \mathbb{Q}h1$ $\mathbb{C}xb3$ 23 $\mathbb{A}xb3$ $\mathbb{B}e2$

Odessky calls this unclear, although White appears to stand better after, e.g., 24  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , contemplating  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ .

#### 24 $\mathbb{W}d3!?$ $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ 25 $\mathbb{Q}d4$ (D)

White slips over the next few moves. Here 25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  was good, meeting 25... $\mathbb{W}b7+$  by 26  $\mathbb{W}f3$ .



#### 25... $h5$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}g1$ a5 27 $\mathbb{Q}f2$ $\mathbb{Q}2e7$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ $\mathbb{B}e1+$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{W}c6+$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}h3$ $\mathbb{Q}1e5!?$

30... $\mathbb{W}c8+$  31  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}c6+$  draws.

#### 31 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}b7$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$

32  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  would have maintained a delicate balance. After White's actual move, 32... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  33  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  34  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  would have led to mate or the win of major material, as the reader can verify. In the game, Black won only after further mistakes.

This chapter has featured far more concrete analysis than has been customary in these volumes. If you have the patience to wade through it, however, you'll be pleasantly surprised with how much fun the variations are, as well as gaining new systems to use in your games.

# 5 Gambits

First, what *is* a gambit? In the broadest terms, it's the sacrifice of a pawn or two in the opening. Sometimes a piece sacrifice is also called a 'Gambit' (e.g., the Cochrane Gambit in the Petroff: 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜xe5 d6 4 ♜xf7), but I think that it's most accurate to restrict the term to pawn sacrifices, and to ones that arise in the early stages of the opening. Of course, there's a hazy line here between 'early stages' and later ones. In the Marshall Attack of the Ruy Lopez, for example, Black doesn't give up a pawn until his 8th move. Some might consider that more of a pawn sacrifice than a gambit. The distinction isn't important in that case; however, if you look at a long list of named gambits, you'll see that they almost all sacrifice a pawn within the first five moves, and very often on the second or third move.

Up to this point in the series, we haven't dealt with a great many gambits. To some extent, that's because they tend to be lacking in the standard themes that I've emphasized throughout. For example, we usually won't see much similarity in pawn-structures between a particular gambit opening and the more conventional openings that we are used to. Nevertheless, when taken as a set, gambits share fundamental characteristics. We shall see, for instance, that almost every gambit emphasizes free piece-play. In addition, most gambits are designed to control the centre, whether by the influence of pieces or by a superior pawn presence. In gambits which depend upon early attacks, that central advantage is often cashed in for tactical gains; in positional gambits, it tends to persist for a while. Oddly enough, there are two fundamentally opposed techniques by which a gambiteer tries to take charge of the middle of the board. In some gambits, a flank pawn is sacrificed for the opponent's central pawn, thus establishing a central majority. In others, paradoxically, the gambiteer *sacrifices* his centre pawns for the sake of rapid piece development, and then uses those pieces to control the central

squares. Both approaches are perfectly legitimate; I'll talk further about this distinction below.

What about the person on the other side of the board, who is charged with defending against a gambit? What techniques are available to him? Broadly speaking, there are two basic approaches. Some players are happy to grab a pawn or two; they find that their extra material makes up for some temporary discomfort, and fully expect the pressure to abate after they play some accurate defensive moves. Other players, however, don't want the bother of defending against an attack, or of suffering under positional constraints, so they'll decline many or all gambits. Similarly, some will accept the gambit pawn(s), but then return them soon thereafter, in order to catch up in development or improve the central situation. In fact, there are gambits that have disappeared from ordinary practice because declining or returning the material proves so effective. In any case, all three of these methods of defence are justified in the appropriate situations.

How important are gambits? Because of their rarity at the highest levels, it's easy to underestimate their influence and utility. For each gambit mentioned in this chapter there corresponds one or more books, and/or sections of books, devoted to its investigation, along with articles and masses of master games. With a few exceptions, in fact, I can't possibly present a significant percentage of the theoretical details behind these openings because there is so much material. But I shall try to outline the most important variations and subvariations, along with what I think are the most critical defences. More importantly, I want to describe the basic ideas behind selected gambits, and point out their positive and negative qualities. It's true that some gambits are of dubious or marginal worth if the opponent knows how to defend precisely. But others are perfectly sound, and your chess education will be seriously lacking

without exposure to this unique opening form. In that context, the words of Grandmaster Alex Yermolinsky are enlightening:

"From the early days of my development as a chess-player I hated gambit play ... I just couldn't accept this as chess ... All classic gambits seemed to lead to the same scenario: White (in most cases, but sometimes it can be Black – anyway, a gambiteer) has to rush things up, has to try to transform his short-lived initiative into an attack against the black king. If it works out, he wins a beautiful game ... if not – I don't know, those games never seem to get published – maybe he loses?"

"Looking back I realize now, things were not so simple. My stubborn refusal to accept gambit play as an important part of chess strategy inevitably caused me to miss something. I missed a chance to learn how to play wide open positions, when your pieces seem to be hanging in the air, and there are maybe 2-3 moves given to you to create something, before they get exchanged or driven back. The hard work I had to put up to overcome this case of arrested development ... could have been easily avoided if I had given myself a little practice in my younger days."

In what follows, I've looked at a few gambits in more detail than they would seem to merit from their frequency of use. That's because, in contrast with positional openings, the precise move chosen in a gambit is often the difference between life and death. Interestingly, it's sometimes easier to discover original ways of playing 'gambit' openings, and defending against them, than it is to come up with new ideas in openings which are, at least superficially, under fewer constraints. I think that's mainly because gambits haven't undergone as thorough a reappraisal with the assistance of computers as have a number of the more mainstream openings. It turns out that there are numerous flaws in the analysis which has been handed down from author to author over the years, which is all the more reason to take an interest in this area.

## Primitive Gambits

One large group of gambits consists of straightforward attacking enterprises. Here structural

issues and long-term gains are of considerably less concern than the immediate success of direct assault. Most of the time, this means that the gambiteer sacrifices a centre pawn for rapid development and open lines. I don't use the word 'primitive' in a derogatory sense; after all, direct attack can be very effective. Let's see some examples, starting with those classic gambits that Yermolinsky was referring to:

### Danish and Göring Gambits

Many of the oldest gambits begin with 1 e4 e5, which is logical in view of the fact that 1 e4 is already the fastest developing move, and 1...e5 one of the most committal replies. The Danish Gambit is a fascinating attempt to jump all over Black from the outset, and you can certainly use it to play for a win, especially against opponents within your own rating range or somewhat higher. It's not the kind of opening to play casually, however; without a fair amount of study, there is a risk that you either won't recover your material or that there will be an unfavourable simplification. Fortunately, the positional and tactical ideas are great fun to go over, so you'll find yourself easily motivated.

**Linden – Maczuski**  
Paris 1863

#### 1 e4 e5 2 d4

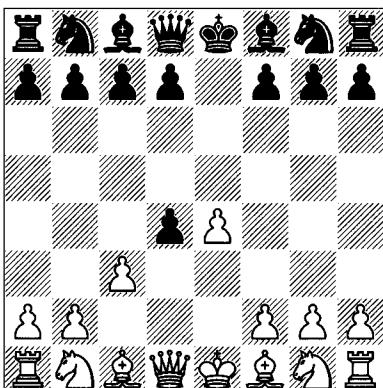
This move-order doesn't necessarily indicate that White wants to play a Danish Gambit, but it avoids the need to study openings beginning with 2 ♜f3 like 2...d6 and 2...♜f6. For example, the Göring Gambit begins 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxc3 5 ♜xc3, yet 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♜xc3 will often come to the same thing. See the note to 4 ♜c4 below.

#### 2...exd4 3 c3 (D)

With this move White makes it a gambit. 3 ♜f3 ♜c6 (other moves could be investigated) 4 ♜xd4 is a Scotch Game where White has bypassed the main-line Petroff. 3 ♜xd4 (the Centre Game), while by no means bad, loses time after 3...♜c6. For the consequences, I'll refer you to the standard theoretical sources.

After 3 c3, White plans to sacrifice pawns in return for open lines and a direct attack on Black's king. Before getting into the details in

B



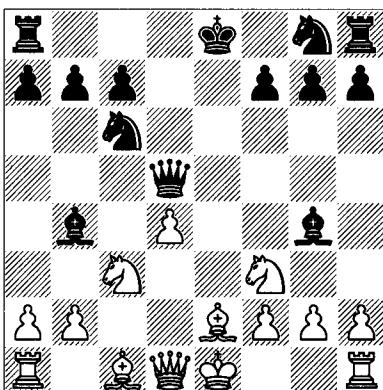
the next few notes, it's worth playing over the main game itself in order to get a feel for this fundamental idea.

**3...dxc3**

Most gambits can be declined, and at this juncture Black has several instructive ways to do so; for example:

a) 3...d5 4 exd5 5 cxd4 ♜c6 6 ♜f3 (perhaps the best way to keep the queens on is 6 ♜e3, which Nigel Davies argues is more likely to produce complications; for example, an original piece placement arises after 6...♝f6 7 ♜c3 ♜b4 8 ♜e2!?, intending a3; then the most critical line is 8...♜g4!?, introducing another pawn sacrifice: 9...♜xe2 10 ♜xe2 ♜xg2 11 ♜f3 ♜g6 12 ♜b3 followed by 0-0-0, as suggested by Voigt and Müller) 6...♜g4 7 ♜c3 ♜b4 8 ♜e2 (*D*).

B



This is a position that can arise from the Göring Gambit via 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 d5 5 exd5 ♜xd5 6 cxd4 ♜b4+ 7 ♜c3 ♜g4 8 ♜e2. Oddly enough, it can also come up in the

Chigorin Defence to the Queen's Gambit Declined! That is, from 1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♜c6 3 ♜f3 ♜g4 4 e3 e5 5 cxd5 ♜xd5 6 ♜c3 ♜b4 7 ♜e2 exd4 8 exd4.

At any rate, the best-known solution was played by Capablanca: 8...♜xf3 9 ♜xf3 ♜c4, when White can't castle and c3 hangs, so he needs to commit:

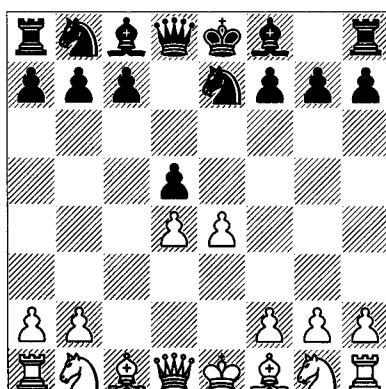
a1) 10 ♜b3 ♜xb3 and now 11 ♜xc6+ bxc6 12 axb3 transposes to the 10 ♜xc6+ bxc6 11 ♜b3 line, while 11 axb3 ♜ge7 has proven solid for Black in many games.

a2) Marshall-Capablanca, Lake Hopatcong 1926 went 10 ♜e3!? ♜xc3+ (Black can also play 10...0-0-0, when 11 ♜b3 is pretty much forced anyway) 11 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 12 ♜f1 ♜c4+ 13 ♜g1 ♜ge7 14 ♜c1 ♜xa2 15 ♜a1 ♜c4 16 ♜c1 ½-½.

a3) 10 ♜xc6+ bxc6 11 ♜e2+ (11 ♜b3 ♜xb3 12 axb3 ♜e7 is thought to be equal; maybe all the weak pawns even out!) But either side can press on with ambitions of winning) 11...♜xe2+ 12 ♜xe2 ♜e7 13 ♜e3 ♜f5 14 ♜hd1 0-0-0 15 ♜d3 ♜he8 16 ♜ad1 with balanced play, Velimirović-Ziatdinov, Kusadasi 1990. It's hard for either side to make real progress. Nevertheless, several positions along the way can be played for a win with either colour.

b) 3...♜e7 isn't played much, because Black seems to be cutting off his own pieces (the queen and f8-bishop). However, he wants to continue ...d5 and gain access to key light squares after White advances the e-pawn. A knight on the more natural square f6 would be subject to tempo-gaining e5 attacks. After 4 cxd4 d5 (*D*), White has to decide what to do about his e-pawn.

W



One example out of many is 5 e5 (5 exd5 ♜xd5 leaves Black with the ideal blockade of White's isolated queen's pawn, and faster development to boot; 5 ♜c3 dxe4 6 ♜c4?! has been suggested, when 6...♝f5! 7 ♜ge2 ♜d6 looks like a good reply) 5...♝f5 (a well-posted knight; Black can also play 5...c5 6 ♜f3 ♜ec6 with pressure on White's centre) 6 ♜c3 ♜e7?! (6...♝b4 is more aggressive, with the idea of targeting White's d-pawn in a line like 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 ♜e2 ♜c6 9 a3 ♜a5 10 0-0 ♜b6 11 ♜e3 ♜e6 and ...f6, with chances for both sides) 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 ♜d3 ♜c6 9 ♜e2 (here 9 ♜c2! has kingside attacking designs) 9...f6 10 a3? (White tries to stop ...♝b4, but this is much too slow; 10 0-0 is correct) 10...fxe5 11 dxe5 ♜h4! (a standard idea, eliminating the defender) 12 ♜xh4 ♜xh4 and White can't defend both his e-pawn and f-pawn in view of 13 ♜f4 (13 g3 ♜xe5 14 gxh4?? ♜f3+ 15 ♜f1 ♜h3#) 13...♜xe5! 14 ♜xe5 ♜xf2+ 15 ♜d2 ♜g5+ 16 ♜f4 ♜xf4 17 ♜xf4 ♜xf4+ 18 ♜c2 ♜g4 19 ♜f1 c5 with an overwhelming attack, Voigt-Hector, Hamburg 2000. Both sides have numerous ways to generate play in this line. Compare 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 ♜ge7 in the next game.

c) 3...d3 removes some of the dynamism from the position, but it's a bit passive and there's a whole game ahead after 4 ♜xd3 ♜c6 (4...d5 5 ♜e2 dxe4 6 ♜xe4 ♜e7 7 ♜f3 ♜f6 8 ♜c2 0-0 9 0-0) 5 ♜f3 d6 6 0-0 (or 6 ♜c4?! ♜f6 7 0-0), when White has better central control.

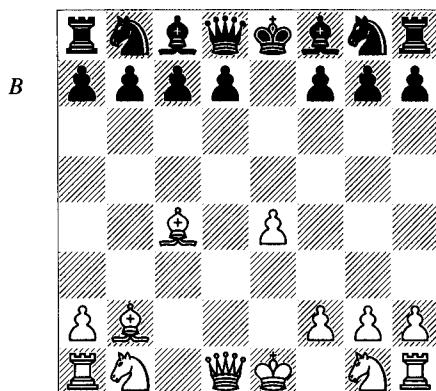
d) I should mention that 3...♝f6 4 e5 ♜e4 is very awkward for Black because of 5 ♜e2!. Compare the gambit in the next game, in which White has the same configuration but has committed to ♜f3, meaning that the move f3 isn't available.

#### 4 ♜c4

White gives up a second pawn for space and development. 4 ♜xc3 is the important move-order mentioned above in the note to 2 d4, played by Alekhine and recommended by Nigel Davies. Then after 4...♝c6, 5 ♜f3 is a Göring Gambit, of which the next game is an example. But White also has 5 ♜c4 and can retain more flexibility by not committing his king's knight. After 4 ♜xc3, Black won't want to continue 4...♝f6?! 5 e5! ♜e7 6 ♜e2. Note also that after 4...♝b4 5 ♜c4 ♜c6, 6 ♜f3 is the main line of the Göring Gambit (see the next game), but 6

♝e2?! is a sensible alternative, protecting c3 and leaving White's f-pawn able to advance at a later time.

#### 4...cx b2 5 ♜xb2 (D)



#### 5...♝b4+

It is considered that the Danish is theoretically sound, and there's no way for Black to guarantee himself the better game. But there are a number of respectable alternatives that give satisfactory play, and some whose assessments are not established. Here is a selection:

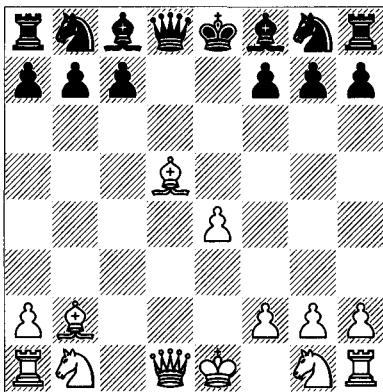
a) A miserly solution that used to be talked about in older books is 5...c6 6 ♜c3 d6 7 ♜f3 ♜d7!, with the idea of meeting 8 0-0 with 8...♝c5. I won't go into the details, but by means of ...♝e6, Black hopes to snuff out White's attack, while he is covering key squares such as d5 and b3. It's difficult to believe that Black can play so slowly, but the line illustrates how well pawns that cover central squares can serve as defenders; in that respect, you might compare the Sicilian Defence. The other move that goes with this sequence is 8...♝b6, to gain time on White's bishop, intending 9 ♜b3 ♜e6. Of course, White still has a dangerous attack, and also has many options on moves 6, 7 and 8; for example, he can try to combine ♜c3 and ♜e2/c2 with 0-0-0, while ♜d5 can be a sacrificial theme. Strange to say, although 5...c6 and 6...d6 used to be a standard recommendation, no modern source that I've seen mentions it.

b) 5...d6 can lead to all sorts of positions and transpositions. Since 6...♝e6 is a threat to break the attack, White often plays 6 ♜b3 ♜d7 (6...♝h6 is complex) 7 ♜c3, intending 7...♝c6 8 ♜d5, and if 8...♝a5, then 9 ♜g3!. This may

not be decisive, but it retains a strong attack for the two pawns.

c) 5...d5 is a very well-known idea. Black can either give back both pawns and seek equality, or try to hold on to one of them. Play continues 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (D) (6 exd5 blocks off White's attacking bishop, allowing 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  with a solid extra pawn).

B



There is extensive theory here, and I'll try to present just enough for you to work with:

c1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is tricky: 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+?$ ! (this seemingly devastating move only wins a pawn, but re-establishes a material balance; 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3+?$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is an ambitious way for White to retain more chances – then 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  has the idea ...c6 and avoids the ancient trap 8...c6? 9  $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$  gxf6 10  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+)$  7... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  8  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  (Black's point) 9  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ . This simplified position was once regarded as favourable for Black because of his queenside majority, but it is probably about equal (after all, White has a kingside majority!). Play can continue 10... $\mathbb{W}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$  (or 11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+!$  gxf6 12  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13 0-0 b6! intending ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ; 11 f3 is a consolidating option, although eventually White would like to get his kingside majority moving with f4) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{W}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}ad8$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with a balanced and unresolved position.

c2) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  and now:

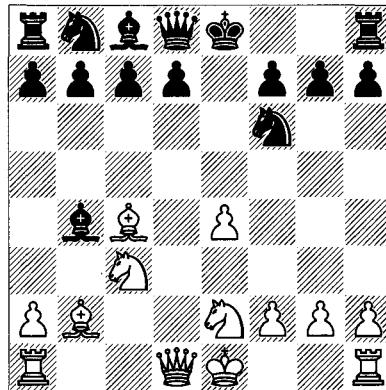
c21) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f1+?$ ! is well answered by 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !, with the idea 8  $\mathbb{W}a4+?$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 10  $\mathbb{W}xb4??$  (but after 10 e5  $\mathbb{W}d3+11 \mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  Black wins at least a piece) 10... $\mathbb{W}d1+11 \mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6+12 \mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}xe1\#$ .

c22) 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , and once White has lost his attacking piece on d5, he may still have enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that. His best line seems to be 9  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10 exd5 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , when in practice, the opposite-coloured bishops – favouring the attacker – have combined with prospects of  $\mathbb{Q}g3-h5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}f4-h5$  to produce balanced results.

c23) 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (this maintains a threat on g7) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  (after 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , White might play 8  $\mathbb{W}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  9  $\mathbb{W}b3+ \mathbb{Q}d5!$  10 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{W}e7$  11 exd5 and Black's king is exposed; 7... $\mathbb{Q}f8+?$  is a curious alternative, protecting g7 and dodging  $\mathbb{W}a4+$ ; the Danish Gambit is by no means worked out) 8  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{W}g5$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}c3+?$  is an alternative: 9...c6 10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6+?$  and here White might try 12 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4+?$ ) 9...0-0 10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  with some attacking prospects. Black has a material plus, however, and 'dynamically equal' seems a fair verdict.

**6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (D)**

B



White develops calmly. Black has to be careful that e5 doesn't create big trouble, and simply  $\mathbb{W}b3$  with 0-0-0 is also in the air.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$**

This is really too greedy. Black should try to develop something by 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  or 7...0-0, or break in the centre with 7...d5. I've chosen this game to illustrate the most elementary gambit situation, in which rapid development and open lines triumph over material advantage.

**8 0-0!**

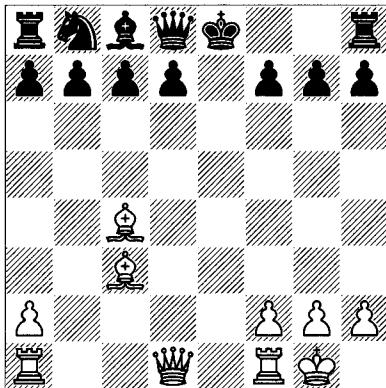
Now every white piece is out, and  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is a threat, along with  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

**8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$ !**

This fails, but again, 9...0-0 allows 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ , hitting the b4-bishop and threatening  $\mathbb{W}g4$ . Then Black can try to hold on by 10... $\mathbb{W}h4$ , but this quickly becomes depressing; e.g., 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{W}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{W}d3$  d6 14  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f6+!$  with the idea 16...gxf6 17  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$  hgx6 18  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ .

**10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (D)**

B



A pair of ideal bishops.

**10... $\mathbb{W}g5$**

What else? 10...0-0 loses to the fine manoeuvre 11  $\mathbb{W}g4$  g6 12  $\mathbb{W}d4$ , forcing mate! A classic coordination of the bishop-pair: note the pin on the f-pawn. And 10...d5 loses for multiple reasons, one being 11  $\mathbb{W}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  with the idea 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe6+!$  fxe6 14  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  16  $\mathbb{W}g4+$  and the king can't escape.

**11  $\mathbb{W}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

Or 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  d6 (12...c5 13  $\mathbb{W}d6+)$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$ .

**12  $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$**

12... $\mathbb{W}c5+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  is hopeless for Black.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$**

This allows White to play a queen pseudo-sacrifice. 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  also loses, to 14  $\mathbb{W}xe8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  15  $\mathbb{W}e2+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16  $\mathbb{W}e1$  c6 17  $\mathbb{W}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e5+.$

**14  $\mathbb{W}g4!$   $\mathbb{W}d6$**

14... $\mathbb{W}xg4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f6\#.$

**15  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$  1-0**

Chess in 1863! You can see the appeal of a gambit that is based upon development and line-clearance. In the 19th century, Black tended

to be a little more cooperative in allowing such attacks, but the Danish Gambit can still be fun to play today. Let's turn to its cousin, the Göring Gambit. I'm going to switch to heavier analytical mode, because it's so important to know precise moves if you're going to enter into either side of this opening.

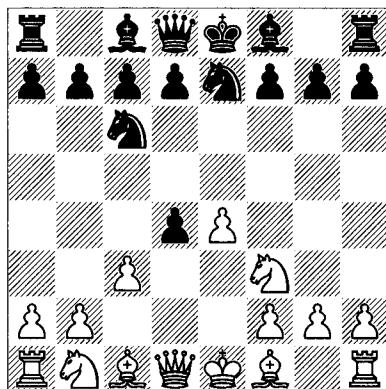
### Ciocaltea – Karaklajć Smederevska Palanka 1971

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxс3**

Black may also decline the pawn. In the last game, we saw (by transposition) 4...d5 5 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  6 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Here are two other ways:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  (D) closely resembles 3... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  versus the Danish, and the ideas are the same.

W



I think that Black can get an objectively equal game by controlling the light squares, but both sides will be able to create a fighting imbalance:

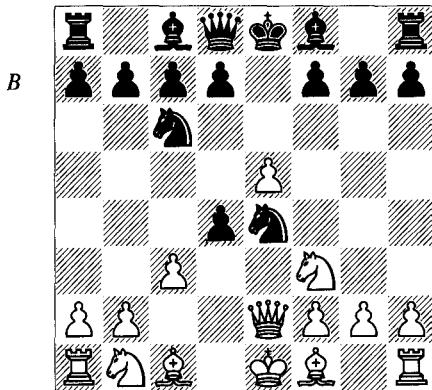
a1) 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  6 cxd4 d5 7 e5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (trying to get ...c5 in) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6! presents White with the problem of what to do about the threat of 9... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , winning a pawn. There might follow 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  10 fxe3  $\mathbb{W}h4+$  11 g3  $\mathbb{W}h6$  12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with equality.

a2) 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d5 6 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is the most tactical line. White has to be careful not to overextend: 7 0-0 (7  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  8  $\mathbb{W}a4+$ , and Black can retreat with 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , or try 8...c6!?) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9 gxf3!  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{W}a4+$ , when Black should play 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , when in view of ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , White will probably repeat

moves; instead, 10...c6? is hit by 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ) 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  11  $\mathbb{W}a6$  c5, threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ . Black has active counterplay.

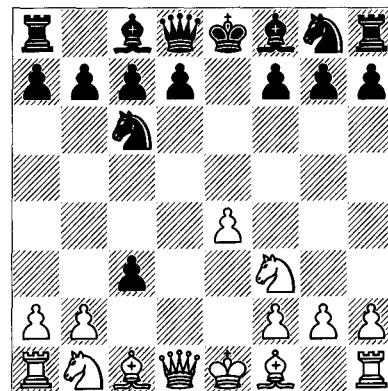
a3) 5 cxd4 d5 6 e5 (6  $\mathbb{Q}c3?$ ! dx $e$ 4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  produces a typical isolani position) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ ! contemplates ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (or 8...g6!?) 9 0-0 0-0 10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  11 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with approximate equality; Black intends ...f6.

b) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  counterattacks the e-pawn and comes close to equalizing. Nevertheless, White may get a slight pull following 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (D).



White attacks Black's knight just when it's not well-positioned to retreat. The main line goes 6...f5 (6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 cxd4 costs Black too much time; according to theory, 6...d5 7 exd6 f5 is playable, but better for White) 7 exf6 d5 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  d3!? (this leads to a lengthy forcing sequence; 8... $\mathbb{W}xf6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx $e$ 4 10  $\mathbb{W}xe4+$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  dx $c$ 3 12 bxc3 is held to favour White very slightly) 9  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  10 fxg7  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx $e$ 4 (after 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  Black's weak queenside hurts him in the case of both 17 0-0!  $\mathbb{W}xg7$  18 g3 and 17 f3  $\mathbb{W}xg7$  18 g3!) 17  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (White can also get an edge with 17  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$  18  $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xg2$  19  $\mathbb{W}a8+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{W}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21  $\mathbb{W}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22  $\mathbb{W}f1$ ) 17...e3! (17... $\mathbb{W}xg7$  18  $\mathbb{W}xc6$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$ , Iskov-Kaiszauri, Oslo 1980, and here 19 0-0! is suggested in *Informator*. Indeed, 19... $\mathbb{Q}h3$  20 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  21  $\mathbb{W}xf1$  is clearly better for White with his two pawns for the exchange and Black's queenside weaknesses.

We now return to 4...dx $c$ 3 (D):



### 5 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

This distinguishes the Göring Gambit. White can also proceed in Danish Gambit style with 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , which opens up some new possibilities after 5...cx $b$ 2 (5...c2!?) 6  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ , but in the end, the simple 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (with the idea 6 e5 d5!) is probably best answered by 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  or 6 0-0 d6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ , transposing to other main lines below. 5...d6 also transposes after 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ , but if White is a lunatic, he can try Marshall's amazing response 6  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  (guarding f7 and threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ) 7  $\mathbb{W}xc3!!??$  (an apparent blunder) 7...d5! 8 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9 dx $c$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  bxc6? (10... $\mathbb{W}e7+!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12 0-0-0 0-0 is better; White can develop very rapidly, but a queen for two pieces is a lot!) 11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  (however, 12  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  was threatened, and White has a real attack after 11... $\mathbb{W}d6!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  with a winning game, Marshall-Halper, New York 1941. More old-fashioned romanticism!

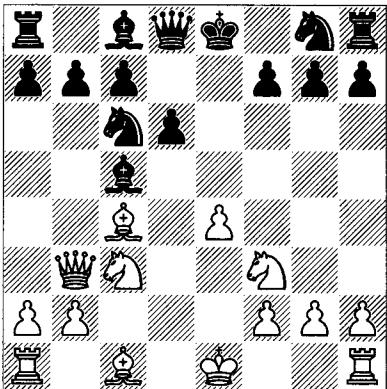
### 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

This pin proves effective. After 5...d6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  9  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  10  $\mathbb{W}a6$  has scored well for White in practice, while 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is seen in our next game. Again, White's sneaky move-order with 2 d4 (described in the last game) might have given White more leeway in these lines, since without having committed to  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , he could play an early  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ , f4 or even  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , just to take the game out of mainstream theory.

At any rate, it's easy for Black to go wrong in the Göring, and even fairly strong players can

get in trouble after 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ? 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d6 7  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (D).

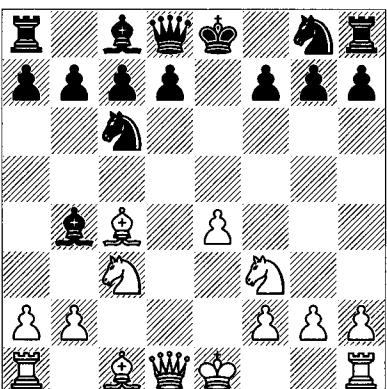
B



The most important line goes 7... $\mathbb{W}d7$  (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ; 7... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  9  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  10  $\mathbb{W}xa5$  leaves Black's king a bit exposed, and the advance e5 will be a theme) 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ ; for example, 8... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$  9  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{W}xg7$ ) 9  $\mathbb{W}c3!$  0-0 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ?! (returning the pawn by 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{exd}5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{dxe5}$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{He8}$  gives Black roughly equal chances) 11 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12 a4  $\mathbb{Q}ce5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ ?! (13 a5!  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  14  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  c6 15 axb6 cxd5 16  $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ) 13...axb6 14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ? (14... $\mathbb{W}c6$ !), Schlechter-Hromadka, Baden 1914, and now 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{dxe5}$  16 f4! is very strong.

6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (D)

B



White really has to develop speedily at all costs.

**6...d6**

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 7  $\mathbb{bxc3}$  d6 is also possible. It usually transposes (8  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , for example, is the note

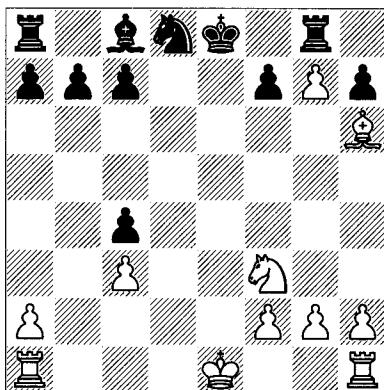
to 7 0-0) but has the benefit of forcing White to capture with a pawn on c3. In principle, White could exploit this move-order with  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and e5, but that's hard to implement successfully.

Simply 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is a major option. Then the line 7 e5 d5 (7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ?? 8  $\mathbb{W}d5$ ) 8  $\mathbb{exf6}$   $\mathbb{dxc4}$  9  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  10  $\mathbb{fxg7}$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  has been around for a long time. Now:

a) 11 0-0!?  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (versus  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 12  $\mathbb{bxc3}$  is a unique and little-tested approach. White gives up the g-pawn in order to gain pressure in the centre and on the queenside: 12... $\mathbb{H}xg7$  13  $\mathbb{He1+}$ , play can go 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Hc8}$  15  $\mathbb{He2}$  with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ; nor is 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Hg6}$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  attractive) 13  $\mathbb{He1+}$  (13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c6 15  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{He8}$  16  $\mathbb{He1}$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f8$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  will be drawn) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ?! b6! 15  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Hxc4}$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 17  $\mathbb{gxf3}$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c5 19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 17  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18  $\mathbb{H}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20 f3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}gd8$ , and the action subsided in Ketola-A.Ivanov, ICCF email 2004.

b) Traditionally White plays 11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 12  $\mathbb{bxc3}$  (D).

B



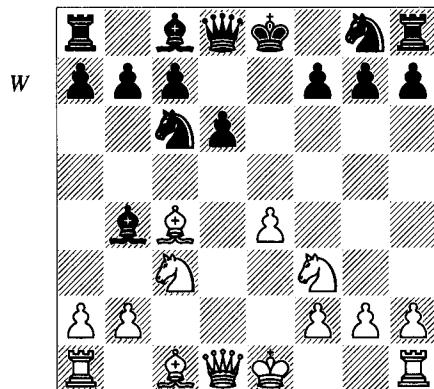
Now Black has pursued two main paths. The resulting lines are very concrete:

b1) Black may or may not stand satisfactorily after 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 0-0-0, but it's easy to fall into trouble; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ? 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$ + 15  $\mathbb{H}xd3$ !  $\mathbb{cxd3}$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ +  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18 f4 f5 19 g4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  20  $\mathbb{gxf5}$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with a winning game, Levy-Karaklajic, Cienfuegos 1972) 14  $\mathbb{Q}he1+$  (or 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ?) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15 g4! and now 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ?! 16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  19

$\mathbb{A}xe6$  1-0 was Dolgov-Kudriatsev, corr. 1993, but 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is also difficult for Black) 15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (15... $f6!$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2??$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18  $f4!$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$   $bxc6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , when the rook on g2 is trapped and can't get out without material concessions, Dolgov-Walter, ICCF corr. 1990.

b2) 12... $f6!$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  can lead to interesting play, although sometimes it peters out because of the opposite-coloured bishops: 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4?$ ! (14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6!$  seems to equalize; for example, 15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  is dead drawn) 14... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $c6$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  should be equal) 16  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d3?$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$   $h5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  22  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and White was winning in Dolgov-Kaverin, corr. 1991.

We now return to 6... $d6$  (D):



**7 0-0**

7  $\mathbb{W}b3?$ ! is rare, but maybe worth a try. 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$  8  $bxc3$  (8  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 0-0 0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  forces White to attend to his e-pawn; if Black is nevertheless worried about 8  $\mathbb{W}xc3$ , he should capture on move 6 instead) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  threatens 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , to get rid of the powerful c4-bishop, but 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (Black again threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ; 9... $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $c6$  11  $f4$  is dangerous for him) 10  $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0 11  $f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  leaves everything up in the air.

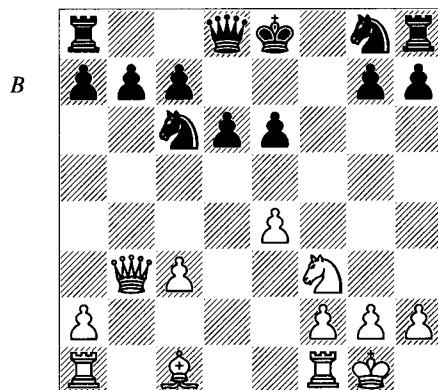
**7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8  $bxc3$**

We've arrived at one of the main lines of the Göring Gambit. Of course, especially at lower levels, you can't count upon reaching it from either side.

**8... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$ !**

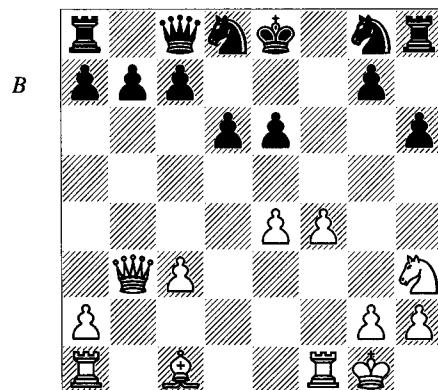
This is Black's most dynamic move, but perhaps not his best.

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is a popular and extremely important alternative. There usually follows 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  10  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (D).



Now Black has two ways to protect e6, and some fascinating attacking themes result from both:

a1) With 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$ , Black decides that he wants to look after his b7-pawn as well: 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (11  $\mathbb{Q}a3?$ ! looks inviting, with the idea of  $e5$ , either immediately or in conjunction with  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  has the idea 12... $h6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ ; after 12... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , there can follow 13  $f4$  intending  $e5$ , or even 13  $e5?$  with the idea 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $f4$   $\mathbb{Q}ef7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ ; the whole line with 10... $\mathbb{W}c8$  is full of similar tactics) 12  $f4$  (12  $e5?$ !) 12... $h6$ . Now the game Ribli-Kovacs, Debrecen 1970 continued 13  $\mathbb{Q}h3?$ ! (D) (White wants to push the f-pawn; 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is a fair alternative, but not as interesting).



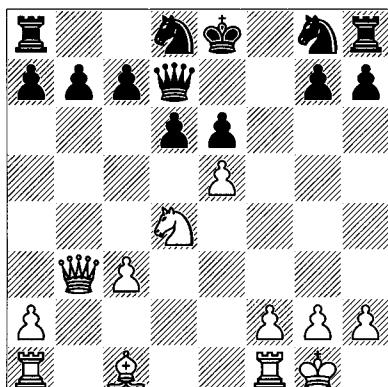
13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  doesn't prevent 14 f5!, in view of 14...exf5 15 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5??$  16  $\mathbb{W}b5+$ , picking up the knight on f5; instead 14...e5! can't be too bad; then White has time to play slowly, and might begin by trying to probe the kingside by 15  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$ ? (now 14 f5 e5 with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is ineffective for White; on the other hand, 14  $\mathbb{M}e1$  is a good slow move, with the idea e5) 14... $\mathbb{W}c6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1!$ ? (15 e5 is consistent with 14  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{M}ae1$  0-0 17 f5 a5 18  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  a4 19  $\mathbb{W}d1$  e5? (a bad mistake; Black has played nearly perfectly, and now simply 19... $\mathbb{W}c4!$  or even 19... $\mathbb{W}xc3$  20  $\mathbb{M}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  leaves White short of compensation) 20  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (suddenly moves like  $\mathbb{W}g4$ ,  $\mathbb{M}f3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ , intending to capture on h6, are extremely hard to answer) 20... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$  (20... $\mathbb{W}c4$  21 f6!  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g1!$  protects f1 and prepares fxg7), and now 21  $\mathbb{W}g4!$  would pretty much have won outright: 21... $\mathbb{W}d7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  23  $\mathbb{W}g6$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xh6!$ , etc.

a2) 10... $\mathbb{W}d7$  has a fair reputation, returning the pawn on b7. However, the position is relatively unexplored. For example, White might try the simple 11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , which threatens  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  as well as a capture on e6 (the book line is 11  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{M}b8$  12  $\mathbb{W}a6$ , when 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ , with good piece-play, is almost certainly better than 12... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{M}ab1$  with an edge for White). Then:

a21) White's centre gives him compensation after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12 cxd4 b6 (12...0-0-0 13  $\mathbb{M}b1$  b6 14 a4! is no fun for Black) 13 d5!, in view of 13...e5 14 f4 exf4 15  $\mathbb{Q}b2!$  or 13...exd5 14  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  c6 15  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , for example, when 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16 f3 0-0-0 17 a4!?,  $\mathbb{M}he8$  18 a5 b5 19  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  a6 20  $\mathbb{M}fd1$  gives White ongoing pressure.

a22) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12 e5! (D).

B



I don't believe that this line has been tried, but to me it doesn't look easy for Black at all. He should probably play 12...d5 (12...dxe5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  has ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and  $\mathbb{M}d1$ ; 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13 exd6 cxd6 grants White good chances by 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  or 14  $\mathbb{M}e1$  d5 15  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{M}ad1$ , intending 17 c4, which Black can't stop by 16... $\mathbb{M}c8$ , because after 17 c4!, 17... $\mathbb{W}xc4?$  loses to 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14 c4 (or 14  $\mathbb{M}ad1$  0-0 15 c4 c6 16 f4!) 14...c6 15 f4, when White intends 15...0-0 16 f5! with the initiative: 16...exf5 17 e6!?  $\mathbb{W}c7$  18 cxd5 cxd5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  20  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  21  $\mathbb{M}ac1$ .

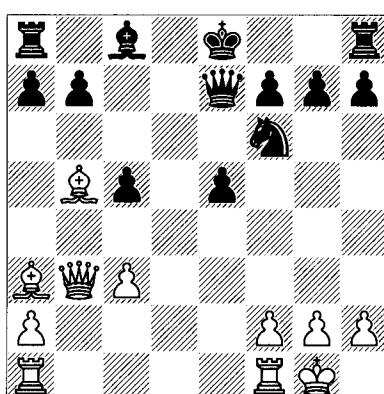
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is an established main line. Then 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  10  $\mathbb{W}b3$  0-0 and 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0 10 f4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  don't impress, which leaves:

b1) The speculative 9  $\mathbb{M}e1!$ ? 0-0 10  $\mathbb{M}b1$  gives White positive chances in a less simplified position than in the lines after 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$ .

b2) 9 e5 and now 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 11  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  transposes to the main position below, but with this move-order, Black can also play 9...dxe5, when 10  $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0! 11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  yields full compensation (but no more than that) after 11...h6 or 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ . This is more dynamic than 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}xd1$  12  $\mathbb{M}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

b3) 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  10 e5!? (10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{M}ae1$  is risky; White would then reorganize to play f4) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 13  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  (D).

B



This position has been played in many games and has led to numerous draws. Black can safely give his extra material back by 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{M}ad1$  0-0 (but not 14...b6? 15  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  16  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{M}fd8$ , etc. He also has the

underrated alternative of 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d2!$  17  $\mathbb{W}b4!$  0-0-0! 18  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c6$ . Finally he can choose the ambitious 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$ , with ideas of ...a6 and ...b5 or simply ...b6, while the king can get away with ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  and ...h6 or ...h5. In practice, Black has done well in this position following 14 f4! e4 15 f5, although it's still unclear. At any rate, White should check out his earlier options before entering this 10 e5 (or 9 e5) line.

**9  $\mathbb{W}b3$**

The only way to fight for the initiative, hitting f7 and b7. Black jumps at the opportunity to expose White's king.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$**

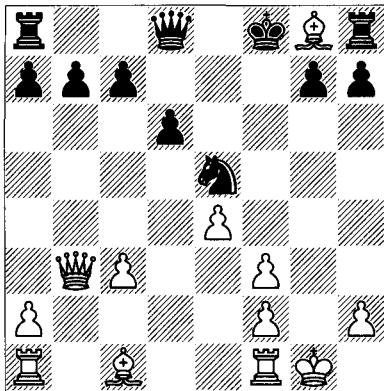
9... $\mathbb{W}d7!?$  turns out badly following 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  11 e5!, intending 11...dxe5? 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ .

**10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  11 gxf3**

11  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$   $\mathbb{W}xg8$  12 gxf3 and now 12... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  transposes, but 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$  is more complex.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$  (D)**

B



**12... $\mathbb{W}xg8$**

Alternatively, Black can grab the pawn but expend precious time by 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+!?$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xg8$  15  $\mathbb{W}xb7!?$  (or 15  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  with the idea 15... $\mathbb{W}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ) 15... $\mathbb{W}c8!$  16  $\mathbb{W}xc8+$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , when White has the more active pieces in the ending.

**13 f4!  $\mathbb{Q}f3+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}h4+$**

14... $\mathbb{Q}xh2!?$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  favours White; Black's rook on g8 is very passive.

**15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$**

At this point, the game continued 16 f5?  $\mathbb{W}c6$  17 f3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , and with the threat of ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , Black equalized. Instead, White should play 16 f3! (16 c4 is also good, but achieves less following

16... $\mathbb{W}g4$  17  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e2$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  19 e5 or 16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17 f3  $\mathbb{W}h3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ) 16... $\mathbb{W}h3$  (16... $\mathbb{W}c6$  doesn't seem to improve after 17 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 17  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ . Black can't make significant progress and White's advantage is clear; for example, 17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6 19  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  21 f5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}fg2$ , etc.

### Przybyla – Sapa

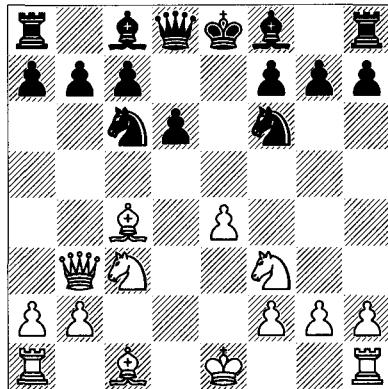
Polish corr. Ch 1992-4

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 d4 exd4 4 c3 dxc3 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

This normally leads to a complex forcing line that White has a hard time avoiding. The 'Danish' move-order would be 1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , when 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 is the main line in this game. Instead, White could try to avoid theory by 6  $\mathbb{W}e2!?$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  allows 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  with easy development for Black) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (6...d6 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 0-0-0 may not favour White, but at least it's unique; f4 is a theme, for example) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with the idea 0-0-0. However, this is a speculative notion that should be reserved for lower-level adventures.

**7  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (D)**

B



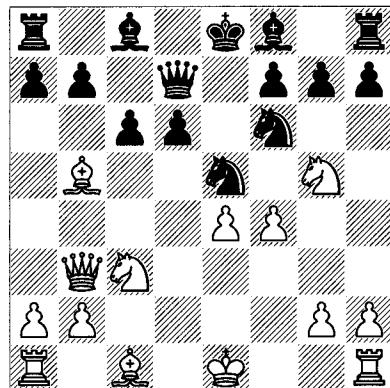
White needs to counter the straightforward idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and ...0-0-0, and it's also desirable to quash the defensive move ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ .

**7... $\mathbb{W}d7!$**

7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  is logical, attacking e4 preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , but putting the queen on the dangerous e-file is risky and (unlike 7... $\mathbb{W}d7$ ) it doesn't threaten to simplify by ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ . Fehlhammer-K.U.Müller, Bundesliga 1992/3 continued 8 0-0

$\mathbb{Q}e5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c6 (versus  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ), and now instead of 11 f4?! (when 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ! was correct), White had the powerful 11  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ !. Then 11...h6? 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  (or 12... $gxf6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !) 13  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! is killing, since Black can't stop  $\mathbb{Q}c7+$ . After 11...a6?!, White's other tactical point appears: 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{W}b6$ !, threatening  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  or  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ . Nor does 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  improve matters after 12  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! with a terrific attack. Finally, 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  allows White a better ending after 12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$ , or White can enter into 12 f3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $cxd5$  14  $exd5$  b5! 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16 d6  $\mathbb{W}d8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  18 f4! with a strong attack.

**8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  c6 10 f4 (D)**



B

A very important position in the Göring Gambit. Surprisingly, it isn't that well worked out.

**10...cxb5**

Or:

a) The other major move is 10... $\mathbb{Q}eg4$ , when I'll just give a typical example out of the scores that have been played: 11 h3?!(11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  are the main alternatives) 11...cxb5 12  $hxg4$  h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ ! d5 (13...a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b5 is unclear) 14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$ ? 16 e5!  $\mathbb{W}g3+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  18 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xg5$  19 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  20 fxg7  $\mathbb{W}g8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}ae1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , Schulz-Volbert, corr. 1981, and here the easiest win was 22  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  b5 (22... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  axb5 24  $\mathbb{W}xb5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  25  $\mathbb{W}b7$ ; for example, 25... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ !  $fxe6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}b6+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f8+$ .

b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (11 e5?! h6 12 exf6  $hxg5$  13 0-0 cxb5 14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  was complex and fascinating in Mastrovasilis-Ovod, Groningen

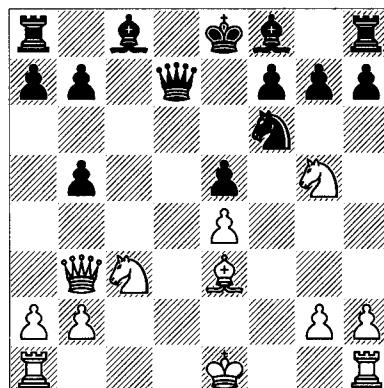
1999; 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?! d5! 12  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  0-0 15 h3 b5 favoured Black in Lutikov-Lisitsyn, Leningrad 1951) 11...h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . This position has arisen many times and is still unresolved; for example, 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (13 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6+$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  0-0-0 16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  with satisfactory compensation for White, but no more than that.

**11 fx5 dxe5**

11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! permits White to grab the initiative by 12 e6!  $fxe6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  (threatening  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ) 13...a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 15  $\mathbb{Q}de6$  h6 16  $\mathbb{W}c4$ ; for example, 16...b5 17  $\mathbb{Q}c7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{W}d5$ .

**12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (D)**

White wants to combine  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ . After 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !, Black activates quickly and remains a pawn to the good.



B

**12...a5!**

Long experience has shown the worth of this move, whose main point is to drive White's queen away by ...a4, but has the added benefits of securing b4 for a bishop and in some cases preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ . Instead, 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15 0-0 threatens multiple captures on d6, although instead of the known 15... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ? 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ !  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ , 15...h6! limits the damage: 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ! (17  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  favours White, and yet Black has his chances) 17... $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ . White may pick up a pawn, but the opposite-coloured bishops complicate matters.

**13 0-0**

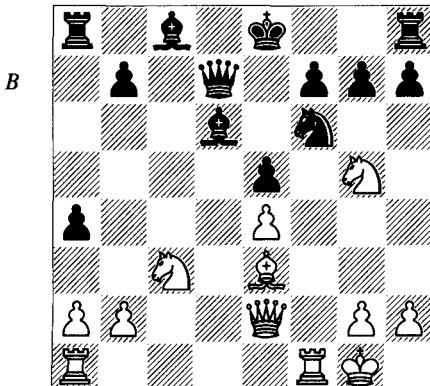
White remains a pawn down after 13  $\mathbb{E}d1$   
 $a4!$  14  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{A}b4+$ .

13... $a4$  14  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!$

Covering e5. Obviously, 14... $\mathbb{W}xb5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  can't be good for Black, and after 14... $h6$  15  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c7+$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  White wins material, in view of 18... $\mathbb{A}a5$  19  $\mathbb{A}b6$   $\mathbb{A}c5+$  20  $\mathbb{A}xc5+$   $\mathbb{E}xc5$  21  $\mathbb{E}d8+$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  22  $\mathbb{E}xh8$ .

15  $\mathbb{W}e2!$  (D)

Keeping the pressure on. After 15  $\mathbb{E}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{A}b8$ , Black has successfully guarded his pieces.



15... $h6$

This forces the pace, and it may well be the best continuation. Black has tried several other moves here, including 15... $\mathbb{A}a6$  and 15... $\mathbb{W}g4$ . 15... $0-0$ ? was played by none other than a young Alexander Grishchuk versus Fluvia Poyatos (World Under-16 Ch, Oropesa del Mar 1998). The game continued 16  $\mathbb{E}xf6!$   $\mathbb{G}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  18  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  (18... $\mathbb{W}g7$  19  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  20  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  21  $\mathbb{E}f5!$  forces 21... $\mathbb{W}xf5$  22  $\mathbb{E}xf5$  and White will follow with either  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  or  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  20  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $f5$ , and here instead of 21  $\mathbb{E}xf5?$   $\mathbb{A}a6!$ , when Black was defending, White had simply 21  $\mathbb{E}f3!$   $f4$  22  $\mathbb{E}h3$   $\mathbb{W}xh3$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  24  $\mathbb{G}xh3$   $\mathbb{F}xe3$  25  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$  with a winning position, since he can reposition his knight to d5 and f6.

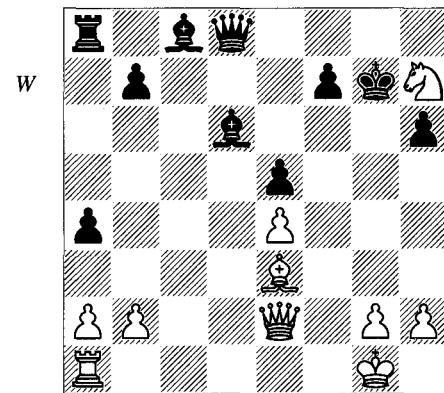
16  $\mathbb{E}xf6!$   $\mathbb{G}xf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}f8?$

17... $\mathbb{A}e7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e6!$   $\mathbb{F}xe6$  19  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  and now 20  $\mathbb{A}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}xh6$ , etc., is a draw. White can try for more by 20  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , but 20... $\mathbb{W}b5$  21  $\mathbb{A}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}xh6$  22  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  23  $\mathbb{W}g6+$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  probably leads to a draw anyway.

18  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}gh7+!$   $\mathbb{E}xh7$   
 19... $\mathbb{W}g7?$  20  $\mathbb{A}xh6+!$   $\mathbb{W}xh6$  21  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{W}g7$   
 22  $\mathbb{W}g5?$ .

20  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+!$   $\mathbb{W}g7?$  (D)

But after 20... $\mathbb{W}g8$  21  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  22  $\mathbb{E}d1$  White keeps a powerful attack going.



21  $\mathbb{W}h5!$   $\mathbb{W}xh7$  22  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $f5$

After 22... $\mathbb{A}e6$  23  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  24  $\mathbb{E}f3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  25  $\mathbb{E}g3$  White can win in several ways; for example, 25... $\mathbb{W}d7$  26  $\mathbb{W}h5!$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  27  $\mathbb{A}h6!$ .

23  $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  24  $\mathbb{W}g6+$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  25  $\mathbb{E}xf5$  1-0

White threatens  $\mathbb{E}f3-h3$  as well as  $\mathbb{A}g5$  and  $f6$ .

There's a lot of life in some of these almost-forgotten gambits. I've given a lot of details in this section, so that you can pick up this opening right away if you're interested.

### Milner-Barry Gambit

The Danish and Göring Gambits are classic examples of 1 e4 e5 gambits which jettison central pawns for development and attack. The same idea can be used against other openings. Here's an example from the French Defence.

R. Moyer – B. Kaczmarek  
*corr. 1969*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$

This is the traditional main line of the Advance Variation.

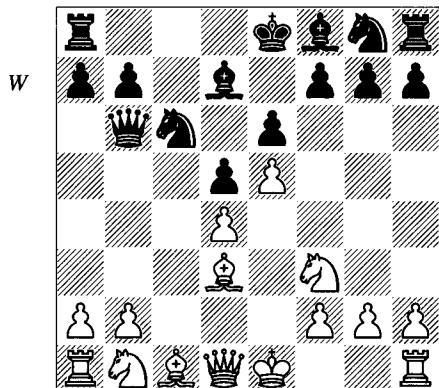
6  $\mathbb{A}d3$

In the vast majority of cases, White plays this move with the intention of gambiting the d-pawn. We saw 6  $\mathbb{A}e2$  in the introductory

Chapter 3 of Volume 1, and 6 a3 is also played; both of those moves keep White's d-pawn defended by the queen on d1.

### 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♖d7 (D)

Black prepares to capture on d4. Notice that 7...♘xd4?? loses a piece to 8 ♘xd4, since 8...♗xd4?? 9 ♖b5+ costs Black his queen.

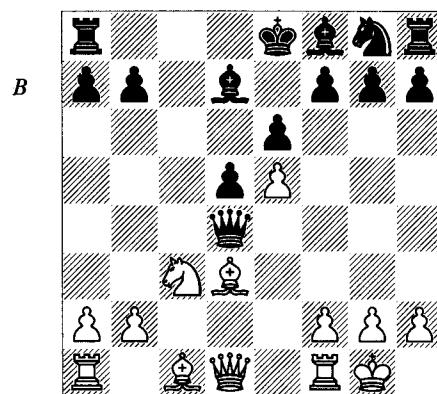


### 8 0-0

Formally speaking, it is this move that introduces the Milner-Barry Gambit. White's d-pawn cannot be comfortably defended, since 8 ♖e3? allows 8...♗xb2, and 8 ♖c2 runs into 8...♘b4 9 ♖b3 (to preserve the bishop-pair generally, and his good bishop in particular; 9 ♖a4 ♗a6! threatens ...♘d3+) 9...♗a6!, preventing castling and preparing ...♘d3+. White can also gambit the pawn with 8 ♖c3 first, which normally transposes after 8...♘xd4 if White continues with the natural 9 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 10 0-0 (10 ♗e2 has the drawback that Black can play 10...f6!; compare the next note). Here the bold move 9 ♖g5?! is sometimes tried and might be fun to play, although like other slower moves in the Milner-Barry, it allows Black to retreat and attack the e-pawn via 9...♘c6!.

### 8...♘xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 10 ♖c3 (D)

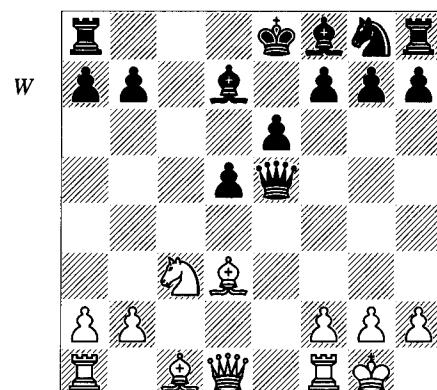
10 ♗e2 first can run into the instructive 10...f6!, decimating the centre and frustrating an attack; for example, 11 exf6 (11 ♗h5+ ♔d8 12 ♗f7 ♘e7! develops quickly; Black's extra pawn and superior centre more than make up for his king position) 11...♘xf6 12 ♖c3 ♖d6 with ideas of ...♗e5, ...♗h4 and ...0-0. If Black wants to, he can also answer 10 ♗e2 by 10...a6, when 11 ♖c3 ♘e7 transposes to the main line without Black having had the chance for 10...♗xe5.



After 10 ♖c3, we should ask what White has for his pawn, and why he is offering Black another one. Essentially, the answer is the same as in the Danish and Göring Gambits: he has cleared out central lines and taken a lead in development. But there are some differences: in those double e-pawn examples, White controlled the centre with a pawn on e4 facing one on d7 or d6. Here he faces a central majority of pawns and a very solid black pawn-structure. Thus White has little long-term compensation, and the onus falls on him to drum up quick action with his pieces.

### 10...♗xe5 (D)

Now it's a truly 'primitive' gambit, with both centre pawns cleared away. While 10...♗xe5 is the riskiest move, losing still more time without developing, it is in some sense the most principled: Black gains not only a key central pawn, but a 2:0 majority in the centre. In the next game we see 10...a6.



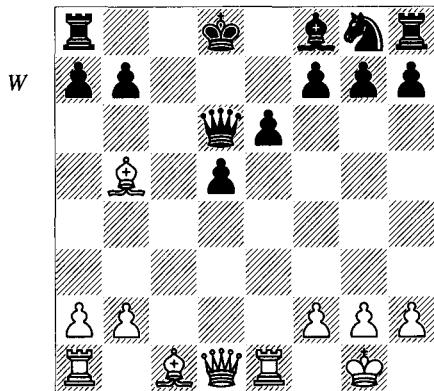
### 11 ♗e1 ♗d6?

Black loses even more time in this way. He should return one of the pawns and get developed by 11... $\mathbb{W}b8!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , which is another main line that is held to be at least equal for Black. White can try to work up chances by 13  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , when a typical sequence is 14... $h5$  15  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$ , after which White has to improve upon 19  $\mathbb{Q}e5?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  20  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}xg3$  21  $hxg3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e4?$   $f6!$  24  $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , Weeramantry-Berrocal, Turin Olympiad 2006.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

12... $\mathbb{W}b8$  may still be best, but then 13  $\mathbb{W}f3$  threatens 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , and 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  16  $\mathbb{W}g3!$  takes over the dark squares with a very strong attack.

### 13 $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$ $\mathbb{Q}d8$ (D)



The inexperienced player might simply dismiss this position, thinking that with Black's king in the centre and White so far ahead in development, White's attack will crash through. In fact, that's what happens. But you should realize that this is only because of the unusual extent of that lead in development. If it were Black's move, for example, he could develop straightforwardly (by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) and even have a substantial advantage, because it's so difficult to attack a strong pawn-centre without the help of pawn-breaks. That's why so few gambits rely entirely upon piece-play.

### 14 $\mathbb{W}h5!$

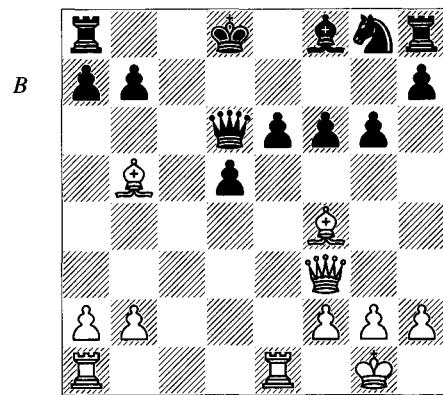
After 14  $\mathbb{W}f3?$ !, a nice example went 14... $f6$ ? (14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  denies White an easy attack) 15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $e5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $fxe5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  18  $a4!$ ? (or 18 b4  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  19  $\mathbb{W}xf8+$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  20  $\mathbb{W}xg7$ ) 18... $a6$ ? 19

b4  $\mathbb{W}xb4$  20  $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ ! 1-0 Brandao-Wellington, Banco do Nordeste do Brasil Ch 1999.

### 14... $g6$ 15 $\mathbb{W}f3$ $f6$ ??

But the f-pawn is attacked and Black's position is already extremely bad.

### 16 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (D)



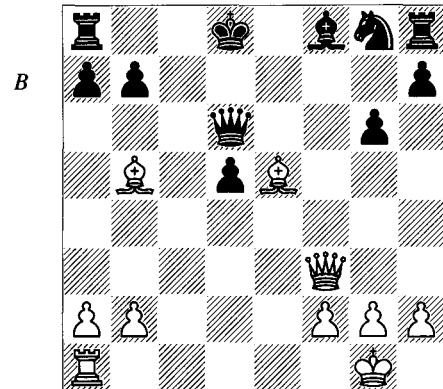
### 16... $e5$

White's pieces simply massacred Black following 16... $\mathbb{W}e7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  (18  $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ !  $exd5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  is an even prettier conclusion) 18... $exd5$  19  $\mathbb{W}xd5+$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (19... $\mathbb{W}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ ) 20  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  1-0 in Mavrikakis-Dermontzis, Aghia Pelagia 2004.

### 17 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !

17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  isn't so easy.

### 17... $fxe5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ (D)



### 18... $\mathbb{W}xe5$ ?

After 18... $\mathbb{W}c5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  White levels the material and continues the attack; for example, 19... $\mathbb{W}xb5$  (19... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  20  $\mathbb{W}f7$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  21  $\mathbb{W}xg8+$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  22  $\mathbb{W}xd5$ ) 20  $\mathbb{W}xf8+$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  21  $\mathbb{W}b4!$   $\mathbb{W}c6$

22  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  23  $\mathbb{W}f4!$  (with too many threats)  
 23... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  25  $\mathbb{W}e5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  26  $\mathbb{W}e6$  intending  $\mathbb{W}f7-f8+$ .

**19  $\mathbb{W}xf8+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20  $\mathbb{E}c1+$  1-0**

In view of the finish 20... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  21  $\mathbb{W}c5+$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  22 b4#.

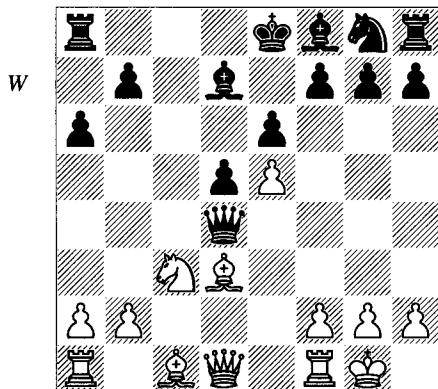
This is the kind of game that Milner-Barry players live for. Notice how, with his own centre decimated, White's various attacks all depended upon free piece-play and sacrifices, as opposed to pawn advances.

### Golod – Barsov

Dieren 1998

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  cxd4 7 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 (D)**

This is Black's most popular move. He refrains from grabbing a second pawn and pauses to prevent  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . 10...a6 also clears the a7-square for the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}c5-a7$ . Sometimes Black will try to anticipate White's intentions and get out of the way, for example by 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$  at this point. But in many situations after a queen has captured a pawn in any opening, even if it seems vulnerable to attack, it does well not to retreat too quickly, because while in the enemy camp, a queen forces the opponent to defend certain pieces and squares and thus prevents him from developing too easily.



Here, for example, White's queen can't wander too far from his d3-bishop. Furthermore, as you will see, Black's queen on d4 supports the move ...f6. At any rate, after 10...a6, Black threatens a successful capture on e5, and if that

isn't appropriate, he would like to get on with his development.

In turn, White has numerous attacking ideas. Probably none of them will fully compensate for his pawn if Black plays perfectly. But in practice, you can play this position as White against opponents of considerable strength. Here is a general breakdown of some lines from this much-contested position:

**11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

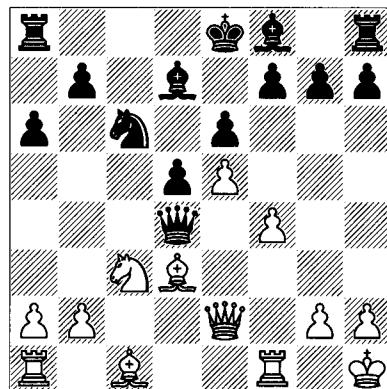
11... $\mathbb{W}h4!?$  is also played, when Black has the ideas of ...h5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-g4$ , while keeping open a retreat-path to d8.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}h1$**

After 12  $\mathbb{M}d1$ , Black can ignore the discovered attack and play 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6!;$  e.g., 13  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{W}xe5?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 17  $\mathbb{M}e1$  f6 18 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c5+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  d4 and Black had taken over in Mnatsakanian-Monin, USSR 1979.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13 f4 (D)**

A wild idea for those who want to avoid the beaten track is 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  (or 13... $\mathbb{W}h4$ ) 14 f4  $\mathbb{W}d6$  (14... $\mathbb{W}f6!?$  isn't mentioned anywhere, but looks satisfactory) 15  $\mathbb{M}ad1$  with the idea 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16 f5, and here 16... $\mathbb{W}e5!?$  is best, since 16...e5? 17  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  d4 18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  20  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  grants White a very powerful attack.

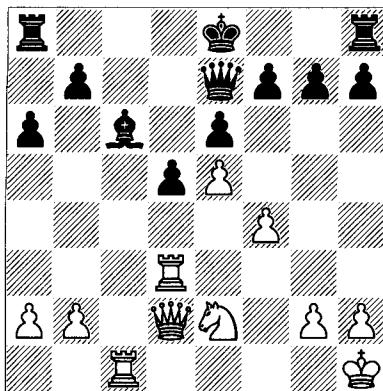


**13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

This developing move prevents  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , and prepares ... $\mathbb{W}f2$  if White plays  $\mathbb{M}d1$ . 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  has also been successful, threatening to capture or exchange the opponent's most important bishop. In that case, if White plays 14  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ , 14... $\mathbb{W}c4$  gains more time by threatening

to exchange queens, so (ignoring many of the theoretical details), scores of games have continued 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}b6!$  (15... $\mathbb{W}c4$  16 b3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  gives White good compensation; after 17...b5, both 18 f5 and the more positional 18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  are promising) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  18  $\mathbb{W}d2!$  (Black has done very well after 18 f5  $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  intending ...0-0-0 and ...exf5 with ... $\mathbb{W}e7$  in some order) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$  (D).

B



After most of the attacking themes are gone or have been put on hold, White still has long-term compensation worth roughly a pawn. We can see that Black's bishop on c6 is bad, and that a white knight on d4 will be a force to reckon with. An early example of this position went 20...0-0 (Black can bail out at this point with 20... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ; for example, 21  $\mathbb{Q}dc3$  0-0 22  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  24  $\mathbb{W}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  25 g3  $\mathbb{W}e8$  26  $\mathbb{W}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ , giving the pawn back for equality) 21  $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$  (more accurate is 21  $\mathbb{Q}dc3$  or 21  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  with the idea f5) 21... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f6 23 f5?? (fancy-looking, but White should play to restrict the bishop further by 23  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}ge3$  f5 25  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ) 23... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  fxe5 25  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}ge3$  exf5 27  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and White has no way in, so Black should consolidate, Voigt-C.Peters, Hamburg 1990.

#### 14 $\mathbb{Q}d2$

This both discourages ... $\mathbb{W}b4$  and prepares 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (14  $\mathbb{Q}f3??$  allows mate on g1). It is slow, but everything else is unsatisfactory:

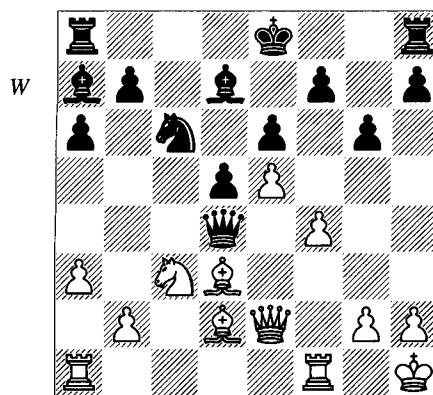
a) 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}f2$  threatens to swap queens, and after 15  $\mathbb{W}g4$  0-0-0! Black stays a pawn up and introduces the idea of ...h5.

b) 14 a3 takes b4 away from Black's queen, but is slow: 14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  g6 16 b4  $\mathbb{W}b6$  (16...b5! is a good option) 17  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , Cubas-An.Rodriguez, Mar del Plata Zonal 2001.

#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Experience demonstrates that 14... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  is also good.

15  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  16 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g6 (D)



#### 18 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$

18 b4 transposes to Cubas-An.Rodriguez above.

18... $\mathbb{W}b6$  19 b4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  20  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}a4$

It's hard to see what else to do.

21... $\mathbb{W}d8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$

22... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  b6 24  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  secures the extra pawn.

#### 23 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$

A typical French Defence pawn sacrifice for light-square control follows 23  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (24  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  d4): 24...d4! 25  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  with ...0-0-0 or ... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  to come.

23... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  25  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  0-0 26  $\mathbb{W}a1$

White is in bad shape. After 26  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  d4 27 b5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , Black threatens both ... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  and ...b6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ .

26... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  28  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  29  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$

Black's extra passed d-pawn is decisive; he went on to win.

#### Morra Gambit

Versus the Sicilian Defence, the gambit that most follows a primitive line-clearing policy is the Morra Gambit. Many books and articles

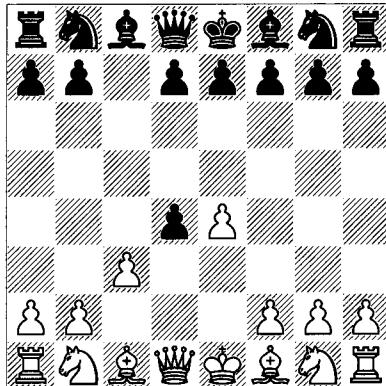
have been written about the Morra, including whole ones about specialized subvariations, so I'll have to be content with presenting a structural overview that concentrates upon the most important variations. In doing so, I'll attempt not to skimp *too* much on details so that the reader can get a good start on a Morra and/or anti-Morra repertoire. My apologies in advance for the density of coverage; these are unruly lines, and sometimes the moves are more important than the explanations!

### Hardarson – de Firmian Copenhagen 1999

#### 1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 (D)

White offers a pawn. Notice how the combination of 2 d4 and 3 c3 resembles the Danish and Göring Gambits.

B



#### 3...dxc3

Most of the time, Black takes up the challenge and accepts the pawn. As usual, he can decline the gambit in many ways, among them the following:

a) 3...d3 denies White's knight access to c3, but doesn't gain a tempo or occupy the centre. A common idea is 4 ♜xd3 (4 c4!?) 4...♜c6 (4...d5? 5 ♜b5+) 5 c4, establishing a kind of Maroczy Bind.

b) 3...d5 4 exd5 ♜xd5 5 cxd4 is a line from the 1 e4 c5 2 c3 Sicilian, that is, 2...d5 3 exd5 ♜xd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 cxd4. However, in that line, Black ordinarily doesn't exchange on d4 at this early a stage, so his options are somewhat reduced, and he must tread a little carefully. One long-established continuation is 5...♜c6 6 ♜f3

e5 (6...♜g4?! 7 ♜c3) 7 ♜c3 ♜b4 8 ♜d2 ♜xc3 9 ♜xc3 e4 10 ♜e5.

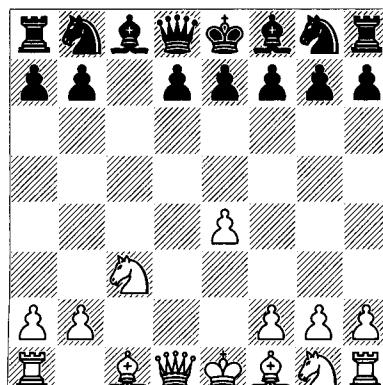
c) Similarly, 3...♜f6 4 e5 ♜d5 is a main line of the 2 c3 Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♜f6 3 e5 ♜d5 4 d4 cxd4). To be well prepared on either side, you should consult the theory of the 2 c3 Sicilian.

d) 3...e5!? used to have a poor reputation, but is not so bad. One variation goes 4 ♜f3 ♜c6 5 ♜c4 (5 cxd4 exd4 6 ♜xd4 and now both 6...♜b4+ and 6...♜f6 7 ♜xc6 dxc6 8 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 9 f3 are known lines which offer White a very slight edge) 5...♜c5!? (Langrock prefers White after 5...♜f6 6 ♜g5!? d5 7 exd5 ♜d5 8 ♜b3! ♜e6 9 ♜xb7 ♜c8 10 0-0, although Black might want to dispute that assessment; the rare 5...♜c7!? is quite a logical move – then maybe 6 ♜b3 is best, intending 6...d6 7 cxd4 exd4 8 0-0 ♜f6 9 ♜g5!, but Langrock analyses 6 0-0 ♜f6 7 ♜g5 ♜d8 8 ♜b3 ♜e6 9 f4! ♜c5 10 ♜xf7!? to an indefinite conclusion) 6 b4!? ♜b6 (6...♜d6 may improve: 7 b5 ♜a5 8 ♜e2 ♜f6 9 cxd4 ♜xe4 10 0-0 ♜e7) 7 b5 ♜a5 8 ♜xe5 ♜xc4 9 ♜xc4 d5!? 10 ♜xb6 ♜xb6 (10...axb6 11 ♜xd4!) 11 exd5 with an extra pawn.

The reason that Black doesn't decline the Morra Gambit more often is that the methods of doing so are unambitious, and in many cases slightly inferior. If nothing else, his winning chances are appreciably reduced.

#### 4 ♜xc3 (D)

B



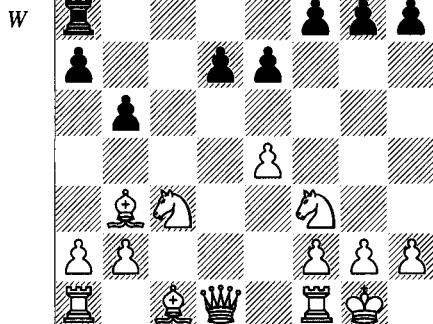
#### 4...♜c6

4...d6 is a significant move-order finesse: 5 ♜f3 (5 f4!?) looks more appropriate than usual, since Black has no option of ....♜c5 with which to prevent castling) 5...e6. This elementary

set-up introduces two interesting defences following 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ :

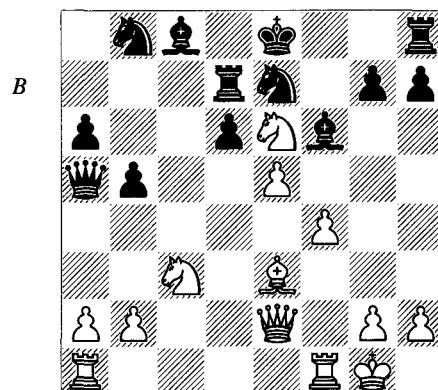
a) 6...a6 7 0-0 b5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}a7$ !? (D). The manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}a7-d7$  is the defining idea of the Chicago Defence: Black intends to shore up d6, thus dissuading the attacking move e5 for the foreseeable future. Then ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  may well follow, or simply ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . The rook also supports a potential ...d5. In return, White gets a few tempi to decide where to put his pieces. He can, for example, play  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , contemplating sacrifices on e6, but also preparing to attack with f4-f5.

Actually, Black has a number of move-orders with which to introduce ... $\mathbb{Q}a7-d7$ , and 8... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  may not be as accurate as Langrock's preference 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 9  $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{Q}a7$  (upon 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}a7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}d7$ , the remarkable piece sacrifice 12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !  $bxa4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  has been tested and analysed, with White apparently holding the upper hand) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}b7$ , and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is a sound way to continue the attack, but Langrock-Redzman, Cuxhaven 2001 saw 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ !  $axb5$  13  $\mathbb{W}xb5 \mathbb{Q}ge7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}a7$ ! (an improvement upon several earlier games) 15  $\mathbb{W}h5$  g6 16  $\mathbb{W}h3$ ! with a complicated game ahead. Again, White's strategy is based upon piece-play, noticeably the various potential sacrifices on e6.



Be that as it may, after 8... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  (pictured in the diagram), the game R.Junge-Vatter, Bundesliga 1988/9 was exciting and highly instructive: 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! is a good developing move, and it sets the trap 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !, forking a7 and g7!; instead, Black can play 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , whereas 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! 10 e5! is messy)

9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ?! (9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is more precise, preparing to exchange a knight if it comes to d4) 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ? walks into 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ !  $fxe6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{Q}a5$  14 a3!, threatening to trap the queen with b4 and meeting 14...b4 with 15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !) 12 f4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ? (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f6$  is correct, when 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  15 f5  $\mathbb{W}e5$  16  $\mathbb{W}g4$  launched an interesting attack in Kuntz-Gauglitz, Budapest 1988; then 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  was best) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ?! (not a terrible mistake, but White misses the winning 13 e5!  $dxe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ !  $fxe6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}x5$  16  $\mathbb{W}h5$ +  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , when Black's position is falling apart) 13... $fxe6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe6 \mathbb{Q}a5$  15 e5! (D).



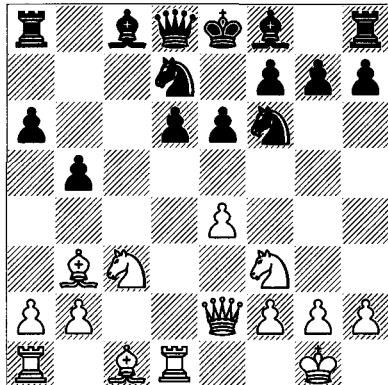
15... $dxe5$  16  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17  $\mathbb{W}f2 \mathbb{Q}g6$ ? (17... $\mathbb{Q}ec6$ ), and here White could have played 18  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ !. That threatens  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  followed by  $\mathbb{W}f7+$  and there's nothing to do; for example, 18... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19 b4! intending 19... $\mathbb{W}xb4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d8+ \mathbb{Q}e7$  21  $\mathbb{W}f7$ #. Notice that White's attacking themes in this note are not all that different from the ones we see in mainstream Sicilian Defence variations.

b) The Finegold Defence tries to develop the queenside first, and can involve a funny-looking fianchetto of the queen: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 a6 (or 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  a6) 8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  (D).

Now:

b1) 10... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ! has the idea 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{W}b7$ ; the b7-square turns out to be a good one for Black's queen in several variations. After 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , 12...b4?! is well met by 13  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $exd5$  14  $exd5+ \mathbb{Q}d8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ !, when the idea  $\mathbb{Q}d4-c6$  is at best difficult to defend against. Black can improve with 12... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , when White has to find

B



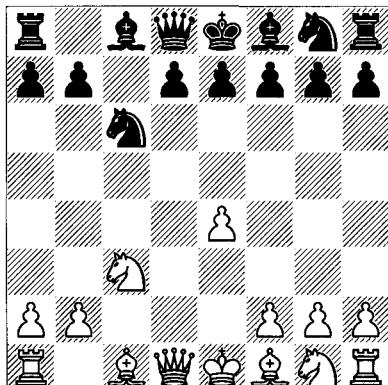
something better than 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}b7$ , repeating the position.

b2) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ ?  $\mathbb{W}b6!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $g6!$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ ) and White lacks compensation. All of this is open for debate.

c) Another move-order with the same idea is 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $a6$ , when 9  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $b5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is line 'b2' above. Langrock suggests instead 9  $e5!?$ ; for example, 9... $dxe5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e8!?$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$  (lest ... $b5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $exd5$  15  $\mathbb{R}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (Silman) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  17  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , when White has enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that.

Let's return to 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D).

W



### 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

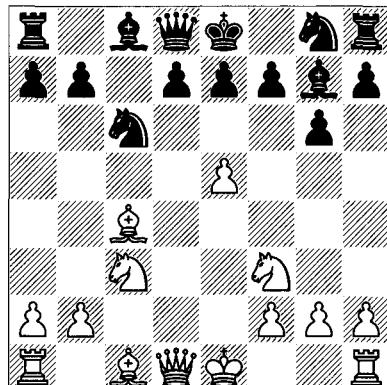
5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is an appealing move-order finesse. Then someone looking to escape the books and stay aggressive as White might consider 5... $d6$  6  $f4!?$  with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and a potential  $e5$ . Against 5... $e6$ , however, 6  $f4!?$  is strongly met

by 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ , so White should probably transpose with 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . A possible advantage of 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  could come in the line 5... $g6$ , when White has various tries to avoid the main lines given in the next note (which deals with 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $g6$ ). For example, 6  $\mathbb{W}b3!?$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7  $\mathbb{W}d5!?$   $e6$  8  $\mathbb{W}d2$  might be worth a try) 6... $e6$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  8  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $d6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  8  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $a6!$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  9  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $a6$  10  $\mathbb{W}d4$   $f6$  11 0-0 with terrific development) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $b5$  10  $\mathbb{W}d4$  and White has some play for the pawn due to his development and Black's dark-square weaknesses.

### 5... $d6$

We'll see combinations of ... $e6$  and ... $a6$  in the next game. 5... $g6$  is known as the Fianchetto Defence, which has a sound reputation. If Black can get ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and ... $d6$  in, his position will be well-nigh unassailable. Therefore, to justify his gambit, White needs to act quickly. One of the main lines goes 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (6  $h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  7  $h5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  8  $\mathbb{W}xh5!?$   $gxh5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  ultimately seems to fail to Langrock's 9... $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$  10  $\mathbb{W}xh5$   $\mathbb{M}f8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$  12  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  and Black wins) 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (6... $d6$  is also apparently playable, intending 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ ; White's best seems to be 7  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7!$  8  $exd6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  9 0-0 0-0 10  $dxe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$  with a small edge) 7  $e5!?$  (D) (a crazy-looking pawn sacrifice; after 7 0-0  $d6$ , Black's position is hard to break down).

B

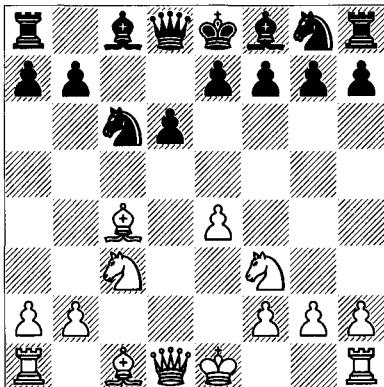


7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  0-0 9 0-0  $d6!$  10  $exd6$   $exd6$  is held to be equal, although White has a number of tries, including 11  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12  $\mathbb{M}fe1$  and  $\mathbb{M}ad1$ , as opposed to 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  with equal play) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  10  $\mathbb{W}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$  (10... $e6$  11  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  12  $\mathbb{W}c7!$

with great compensation) 11  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12 0-0 d6 13  $\mathbb{W}e3$  h6 14  $\mathbb{E}e1$  e5! 15 h3 with the idea f4. Now Black might try 15...g5, but a safe equalizer according to Langrock is 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$  16  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  axb6 17  $\mathbb{A}e3$   $\mathbb{A}e6$ .

#### 6 $\mathbb{A}c4$ (D)

B



#### 6...a6

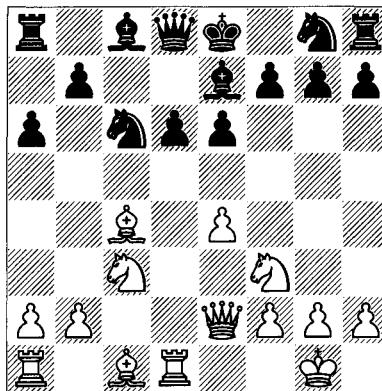
Many players feel that this is the most reliable defence in the Morra Gambit complex, or at least the easiest to play. Black retains the idea of ... $\mathbb{A}g4$ , and also the flexibility to decide between ...e6 and ...e5. In any case, we've come to a major splitting point where Black needs to commit to a structural choice. One of the main defensive lines begins with 6...e6, but you might also want to check out the move 6... $\mathbb{A}f6$ , which, if playable, can cut down the number of White's options:

a) 6...e6 7 0-0 leads to two other standard positions:

a1) 7... $\mathbb{A}e7$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$  a6 (8... $\mathbb{A}d7$  9  $\mathbb{E}d1$  and now 9...a6 transposes, while 9... $\mathbb{A}f6$  10  $\mathbb{A}g5$ ! introduces the idea of  $\mathbb{A}xf6$ , damaging Black's pawn-structure, and prepares to double on the d-file; naturally, that's not fatal for Black, but keeps the game lively) 9  $\mathbb{E}d1$  (D).

This is White's basic set-up in the Morra Gambit. As befits a 'primitive' gambit, White relies mainly upon piece-play, almost never resorting to f4 or g4-g5, as he does in the Open Sicilian (see Volume 1). Instead, development by  $\mathbb{A}e3$ ,  $\mathbb{A}f4$  or  $\mathbb{A}g5$  follows, hoping to exploit the weaknesses in Black's position, such as d6 and b6, and, with luck, using his single pawn-break e5. Black can argue that he has an extra pawn and a central majority, the latter covering

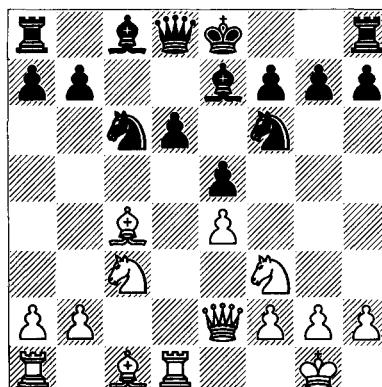
B



all of White's potential forward posts c5, d5, e5 and f5. His problem, of course, is catching up in development. Some sophisticated players use the following move-order: 9... $\mathbb{A}d7$  (Black delays ... $\mathbb{A}f6$  so as to prevent White from placing his bishop on g5 early on; he also blocks the d-file in the face of 10 e5) 10  $\mathbb{A}f4$  e5 11  $\mathbb{A}e3$   $\mathbb{A}f6$  12  $\mathbb{E}d2$  0-0 13  $\mathbb{E}ad1$  h6 (13...b5 14  $\mathbb{A}b3$   $\mathbb{A}a5$ ! is recommended by Langrock, although White might bail out with the tactic 15  $\mathbb{A}xe5$ !  $\mathbb{A}xb3$  16 axb3 dx5 17  $\mathbb{A}d5$ !  $\mathbb{A}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{E}xd5$ , when 18... $\mathbb{A}e6$ ! 19  $\mathbb{E}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}fxd8$  looks about equal) 14  $\mathbb{A}h4$ !  $\mathbb{A}a5$  (14...b5 15  $\mathbb{A}b3$  b4 16  $\mathbb{A}a4$   $\mathbb{A}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{A}b6$   $\mathbb{A}xd2$  18  $\mathbb{A}xd8$   $\mathbb{A}xb3$  leads to equality, according to Langrock) 15  $\mathbb{A}g6$   $\mathbb{A}xc4$  16  $\mathbb{A}xe7+$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  17  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{A}e6$  18  $\mathbb{W}b4$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  (18...b5? 19  $\mathbb{E}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}fb8$  has the idea of ... $\mathbb{A}e8$  and/or ...a5) 19  $\mathbb{E}xd6$   $\mathbb{A}c4$  20  $\mathbb{W}b6$   $\mathbb{W}fc8$  21 f3  $\mathbb{E}4c6$  ½-½ N.Regan-Holm, London 1994.

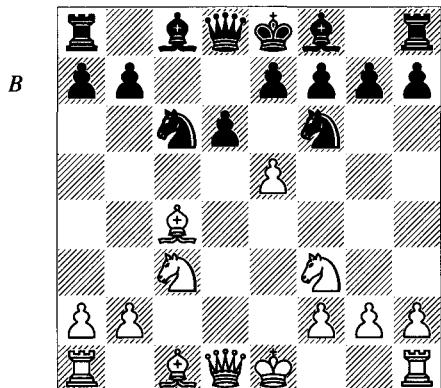
a2) 7... $\mathbb{A}f6$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  9  $\mathbb{E}d1$  e5! (D) is known as the Classical Main Line, a much-disputed position which once was the most popular in the entire Morra.

W



Black sacrifices a whole tempo and cedes the d5-square, but stops e5 and intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  to increase his new-found control over d4, or simply ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ . As compensation for Black's extra pawn, White has space and control of the d5-square. One important line goes 10... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (10 h3 has been played a lot, when 10...0-0 11... $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  or 11...a6 is a typical follow-up) 10...0-0 (10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !? 12 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! intends  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 11 b4! (a typical queenside space-grab) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  eliminates Black's hard-earned central presence) 12 a3. This position introduces a middlegame that appears about equal. White doesn't have immediate threats, but Black has some issues with the weakness of his d5-square, and has to find a way to redeploy his forces.

b) 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?, sometimes thought to be dubious, has the advantage that after 7 0-0 (7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e6), Black can play 7...a6 and transpose into the line 6...a6 7 0-0 without having to face 6...a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . White's standard reply has been 7 e5 (D).



Now Black can't play 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ? 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5? 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ ; this is a recurring theme in gambit play. Nor is 7...d5 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  comfortable. Two others:

b1) After 7...dxe5?! 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , White should continue 10  $\mathbb{Q}c7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !, because if 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , which may well be best, Black can no longer castle and White can play 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ .

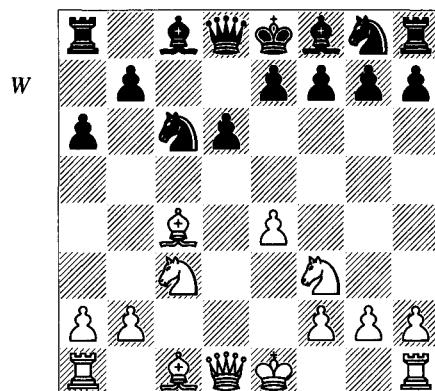
b2) After 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! no one has demonstrated an advantage for White:

b21) If White chooses 8 exd6, then the type of position after 8...exd6 9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 0-0 0-0 is one that often arises in Morra lines. One try is

11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12  $\mathbb{M}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{W}c2$ !? with the dual ideas of  $\mathbb{W}b3$  and  $\mathbb{M}ad1$ . 8... $\mathbb{W}xd6$  is playable, when 9 0-0!? or the attacking 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  is more attractive than 9  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ .

b22) 8 e6!?,  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !; neither side can castle, and Langrock gives various lines that lead to equality.

Finally, we return to 6...a6 (D):



### 7 0-0

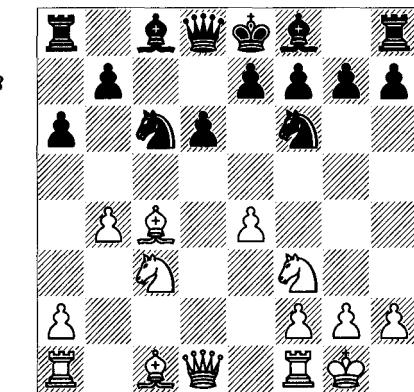
Already White might want to look for something harder-hitting. An often-recommended idea for him is 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , with the line 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  9 0-0 e6 (9... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ !?) 10  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ . It has been pointed out that this is virtually the same position as a sideline of the Richter-Rauzer Sicilian with the same tempi but White having a pawn less! After 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , intending ...0-0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h8$ , Langrock continues 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , interfering with the coordination of Black's pieces. Still, Black has the bishop-pair and an extra pawn, which Silman recommends giving back by 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (but Black can also be greedy with 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  or delay White's win of the h-pawn by 12...h5!?) 13  $\mathbb{W}g7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{W}h7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  with ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  or even ...f5) 13  $\mathbb{W}g7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16 g3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17 h4!? (17  $\mathbb{W}h3$ ! is better), and now 17... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 18  $\mathbb{W}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  favours the bishop-pair. This could be the most significant line versus 6...a6, and deserves investigation.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8 b4!?

White attacks on the queenside, hoping to harass Black's pieces with b5 and gain the b5-square. This is designed to bypass the standard

set-ups. In particular, 8  $\mathbb{W}e2?$ !  $\mathbb{B}g4!$  9  $\mathbb{M}d1$  e6 has scored brilliantly for Black over the years, getting the bishop out without the disadvantage of having to play ...e5 (and in doing so, ceding d5). After 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! 11  $\mathbb{B}e3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) is effective. White has almost nothing for a pawn.

Alternatively, both 8  $\mathbb{B}g5$  e6 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  and 8  $\mathbb{B}e3$  (eyeing b6) 8...e6 (8... $\mathbb{B}g4$  9  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !) 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{B}e7$  10  $\mathbb{M}fd1$  b5 11  $\mathbb{B}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  are playable for White, if slightly uninspiring. Objectively, they are probably better than 8 b4, which is more of a gamble.



### 8... $\mathbb{B}g4$

This is consistent with ...d6 and ...a6, but not the only move.

a) White's first point is that 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$ ! 9 e5! is very awkward for his opponent: 9...d5 (9...dxe5?? 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$  – that trick again!) 10  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{M}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  e6 14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 15  $\mathbb{B}e3$  with a promising attack against Black's queenside weaknesses.

b) A simple and common-sense alternative is 8...e6 9 b5 (9 a3!? is perhaps best; having established an edge in space, White would then switch back to conventional development with  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 9...axb5! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{B}e7$ . This looks good, especially since 11 e5 (11 a4!? 0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 12 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{M}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  isn't particularly frightening. White needs ideas here.

c) 8...b5 9  $\mathbb{B}e2$  threatens 10 a4, which is surprisingly strong; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  10 a4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 11 e5! dxe5 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  bxa4 13  $\mathbb{M}xa4$ ! with the tactical idea 13...e6 14  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !! g6 15

$\mathbb{Q}g5$ !  $\mathbb{B}e7$  16  $\mathbb{M}xb4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  (16...gxh5 17  $\mathbb{M}b7$ ) 17  $\mathbb{W}f3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ , etc.

You can see the appeal of 8 b4 to gambit-style players! But 8...e6 needs some work on White's behalf.

### 9 b5 $\mathbb{B}xf3$

9...axb5 should also work; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  e6 11  $\mathbb{M}b1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ .

### 10 $\mathbb{G}fx3$ axb5

10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11 bxa6!  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12 axb7 gave White good tactical chances in N.Regan-Van Beek, Haarlem 1998: 12... $\mathbb{M}a7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{M}xb7$  14  $\mathbb{W}a4$  (threatening checkmate in 1!) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  with free piece-play ( $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and  $\mathbb{M}b1$  are coming) and an outside passed pawn.

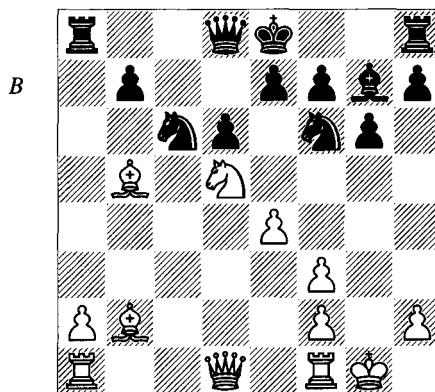
### 11 $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

11  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ ?! doesn't seem to hold up.

### 11...g6! 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White should look for something else here, perhaps 12  $\mathbb{M}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ .

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (D)



### 13... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

Martin gives 13...0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$  exf6 15  $\mathbb{W}d5$  intending  $\mathbb{M}fd1$ , although 15...f5! 16  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  with the idea 17 exf5  $\mathbb{W}g5+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! gives Black the superior pawn-structure; for example, 19  $\mathbb{W}d4+$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  20  $\mathbb{W}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21 fxg6 fxg6 22  $\mathbb{M}ad1$  d5. In general, we can say that the b4-b5 plan depends upon mistakes by the opponent.

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 15 $\mathbb{M}c1$ 0-0 16 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6 17 $\mathbb{M}xc6$ $\mathbb{M}xa2$ ?

Black relaxes. 17...e6! is correct.

### 18 $\mathbb{M}c8!$ $\mathbb{W}d7$

18... $\mathbb{W}xc8$ ? 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$ .

### 19 $\mathbb{M}c7$ $\mathbb{W}d8$

19... $\mathbb{W}h3$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  21  $\mathbb{W}b3$  wins d5 for White's knight.

### 20 $\mathbb{Q}c8?$ !

White can play for a win with 20  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ , and another nice idea is 20  $\mathbb{W}c1$  e6 21  $\mathbb{Q}c8!$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$  with the point 22... $\mathbb{W}xh6??$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  is met by 23  $\mathbb{W}xh4$  exd5 24  $\mathbb{W}e7!)$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf8#$ .

20... $\mathbb{W}d7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c8$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  1/2-1/2

**H. Schmidt – A. Müller**

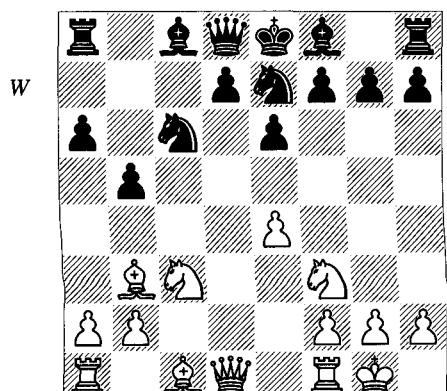
*Germany tt 1992/3*

### 1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Various unique lines can arise via 4...e6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , when 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  transposes to the game. One is 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5?!$ , and another 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$ ) 6...b5 (6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is seen in the following game) 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . Both are chancy, but the latter has a fairly good theoretical reputation.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ e6 6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ $\mathbb{W}c7$

Systems featuring ...e6 and ...a6 have always had a following among Sicilian players. These are ultra-flexible lines, and there are a remarkable number of move-orders, in part because Black can play combinations of ...b5, ... $\mathbb{W}c7/b6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}c5/d6/e7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  in almost any order. One popular sequence is 6...a6 7 0-0 (7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  is rather cooperative of White, because one of Black's logical set-ups combines ...f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7-g6$  anyway) 7...b5! (several other legitimate moves are played here; for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , 7... $\mathbb{W}c7$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7-g6$ , and 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  immediately) 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  (D).

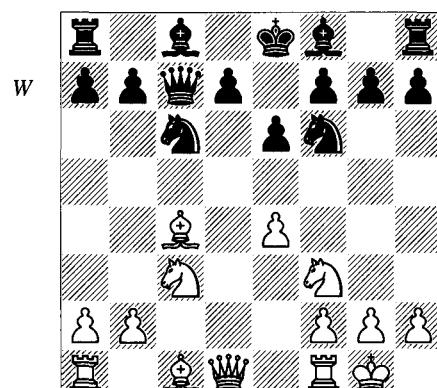


Now:

a) The most common move is 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , but 9...f6 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  shouldn't bother Black; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$  (12  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ; 12  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ , Chikovani-Yagupov, Tula 1999, and now 13... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  all leave White looking for compensation.

b) In this sort of line, White needs to strike quickly, and 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , intending to meet 9... $\mathbb{Q}g6!?$  with 10 a4! b4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  is a sacrifice that fits in well when Black has committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ . Then Black has to decline the sacrifice and defend b6, but he's on the defensive: 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (11...exd5? 12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}ce5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14 d6! threatens  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and f4) 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  f6 13  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ . Therefore Black should develop first by 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when 10 a4 b4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  exd5 12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is another story; for example, 13 d6  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  14  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  15  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16 dxe7  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$ , holding on to the extra pawn with fair prospects.

7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D)



### 8 $\mathbb{W}e2?!$

This allows a cunning manoeuvre that robs White of his compensation. 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  9 e5! is better. Black should probably reply 9...a6!, when 10  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  11 exd6 b5 and 10 exf6 axb5 11 fxg7  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  0-0 have been analysed in depth without a firm conclusion. 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  leaves Black in trouble after 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , which reminds me of a Milner-Barry where Black has been too greedy. Instead, 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4?!$  d6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4$  (D.Moulton-Manik, San Mateo 1992) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  is an example of the kind of counter-tactics that abound in these positions.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$

An astonishing number of players (including grandmasters) have fallen for the trap 9 h3??  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ , winning on the spot. The alternative 9 g3 a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6?$  (or 10...d6) is fairly solid for Black, although naturally White still has some compensation.

**9... $\mathbb{W}b8$  10 h3 h5**

A standard idea; White can't capture the knight unless he weakens his own kingside first.

**11 g3 a6**

11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$   $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  threatens 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ . In what follows, White lets the game drift.

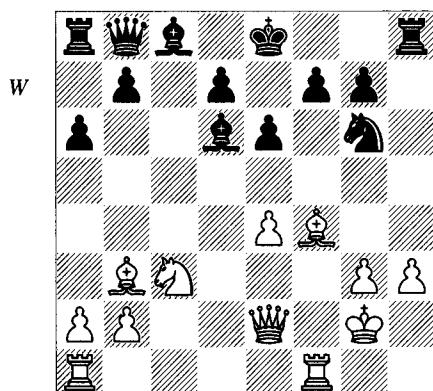
**12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!$**

**15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  h4**

By luring White into playing g3, Black has justified the move ...h5.

**16  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  hxg3 17 fxg3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (D)**

Both 17...f6! and 17...b5 leave Black with as many attacking chances as White, in addition to his extra pawn.



**18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  b5 20  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}e5$**

White has no compensation; the e5 outpost serves Black well. A desperate counterattack ensues.

**21  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f1+$**

And now simplest was 22... $\mathbb{Q}g8!$  23  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}h5$ , winning, because White can't avoid the exchange of queens. In spite of Black's good play thus far, the game ended tragically following 22... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  23  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  (23...b4!) 24  $\mathbb{Q}d5+!$  exd5 25  $\mathbb{W}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}b7??$  (25... $\mathbb{W}xf8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xb2+$  27  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c3+$  28  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}d2+$  with a perpetual check) 26  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  27  $\mathbb{W}b6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  28  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  29  $\mathbb{W}xd5+!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  30  $\mathbb{W}xa8$

$\mathbb{W}xb2+$  31  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c3+$  32  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{W}d3$  33  $\mathbb{W}f8+$  1-0.

The developing player would do well to try out the Morra Gambit upon occasion. It can serve to improve your tactical skills, while throwing a lot of Sicilian Defence players off balance.

Even in slow openings such as the Caro-Kann Defence, there are respectable gambits in this category; for example, White clears out the centre for activity in the variation 1 e4 c6 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  4 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  5  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  e6 6 d4 dxе4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , intending to attack with the help of the open central files.

### Blackmar-Diemer Gambit

1 d4 by its nature develops less dramatically than 1 e4, but I should mention some fairly mainstream examples of primitive gambits in d-pawn openings. The most obvious example is the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, which goes 1 d4 d5 2 e4 dxе4 and either 3 f3 or 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 f3 exf3 5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , the latter a mirror-image of the Göring Gambit. Once more, there are books and many publications on this opening. There are many wonderful traps and tactics in the Blackmar-Diemer, and it may be worth experimenting with, but I don't think it quite holds up against accurate defence. To keep the coverage concise, I'll bypass much of the fun and give a respectable example:

**Alexander – Golombek**

*British Ch, Nottingham 1946*

**1 d4 d5 2 e4**

Unfortunately, serious move-order issues can interfere with White's plans in the Blackmar-Diemer. Here 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 e4 is also played, when 3...dxе4 transposes. But Black can also play 3... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxе4, which has been pretty effective in practice. Some fans of the gambit are willing to accept that and work around it. Others feel that 2 e4 dxе4 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  may be the best move-order, even if White has to deal with 3...e5 in the note to Black's third move.

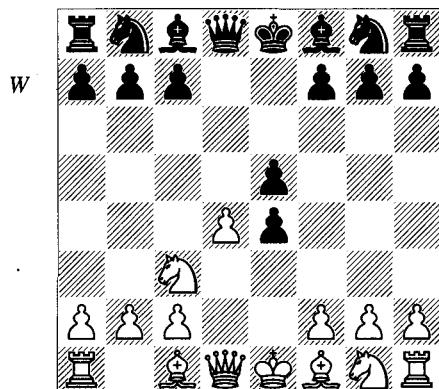
**2...dxе4 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

Upon the immediate 3 f3, 3...e5! is known to be good. Then 4 dxе4  $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

already gives Black the advantage; for example, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0-0+ 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ .

### 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Unfortunately for the gambiteer, 3...e5 (*D*) at this point illustrates another limitation of the Blackmar-Diemer.



For example:

a) 4 dx5 is met by 4... $\mathbb{W}xd1+$ .  
 b) 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  has several answers, an ambitious one being 4... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5, while after 4...exd4, the common reply 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  seems to end up in Black's favour after 5... $\mathbb{W}e7$  6  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

c) Nor is the slow 4  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd4 5  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  appealing.

d) White has often played 4  $\mathbb{W}h5$ , but the counter-gambit 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  5  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  subjects him to difficult pressure.

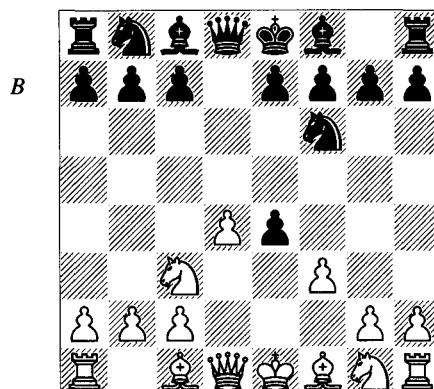
e) 4  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  (4...exd4 is a popular alternative, and 4...f5 with the idea 5 dx5  $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  is also promising) 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (5 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$ ) 5...f5!? 6 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  8 0-0-0+  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and White has to show how his position might be worth a pawn.

I should emphasize that this is hardly the last word; further research and/or creative thinking may improve your view of White's prospects.

### 4 f3 (*D*)

#### 4...exf3

Black can also decline the gambit. Among other tries, 4...c6 is a particularly useful semi-waiting move. Black's first point is that 5 fxe4 e5! makes structural gains. Black has the advantage after 6 dx5 (6 d5 is met by 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ; 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  exd4 7  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  may be best, but both 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  with the idea ...0-0 and ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  leave White with little compensation



for the isolated e-pawn) 6... $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , when he has a powerful outpost on e5 in front of the isolated pawn. Other moves for White include 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}a5!$  and 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , which is a variation of the Veresov Opening, that is, 1 d4 d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  4 f3 c6 5 e4 dxe4. In that line, 6 fxe4 e5! 7 dxe5  $\mathbb{W}a5!$  with the idea 8 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xg5$  is known to be at least equal for Black. Finally, 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  isn't what White wants in terms of structure (the pawn on f3 is misplaced); then 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  already equalizes or more.

### 5 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

Black has an overwhelming record versus 5  $\mathbb{W}xf3?$ . His pawn advantage is safe after 5...g6 or 5...c6, which leave no weaknesses in the position. With care, Black can also get away with 5... $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ , since White can't win enough time attacking the queen to succeed in attack.

### 5...c6

This is one of the better defences. Black strengthens his control of d5 without blocking off his queen's bishop, which can develop to f5 or g4. To my mind, the frequently-played alternatives 5...e6 and 5...g6, analysed in remarkable detail over many years, offer White more chances to work up a significant attack.

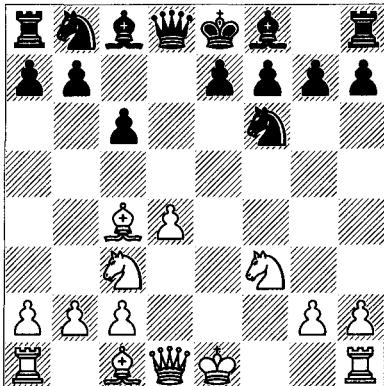
### 6 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (*D*)

Black does very well against other moves; for example, 6  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ), and 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ .

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}f5$

White gets what he wants after 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4??$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (7... $\mathbb{W}xd1??$  8  $\mathbb{W}xf7#$ ; 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5??$  8  $\mathbb{W}xh5$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 (Black's isolated e-pawns are not only targets, but they also imprison Black's bishop) 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11

B



$\mathbb{A}xe5$  with a winning position; for example, 11... $\mathbb{W}d7$  12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0-0 13  $\mathbb{A}f3!$ , threatening 14  $\mathbb{A}b5!$  and 14  $\mathbb{A}a4!$ .

7 0-0

7  $\mathbb{A}e5$  e6 8 0-0 sets some traps such as 8... $\mathbb{A}xc2??$  9  $\mathbb{A}xf7!$   $\mathbb{A}xd1$  (Bücker analyses 9... $\mathbb{A}xf7$  10  $\mathbb{W}xc2!$   $\mathbb{W}xd4+$  11  $\mathbb{A}e3!$   $\mathbb{W}xe3+$  12  $\mathbb{A}h1$   $\mathbb{A}d6$  13  $\mathbb{A}el$  with a strong attack) 10  $\mathbb{A}xd8$   $\mathbb{A}xd8$  11  $\mathbb{A}xd1$   $\mathbb{A}d5?!$  12  $\mathbb{A}e1$   $\mathbb{A}b4$  13  $\mathbb{A}xe6!$ , Welling-Wrobel, Bad Mondorf 1982. This is the sort of thing Blackmar-Diemer fans live for. Alas, Black can defend by 8... $\mathbb{A}g6!$ , when the dramatic 9  $\mathbb{g}4$  was smoothly countered by 9... $\mathbb{A}bd7!$  10  $\mathbb{A}xg6$   $hxg6$  11  $\mathbb{g}5$   $\mathbb{A}c7!$  12  $\mathbb{A}f4?$   $\mathbb{A}d6$  13  $\mathbb{g}xf6$   $\mathbb{A}xf4$  14  $\mathbb{f}xg7?$   $\mathbb{A}e3+!$  0-1 in Ang.Rodriguez-Bricard, Toulouse 1998.

7... $\mathbb{A}e6$  8  $\mathbb{A}g5$

8  $\mathbb{A}e5$  can be met by 8... $\mathbb{A}g6$  (or 8... $\mathbb{A}xc2??$  9  $\mathbb{W}xc2$   $\mathbb{W}xd4+$ ) 9  $\mathbb{A}xg6$  (9  $\mathbb{g}4?!$   $\mathbb{A}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{A}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$ ) 9... $hxg6$  10  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{A}d6$  with the upper hand.

8... $\mathbb{A}e7$

Or 8... $\mathbb{A}bd7$  9  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{A}d6$  and ... $\mathbb{W}c7$ .

9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{A}ad1$   $\mathbb{A}bd7$  11  $\mathbb{A}e5$   $\mathbb{A}xe5$  12  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{A}d5?$

Black has an extra pawn and a healthy advantage after 12... $\mathbb{A}d7!$  13  $\mathbb{A}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$ .

13  $\mathbb{A}xd5$   $cxd5$  14  $\mathbb{A}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  15  $\mathbb{A}xd5!$   $\mathbb{A}xc2$

15... $\mathbb{A}ad8$  is somewhat less cooperative.

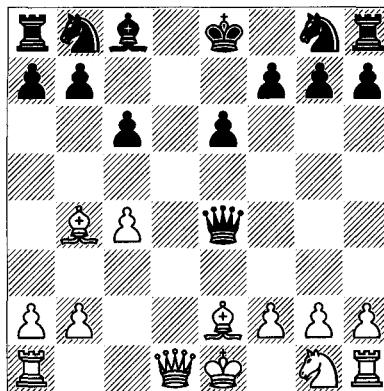
16  $\mathbb{W}xc2$   $exd5$  17  $\mathbb{A}xd5$   $\mathbb{A}ad8$  18  $\mathbb{A}fd1$   $\mathbb{A}xd5$  19  $\mathbb{A}xd5$   $\mathbb{A}d8$  1½-½

## Other Primitive Gambits

The Staunton Gambit versus the Dutch Defence offers the e-pawn in a similar way via 1

d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 and now 3 f3 exf3 4  $\mathbb{A}xf3$  or 3  $\mathbb{A}c3$   $\mathbb{A}f6$  4 f3 exf3 5  $\mathbb{A}xf3$  (though Black normally doesn't take on f3 so readily). That's a mirror image of the Morra Gambit. A more original idea arises in the Queen's Gambit Semi-Slav sequence 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3  $\mathbb{A}c3$  e6, if White continues 4 e4!?, dx4 (4... $\mathbb{A}b4$  is the most promising way to decline the offer) 5  $\mathbb{A}xe4$   $\mathbb{A}b4+6 \mathbb{A}d2?!$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  7  $\mathbb{A}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xe4+8 \mathbb{A}e2$  (D) (or 8  $\mathbb{A}e2$ ).

B

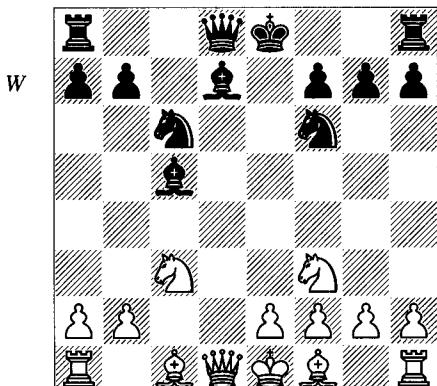


White has again allowed the capture of both central pawns in order to develop quickly and open lines. The difference here is that in addition to attacking chances, he has gained an essentially positional advantage: the dark squares in Black's camp have lost the natural protection afforded by Black's king's bishop. Nevertheless, this sacrifice has the usual drawback of a 'primitive' gambit, that is, White's pressure on those squares is not supported by central pawns, and there are no immediate ways to break down Black's solid pawn-structure. Therefore Black will frequently manage to consolidate, especially when he succeeds in playing ...e5 and freeing his bad bishop. Theory goes back and forth with respect to how this imbalance plays out, but I should say that 4 e4 has been one of White's most respectable gambits at the highest levels for many years.

You may have noticed that I haven't yet mentioned any gambits by Black in the 'primitive' category. It's asking a lot for Black, already a tempo down, to offer valuable centre pawns in pursuit of attack. For example, you sometimes see Black try 1 d4 e5 2 dx5 d6? 3

$\text{exd}6 \mathbb{Q}\text{xd}6$  at lower levels of play, but that has yet to attract much interest among masters. If White plays  $4 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3$ , he is not even behind in the number of pieces developed. On the other hand,  $1 \text{f}4 \text{e}5 2 \text{fxe}5 \text{d}6 3 \text{exd}6 \mathbb{Q}\text{xd}6$ , known as the From Gambit, has a long history of grandmaster practice. Clearly, that's because of the fact that  $1 \text{f}4$  doesn't help White's development and somewhat exposes his king. See Chapter 6 for some analysis. Similarly the gambit  $1 \text{e}4 \text{c}5 2 \text{f}4 \text{d}5 3 \text{exd}5 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6 4 \text{c}4 \text{e}6! 5 \text{dx}e6 \mathbb{Q}\text{xe}6$  clears out Black's centre, but leaves holes all over White's position (the moves  $\text{f}4$  and  $\text{c}4$  have not been productive) and gives Black a lead in development.

The Hennig-Schara Gambit is a good example of a  $1 \text{d}4$  opening in which Black plausibly abandons his centre pawns for activity. It begins  $1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{e}6 3 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}3 \text{c}5 4 \text{cx}d5 \text{cx}d4!?$   $5 \mathbb{W}\text{xd}4$  ( $5 \mathbb{W}\text{a}4+!$  is a technical nicety; you can reach the main position via  $5 \dots \mathbb{Q}\text{d}7 6 \mathbb{W}\text{xd}4 \text{exd}5 7 \mathbb{W}\text{xd}5 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}6$  with  $8 \dots \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6$  next, gaining another tempo on White's queen; White avoids a couple of alternate tries by Black if he plays this way)  $5 \dots \mathbb{Q}\text{c}6! 6 \mathbb{W}\text{d}1 \text{exd}5 7 \mathbb{W}\text{xd}5 \mathbb{Q}\text{d}7!$ ; for example,  $8 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6 9 \mathbb{W}\text{d}1 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}5$  ( $D$ ) is considered the main line of this gambit.



As with our other primitive gambits, Black has cleared out the centre but gained several tempi for an attack by pieces. He can pursue that in various ways; for example, by moving his queen to  $\text{c}7$ ,  $\text{e}7$  or  $\text{b}6$ , and then playing  $\dots \text{o}-\text{o}-\text{o}$  or  $\dots \text{o}-\text{o}$  with  $\dots \mathbb{Q}\text{d}8$ . The dynamic old main line continues  $10 \text{e}3 \mathbb{W}\text{e}7 11 \mathbb{Q}\text{e}2 0-\text{o}-\text{o} 12 \text{o}-\text{o} \text{g}5! 13 \text{b}4!$ . White returns the pawn to launch a queenside attack after  $13 \dots \mathbb{Q}\text{xb}4 14 \mathbb{W}\text{b}3$ .

## Positional Gambits

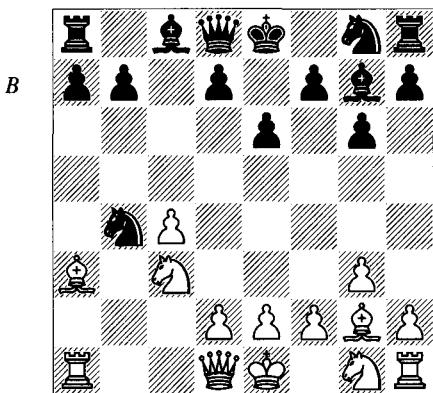
When modern chess was first developing, gambits were almost always used as a means to establish an attacking game. Today, those gambits are still with us (see above), but we often play gambits which are positional in their orientation. In these, the gambiteer retains an influential pawn-centre, which is usually part of his compensation. The most common strategy employed is the sacrifice of a flank pawn to establish a full and often mobile pawn-centre. This can involve giving up a flank pawn in order to divert one of the opponent's centre pawns, thus establishing a pawn-majority. Or it might involve surrendering a flank pawn with the goal of gaining time, which is then used to establish a large centre. Note that this is the opposite of the strategy in the previous section, which involved clearing out one's own centre pawns! Let me begin by listing some of these gambits and examine a few others via games.

To begin with, there's the King's Gambit, discussed in Volume 1:  $1 \text{e}4 \text{e}5 2 \text{f}4$ . White offers his f-pawn in order to draw Black's e-pawn away from the centre. Then, ideally, he will be able to play an effective  $\text{d}4$  and develop his pieces quickly around a mobile centre. Black has several gambits which employ the same philosophy, the two most prominent of which are the Latvian Gambit ( $1 \text{e}4 \text{e}5 2 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \text{f}5$ ) and the Schliemann Defence to the Ruy Lopez ( $1 \text{e}4 \text{e}5 2 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}6 3 \mathbb{Q}\text{b}5 \text{f}5$ ).

The Queen's Gambit (discussed in Volume 2) is not a real gambit, at least in its pure form  $1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{dx}c4$ , because White can recover his pawn quickly. We do see a number of lines, however, in which White sacrifices a pawn for the sake of establishing a large, mobile centre; for example,  $1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{dx}c4 3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6 4 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}3 \text{a}6 5 \text{e}4 \text{b}5 6 \text{e}5$ . An analogous line in the Slav is  $1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{c}6 3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6 4 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}3 \text{dx}c4 5 \text{e}4 \text{b}5 6 \text{e}5$ , while  $1 \text{d}4 \text{d}5 2 \text{c}4 \text{c}6 3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}3 \mathbb{Q}\text{f}6 4 \mathbb{Q}\text{c}3 \text{e}6 5 \mathbb{Q}\text{g}5 \text{h}6 6 \mathbb{Q}\text{h}4 \text{dx}c4 7 \text{e}4 \text{g}5 8 \mathbb{Q}\text{g}3 \text{b}5$  is a major line in the Semi-Slav. These have a rather opportunistic character, and when White succeeds he usually does so by direct assault supported by tactics, rather than by further central pawn advances.

## b4 Gambits

In openings which begin with moves other than 1 e4 or 1 d4, most gambits for White are positionally-based flank-pawn sacrifices. In the Symmetrical variations of the English Opening, we find various offers involving b4; for example, 1 c4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 ♘g2 ♘g7 4 ♘c3 ♘c6 5 a3 e6 6 b4!?. The point is seen in the line 6...cxb4 7 axb4 8 ♘a3 (D).

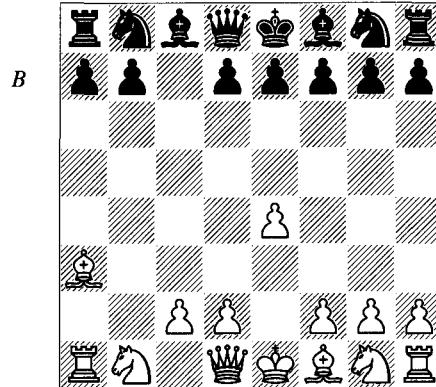


Here the considerations are more positional than tactical. White's development advantage is only slight, but he has some serious pressure on the dark squares: ♘b5 or ♘e4 might follow, and d4 and ♘f3 also hit dark squares; finally, even e4-e5 is sometimes an issue. In this precise position, furthermore, the knight can't be easily defended in view of 8...a5? 9 ♘xb4.

Consequently, the pseudo-sacrifice 6...♘xb4 7 axb4 cxb4 is more common, when 8 d4 bxc3 9 e3 intends ♘e2xc3 and ♘a3, a gambit with the same dark-square themes. In Volume 3, I covered this position in some detail.

In the Sicilian Defence, the diversion of the black pawn from c5 arises in the Wing Gambit, 1 e4 c5 2 b4, which allows White to have more leeway in the centre following 2...cxb4. He can play 3 d4 or 3 ♘b2 at that point, but more commonly opts for 3 a3, trying to develop quickly after 3...bxa3 4 ♘xa3 or 4 ♘xa3 (D).

White intends to construct a large centre, but he also hopes to win dark squares and prevent Black from castling if he plays ...e6 or ...e5; this strategy resembles the English Opening example above. Of course, there are



many options for Black even before this point, including 3...♗f6 or 3...d5.

The same idea (and sometimes the same pawn-structure) arises in the French Wing Gambit: 1 e4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 cxb4, when White can play either the central move 5 d4 or the developing 5 a3 bxa3 6 ♘xa3.

In the Scandinavian Defence with 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♘xd5 3 ♘c3 ♘a5, White can play another sacrifice of the b-pawn, Mieses's long-discarded 4 b4!?. After 4...♗xb4, the older 5 ♘b1 scrounges up some activity, but has generally been ineffective because after 5...♗d6, Black develops normally. Recently, White has played 5 a4! with the idea 6 ♘a3; then Black has some problems getting developed, because White can answer ...e5 or ...e6 with ♘xf8 and prevent castling, as well as gaining influence on the dark squares. Even the move a5 can prove useful. Of course, this gambit may turn out to be of marginal soundness, but at least it combines quick development with positional considerations.

## g4 Gambits in the Dutch Defence

The mirror image of the Sicilian Defence gambit with b4 is a Dutch Defence gambit with g4. It turns out that there are quite a few of these:

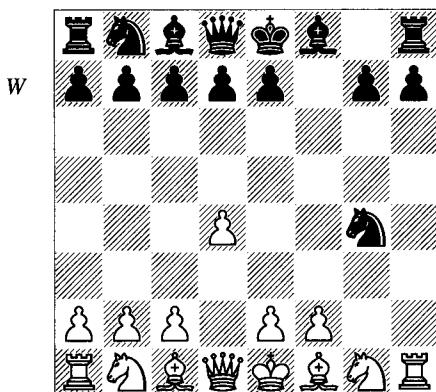
**Ravikumar – Nasir Ali  
New Delhi 1982**

### 1 d4 f5 2 g4!?

This is called the Krejčík Gambit. White undertakes to divert Black's f-pawn from control of e4, just as 1 e4 c5 2 b4 tries to draw Black's

c-pawn from control of d4. White has three similar and respectable ways to gambit the g-pawn:

a) The move 2 h3 has the same idea of g4, but intends to recapture on g4 with his h-pawn in case of ...fxg4, while not allowing ...g3 (see the note to move 3 in the main game). This is sometimes called the Korchnoi Attack. Play can proceed 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (after 2...d5, White can still continue with 3 g4 fxg4 4 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  and 5 f3 or 5  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ , but that looks speculative, and it's probably more sensible to exploit the hole on e5 by 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 4  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 3 g4 fxg4?! 4 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (D), and now:



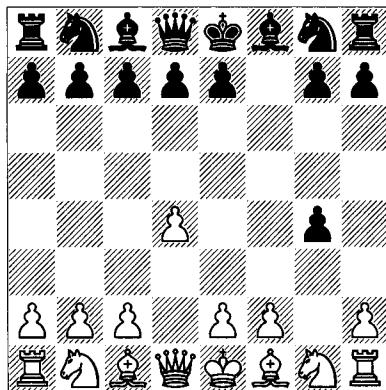
a1) 5 e4 d6 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ? g6 (6...c6 is recommended by A.Watson) 7 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 9  $\mathbb{W}d2$  with positional pressure and attacking chances, Korchnoi-Känel, Biel 1979.

a2) 5  $\mathbb{W}d3!$  appears still stronger, and includes the trap 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6??$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ . Also terrible is 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6?$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  gxh6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}h5\#$ . Even the best move, 5...g6, allows 6  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ , which is probably somewhat better for White, and 6  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  is by no means necessary; for example, both 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 6  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  generate more than enough play for a mere pawn.

b) Another version of a g4 gambit in the Dutch Defence stems from Alapin's move 2  $\mathbb{W}d3$ , attacking f5. Then if Black chooses 2...e6 (2...d5 is probably better), White plays 3 g4 fxg4 4 h3 gxh3 (not the only move) 5  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ , which is an approximate mirror-image of a line in the Sicilian Wing Gambit. White has reasonable compensation, with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , as well as simply  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  and e4.

c) 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (2...d5 is the main alternative) 3 g4!? is a similar idea, when 3... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (3...fxg4 4 h3) 4 e4 forms a big centre, and then 4...d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  keeps up the pressure. As usual, Black's e6-square is weak.

2...fxg4 (D)



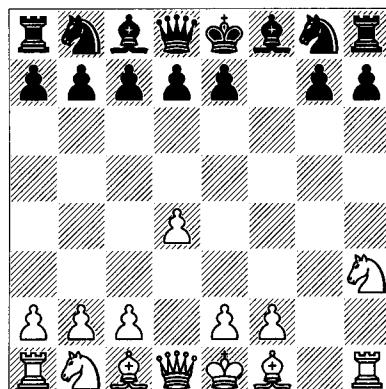
3 h3

3 e4 is the next game.

3...gxh3?!

This cedes the h-file to White, who also gets rapid development against a weakened king position. 3...g3 4 fxg3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is a good way to decline the gambit. Then 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 6  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8 e3 0-0 9  $\mathbb{W}d2$  with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  leads to a nicely imbalanced position, perhaps slightly in favour of White because of Black's difficulty in achieving ...e5.

4  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  (D)



White has a serious attack, with ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ,  $\mathbb{W}d3$  and e4.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?

This supports e4 and threatens 6  $\mathbb{W}d3$ . Another good course is 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 6  $\mathbb{W}d3$  with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and 0-0-0.

5...d5 6  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}d6!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

7  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  8  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{W}xh7$  9  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10 c3 e5 gives Black some compensation.

7...c6 8 e4!? dxe4 9  $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  13  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh8!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

White is winning; he has far too many pieces out aimed at Black's weaknesses, with  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and 0-0-0 in reserve if needed.

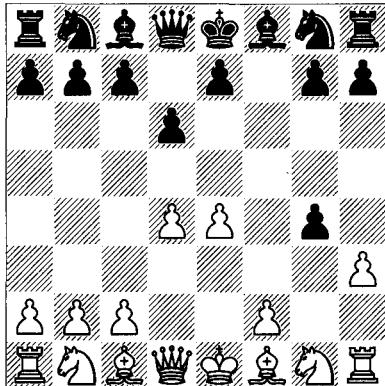
**Marzolo – Piat**  
*Clermont Ferrand 2001*

**1 d4 f5 2 g4 fxg4 3 e4 d6**

Here it seems wise to stake out central territory by 3...d5 4 e5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , when 5 h3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  6 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  is double-edged.

4 h3! (D)

B



White plays much as he does in the Sicilian Wing Gambit with 3 a3.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

As above, 4...g3 keeps White's h-file closed, but after 5 fxg3, there is no obvious follow-up, and White controls the centre.

5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

5 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  6 f3 is similar: 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? (not 6... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ? 7 e5) 7  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c6 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  with ample pressure on the light squares.

5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  7 f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e5

A good move, but it further weakens the light squares.

9  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  h6 10  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13 0-0-0 a6 14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$

Here 14  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !  $\mathbb{W}h8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  would confer a clear advantage upon White.

14...0-0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?

16... $\mathbb{W}f7$  is better.

17 exd5

Surprisingly, 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  wins material because of 18... $\mathbb{W}h8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

17... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5?! 19 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f1!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ??

But against 22... $\mathbb{W}h5$ , 23  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is very strong; for example, 25...d5 26  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ ! with the idea 26...bx a6 27  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  28  $\mathbb{W}b4+$ .

23  $\mathbb{Q}h3$

White picks up material; he won easily.

## ...b5 Gambits in the Nimzo-Indian Defence

Sometimes the offer of a pawn by ...b5 can be used to divert White's c-pawn. This occurs in the Benko Gambit, discussed below, where Black completes the analogy with the Sicilian and Dutch examples by playing ...b5 and then ...a6. In several variations of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, we see the same idea; for example, 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  4 e3 0-0-0 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5!? 6 cxb5 a6 is a gambit based upon controlling the light squares. It was developed by Vitolinš. Another type of flank pawn sacrifice is seen in this game:

**Short – Aleksandrov**

*European Team Ch, Pula 1997*

**1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$**

This is the Leningrad System of the Nimzo-Indian. Now one of Black's primary methods of defence involves sacrificing a flank pawn:

4...h6 5  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c5 6 d5 b5 (D)

In typical gambit style, Black undermines White's support of d5.

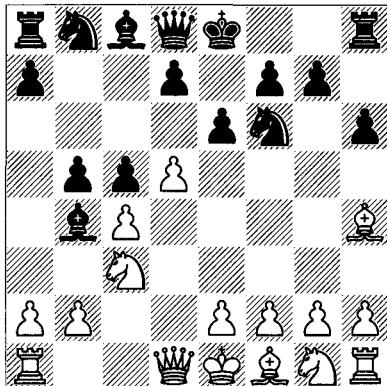
7 dxe6

7 cxb5 g5 8  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  works out well for Black. If White is going to decline the gambit, 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  with the idea of e4 is one of the best ways to do so.

7...fxe6 8 cxb5 d5

This is the point: once the c-pawn disappears, Black is able to establish a central superiority.

W

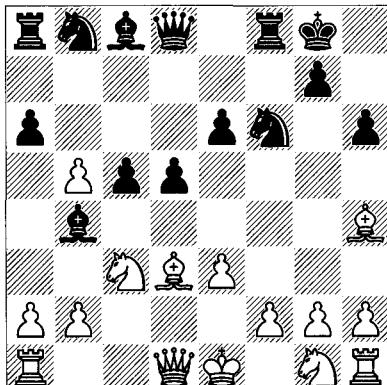
**9 e3 0-0**

The game we are following actually went 6...0-0 7 e3 b5 8 dxe6 fxe6 9 cxb5 d5, transposing to this position. I'm using the normal move-order because it avoids certain complications. Now White has to deal with the prospect of Black's centre advancing further.

**10 ♜d3 a6!?** (D)

This is a familiar pattern for us by now: Black exchanges White's advanced b-pawn so as to activate his pieces. In fact, however, 10...d4 is more common, often leading to the forcing line 11 exd4 cxd4 12 a3 ♜a5 13 b4 dxc3 14 bxa5 ♜b7 15 ♜e2 ♜xg2 16 ♜g1, when 16...♜f3 17 ♜g3! ♜xe2 18 ♜xe2 seems to favour White, although it's still tricky.

W

**11 ♜e2**

White almost has to return the pawn and get his pieces out. One major point of 10...a6 becomes clear in the line 11 bxa6?! d4 12 exd4 cxd4 (or 12...♝xd4?!, hitting the bishop on h4 and intending 13 ♜f3 ♜xc3+ 14 ♜f1 ♜xd3+!

15 ♜xd3 ♜xa6) 13 a3 ♜a5 14 b4 dxc3 15 bxa5 ♜xa5 16 ♜e2 ♜xa6 17 0-0 ♜c5 with ideas of ...♜xd3 and ...♜a6; then Black stands better.

**11...c4 12 ♜c2**

12 ♜b1 leaves room on c2 for the queen. After 12...axb5 13 ♜c2, 13...♜xc3+ 14 bxc3 e5! has been played, but 13...♜bd7! 14 0-0 ♜b6 looks safer, with a central majority and space.

**12...axb5 13 0-0 ♜c6!?**

Insisting upon playing with a material deficit. Simply 13...♜a5! keeps Black's good structure intact, because 14 a4 (14 a3 ♜e7; 14 ♜d4 ♜xc3 15 bxc3 e5 16 ♜f5 ♜c6) 14...bxa4 15 ♜xa4 ♜d6 leaves White with a vulnerable b-pawn.

**14 ♜xb5 e5!?**

14...♜c5 followed by ...♜b6 and/or ...♜b4 gives Black meaningful compensation, although White should keep a small edge.

**15 b3**

White misses his chance: 15 ♜xf6! ♜xf6 16 b3 gives him the better of it. Now Black in turn could play 15...♜a5! with an excellent game.

**15...♜g4? 16 h3 ♜h5 17 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 18 bxc4 dxc4 19 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 20 ♜ec3**

White has a healthy extra pawn.

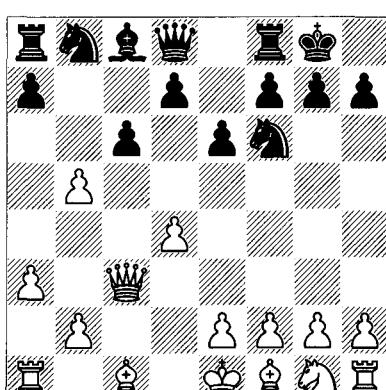
### S. Mohr – Christiansen

Bundesliga 1989/90

**1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 ♜b4 4 ♜c2 0-0 5 a3 ♜xc3+ 6 ♜xc3 b5!?** 7 cxb5 c6 (D)

This time Black uses his c-pawn instead of his a-pawn, but the idea is the same: to open lines and bring pieces out quickly.

W

**8 f3**

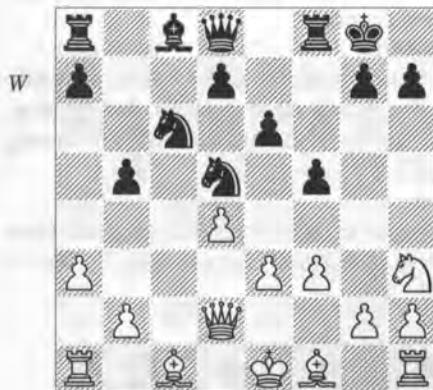
The obvious alternative is 8 bxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ . Here Black has a multitude of ideas, including ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , or in some cases ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and ...f5, perhaps with ... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ . He is trying to develop quickly and grab the initiative, of course, but even more than that he wants to control the light squares and use them as a basis for attack.

Compare the alternate acceptance of the gambit by 8 e3 cxb5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  in Rantanen-Raaste, Helsinki 1990: 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4?$  10  $\mathbb{W}b4$  a5 11  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 13 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4! (it seems odd to block the path of the b7-bishop, but the pawn on e4 serves to cut off White's defenders from the kingside) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  17 g3? (17  $\mathbb{Q}h1$ ) 17... $\mathbb{W}h3$  18 f4 exf3 19  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}xg3+$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}g2+!$  is even stronger) 22  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$   $\mathbb{W}xh2$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}g1+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  26  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{W}h2$  27  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5+$  29  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  30  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  31  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6+$  0-1.

8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5 10  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  cxb5 11 e3

11 e4 would run up against 11...fxe4 12 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !, as analysed by Christiansen.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D)



12  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}b3$  and intensifies the pressure on the light squares.

12... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  13  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$

Enterprising, although 14... $\mathbb{W}b6$  is safer and good, with the idea 15 bxa5  $\mathbb{W}xa5+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$ .

15 bxa5?

15  $\mathbb{W}xb5!$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  17  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  18  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a2$  19  $\mathbb{W}xa2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  is unclear.

15... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}g5$

Black attacks two critical pawns; it's all over.

20 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  22  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}g2+$  0-1

The reason why these gambits are possible in the Nimzo-Indian is that Black takes an early lead in piece development when he plays 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and 4...0-0 while White is taking time to establish a pawn-centre. A pawn sacrifice that works on the same principle in the King's Indian Defence is 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 8  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D).



Black intends to exploit his lead in development, the hole on d4, and White's dark-square weaknesses. He will usually do so by ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , unmasking the powerful g7-bishop with tempo. Notice how bad White's bishop on f1 is. In spite of the fact that White has no overt pawn weaknesses to target, and the queens are off the board, Black's pawn sacrifice is considered sound, and this has become his most popular line of defence versus the Sämisch Variation.

## Gambits in the Réti Opening

Early flank pawn gambits abound in chess. Here are a few of many positional gambits in the Réti Opening (and closely related lines of the English) which involve diverting Black's d-pawn to c4:

a) 1 c4 c6 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  dxc4 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ . Now Black keeps the gambit pawn, and 7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  9 e4

g6 10 b3! makes the sacrifice permanent. Then 10... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  cxb3 12 axb3 0-0 13 d4 gave White central compensation in Salov-Beliavsky, USSR Ch, Minsk 1987.

b) 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 c4 c6 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  6 d4?! dx $c$  7 e4 again establishes a strong centre in return for the pawn.

c) 1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c6 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  dx $c$  5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (5...b5 6 a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7 b3! cxb3 8  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  is similar) 6 a4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9 a5 0-0 10 b3 cxb3 11  $\mathbb{W}xb3$ , and White has a typical central advantage along with the bishop-pair and dark-square pressure, Kosten-Goldin, Paris 1994.

d) 1 c4 c6 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  dx $c$  5  $\mathbb{W}c2$  b5 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with dark-square pressure and a potential attack on Black's backward c-pawn, Dzhindzhikhashvili-Bagirov, USSR Ch, Baku 1972.

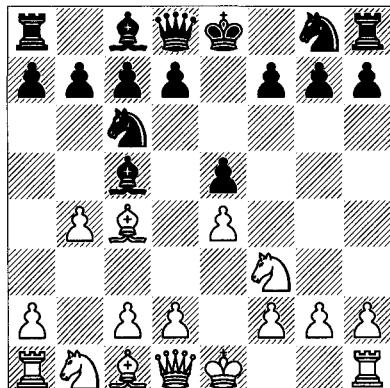
You'll find many variations on these themes in opening praxis.

## The Evans Gambit

Finally, a flank pawn may be sacrificed purely for the sake of gaining time. In the classic example, the Evans Gambit, White wants to use that time to set up a large centre. Here are a couple of games and a brief survey:

**H. Lehmann – P. Müller**  
Lucerne 1952

1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  4 b4!? (D)



B

This introduces the Evans Gambit, which for some time in the 19th century was the most

popular attacking opening around. The Evans is still being used by some grandmasters, and received a boost from Kasparov's successful adventures with it. This charming game shows why enthusiasts love it, and I've embedded as many important lines as I can, including some fun miniatures, to illustrate the lay of the land for potential gambiteers.

4... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  5 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$

Or:

a) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !? looks funny, blocking the d-pawn, but it supports e5 and therefore allows Black to castle quickly, something he often doesn't get to do in the Evans Gambit. Short-I.Sokolov, Sarajevo 2004 went 6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 0-0 8  $\mathbb{M}e1$  h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{M}e8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ) 10...b5 11 a4! b4 12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  bxc3 13 dx $e$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{M}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{M}e7$  17 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18  $\mathbb{W}d3$  with an attack.

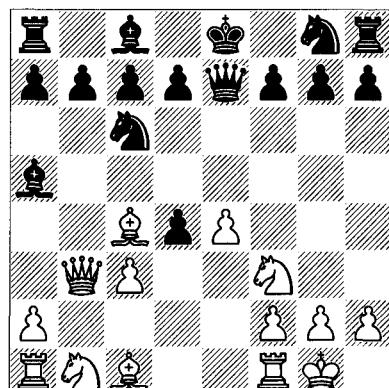
b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is one way to attempt to return the pawn: after 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  d5 9 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$ , White has space and the better centre following 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , but Black has the two bishops and practice has shown that he has his full share of the chances. Following Kasparov's example, White often prefers to stay a pawn down with 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  exd4 8  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ , relying on his attacking chances.

6 d4 exd4

It's always risky to allow White a mobile centre, so Black takes time to prevent that. 6...d6 is a solid alternative seen in the following game.

7 0-0

White can try  $\mathbb{W}b3$  at several junctures. Here 7  $\mathbb{W}b3$  is unresolved; for example, 7... $\mathbb{M}e7$  8 0-0 (D):



B

a) Crazy play results from 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  d6 10 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (10...0-0 11 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! is unclear) 11 e5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13 exd6 (13  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ?+  $\mathbb{W}xf7$  14  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ; 13 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xf6$ ) 13...cxd6 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  (15  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$ !?) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  and Black keeps his pawn. There are many alternatives here for both sides.

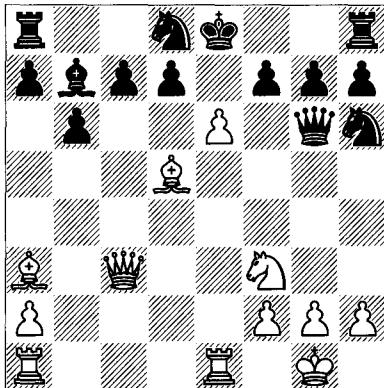
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9 cxd4 (or 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  d6 and then 10 e5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! or 10 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !?) 11  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  next) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! led to a successful attack in Short-P.H.Nielsen, Skanderborg 2003) 10  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  11  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  d6 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13 e5 dxe5 14 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18  $\mathbb{W}a4+$ , repeating.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Alternatively:

a) A good old-fashioned example shows why the Evans Gambit used to be so popular: 7...dxc3 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  9 e5  $\mathbb{W}g6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?! 11  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ? (11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  is better, although 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  has done well against it) 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  b6 (13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  c6 16  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  and all of White's pieces are poised to attack) 14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? 15 e6! (D).

B



1-0 Neumann-Anderssen, Berlin 1865. Look at that activity; the position has adopted the character of a 'primitive' gambit. Black resigned in view of 15...fxe6 (15...dxe6 16  $\mathbb{W}xc7$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  17  $\mathbb{W}xc7$ . At the time, Anderssen was one of the best players in the world!

b) A popular defence is 7... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ , when I'll just mention a few possibilities: 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (8 cxd4 d5 9 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !) with the idea 11

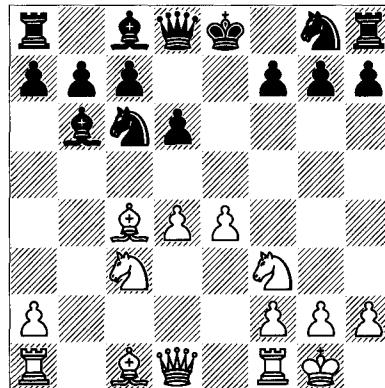
$\mathbb{W}xb7$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}db4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}b8$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! (8...d5 9 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ! is very complicated, but can be avoided by 8... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (now 9  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  can be met by 9...f6!; 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  11  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 12  $\mathbb{W}xa5$  d5 gets Black's pieces out quickly) 9...d5! 10 exd5 (10 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ) 10...0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (14 cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ) 14...c5 (Black can keep an edge by 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ! 15  $\mathbb{W}f4$  and now 15... $\mathbb{W}d6$  or 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ) 15 dxc6 bxc6 16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  ½-½ Short-Adams, Sarajevo 2000.

#### 8 cxd4 d6

8... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  with the idea of ...d5 deserves respect: 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (9 d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d6 11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  gives White unclear compensation) 9...d5 (not 9...0-0? 10  $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) 10 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! (several games have gone 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ? 11  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) 11 d6!  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14 dxe5 (14  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15 dxc7  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  h6 17  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is about even) 14...0-0 15  $\mathbb{W}e4$  g6 16  $\mathbb{W}h4$  h5, Garnier-Chamba, Loire 2004, and now 17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ! is unclear but promising; for example, 17...cxd6 18 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ! 20  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (D)

B



#### 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?

This is at best extremely risky after White's response, and probably just bad. Black has a couple of alternatives:

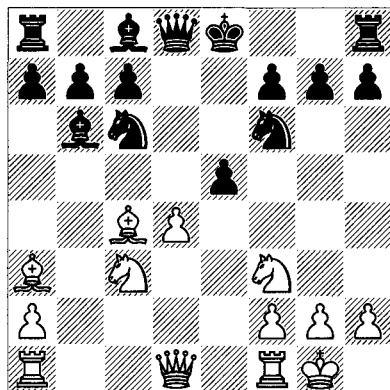
a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! (10  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ +, although often played, is unconvincing after 12... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and now 13  $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14  $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  15 e5 h6! or 13  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  14 e5 h6!) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11 e5!?(11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is

one good option, and 11 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  12 a4 another) 11...dxe5? (11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ ) 12 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  15  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17 g4! with a winning game, Hirschfeld-Kolisch, Paris 1864.

b) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  can be answered by 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , but some classic games continued 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  13  $\mathbb{W}xc4$ ; for example, 13... $\mathbb{W}f7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  g5!? 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , Chigorin-Steinitz, London 1883, and here 18  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 19 e5! is strong.

**10 e5! dxe5 11  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  (D)**

B



This is the essence of the Evans Gambit! Black's king is stuck in the centre, regardless of how many pawns he wins.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

Nothing is terribly attractive here:

a) After 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$ , 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  has had some success, but 13  $\mathbb{Q}ae1!$  looks better, when all of White's pieces are in the attack; for example, 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  16  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  and the central files will decide.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c5 14  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  and White is already close to winning, Blackburne-NN, Great Britain 1872.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

If 13...c6, then Black's position collapses following 14  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15 d5!  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ad1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}fe1+)$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  18  $\mathbb{W}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ .

**14  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15 d5!**

Offering more pawns for open files!

**15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$**

Black is thoroughly lost after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  c6 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

**16  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  c6 17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  1-0**

After 20... $\mathbb{W}xa4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$  White mates in a few moves.

After that wild ride, let's see some more sober treatments. In the game and analysis that follow, Black doesn't go for material aggrandisement as much as for personal safety.

**Vicente Haro – Flear**

*Castellar 1996*

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  4 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$**

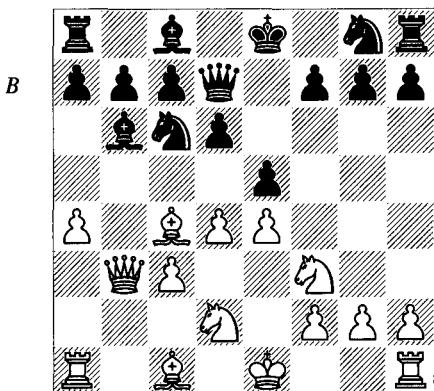
The main way to decline the Evans Gambit is 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , when White should not try to win a pawn by 5 b5?!  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  because of a tactic that appears in many double e-pawn openings: 6... $\mathbb{W}g5!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  (7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{W}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}xe4+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{W}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{W}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  and after both 13...d5 and 13...d6 Black's two pieces are clearly more effective than the rook) 7... $\mathbb{W}xg2$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{W}xe4+$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and with care, Black will be able to win the trapped knight on h8.

White's conventional course after 4... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is 5 a4 a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  8 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9 a5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  with equal chances; for example, 10 d6! cxd6 11 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12 0-0 0-0, Morozevich-Kamsky, Moscow 2008.

**5 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  6 0-0**

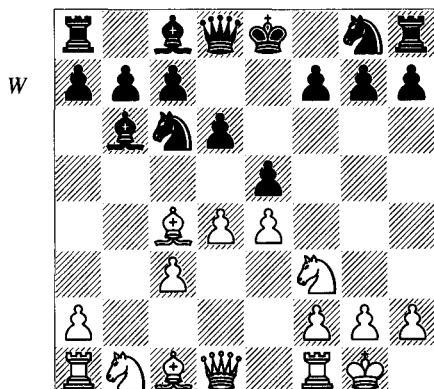
Logically developing so that the c-pawn won't be pinned after the advance d4. Instead, 6 d4 mixes things up, as we saw in the preceding game, when Black accepted the pawn and attendant risks by 6...exd4. Or, in the spirit of the game before us, Black can head for a safe position by 6...d6 7  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  transposes to the game) 7... $\mathbb{W}d7?$  (an alternative and under-utilized defence is 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ; however, watch out for the standard trap 7... $\mathbb{W}f6$ ? 8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 10  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  and 11  $\mathbb{W}xa5$  – the move ... $\mathbb{W}f6$  can be a good defence, but only if Black's bishop is back on b6!) 8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (8 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  intends ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ; then 9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 0-0

0-0 might follow) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) 9 a4 (D).



9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is an alternative, although 10  $\mathbb{Q}a2$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ?! 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  threatens a5, and 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  d5 13 a5! gives White ongoing pressure; Black can also play 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , when the violent continuation 10 a5!?,  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  produces a mess that Black appears to survive) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  looks like a sound alternative for Black) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! f6?! 13 a5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6 18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and Black's position is hard to breach, Nouru-Norri, Jyväskylä 2008.

6...d6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (D)



This is known as the Lasker Defence, and has held up for years as a reliable Evans Gambit remedy.

**8 dx5**

8 a4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (Lasker also played 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , when 10 d5 complicates matters) 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  11 a5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$ , Chigorin-Em.Lasker, St Petersburg 1895/6. Black stands better with his bishop-pair and extra pawn, although White has space and it's still a game.

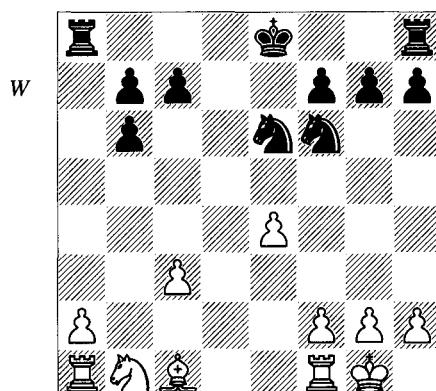
**8...dxe5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

This doesn't accomplish much, but White would like to avoid the simplifying 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ). Then:

a) 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  leaves White rather passively placed.

b) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  can be answered by 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , when 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}dc6$  is fine, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}g6-e5$ . The game Annageldiev-V.Ivanov, Ashkhabad 1996 continued instead 12... $\mathbb{Q}dc6$ !?, 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !?, and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h5! 16 h4  $\mathbb{Q}ce5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0-0 would have resulted in an advantage for Black.

c) 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 (D).



This type of position is what Black is aiming for. White's c-pawn is isolated, as is his a-pawn, which can be attacked along the half-open a-file. In addition, Black's knights have particularly good squares to occupy on the queenside.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

White wants to deal with ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ .

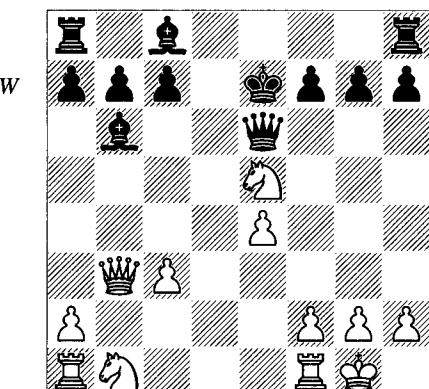
**11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$**

This is the most frequently-played move. Sadly for White's attacking ambitions, Black has several roads that lead to equality or better. 11... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  has also proved playable, for example, as have:

a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12  $\mathbb{W}a4+$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $hxg6$  14  $axb3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) 12...c6 (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ +  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $hxg6$  16 e5!) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xg5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  and both 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  and 15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  leave the h8-knight in major trouble.

b) 11...f6! may be easiest of all: 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg8$   $fxg5$ ! with the idea 13  $\mathbb{Q}xg5?$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .

**12  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  (D)**



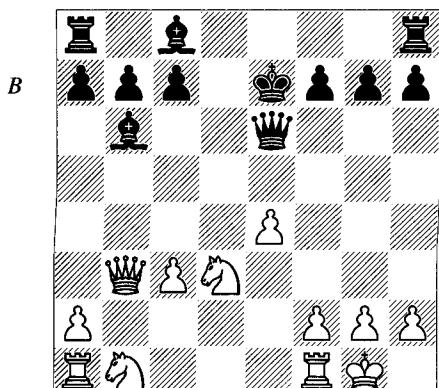
Black has done well in this position because of his pawn-structure and bishop-pair.

**15  $\mathbb{Q}d3??$  (D)**

Or:

a) 15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{R}d8$  16  $\mathbb{W}a3+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  favours Black's activity and pawn-structure, but as it keeps the queens on the board, this is probably White's best course.

b) 15  $\mathbb{W}a3+$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  16  $\mathbb{W}xd6+$   $cxd6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}hc8$ , Ebeling-Rantanen, Jyväskylä 1987; compare the game.



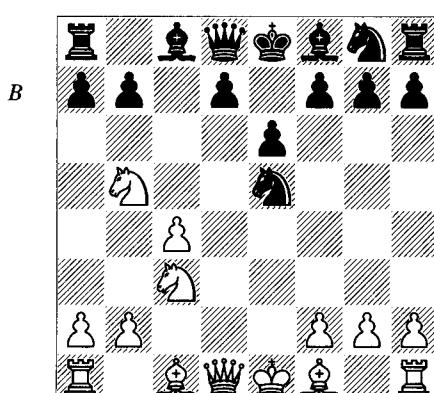
**15... $\mathbb{W}xb3!$  16  $axb3$   $\mathbb{R}d8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c6 18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  20  $\mathbb{R}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{R}d3$**

With his opponent having the bishop-pair, active rooks and targets to attack, White doesn't stand a chance. The game concluded 22  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  23  $\mathbb{R}c2$   $\mathbb{R}ad8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d1$  25  $\mathbb{R}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  26  $hxg3$   $\mathbb{R}xb3$  27  $\mathbb{R}b2$   $\mathbb{R}xc3$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{R}cd3$  29  $\mathbb{R}c1$  a5 30  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a4 31  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{R}d2$  32  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{R}xd5$  33  $\mathbb{R}xb3$   $\mathbb{R}h5+$  0-1.

## Positional Gambits of Centre Pawns

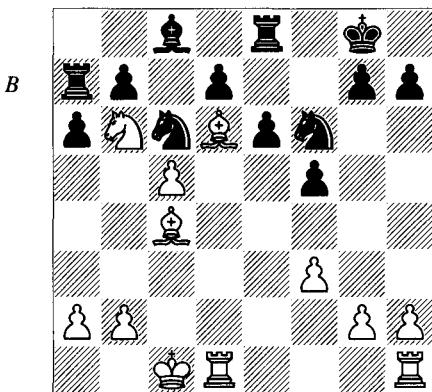
Sometimes one side sacrifices a centre pawn (rather than a flank pawn), not for an attack, but with the object of improving his central position and/or establishing lasting positional advantages. One simple example is the Albin Counter-Gambit, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dx5 d4, which I discussed in Volume 2; Black's d-pawn cramps White and wins territory. It has a reasonably good reputation. The Falkbeer Counter-Gambit, 1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 e4, is a king's pawn mirror image of the Albin! In modern chess it has few takers, however, because the pawn on e4 can't be maintained.

In Volume 3, I discussed an early central pawn sacrifice by White which has all the characteristics of a positional gambit: 1 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 3 e4 c5 4 e5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6 d4  $cxd4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}db5$  (D).



It is aimed entirely at dark-square control rather than attack. The main line goes 8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  f6 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , when the weaknesses on d6 and b6 compensate White for the pawn. A one-sided example went 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

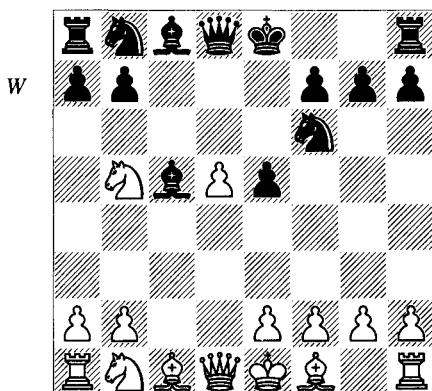
12 ♜b6 ♜f5 13 ♜c5 ♜e7 14 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7?! 15 c5 0-0 16 0-0-0 f5 17 ♜c7 ♜c6 18 ♜d6 ♜e8 19 ♜a4 ♜d5 20 ♜c4 and here 20... ♜f6 (Black played the hopeless 20...b5 21 cxb6 in Giffard-Verat, Paris 1996) 21 ♜b6 ♜a7 22 f3 (D) would be the culmination of the dark-square strategy!



Another standard English Opening central-pawn gambit is associated with the establishment of a strong point:

**Ponferrada Luque – Bellon**  
*Malaga 2002*

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♜f3 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e5 5 ♜b5 d5?! 6 cxd5 ♜c5 (D)



7 e3 0-0 8 ♜c3 e4

Black hopes that this pawn will cramp White for the rest of the game.

9 ♜e2 ♜e7 10 0-0

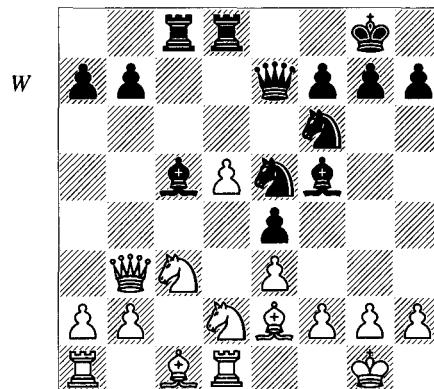
Usually, White tries to consolidate in the centre before using up a tempo on this move; for example, 10 ♜d2 ♜d8 11 a3 intending b4. 10 a3 a5 11 g4?! is an intriguing alternative which I discussed in detail in Volume 3.

10... ♜d8 11 ♜c2

11 a3 or 11 ♜d2 is still preferable. White should not be afraid to return the pawn for positional gains.

11... ♜f5 12 ♜d1 ♜bd7 13 ♜d2 ♜ac8 14 ♜b3 ♜e5 (D)

Black is not concerned with regaining his pawn by, say, 14... ♜b6 and ... ♜e5, but eyes weak squares like d3. Even more importantly, his well-secured pawn on e4 cuts White's pieces off from defending his kingside.



15 ♜f1 a6 16 ♜g3 ♜g6 17 a4 h5!

Black finally supplements his piece-play with a menacing pawn advance.

18 a5??

White really should hunker down with 18 h3 h4 19 ♜f1, although his position is passive and unenviable; the same applies for the next few moves.

18... ♜d6

There's really no reason to delay 18...h4 19 ♜f1 h3!.

19 ♜a4 ♜ed7 20 ♜ad4 h4 21 ♜f1 ♜e5 22 ♜a4 ♜c7 23 ♜a2 h3!

Finally!

24 g3?

Leaving a horrible weakness on g2, but after ...hgx2 Black would control all the light squares anyway.

24... ♜h5! 25 b3 ♜dc8 26 ♜c4 ♜f5!

Intending ... ♜e5. The rest is easy:

27 ♜xh5 ♛xh5 28 f3 ♜e5 29 ♜xc7 ♜xf3+ 30 ♜h1 ♜xc7 31 ♜e2 ♜g4 0-1

Resignation is a bit premature, but White can hardly move and Black threatens ...♜fxh2, among other things; for example, 32 ♜b2 ♜fxh2 33 ♜xh2 ♜f2+ 34 ♜xf2 ♜xd1+ 35 ♜f1 ♜xb3.

Black can also gambit a central pawn simply to free his pieces, particularly if he has a reasonable chance to recover the pawn. A prime example is the Budapest Gambit, 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 e5, challenging the centre while activating Black's dark-squared bishop. After 3 dxe5, Black normally plays 3...♝g4 (although 3...♝e4, which is a true gambit, remains unrefuted and is taken quite seriously by some strong players). Then White will generally return his forward e-pawn for what he hopes will be a slight positional superiority. For example, after 4 ♜f4 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 ♜b4+, one line is 6 ♜bd2 ♜e7, when ...♝gx5 will follow shortly, and White counts upon the fact that his c-pawn restrains ...d5, along with the idea of a timely c5, to give him some pressure. White can also play 6 ♜c3 ♜xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♜e7 8 ♜d5, to hang on to his material, after which Black can drum up an initiative by 8...f6 9 exf6 ♜xf6, with compensation for the pawn; whether it is sufficient has been debated for decades.

The number of positional gambits that masters play is growing every year. They are enormously instructive to study from both sides of the board, and I recommend adding at least one or two to your own repertoire.

## The Ultra-Positional Benko Gambit

The most important true gambit in modern times is the Benko Gambit, whose nature is about as far as possible from the Danish Gambit (which we saw at the start of this chapter). Because it serves no attacking or tactical purpose and only aims for long-term positional pressure, the Benko Gambit was effectively ignored for more than 100 years of modern chess. Even the positional gambits above contain possibilities of attacking the king in the long run, but the Benko is ultra-positional, in that Black's

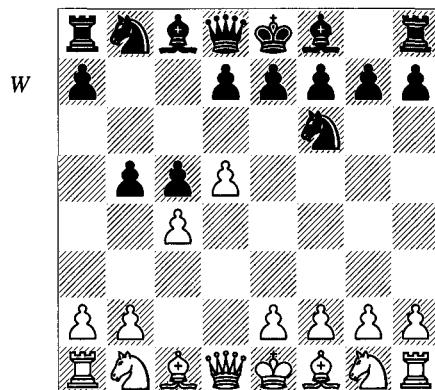
play consists of queenside pressure which may not even come to fruition until the endgame.

Let's begin by examining one of Pal Benko's own games from several decades ago. In essential ways, little has changed since.

**Camara – Benko**

São Paulo 1973

1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 (D)



This is the Benko Gambit.

**4 cxb5**

In the following game, I'll briefly discuss declining the gambit on this move or returning the pawn on the next move. The most important positional lessons proceed from its acceptance.

**4...a6 5 bxa6 ♜xa6**

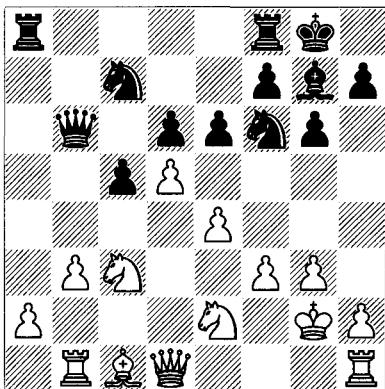
In the early years of the gambit, it wasn't realized that 5...g6 is more accurate, for reasons that are explained in the next game.

**6 ♜c3 d6 7 ♜f3**

When White tries to use this knight to bolster his queenside, its passive position allows Black to make a central break. Gross-Benko, Aspen 1968 is a good introduction to the gambit's character: 7 e4 ♜xf1 8 ♜xf1 g6 9 g3 (9 ♜f3 transposes to the game) 9...♝g7 10 ♜g2 0-0 (here we have the standard formation that we discuss in the main game) 11 ♜ge2!? ♜b6 12 ♜b1 ♜a6 13 b3 ♜c7 14 f3 (everything looks solid enough) 14...e6! (D).

This is a major Benko Gambit theme that we don't often see because in most modern systems, White takes care to prevent it! The game went 15 dx6 fxe6 16 ♜e3 ♜c6! (White is vulnerable on the long diagonal) 17 ♜d2 d5 18 exd5 exd5

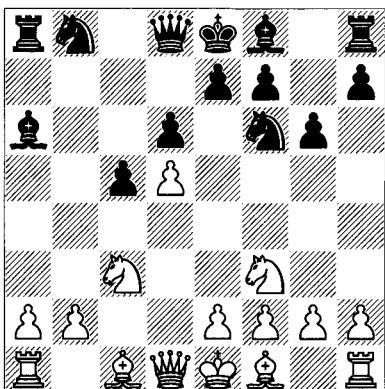
W



(Black's centre is already decisively strong) 19  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d4 20  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  d3! 23  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  (23  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ !) 23...  $\mathbb{Q}exf4+$  24 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  26  $\mathbb{Q}ff1$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! 0-1.

7...g6 (D)

W



OK, we've reached the archetypal Benko Gambit position. What is Black's compensation for the pawn? It turns out that there are many factors; initially, we can identify these:

a) He is ahead in development. Apart from his bishop and knight, his rook on a8 is developed on a useful half-open file.

b) Black's undeveloped pieces have convenient and active squares to go to: his bishop on g7 will be a powerful, unopposed piece, his queen's knight can go to d7, and his king's rook and queen can occupy the b- and/or a-files.

c) Black can put serious pressure on White's queenside pawns, especially with his g7-bishop bearing down on c3 and b2. The Benko pawn-structure is particularly instructive because it shows how unobstructed a- and b-pawns can so

easily be rendered immobile. This occurs in other openings, even when the pawns are passed (i.e., in the absence of an enemy c-pawn), as long as they are on half-open files. In the Benko Gambit, White's b-pawn advance creates a hole on a3 and target on a2, whereas if his a-pawn steps forward, that forms a weak square on b3 and makes it easier to attack b2.

One extra possibility for Black is to capture White's knight on c3 in a situation where White has to play  $bxc3$ . The idea is to create a further weakening of White's pawn-structure because of the newly-isolated a-pawn, weak c-pawn, and attractive outposts for Black's pieces on c4, a4 and a3. Sometimes White will get compensation in the form of weakened dark squares around Black's king, but in a number of positions that won't have practical value.

d) White's centre can sometimes be attacked by ...e6, which either gives Black a direct attack on d5 if he gets to play ...exd5, or a broad and potentially mobile centre if he answers dx6 with ...fxe6. This occurred in Gross-Benko above.

e) In terms of defence, Black's pawn-structure is weakness-free and his king is extremely unlikely to face attack. Importantly, White will have trouble marshalling enough forces to carry out his desired pawn-break e4-e5, because Black can aim so many pieces at that square.

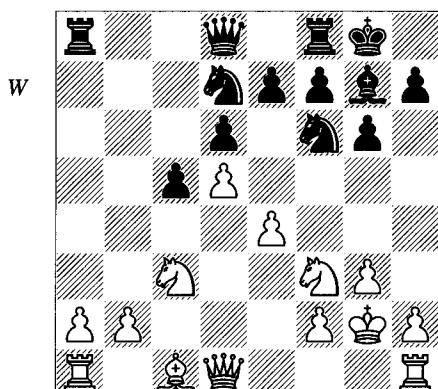
So, you may ask, why does White even bother to play against the Benko Gambit, given this array of inspiring features in his opponent's position? First, an extra pawn is nothing to sneer at. In addition, White has no overt weaknesses in his pawn-structure; for all of Black's wonderfully-placed pieces, he still needs to attack something more times than it's defended, or to craft a pawn advance that breaks down his opponent's position. And while authors are describing all the positive aspects of Black's situation, they seldom mention that his queenside attack is based mainly upon piece-play; we know that such attacks are more difficult to bring to fruition than those which have the aid of pawn-breaks. It's true that Black sometimes has an opportunity to play ...f5 or ...e6, but White can often prevent those moves or render them harmless. As we shall see, for example, neither of those moves is likely to be successful if White plays g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ .

**8 e4**

A major decision. White stakes out room in the centre, but loses the right to castle and creates an interior weakness on d3. In the next game we shall see other ways of handling the position.

**8.... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10 h3**

At the time of this game, this was the most popular move. White stops ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and will ‘castle by hand’, marching his king over to h2. The related 10 g3 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (D) was a main line of the Benko for some years, accounting for hundreds of master games.

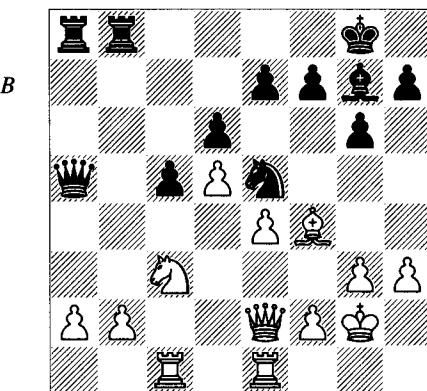


It's worth seeing a few examples in order to illustrate the pluses and minuses of these two very similar set-ups. In doing so we shall be introduced to some basic themes of the Benko Gambit. Once White has moved his king to g2, he must decide whether to allow ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-e5$ :

a) Upon 12  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is a good move, but the most thematic idea is 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , preventing e5 and bringing a black knight to e5, from where it watches over c4 and d3. That needn't be fatal, of course, and Black has to be wary of playing ...c4 (intending ... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ), because he gives White access to his own d4-square with the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ -c6. White can respond with piece-play or pawn-play:

a1) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14 h3  $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (D).

17... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !? (this is by no means the only move, but demonstrates how endgames can be satisfactory for Black even when White hasn't compromised his pawn-structure; 17... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! is an attractive alternative, especially in view of the critical line 18 b3 c4! 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20



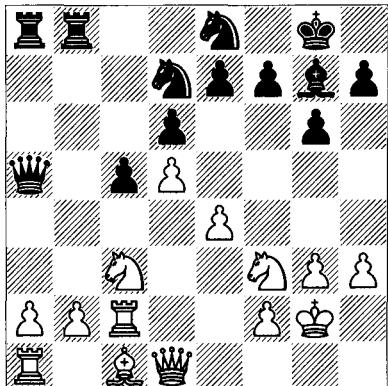
bx $c$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , when Black is two pawns down but has sufficient counterplay) 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  20  $\mathbb{Q}exe2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 21  $a3$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , Karpov-Salov, Belgrade 1996, and now 22... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  would have kept the pressure on, with equality.

a2) 13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15 f4 drives the knight away, but at the cost of creating further internal weaknesses in White's camp. In Neverov-Bologan, Nikolaev Zonal 1995, Black tried 15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is also sensible) 16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , and now he arranged his pieces both to increase the pressure on White's queenside and to look down the long light-squared diagonal: 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !?(16... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18 a4  $\mathbb{Q}fc8$ ! 19  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c4 is unclear) 17 a4  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c4! 20  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  at least temporarily stops Black's initiative) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  with active rooks and an attack on d3, b3 and a4. These lines seem balanced.

b) 12 h3, stopping ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , is logical. A typical example is 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (Benko's 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  is still held to be a sound method of play) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! (covering b2 and thus at least theoretically allowing White's bishop to move) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (covering e5, and presaging a trek to b5 via c7, in order to exchange White's knight on c3) 15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ! (D).

White protects c3 and b2, again preparing for a move by White's bishop. This position has arisen scores of times. In Neverov-Van der Weide, Hoogeveen 1999, Black chose 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  are also played) 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !? (with White's pieces coordinating so

B

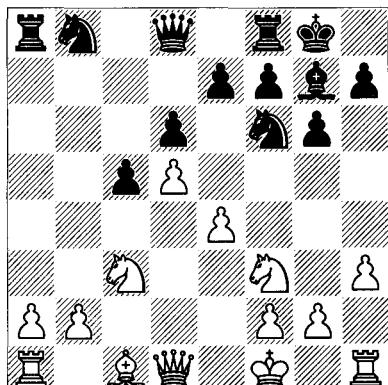


well, the ending may not be optimal; 16... $\mathbb{Q}a4!$  looks like a better solution: 17  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  18  $\mathbb{M}c4$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  19 a3, Maduro-Mendes, Coimbra 1995, and now 19... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  looks satisfactory, considering capturing on b2, but also having in mind ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or even ...e6) 17  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{M}xa6$  18  $\mathbb{M}b1!$  (18 b3 is answered with 18...f5!) 18... $\mathbb{Q}a4?$ ! (18... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is met by 19 b4!, but 18... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  may be best) 19  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20 b3 f5 21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22 b4! and White was consolidating. An instructive example.

c) 12  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  13  $\mathbb{M}b1$   $\mathbb{M}fc8?$  is a typically creative Pal Benko idea, preparing ...c4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . For everyone else, putting the rook on b8 would be automatic. 14 b3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15 h3  $\mathbb{Q}ge5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c4! gave Black full equality in Donner-Benko, Palma de Mallorca 1971. After 18 bxc4 (or 18 b4  $\mathbb{M}a3!$  intending either ... $\mathbb{W}a6$  or ... $\mathbb{M}ca8$ ) 18... $\mathbb{W}d4$  Black stands better.

**10...0-0 (D)**

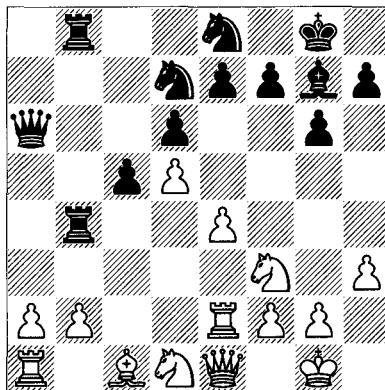
W



**11  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  13  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{M}fb8$  14  $\mathbb{M}e2$  is precisely the position we saw in the preceding note 'b', with the exception that  $\mathbb{Q}g1-h2$  has replaced g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ . One example is 14... $\mathbb{M}b4$  (alternatively, 14... $\mathbb{M}a7$  is playable, or 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{M}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  17  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{M}xa6$  18  $\mathbb{M}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ) 15  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{W}e1!$ ?  $\mathbb{M}ab8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}a6!$  (D).

W



18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (not 18  $\mathbb{Q}d2?$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$ ) and now 18... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  led to equality in Scherbakov-Vučković, Belgrade 2000, but 18...e6! 19 dx6 fx6 would have created a positional advantage in the centre and forced White to deal with b2 anyway.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2$**

As this variation is no longer used much, I'll skip over the remaining theory.

**13... $\mathbb{M}fb8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$**

Benko gives the line 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  16  $\mathbb{M}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c2!$  17  $\mathbb{W}xc2$  (else ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 17... $\mathbb{W}xc4$  with adequate compensation.

**15  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17  $\mathbb{M}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$**

As usual, Black is not afraid of simplification, including the exchange of queens.

**18  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

18 b3?  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  19  $\mathbb{W}xc4?$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  20 bxc4 loses to 20... $\mathbb{M}b2$ .

**18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$  19 f4  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (D)**

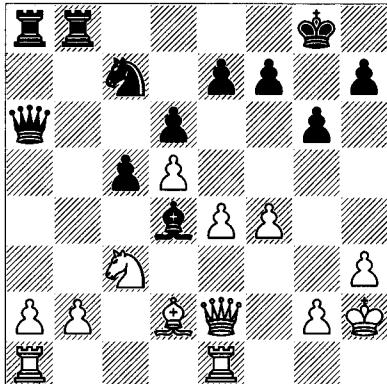
Benko: "Black stands better: the pawns on a2 and b2 are targets, the d5-pawn can be undermined by a well-timed ...f5 advance, and White's counterplay is nowhere to be seen."

**20  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  21  $\mathbb{M}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

By protecting e7, Black prepares ...f5, which will undermine the pawn on d5. This is another Benko Gambit theme, especially in the ending.

**22  $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

W



White's problem is that there isn't anything positive to do, and he can't even sit still in the face of ideas like 22  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  f5 23 exf5 gxf5 24  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{B}b3!$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and 22  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  f5.

22...f5 23 exf5 gxf5 24  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 26  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e5 27 fxe5 dxe5 28  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black's powerful centre pawns make the victory a matter of technique, especially since White's queenside can't profitably advance.

29 a3  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  30  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{B}b3$  31  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{B}b5$  32  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  33  $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  34  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e4 35  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  d3 36 g4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  37  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  38  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  39  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  fxe4 40  $\mathbb{Q}df2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  41  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-1

White resigned without waiting for 41... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  or 41... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ .

To this day, Black wins many games based upon the positional ideas that appear in this game. Next, we'll look at a modern variation in which Black doesn't have such an easy time finding good squares for his pieces.

### Van Wely – Carlsen Wijk aan Zee 2008

**1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5**

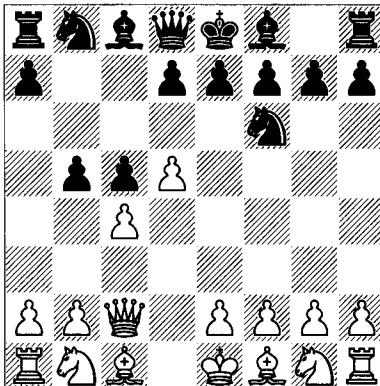
White has a great many ways to decline the gambit or return Black's pawn. Here are some brief comments:

a) An obvious try is 4 a4, intending 4...bxc4 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . But 4...b4, closing the position, can stifle the play and make it difficult to open lines.

b) 4  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  has the simple idea e4, which shouldn't be too dangerous if Black quickly breaks up the centre via ...bxc4 and ...e6. White would rather have his knight on c3 in such positions.

c) 4  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (D) is more subtle than 4  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , still intending e4 but reserving the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and leaving a path to f4 or g5 open for his queen's bishop. Then Moskalenko suggests that the most important lines are:

B



c1) 4...bxc4 5 e4 e6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  exd5 7 exd5 d6 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  (or 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 10 h3) 9...0-0 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (by delaying  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  in favour of  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , White now has a direct view of the f5-square) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12 b3!  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13 bxc4 is a structure worth remembering, since White's space, grip on d5 and superior minor pieces outweigh Black's bishop-pair.

c2) 4...b4 5 e4 d6 6 f4! sets up a mobile centre as in the King's Indian Four Pawns Attack. White intends  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , 0-0 and/or  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  in some order.

c3) 4... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (or 5 a3) 5...bxc4 6 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (6...e6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$  e6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  with the idea of a3; again, delaying  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  proved useful.

c4) 4...e6 5 e4 exd5 (5...bxc4 transposes to 'c1') 6 cxd5 c4 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with a small advantage for White.

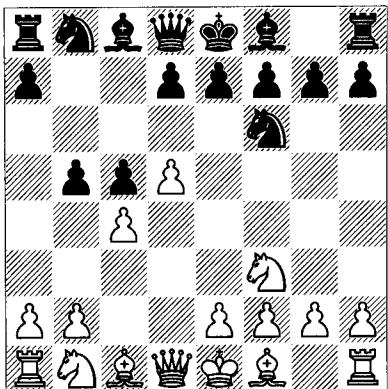
d) 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D) is arguably the most significant attempt to get the better game by purely positional means.

Then 4...e6? is the Blumenfeld Gambit, after which 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is an older main line, but I believe that 5 dxe6 fxe6 6 cxb5 should, with care, give White an advantage. The usual responses to 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  are:

d1) 4...bxc4, when 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and 6 e4 is comfortable for White, although playable for Black.

d2) 4... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , when among other ideas, 5  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  bxc4 6 e4 and 5  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  are critical.

B



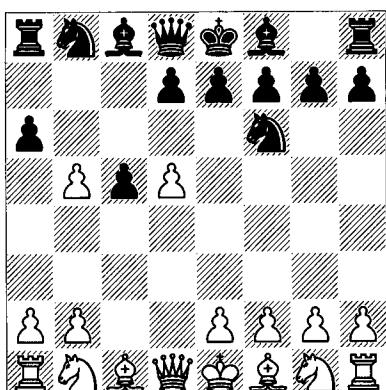
d3) 4...b4, when 5 a3 creates queenside possibilities.

d4) 4...g6 is probably Black's safest choice, and can still transpose into normal lines following 5 cxb5, or go its own way after 5 ♜bd2 or 5 ♜c2.

Considerable theory is attached to 4 ♜f3, and players on both sides of this opening will benefit from its investigation.

**4...a6 (D)**

W



**5 bxa6**

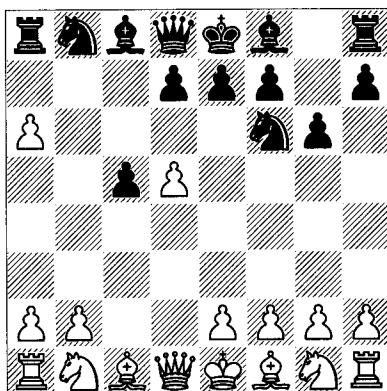
Acceptance is the principled move, but White has some important alternatives here such as 5 b6, 5 f3 and 5 e3. Each of those moves has extensive theory associated with them, and if you want to build a repertoire with the Benko Gambit, you'll want to learn something about them as well. To keep this coverage fairly concise, I'll refer you to more specialized sources.

**5...g6! (D)**

Of all the move-order nuances in the Benko Gambit, this one most needs to be understood.

If Black plays 5...♜xa6 (as he did in many of the early games with this variation, including the previous one), it turns out that White can defend effectively by fianchettoing both bishops: 6 g3 d6 (6...g6 7 b3) 7 ♜g2 g6 8 b3! ♜g7 9 ♜b2 0-0 10 ♜h3 and 11 0-0. Experience has shown that, with Black's g7-bishop neutralized, he will have a relatively more difficult time achieving counterplay against White's queenside. Compare the next note.

W

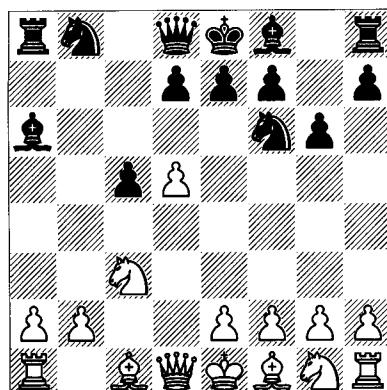


**6 ♜c3**

Here, however, the line 6 b3 ♜g7 7 ♜b2 0-0 8 g3 is well met by 8...♜xa6!, when Black's bishop has more options and ...♜c7 has to be taken into account: 9 ♜g2 d6 10 e4 (for example, White has to be careful that his d-pawn isn't lost to a combination of ...♜c7 and ...♝b7) 10...♝b7 11 ♜e2 e6! with a very effective central attack.

**6...♜xa6 (D)**

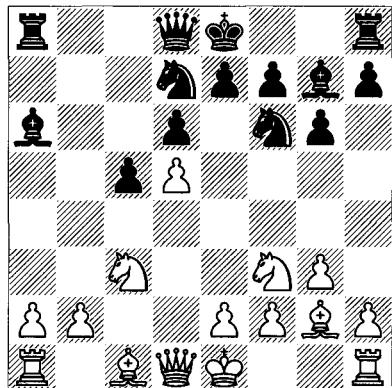
W



**7 g3**

Introducing the Fianchetto Variation, the most popular choice of grandmasters today. 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8 g3 d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  transposes to the main line of this game. In such a flexible opening there are always obscure variations hidden within the transpositions, but fortunately they tend not to be too important at this juncture.

7...d6 8  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (D)



W

For our purposes, I'll use this move-order, because in some lines it helps Black to delay ...0-0.

Why is White taking two moves to put his bishop on a square (g2) where it is blocked by its own d-pawn? There are a few reasons for doing so, ones which should be more comprehensible when you have been through the material in the previous game:

a) He gets to castle, a luxury not afforded by the lines involving e4.

b) He doesn't create any internal weaknesses such as the one on d3 that the move e4 produces.

c) He discourages the move ...e6, which we have seen can break up White's centre and establish a mobile central pawn-mass. Now ...e6 is still conceivable, but will be an exceptional occurrence because dx<sub>e</sub>6 will extend the range of White's bishop along the long diagonal.

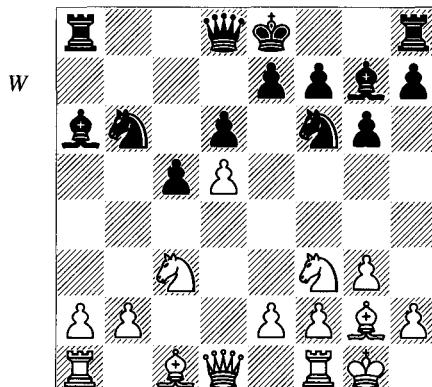
d) Now that it isn't doing much useful work, White may actually profit from the presence of Black's bishop on a6! His point is that the latter piece has nowhere particularly useful to go, and in fact it gets in the way of Black's attempts to threaten White along the

a-file or occupy a6 with another piece. That may sound rather abstract, but you will see that in key variations below, Black's favourite and probably best move is ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !

Of course, Black mustn't be too upset with the passive position of White's bishop on g2; he should get on with his queenside play. That generally means ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and ... $\mathbb{R}fb8$ , as in the previous game, but he also has ideas of a well-timed ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  in order to attack d5 and encourage White to move his queenside pawns.

10  $\mathbb{R}b1$

It's remarkable how this simple move turned a previously humdrum line into White's favourite variation against the Benko Gambit. Granted, White's move is useful: it protects b2 and removes the rook from indirect attack from the bishop on g7. But the key factor is that White can play b3 at the right moment. And that's where timing comes in. In the past, White had played 10 0-0 with the idea 10...0-0 11  $\mathbb{R}b1$ , but he found himself confronted with 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! (D).



W

This causes problems with the simultaneous protection of d5 and the queenside; for example, if White now plays 11  $\mathbb{R}b1$ !?, he has to deal with 11... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , which attacks both d5 and a2. At least that's how theory explains it. Actually, you might want to take this a bit further and see how the position plays out after, say, 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ; I'm not sure whether this is as harmless as its lack of coverage suggests.

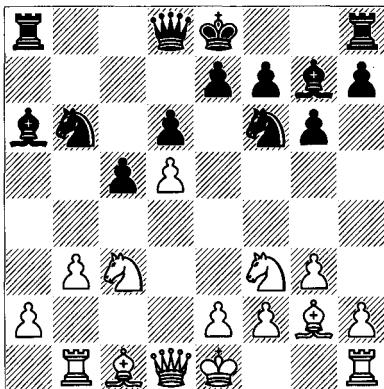
10...0-0

Carlsen has used the move-order 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (after 11 0-0, 11...0-0 will transpose, and 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  can be met by 12 a3! with the idea

of b4) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12 b3  $\mathbb{W}a3$  13 0-0 0-0 to transpose to the game position.

What about 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (compare the previous note)? For some time, it was dismissed due to 11 b3 (D).

B

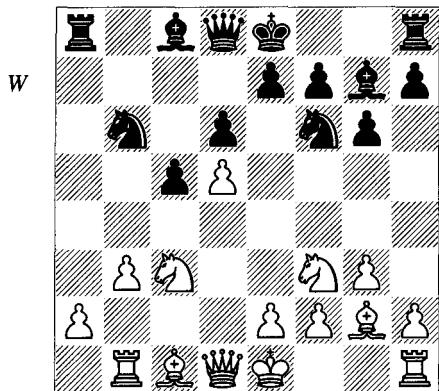


This move keeps Black's pieces out of c4 and a4, while in some cases preparing  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ . Now if Black plays ...c4, White will reply b4, establishing two connected passed pawns on the queenside and making the bishop look silly on a6. Nevertheless, Black has returned to this position with some new ideas and it is still being disputed today:

a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (attacking d5) 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  (12 e4 can be met by 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ , establishing the sort of position that we got used to in the previous game) 12...0-0 13 0-0 (I'll be skimming over White's various alternatives; 13 a4 doesn't offer much after 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{W}a8$ , or here 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , offering a repetition; 13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}d7?$ ! 14  $\mathbb{W}d2$  h6 threatens ...g5, when 15 f4 c4? gives compensation in view of 16 b4?!,  $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$ ! (slow; 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  h6 has the idea ...g5) 14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (14  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15 e4 is also promising) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  16 e4  $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  and White stands well, Rowson-G.Jones, British Ch, Scarborough 2004. The e4/d5 structure is fine as long as Black has no access to White's internal weaknesses, and here the bishop on b2 neutralizes that on g7.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$ ! (D) has the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

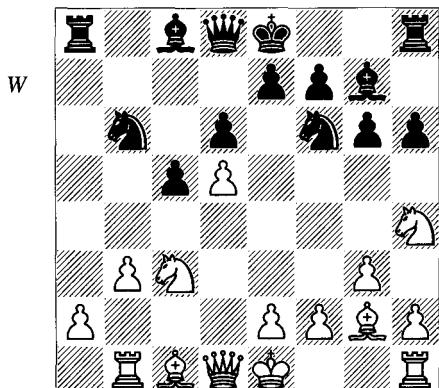
If White prevents that with 12 e4?!, 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$  will bring us back to a familiar type of position in which Black has prevented castling and can target d3. A good illustration is 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  14



$\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  16  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8!$  17 a4  $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  f5!, as in Cvitan-Matamoros, Cannes 1996, when White will have to give back his d-pawn and leave Black with a 2:0 central majority.

Nevertheless, this exotic strategy (... $\mathbb{Q}c8-a6$ ) is in itself proof of the efficacy of White's placement of his bishop on g2, in that Black's bishop on a6, so powerful in other variations, feels obliged to retreat to its home square so long as White hasn't moved his e-pawn. This corresponds with McDonald's observation above about the relative strengths of the two sides' light-squared bishops. Instead of 12 e4, White should move his f3-knight, and there seems to be a pleasant choice:

b1) 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  h6 (D).



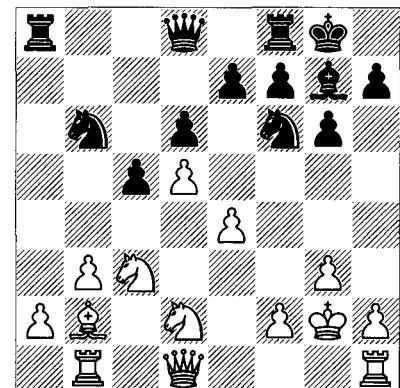
Black intends 13...g5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , forcing a response:

b11) 13  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  (Black renews the ...g5 idea) 14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (after 14 0-0 g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , Gawain Jones discovered that even 15... $\mathbb{Q}fxd5!$  is sound;

instead, 14 f4!? prevents ...g5, but creates an internal weakness on e3, inviting 14...0-0 15 0-0 {15 a4 c4!} 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ; and 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15 e4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is still possible, as in the game Gordon-Djurhuus, Oslo 2008) 14...g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  {15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16 e4 {16 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bx5!$ } 16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17 a4! 0-0 18 h4 g4 19  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  prepares  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , after which White has an extra pawn and solid position} 16 e4  $\mathbb{W}g6$  17 0-0 0-0 18  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  19 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  h5, Breier-Van der Weide, Wijk aan Zee 2006, and here White has several ways to solidify his extra pawn; for example, 21  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (or 21 a4) 21...g4 (21... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  22 a4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ) 22 a4 gxh3 23  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ .

b12) 13  $\mathbb{W}d3$ ! is quite possibly better: White keeps d5 under guard, protects against ...c4, and still watches over f5. White plans  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  next; for example, Feller-Gunnarsson, Differdange 2008 continued 13... $\mathbb{W}d7$  14 0-0 g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and Black didn't find enough compensation following 15... $\mathbb{W}f5$  16 e4  $\mathbb{W}g6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18  $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0 19  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ .

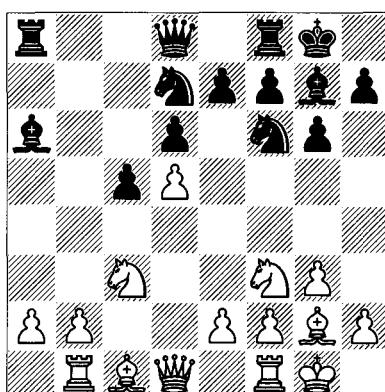
b2) 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is also promising, covering c4 and e4. Black can still implement his plan by 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (after 14 0-0?!  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , Gawain Jones's 15... $\mathbb{Q}d3$  gives Black full compensation) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  0-0 17  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (D).



White's pieces are coordinating better than in Cvitan-Matamoros above. His knight on d2 and bishop on b2 are unusually well-placed. In Van Wely-E.Berg, Reykjavik 2008, seeing no prospects on the queenside, Black tried to play in the centre with 17...e6!? 18 dx6 fx6 19 a4! d5, but White easily neutralized the pressure

after 20  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  21  $\mathbb{W}e2$  {21  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! is also strong} 21...c4 {21...d4 22  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  d3 23  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ !} 22 bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  24 cxd5 exd5 25  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  26 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  and Black was a pawn down for less than nothing.

### 11 0-0 (D)



### 11... $\mathbb{W}a5$

The Benko is very flexible, and I'm not sure that anyone knows what's best here. Some possibilities:

a) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12 b3  $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ! 13  $\mathbb{W}d2$ !  $\mathbb{W}a8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  and Black hasn't made real progress, L.Johannessen-Djurhuus, Norwegian Ch, Røros 2002.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  has the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ -b5 to assist in the queenside attack. One way to prevent this is 12  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13 a4?  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ , White has two strong bishops and a pin on the long diagonal; for example, 15  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !, intending 18... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  (or 14 e4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a2$ ?, covering b4) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15 e4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16 b3  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and White consolidated in Grishchuk-Tregubov, French Team Ch 2005.

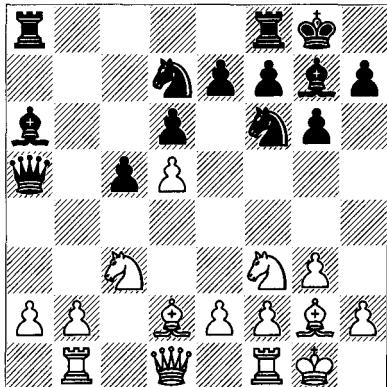
### 12 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ (D)

12  $\mathbb{W}c2$  has been played more, but this straightforward bishop development seems to cause Black the most problems.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Again, several ideas are possible here. After 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , planning an early ...e6, Flear recommends 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  14 e4, with the idea 14...e6? 15 dx6 fx6, and here 16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! is simplest.

B



Alternatively, the natural 12... $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  13 b3  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  resembles the game, with the idea 14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15 a4!  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , keeping control over the queenside.

**13 b3  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !**

White plans  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ . 14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and now 15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  might repeat. White usually plays for more with 15  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , when 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 16 e4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}e5-d3$  is a familiar manoeuvre by now.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

Perhaps 15... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  is more accurate, but Black still needs a plan following 16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ .

**16 e4!**

Now that Black can't play ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ .

**16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$**

16... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  17 a4!  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ca3$  consolidates the pawn, Dautov-Felgaer, Port Erin 2002.

**17 a4!**

White is taking over.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  with  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  are all strong ideas.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ ?! 19 b4**

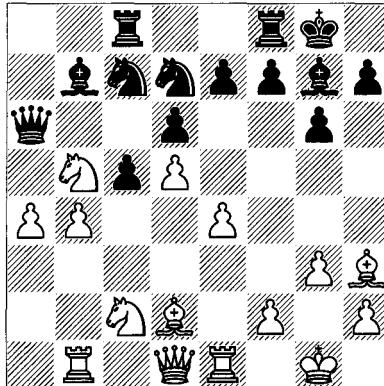
Still better is 19  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , or 19  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  with the idea 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ . In both cases, White has a very large advantage.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$**

20... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  21 axb5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22 bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  isn't much better.

**21  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (D)**

B



**21...f5?!**

A wild stab, but 21... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  22 bxc5 dxc5 23  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is positionally disastrous for Black. After 21...f5?!, the most direct winning line was 22 exf5; for example, 22... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  23 f4!  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  26 fxg6, etc. In the game, Van Wely lost the thread and Carlsen actually went on to win.

Overall, the set-up with g3,  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and b3 has yet to be neutralized by Black. However, if an opening survives its initial challenges, which the Benko Gambit certainly has, it tends to survive later ones, so we'll see what the future holds.

This chapter has described a range of gambits from the directly attacking to the positional. In my opinion, every developing player should try to incorporate one of each type into his repertoire, if only as an optional weapon.

# 6 f-Pawns and Reversed Openings

This chapter re-opens the topic of reversed openings, which I've already discussed at some length in the context of the English Opening in Volume 3, and to a lesser extent in other places (for example, 1...b6 and 1 b3 in Chapter 4 of this volume). A reversed opening usually refers to a case in which White plays an opening best known as a black defence, hoping to exploit the advantage of his extra move. Sometimes Black plays what is normally a white opening with a tempo less; this is the case with a couple of the double e-pawn variations I'll mention below. Obviously, for White to gain a tempo on a known variation will more often be attractive than for Black to play a known variation with a tempo less. Even so, since white systems on average sport a somewhat higher evaluation than black ones, their adoption with a tempo less will not necessarily lead to a disadvantage.

Up to this point in the series, I've examined openings in which the first pawn move is made by the b-, c-, d-, e- or g-pawn. In this chapter, I'm beginning with a discussion of the neglected f-pawn openings, namely, 1...f5 (the Dutch Defence, played versus 1 d4 or 1 c4), and 1 f4 (the Bird Opening). The Dutch has a storied history of use by elite players, and numerous devoted grandmaster advocates today. The Bird, although it has never been played extensively at grandmaster level, has a respectable master following and is undergoing a modest revival. I'll devote most of this chapter to a serious investigation of this opening duo. Then I look at the King's Indian Attack in the context of reversed openings, since it is the other side of the King's Indian Defence coin. Finally, I touch rather lightly upon some examples of reversed openings that stem from 1 e4 e5; hopefully they are instructive in their own right.

The study of reversed openings will increase your understanding of what can and cannot be achieved in openings. Many chess-players are mathematically oriented, with a facility for

logical thinking. So it's only natural to assume that there must be some way to make use of an extra move. After all, chess moves have value, and you wouldn't voluntarily give a move away under normal circumstances. However, as we've talked about throughout these volumes, the worth of an extra move isn't a straightforward matter. In reversed positions of the English Opening, for example, it's remarkable how seldom White can actually claim to have the better game. For one thing, any advantage is limited by the fact that he will usually be playing what are essentially defensive or counterattacking lines. In addition, there's a paradoxical benefit in *not* having to move, in that Black gets a better look at what his opponent is up to and is able to react accordingly. Thus White's strategy will be to try to gain something from his extra move without compromising his position, and Black will try to make use of the extra information revealed by that move. It sometimes happens that, if White isn't careful, he will actually end up in a worse position than if he hadn't had the extra move at all!

Stepping outside the practical realm, this difficulty (of converting a move into something of value) is also revealing about the nature of chess itself. The paradox of information applies to every move, whether in a reversed position or not. In some sense, however sound and logical a move is, it contains the risk of leaving you worse off! That enormously magnifies the complexity and subtlety of the game. If advantages and disadvantages were additive in some linear fashion, chess would be a minor game at best. But we have geniuses who do little else but study and play chess from the time they are five years old into their forties, and they make multiple mistakes in nearly every game, often quite serious ones! As an exercise, set up a reversed opening and try to find ways to make even modest improvements in your position without destabilizing something elsewhere on the board. You'll find that the most trivial-seeming change

always seems to show up in one or another line of analysis where you're least expecting it. When you see how such a straightforward task (concentrating on only a single move) can entangle you in a whole complex of issues, it helps you appreciate how deep and impenetrable chess really is.

Returning to the task before us, and before moving on to specific examples, you need to know which reversed openings are fit for inclusion in your repertoire. The simplest criterion is subjective: do you enjoy playing the opening in question? Strictly speaking, that's not necessary, but it is certainly helpful. Two other considerations present themselves:

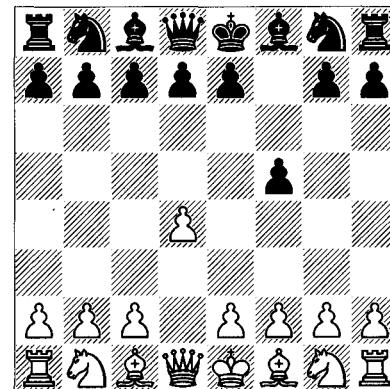
1. Is the opening objectively good? For example, let's assume that you're playing White and reversing a standard black defence; will the opening produce any advantage against accurate play? Does White, with a tempo more, risk ending up in a more exposed position than Black does with a tempo less?

2. If the reversed opening that White is using doesn't produce any advantage, will it nevertheless cause practical difficulties for Black? That is, are there easy ways for Black to equalize against it, or will he be confronted with problems to solve even after the opening phase is over? It's worth noting that the answer to this question also determines whether White plays a particular 'mainstream' opening. That is, since Black can ultimately equalize against most if not all openings, White will want to choose openings which exert lasting pressure. In conventional thinking, that would explain the high-level use of the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5) rather than the Scotch Game (3 d4), the Vienna Game (2 ♜c3) or any of the double e-pawn gambits. Arguably, all of these openings draw with perfect play. Similarly, among strong players, you largely see White's choice of the Queen's Gambit after 1 d4 d5. That is, he plays 2 c4 (or 2 ♜f3 and 3 c4), rather than 2 ♜c3 or 2 e3, or 2 ♜f3 with 3 ♜f4. It's not that Black can't ultimately equalize in any mainstream opening; it's that against the better ones he is confronted with serious challenges and, having solved them, is still left with a complex struggle to conduct. On a practical level, this can have additional benefits such as tiring out your opponent or putting him in time-trouble.

Having said all that, let's move to our first set of reversed openings.

## Dutch Defence/Bird Opening

**1 d4 f5 (D)**



The Dutch Defence is a traditional and essentially sound opening which nevertheless requires precise treatment on Black's part. At the grandmaster level, therefore, it is primarily the province of loyal specialists. But for the average player and even the master, the Dutch can be a particularly effective weapon. In part, that's due to a potential imbalance in knowledge between opponents: most 1 d4 and 1 e4 players will allot only limited time to study of the Dutch, placing a higher priority upon much more frequently-played openings such as the Queen's Gambit and Indian systems. This situation suits Black, all the more so if he applies himself to mastering the general ideas and concrete variations of 1...f5.

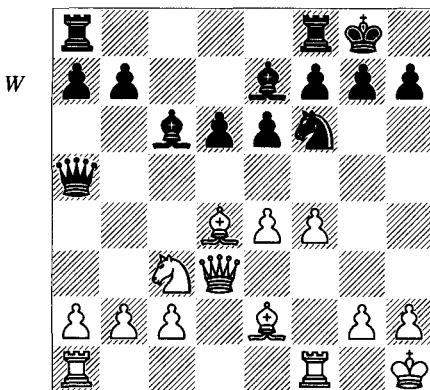
Black has three primary set-ups in the Dutch Defence. The Classical System includes the moves ...f5, ...♝f6, ...e6, ...♞e7, ...o-o and ...d6; the Leningrad System combines ...f5, ...♝f6, ...g6, ...♝g7, ...o-o and ...d6; and the Stonewall System consists of the moves ...f5, ...♝f6, ...e6, ...d5 and ...c6. I'll mainly concentrate upon the first two of these and discuss the Stonewall in less detail at the end of this section. The rare Antoshin System involves the moves ...♝f6, ...d6, ...c6, ...♝c7 and ...e5. Black's development suffers in this case, so he generally ends up in a somewhat inferior position; I'll have to

refer you to the standard remedies in theoretical works.

The Dutch Defence can be thought of as a mirror image of the Sicilian Defence. In particular, we see that if White plays e4 in the Dutch Defence, ...fxe4 gives Black a central majority and a half-open f-file, just as in the Open Sicilian with, e.g., 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4, Black obtains a central majority and a half-open c-file. In the Dutch, Black's first goal is usually to achieve ...e5, whereas in the Sicilian, a successful ...d5 usually denotes equality or better.

Take the position after the following sequence:

1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♜f6 3 ♜g2 e6 4 c4 ♜e7 5 ♜f3  
0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♜c3 ♜e8 8 ♜e1 ♜g6 9 e4 fxe4  
10 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 11 ♜xe4 ♜c6 12 ♜e1 ♜f6 (D)

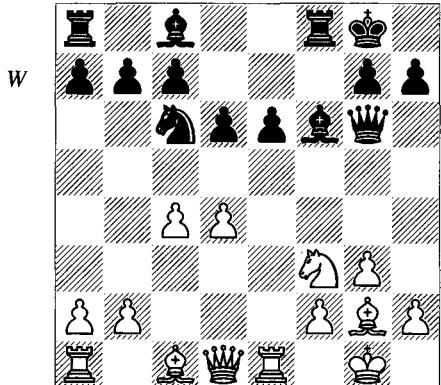


Black's corresponding weakness on d6 is further away from his normal king placement on g8, and all three kingside pawns remain on the second rank, guarding their charge.

A comparison of flank attacks is also revealing. After the exchange on d4 in the Sicilian Defence, Black has a potentially strong minority attack on the queenside via ...b5-b4. In both the Classical and Leningrad Dutch, after an eventual e4 and ...fxe4, Black's advance of his kingside minority exposes his king. Nevertheless, by the time White plays e4, Black's f-pawn in the Dutch Defence can sometimes assist a serious kingside attack by ...f4, often in conjunction with ...g5. As White's most popular and arguably most promising lines nearly all stem from playing g3, ♜g2 and 0-0, this kingside advance, combined with moves such as ...♜h5, ...♜h3 and ...♜g4, can cause considerable havoc in White's camp. I should mention that in the Classical Variation (...♜f6, ...e6, ...d6 and ...e7), Black can also play a sort of waiting game with moves such as ...c6, ...a5 and ...♜a6, delaying both ...e5 and ...g5. This time there is no analogy in the Open Sicilian, since d4...cxd4 has already been played; whereas, when playing Black in the Closed Sicilian, there would be no point in delaying both ...d5 and ...b5 in favour of risky moves like ...f6, ...h5 and ...♜h6.

From White's point of view, the two most important differences between these openings are:

- 1) In the Sicilian, he usually attacks in the centre and on the kingside; in the Dutch, he attacks in the centre and queenside.
- 2) In the Sicilian, his centre is typically under attack from ...♜f6 and the likes of ...b5-b4,



...and compare it with this common structure and piece placement for Black in the Sicilian Defence:

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♜e2 e6 7 0-0 ♜e7 8 ♜e1 ♜d7 9 ♜h1 ♜xd4 10 ♜xd4 ♜c6 11 ♜d3 0-0 12 f4 ♜a5 (D)

First, note that in all variations of the Dutch Defence, since Black plays ...d6 or ...d5 at some point, he will have a weakness on e6. Similarly, in the Open Sicilian (with 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4), assuming that Black plays either ...e6 or ...e5, he adopts a weakness on d6 (that applies to most variations, although not in the Dragon and Accelerated Dragon). In the Dutch, Black will generally have to castle kingside, i.e., on the same side of the board as his weakness, and he will lack the natural protection that a pawn on f7 affords a castled king. In the Sicilian Defence,

... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7-c5$ ; it is also subject to radical transformation from the move ...e5. In the Dutch, his c4/d4 centre tends to be fairly secure, particularly since ...g5-g4 is a risky venture; and the move ...d5 is not a realistic option in most positions (with a few important exceptions).

Needless to say, most strong players feel that the trade-offs for the Sicilian Defence are worth it as Black, whereas fewer are willing to adopt the Dutch Defence. Nevertheless, the comparison is useful for identifying the underlying features of both openings.

## Leningrad Dutch

**Beliavsky – Malaniuk**

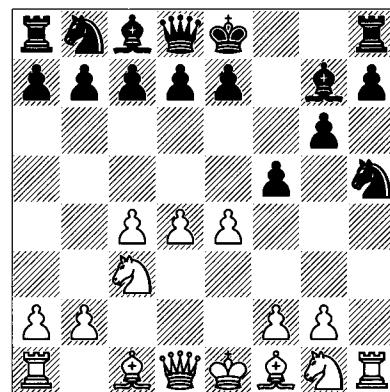
*USSR Ch, Moscow 1983*

### 1 d4 f5 2 g3

I'll concentrate upon this move in all variations; White plays g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  in a large majority of all Dutch Defence lines. On an obvious level, this supports White's ideal break e4, which will open lines for White in classical fashion. Another factor is that, with pressure on b7, Black will have to be careful in developing his queen's bishop. In some cases, it's important that White's attack on d5 makes the move ...d5 itself more difficult for Black to play, whereas the moves ...c5 and ...e5 can sometimes weaken d5 and the centre. Finally, whether or not Black plays ...c6, the bishop on g2 supports the advance b4-b5, just as it does in the English Opening. Not surprisingly, there's more to this move, but that's best shown by example.

Instead, the natural move 2 c4 can transpose, or White can go his own way. Perhaps the main sequence that Black should avoid is 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (2...g6?! 3 h4!, when 3... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 h5 is annoying, while 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 4 h5!  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  gxh5 6 e4 is worse still; compare the rest of this note) 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 (3...d6! with ...g6 next avoids the following problem) 4 h4!  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 h5!, intending 5... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  6 e4! (D).

Now there is no ideal defence against White's threats of 7  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  and 7 exf5; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (6...e6 7 exf5 exf5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  gxh5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xh5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  with a huge attack, threatening both  $\mathbb{Q}xf5+$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , to begin with) 7

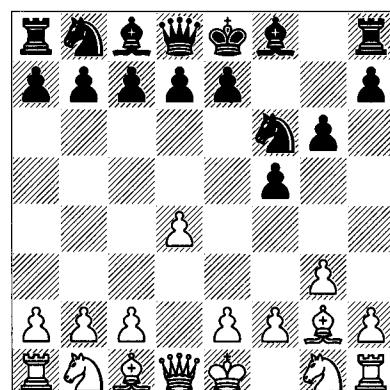


B

exf5 gxf5 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (or 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and 0-0-0; or even 8  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ; in every case, White's half-open h-file facing Black's weakened kingside gives White some advantage) 8...0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d6 10 0-0-0, and White has more than enough for a mere pawn. Always be aware of this h4-h5 possibility.

### 2...d6

Sometimes Black uses this particular move-order in order to discourage  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  lines (see below). Instead, 2...g6?! 3 h4! presents the kind of difficulties seen in the previous note. So the conventional move-order is 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  g6 (D).



W

Then apart from the normal 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 0-0 d6, transposing to the game, White has:

a) 4  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ , intending  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  followed by d5. After 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , a common defence is 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , intending ...e5. After 6 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , Black's knight can't easily be dislodged from e5; a typical continuation is 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 8 e4 fxe4 (8...d6 is also playable) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  cxd5 11

$\mathbb{Q}xd5$  e6 12  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 with chances for both sides.

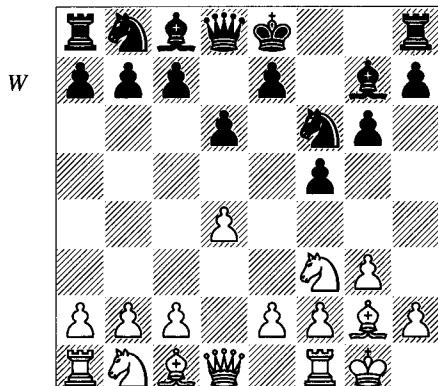
b) Alternatively, White can play 4 c3?! with the idea of  $\mathbb{W}b3$ , which both attacks b7 twice and prevents Black from castling; for example, 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  0-0? 6  $\mathbb{W}b3+$  and 7  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ . Black usually resorts to ...e6 and/or ...d5 at some point in order to get castled, with which he has achieved respectable results.

I won't say more about these deviations, but they will repay some study.

3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Now 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (with the idea 4...g6 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , looking to play d5 and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 4...e5! denies White's knight access to f4, and Black has no problems following 5 dx5 dx5 6  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ . Of course, there are options other than 5 dx5, but Black should come out all right because White's knight is poorly placed on h3.

3...g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D)



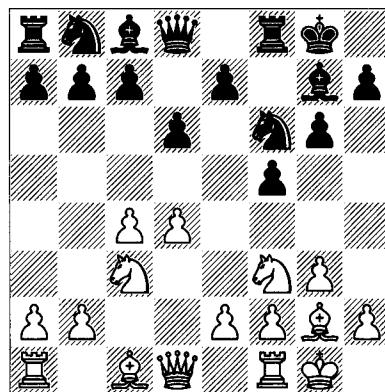
This is the Leningrad Dutch formation for Black, distinguished by the fianchetto of Black's king's bishop. It is the choice of most modern players, although the Classical and Stonewall Variations are still important. An optimist might argue that the Leningrad Dutch is an improved version of the King's Indian Defence, because in the King's Indian, Black ends up moving his king's knight in order to advance his f-pawn, whereas in the Leningrad Dutch, the pawn is already on that square! Naturally there are some limitations to that argument, but it's true that Black initially has more direct control of the centre due to the move ...f5, and if he can carry out ...e5 (almost always a major goal, especially in the Classical and Leningrad Variations), the

companionship of his pawn on f5 increases the possibility of a productive central advance.

6 c4

6 b3 0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  will be examined below.

6...0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D)



7... $\mathbb{W}e8$

This is the modern main line of the Leningrad Dutch, replacing the moves 7...c6 and 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , which used to be considered the only two respectable choices. Those moves are still important choices, of course, but I'll stick with the queen move so as to cover the essential practical details. The Leningrad Dutch is a popular system and, like others, has a massive body of theory attached to it.

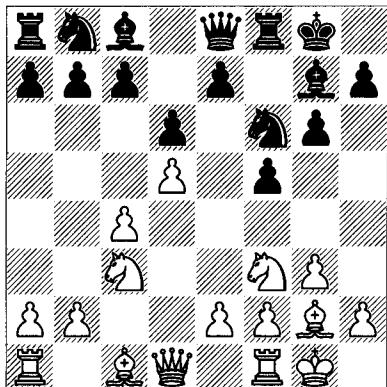
Why 7... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ? It's really a matter of timing and specifics. The threat of an early ...e5 limits White, who has to prevent Black from equalizing with that advance, and it turns out that transferring Black's queen to the kingside (usually by ... $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) can have real benefits. Black also keeps his options open, as can be seen in the next few notes. Finally, he has a concrete defence in mind versus 8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , which you will see in the game following this one.

8 d5 (D)

White's two main strategies in the Leningrad Variation involve this central advance d5 and the break e4, seen in the next game. The older move 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  has failed to produce any advantage after either 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  or 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9 cx5  $\mathbb{W}b5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 11  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  e5.

After 8 d5, if White can play  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  and then enforce the opening of the e-file, the weakness on e6 will be of decisive importance. He also has the idea of b4,  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  and, at the right moment,

B



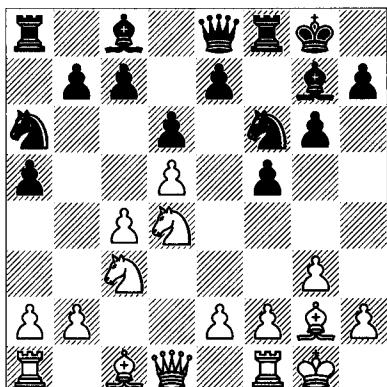
c5. Playing b4 has the additional benefit of discouraging Black from ...c6 because of dxcc6 followed by b5.

On the negative side, 8 d5 opens the a1-h8 diagonal for Black's bishop and gives him squares on c5 and e5 upon which to put knights. White's advance is also very committal and thus allows Black to focus upon a narrower set of problems than would be presented by a more flexible move.

#### 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

8...a5 is the main alternative. It forestalls White's b4 expansion on the queenside (which is a plan that can cause Black considerable discomfort following 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ), and in doing so it secures a post on c5 for Black's queen's knight. Now 9  $\mathbb{R}b1$  is rather slow after 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10 b3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (versus  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12 e3 c6. White has any number of other replies, including 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  and 9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ . I'll limit myself to 9  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , which is the most thematic move, as it covers e6 and opens up the possibility of e4. Black replies with 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (D).

W



a) 10 b3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  g5! saves Black a tempo, because in other lines he usually has to play ...h6 and ...g5, the former move contributing little to his plans. One instructive variation goes 12 e3 f4! 13 exf4 gxf4 14  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15 dxcc6 c6 16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?! f4xg3 17 hxg3?  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !, when White has problems in the face of ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . After 18  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  White has to give up a pawn by 19  $\mathbb{R}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  20  $\mathbb{R}xf2$ , etc., because 19  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! costs him more material.

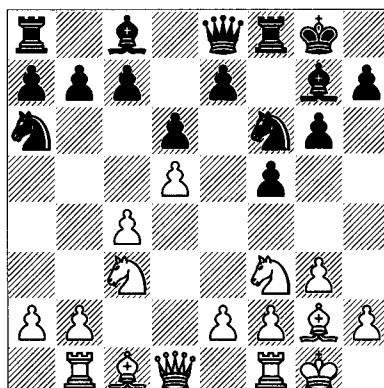
b) 10 e4 fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (or 13  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?) prepares ...c6, not necessarily immediately) 16  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e5 17 dxcc6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  b6 with equality, Van der Sterren-Nikolić, Ter Apel 1994.

Naturally, there's more to be said here, but White should probably look into his 9th-move alternatives.

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}d4$

9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  isn't bad (compare the reversed position in the Bird Opening, where it equalizes). But the most important alternative to 9  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is 9  $\mathbb{R}b1$  (D), which removes White's rook from the long diagonal and prepares b4, both capturing territory and restricting Black's pieces.

B



In this case, Black almost always gives up his kingside plans for the moment and plays on the queenside with ...c6 or ...c5. Many years of theory and practice have yet to resolve this variation; here's a brief look at two key lines:

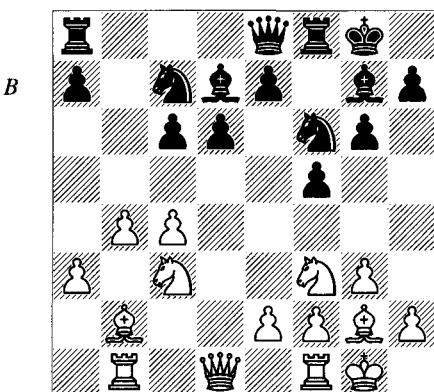
a) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?! 10 b4 c6 11  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ?! cxd5 12 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! (otherwise Black gets squeezed) 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  f4! 16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , Adianto-Kindermann, Biel 1995, and here

Kindermann suggests 16... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ; if White has any advantage, it's not much.

b) 9...c5 (or 9...c6) 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 b4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and then:

b1) The aggressive 12 b5, trying to win the c6-square for a knight, isn't terribly effective following 12...cxb5 13 cxb5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14 a4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (or 15  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  a6!) 15... $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  18 e3, when 18... $\mathbb{Q}a2?$  eventually resulted in equality in Babula-Beim, Bundesliga 1999/00, but it might have been easier to double rooks via 18... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ; for example, 19  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  20 bxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ .

b2) 12 a3 is a move that was found only after lengthy investigation. 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  and 12...h6 are also played) 13  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (D) and now:



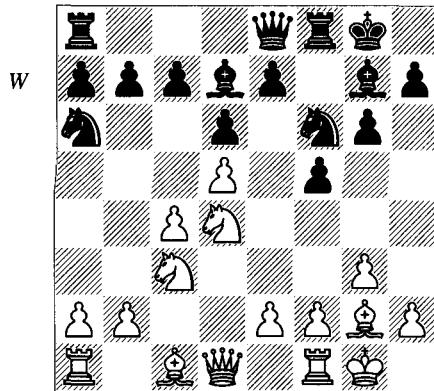
b21) 13...a5 is worth thinking about, since after 14 b5, 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  or 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  gives Black the c5-square or allows him to exchange off a white knight on d4.

b22) Kindermann's idea 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14 c5! d5! has been tested several times and seems to hold, but needs precise handling.

b23) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ? (introducing a speculative pawn sacrifice) 14  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (14  $\mathbb{Q}a1$  is a safer continuation) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?, Fridman-E.Berg, Bermuda 2003. Black is reacting to White's queenside drift by using the standard Leningrad Dutch attack on the other wing. Whether it fully compensates after 15  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  f4 16  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  g5 17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  is not obvious, but these attacks are always very dangerous in practice.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D)

Black can also increase his control over e4 by 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , but it's more direct to develop a piece and support counterplay by ...c6 or ...c5.



### 10 e3

Rather slow. The natural 10 e4 has also achieved little after 10...fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  c6. Then Black can play ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (to cover e6) and ...c5; after attending to the centre, he will often get a good queenside attack.

A positional trick that comes up a lot goes 10  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c6, when 11 b4? c5! 12 bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  secures an outpost for Black on c5 in front of the backward c-pawn. In Bu Xiangzhi-Galyas, Budapest 1999, White recognized the danger and undertook quick action to simplify: 13  $\mathbb{Q}e6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  14 dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ , when Black had a slight edge based upon his central majority. However, White can improve by 11 b3, which keeps both sides' possibilities open.

### 10...c6 11 b3 $\mathbb{Q}c7$

11...c5 12  $\mathbb{Q}de2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is also possible.

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ c5!

Black takes the opportunity to attack on the queenside. He will play ...b5 and potentially render White's c4-pawn vulnerable to ...bxc4, ... $\mathbb{Q}g4-e5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-b4$ .

### 13 $\mathbb{Q}de2$

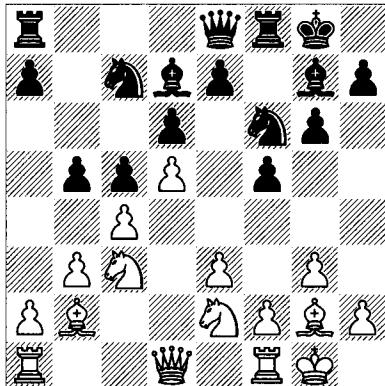
13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  places the knight on a better square than e2, but takes an extra move. After 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , White isn't threatening anything right away, so Black might continue 15...a5, and if White tries to block by 16 a4, then 16...bxa4 17  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  creates queenside counterplay. This variation offers opportunities for both sides.

### 13...b5! (D)

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}c2??$

Since White's c-pawn now becomes weak, 14 cxb5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  should

W



be played, threatening  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ . Then 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  is roughly equal, whereas 16...g5 is both more ambitious and riskier.

**14... $\mathbb{B}b8$**

Or 14... $\mathbb{B}xc4$  15  $\mathbb{B}xc4$   $\mathbb{B}b8$ , to avoid giving White another chance for  $\mathbb{B}xb5$ .

**15  $\mathbb{B}ac1$ ?!  $\mathbb{B}xc4$  16  $\mathbb{B}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !**

In quite a few Dutch Defence positions, a knight can go to a pseudo-outpost on e5 with good effect. It's easy to underestimate Black's piece-play.

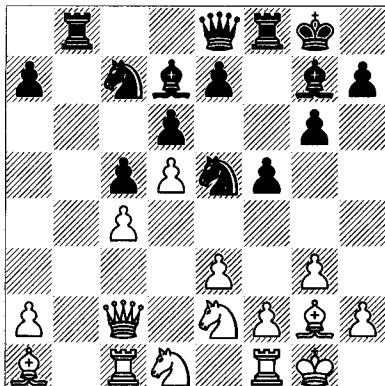
**17  $\mathbb{Q}a1$**

After 17  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  19  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ! Black wins a pawn.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ ? (D)**

White had to bite the bullet and allow the lengthy forced tactical sequence following 18  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$ !? (18... $\mathbb{B}b4$ ! 19  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20  $\mathbb{B}d3$  favours Black, but at least White keeps a material balance) 19  $\mathbb{B}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  20  $\mathbb{B}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  21  $\mathbb{B}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  24  $\mathbb{B}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  25  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{B}b2$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , which is still unclear.

B



Now Black wins material:

18... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  19  $\mathbb{B}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ! 20  $\mathbb{B}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  21  $\mathbb{Q}dc3$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !? 22  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  24  $\mathbb{Q}1c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Or 24... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !.

**25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  27  $h4$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}b5$**

A good move, although 27...e6! will either win material or further weaken White's position.

**28  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  29  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  30  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  31  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$**

It's over now. The finish is pretty:

32  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  33  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  34  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  35  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ! 36  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}fxg4$  37  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}exf6$  38  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ ! 39  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}b2+$  40  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $g3$ !+ 41  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-1

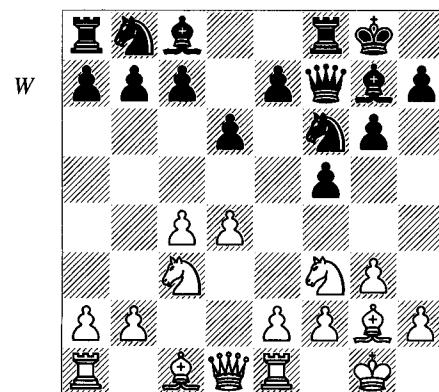
Because after 41... $\mathbb{Q}xc1$ , 42  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (the trick that White has constantly been trying to make work) fails to 42... $\mathbb{Q}h1$ + 43  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ .

**Filippov – Potapov  
Russian Ch, Elista 2001**

**1 d4 f5 2 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 g3 g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

This is more directly dangerous than 8 d5; if White could play e4 now (with Black's queen on e8), his pressure down the e-file would be deadly. Hence Black's next move:

**8... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! (D)**



By attacking c4, Black buys time to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , preventing both e4 and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . The move ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  at this precise juncture is fundamental to the fact that 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  works at all.

**9 b3**

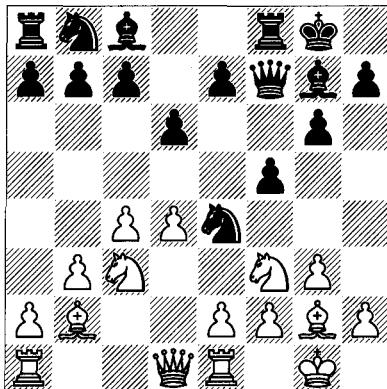
White simply protects the c-pawn and prepares e4. Other tries:

a) 9  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f1!?$  gives White active play and compensation for his pawn. Following 10... $\mathbb{W}c6$ , the position is considered satisfactory for Black; for example, 11 e4 fxe4 12  $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  and now 15... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  or 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  gives him two pawns for the exchange with the initiative. However, Neverov's suggestion of 11  $\mathbb{W}b3+d5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  is worth looking into.

b) 9  $\mathbb{W}d3$  h6 10 e4?! demonstrates how White's light squares in the centre and king-side can become vulnerable in conjunction with Black's f-file pressure: 10...fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  (with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 13 d5 (13 g4?!  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xf2+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  with the point that 14 a3?! (better is 14 g4 c6 15 dx6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ ) is met by 14... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  16  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}g7!$ .

9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (D)

B



Note how Black has taken advantage of White's unprotected pawn on f2 to prevent the capture on e4. But it's not so easy to manage everything. In the meantime, White develops his remaining pieces and keeps his options open.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black wants to prepare ...e5 and at the same time give his queen's bishop a place to go on d7, or even on f5 or g4 if Black ends up playing ...fxe4 or ...f4. Instead, 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  blocks the bishop, but has been satisfactory in practice; for example, 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (12 d5 e5!) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  14  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  c6 15  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , Zentai-Galyas, Balatonalmadi 2008. White may well be able to keep a small advantage after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , but Black's position is solid and playable.

11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  e5

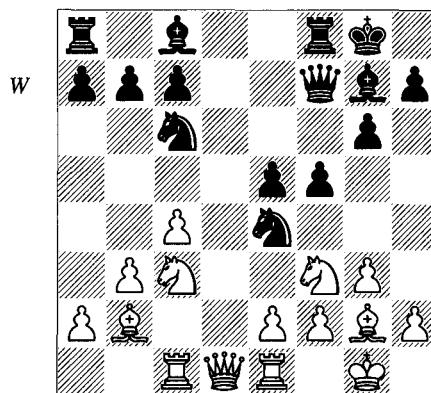
11...h6 12 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  ultimately seems to favour White, especially because 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  launches a terrific attack, with e4 coming next.

12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ ?

Introducing a tactical struggle. 12 d5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is of a strategic nature and deserves consideration by White. Then Kindermann's preference for Black is 13... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  14 c5  $\mathbb{W}e7$ .

12... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (D)

12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  was eliminated from practice by the move 14  $\mathbb{W}d5!$ . Then e5 is attacked, and 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  or  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ .



13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !?

A creative pawn sacrifice.

13...fxe4 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}xf2+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$

White's threat of  $\mathbb{W}d5+$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is coupled with the placing of a powerful knight on e4.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! has transposed in two games after 16... $\mathbb{W}e3$ , thus eliminating Black's alternative in the next note. But 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$  and 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}d2$  are also worth looking into.

16... $\mathbb{W}e3$

Here Kindermann discovered 16... $\mathbb{W}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}h5!$  with tremendous complications, which doesn't seem to have been tried over-the-board. There can follow 18  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  "and Black enjoys considerable counterplay".

17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

This is a well-known position; rather than give the latest technical details, I've chosen an older and highly instructive game to show.

**18...♝xc3?!**

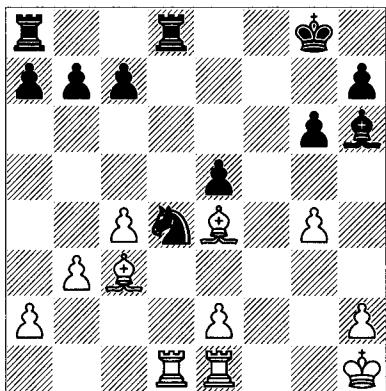
18...♝h6! 19 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 20 ♜cd1 ♜g7 has been played several times, with Black apparently achieving equality. That will doubtless continue to be challenged, but 18...♝h6 appears to be better than the immediate exchange.

**19 ♜xc3 ♜h6 20 ♜cd1 ♜d4 21 g4!**

This wins the bishop-pair and thereby establishes a clearly favourable endgame.

**21...♝xe4 22 ♜xe4 (D)**

B



The opening is over, but the rest of the game is very much worth playing over. Note how White advances every pawn in a relentless territorial expansion; this enhances the power of his bishops.

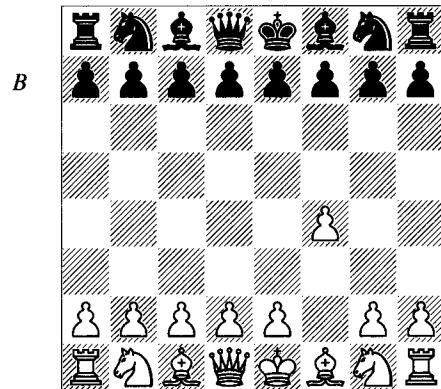
22...c6 23 b4! ♜g7 24 e3 ♜e6 25 h4! ♜xd1  
26 ♜xd1 ♜d8 27 ♜b1! ♜f7 28 ♜g2 ♜d7 29  
♜f2 a6 30 ♜e2 ♜c7 31 ♜f1+ ♜g8 32 h5!  
gxh5 33 gxh5 ♜e8 34 ♜g1 ♜d6 35 ♜e2 h6 36  
c5! ♜f7 37 ♜f5 ♜e7 38 e4 ♜g5 39 a4! ♜f8 40  
♜f1 ♜e8 41 ♜g6+ ♜d8 42 b5 axb5 43 ♜a5+  
♜c8 44 ♜d1 b6 45 cxb6 c5 46 axb5 ♜b7 47  
♜f5 ♜f7 48 ♜d7 ♜f6 49 ♜c6+ ♜b8 50 ♜c3  
1-0

## Bird Opening

We aren't done with the Dutch Defence by any means, but I want to turn to the reversed opening, 1 f4, known as the Bird Opening, both to examine it on its own merits and in order to compare it to the Dutch.

**1 f4 (D)**

The Bird Opening has never had a steady following at grandmaster level. For most players, its main drawback is that Black doesn't have to



work hard enough to reach equality. In most openings, White has an initial advantage that persists for a while and requires accurate handling from Black in order to achieve equality. The Bird Opening doesn't present that level of challenge. In addition, some players are reluctant to deal with the From Gambit, 1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6, which takes the initiative away from White in the first few moves.

Having said that, 1 f4 is perfectly respectable from a theoretical point of view and, along with other unorthodox openings, has been receiving renewed attention. Today's players have an understandable desire to get away from 'theory' once in a while; that's not always possible in standard openings because the most interesting systems include at least a few very lengthy variations which need to be memorized. By contrast, there are few truly critical variations involved if you pick a repertoire based upon 1 f4. The From Gambit is one of them: you have to study it (or play 2 e4, transposing to the King's Gambit). But this gambit has been looking increasingly shaky versus accurate play by White, and the relevant theory isn't too difficult to absorb (see the next note). The other lines that you'll probably want to master are those that stem from 1 f4 d5, a reversed Dutch Defence. For one thing, statistics show that you will see 1...d5 far more often than any other reply. Although you can always avoid playing reversed Dutch positions, it's more promising and instructive to take up the challenge and see what you can do with your extra move. In fact, many 1 f4 players also use the Dutch Defence, so the two openings can reinforce one another.

In the first two games, I'm going to look at the reversed Leningrad Dutch variations, dealing primarily with the main lines. At the same time, there are many early options, and I'll try to supply enough background details so that you can get a feel for how the opening breaks down in general, and which lines might appeal to you when playing either colour.

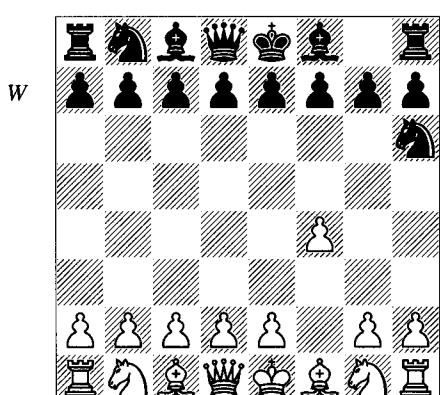
### 1...d5

Obviously, Black can do without ...d5 and thus side-step a main-line Dutch Defence position; for example:

a) Black can contest the critical e5-square by 1...d6!?, with the idea 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}g4$ . Upon 2 e4, Black might play into a line of the f4 Sicilian by 2...c5, a King's Gambit Declined by 2...e5 or choose a Pirc set-up with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 (or here 3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?). You can imagine how many independent move-orders can result from this or other slow first moves. That's because 1 f4 puts so few demands upon Black.

b) The natural 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is another example: after 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , it can transpose to a reversed Dutch after 2...d5. Alternatively, Black can play 2...c5, 2...g6, 2...b6 or another noncommittal move. The position is practically unconstrained, which is the reason so many games with the Bird Opening leave the beaten track early on.

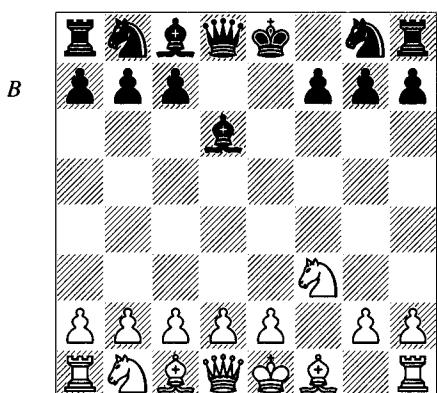
c) 1... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ? (D) is a curious way to get to unique positions.



This resembles variations of the Dutch Defence in which White plays  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ . Black's idea is for his knight to occupy the f5-square; for example, 2 e4 (2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 and now 3 e4 d5 is similar; naturally, White has solid alternatives such

as 3 g3) 2...d5 3 exd5!? (3 e5 also opens the way for Black's knight to settle on f5, after 3...c5 or 3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 3... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (or 5...g6) 6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  7 d5? (overextension) 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0-0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  with the advantage. This is analysis by Reinderman. I won't go into further detail, but 1... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is a legitimate choice.

d) I'm going to refer the reader to books and databases for a detailed coverage of the From Gambit: 1...e5 2 fxe5 (2 e4 is the King's Gambit) 2...d6 3 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ . At the moment, it seems to favour White in the main lines after 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D).



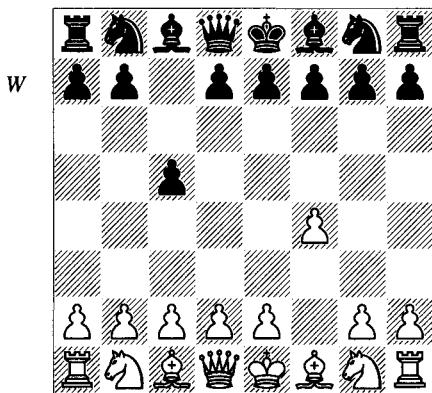
Here are a few thoughts about theory, featuring some practical approaches:

d1) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  can be answered by the slightly unusual 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (recommended by Larsen; the main line 5 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 7  $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  is a bit hard to assess; for example, after the recommended 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8 e3 0-0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5 10  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , 11...f4! 12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  offers compensation; 5 e3 opens another can of worms following 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ) 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6 g3!; for example, 6...h5 (6... $\mathbb{Q}xh2$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xh2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  has been analysed at some length and seems to favour White) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  h4 8 gxh4 (8  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  9 gxh4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10 d3 is recommended by Vigus) 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}eg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  is rather slow after 10 d4!  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11 h3; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  10 d3 with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}d2-f4$ , when White has the upper hand.

d2) 4...g5 5 d4!? (again, not the normal choice; loads of theory indicates that White can survive some dangerous attacks and emerge

with the better game after 5 g3 g4 6 ♜h4 ♜e7 7 d4 {7 e4 should get another look} 7...♜g6 8 ♜xg6 {8 ♜g2 is equally complicated, and unclear} 8...hxg6 9 ♜d3 ♜c6 10 c3 ♜f5 11 e4 ♜e7 12 ♜g2 0-0-0 13 ♜e3, although 13...♜e6 can be interesting) 5...g4 6 ♜e5 ♜xe5 7 dx5 ♜xd1+ 8 ♜xd1 ♜c6 9 ♜c3 ♜e6 (9...♜xe5? 10 ♜f4 f6 11 ♜d5) 10 ♜f4 0-0-0+ 11 ♜c1 ♜ge7 12 b3 ♜g6 13 g3 (13 ♜g5!?) 13...♜gx5 14 ♜g2, and White has two well-placed bishops with good prospects.

e) The most important of Black's positional alternatives to 1...d5 and 1...♜f6, at least in practice, is 1...c5 (D), often used by Sicilian Defence players.



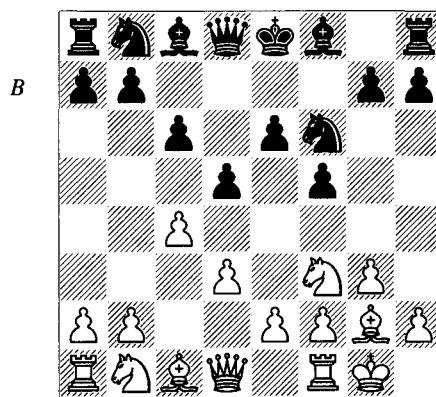
Then:

e1) 2 e4 transposes to a Sicilian Defence sideline (1 e4 c5 2 f4), but that allows the well-known 2...d5! 3 exd5 ♜f6 with the idea 4 c4 e6!, a gambit in which Black gets at least enough compensation after 5 dx6 ♜xe6. Note that White has holes on d4 and d3, while if he plays d3, then e3 becomes weak as well. What with good development and pressure down the d-file against White's backward pawn, most people prefer to play Black.

e2) White typically continues 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 g3 (3 e4 d5?! is again worth considering: 4 exd5 ♜xd5 5 ♜c3 and 5...♜d6 6 ♜e2 g6 7 0-0 ♜g7, or 5...♜e6+ 6 ♜e2 ♜d4, or here 6...♜h6 with the idea ...♜f5; compare the English Opening line 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 f5 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜c6 5 ♜e3+ from Volume 3) 3...g6 4 ♜g2 ♜g7 5 0-0 d6 (or 5...♜f6 6 d3 0-0 7 e4 d6), when White can't use the e5-square and should play along the lines of a reversed English Opening: 6 e4

e5!? (a common Closed Sicilian and King's Indian Attack theme; 6...e6 and 6...♜f6 are conventional alternatives) 7 d3 ♜ge7 8 ♜c3 0-0 9 ♜e3 exf4 (9...♜d4) 10 ♜xf4 (10 gxf4 f5!) 10...♜d4 with equal prospects.

Please forgive me a digression here. This idea of ...d6 to cover e5 comes up with reversed colours in the English Opening version of the Stonewall Dutch if Black is not very careful with his move-order: 1 c4 f5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 g3 e6 4 ♜g2 d5 5 0-0 c6?! 6 d3 (D).



This is strangely difficult for Black to play against; for example:

a) 6...♜d6 7 ♜c3 0-0 8 e4! with the idea 8...fxe4 9 dxe4 ♜xe4 10 ♜xe4 dxe4 11 ♜g5.

b) 6...♜bd7 7 ♜c3 ♜e7 8 e4 (8 ♜c2 is also good, preparing to play e4) 8...fxe4 9 dxe4 ♜xe4 10 ♜xe4 dxe4 11 ♜g5! (a trick from the Philidor Defence, among other openings) 11...♜c5 (11...♜xg5 12 ♜h5+ g6 13 ♜xg5 with two strong bishops) 12 ♜h5+ g6 13 ♜h6 ♜f8 14 ♜h4 ♜e7 15 ♜e3 and ♜fd1.

c) 6...♜e7 7 ♜f4 0-0 8 ♜c2 with the idea 8...d4 9 e3 dxe3 10 ♜xe3 grants White the superior centre and better development.

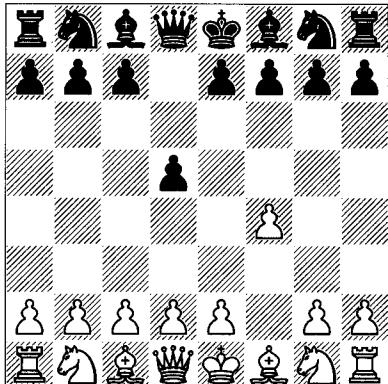
d) 6...dxc4? 7 dxc4 ♜xd1 8 ♜xd1 simply exposes Black's weaknesses.

e) Avrukh-Shachar, Tel Aviv 2002 continued 6...♜c5 7 ♜c2 ♜bd7 8 cxd5 cxd5 (8...exd5? 9 d4 and 10 ♜xf5) 9 ♜f4 0-0 10 ♜bd2 with advantage. White has the plan of ♜b3, ♜ac1 and penetration down the c-file.

The point is that the Stonewall structure emphasizes control of e4, and Black's play flows more freely once White has committed to d4.

Let's return to 1 f4 d5 (D):

W

**2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$** 

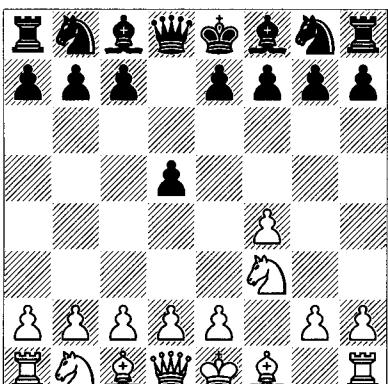
Naturally White can set up in numerous ways, such as 2 d3 or 2 e3, but it's probably worth delaying a fianchetto:

a) 2 g3 h5 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  h4! is a theme we've seen before, with the idea 4  $\mathbb{Q}xh4?$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4!$  5 gxh4 e5. Black will have a pawn for the exchange, as well as an attack and an ideal centre after 6  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

b) 2 b3  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ? is a clever move, reversing White's line 1 d4 f5 2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  versus the Dutch. Here Black is a tempo down, but the extra move b3 will sometimes hurt White's position. Just for example, the tempting 3 h3?!  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  4 g4 e6! threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}h4\#$  (here 4...e5 5  $\mathbb{Q}h2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  is unclear). Play can continue 5  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  c5 7  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  gives Black a greater share of the centre and a good chance of playing ...d4 at some point, cutting off the b2-bishop) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !, forcing the weakening 8 d4, and thus pointing to a drawback of b3.

We now return to 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D):

B

**2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$** 

2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  will be seen in the following game. A couple of alternatives in brief:

a) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  parrots the popular line 1 d4 f5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . This seems an acceptable choice after 3 g3 (naturally 3 d3 and 3 e3 are playable; after 3 b3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , 4...d4 cuts into White's ambitions) 3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (3...g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ) 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (4... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e5?! is too hurried after 6 c4! exf4 7 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ ) 5 d3 0-0-0!? 6 0-0-0!? h5 with dynamic play ahead.

b) 2... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  contemplates ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ , especially if that exchange can assist in achieving the move ...e5 with a central superiority:

b1) 3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  mimics the Trompowsky Attack move 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , and can lead to interesting positions after 3... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . Then White should avoid 4 g4? e6 5 h4 f6 in favour of a line such as 4 c4 f6 5  $\mathbb{Q}a4+$  c6 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Instead, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and even 3...h5?! are reasonable alternatives.

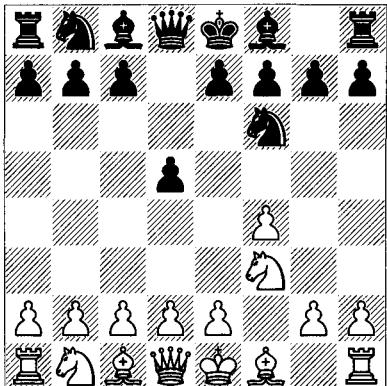
b2) 3 e3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  4 h3 (in response to 4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , 4...c6 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e5 is one of a wide variety of defences; nevertheless, 4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  holds forth better long-term prospects than 4 h3) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !? (5...e6 and 5...c6 are safe and solid alternatives, while the gambit 5...e5?! has the idea 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !?)  $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  0-0-0, when Black has a significant initiative; for example, 8 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !?,  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with active play, Hanegby-Pijl, IECG email 2001; of course, a pawn is a pawn) 6 g4!? c6 (or 6...e6 7 d3 h6) 7 g5 (7 d3 e5 8 g5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  has also been played, with mutual chances) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  8 d3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  9 e4 dxе4 10 dxе4 e5 11 f5?! (11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  h6 is unclear) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 h4, Jendrian-Boehmer, Internet 2004, and now 12...h6! breaks up White's pawn-mass, because 13  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  hxg5 14 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! 15  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}h2$  16 c3 0-0-0 brings every black piece into play.

We now return to the position after 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D):

**3 g3**

White heads for a Leningrad Dutch set-up, easily the most popular of Black's choices when playing the Dutch. We shall see a reversed Classical Dutch, 3 e3 g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , below. The Stonewall formation with 4 d4 is particularly harmless to Black if he hasn't played ...c5 yet, and gives him more options if he hasn't cut

W



off his bishop by ...e6. For example, 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !? (instead, 6...b6 with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is a favourite anti-Stonewall technique; Black is a tempo down on a normal line for White, but should still have decent chances) 7  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $gxf5$  with complex play. White has a very bad bishop, but Black's own bishop on g7 has few prospects and it's hard to open lines. Sometimes White can play for g4.

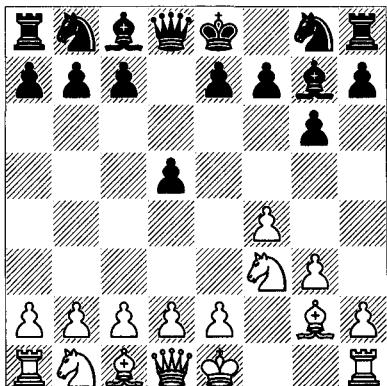
**3...g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$**

Having strolled through the initial moves, let's turn to a game. The move-order illustrates a couple of new ideas:

**H. Danielsen – A. Petrosian**  
Schwerin 1999

**1 f4 d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (D)**

B



**4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

The following two moves by Black are ones sometimes played by White in the Leningrad Dutch:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and sometimes ...d4 is a legitimate alternative. In fact, when White plays  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  in the reversed system, one of his problems is that Black will liquidate the centre and play ...e5 with a rather dull equality. But in the Bird Opening, White would like to avoid that outcome on principle, and thus may not wish to prepare e4. One way to set up would be 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  d3!? (6 e3 is less ambitious and anticipates playing e4 versus ...d4) 6...d4 7 c4 with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2$ , covering e3 and expanding on the queenside by  $\mathbb{B}b1$  and b4. In most cases, Black will play ...a5, but has to decide whether to play ...c5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , or ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  alone. Then, in most lines, he will try to break with ...e5. This is a very technical line in which both sides should have fully-fledged play.

b) 4...c6 can be slightly irritating for White. Play can continue:

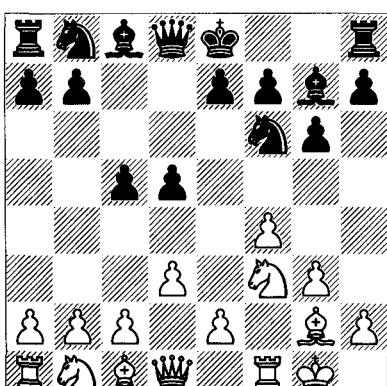
b1) 5 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6+$  attacks b2 twice and forces 6 d4, when White has a hole on e4. However, this is a structure which Black often plays in the reversed position, and rather more double-edged than it might at first seem.

b2) White can also play 5 d3, when 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$  threatens b2 and intends ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ; these positions are playable for both sides.

b3) 5 e3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 d3 0-0 7 0-0. White has various modes of development here such as  $\mathbb{We}2$  or  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , usually followed by e4 at some point. With logical play, however, Black should reach equality.

**5 0-0 c5 6 d3 (D)**

B

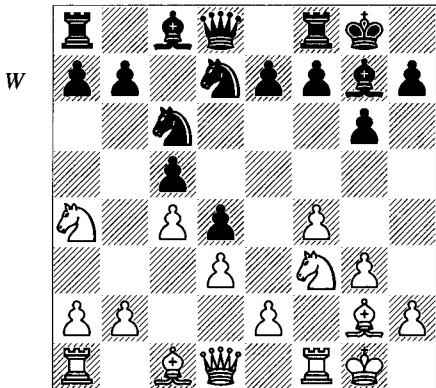


**6...0-0**

6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  will transpose in most cases, but does make the move 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3!?$  more appealing to White than usual:

a) 7...0-0 permits 8 e4; it's unclear how 8...dxe4 9 dxe4 comes out, but White has the better prospects for an edge. White can also play 8 a3, which anticipates the need for b4 and is consistent with the idea that follows. Finally, Bücke's suggestion 8 h3!? is another useful semi-waiting move, in that it assists White slightly in most possible continuations, without hurting him in any obvious way; however, compare 7  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 h3 in the note to 7 c3 below.

b) 7...d4 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (contemplating an exchange sacrifice with ...b5) 9 c4 (9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  10 f5!? is Lars Karlsson's idea, leading to exotic tactical play; this is fun to analyse) 9...0-0 (D).



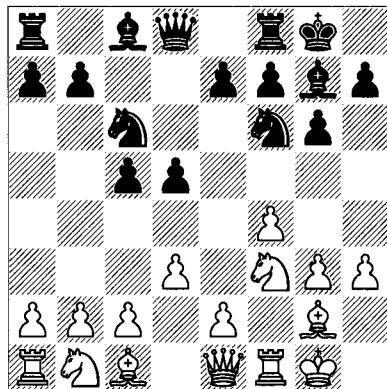
We've arrived at what amounts to a King's Indian Defence (the Yugoslav/Panno Variation), but with colours reversed and White having the extra move f4! Perhaps not surprisingly, f4 has both good qualities (increased central control) and drawbacks (central weaknesses, potentially exploitable by ...e5). Morozевич-Svidler, Internet 1999 continued 10 e4!? (10 a3 with the idea  $\mathbb{B}b1$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and b4 is another thematic approach) 10...dxe3 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  12  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  13 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  cxb4 15  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  b6 16 d4, and White may be slightly for preference because of his good centre, but that's not clear.

### 7 c3

A very flexible move-order; of course, everything is committal in some way, and White does forfeit the possibility of  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and c4 in one go. He also foregoes 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , a traditional but somewhat less popular move in the reversed

Dutch position. Then if Black plays 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , White might want to reply 8 h3, as suggested by Stefan Bücke.

After the more conventional 7  $\mathbb{W}e1$  (analogous to the main line ... $\mathbb{W}e8$  in the Leningrad Dutch), a similarly thought-provoking line is 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 h3!? (D).



In reversed positions, it's hard to make a useful move that doesn't also give Black something in return. In fact, h3 is a move that White will almost always make in conjunction with  $\mathbb{W}e1$ , since g4 and  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (or  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ) can follow and it's useful to prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  in many lines. As an exercise in reversed positions, let's see what might follow:

a) 8...b6 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (9 g4 looks premature in view of 9...h5! 10 g5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ ? 10 g4) 10 e4 dxe4 11 dxe4 is double-edged. Now 11...e5!? 12 f5!? (12 fxe5?  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ !) 12...gxf5 (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  with the idea 14 c3?  $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$ !) 13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is a standard attacking scheme seen in the Closed Sicilian, King's Indian Attack, and various Botvinnik set-ups in the English Opening. For example, 13...fxe4?! (13...f4 14 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ) 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ? 15  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  exd4 17  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and White wins (17... $\mathbb{W}e5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ).

Still, there's a line in which White's pawn on h3, and new weakness on g3, can be a negative:

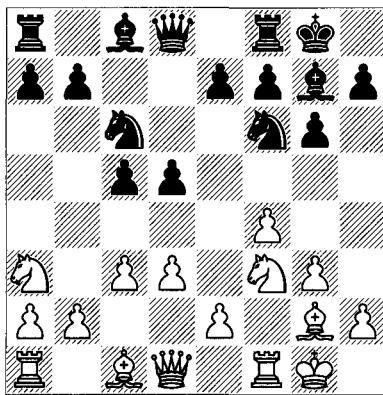
b) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  is playable; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  b6 11 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  with chances for both sides) 9...cx d4 10  $\mathbb{W}f2$  (Black in the same position – without ...h6 – plays ... $\mathbb{W}b5$  here, but White's equivalent 10  $\mathbb{W}b4$  runs into 10... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ! 11 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h5, taking advantage of

White's extra move h3; 10 ♜d2 ♛d7! also exploits the extra move h3 by threatening ...♛c8, with a double attack on h3 and c2) 10...♛d7 11 ♜a3 (11 ♜xd4 ♛c8!) 11...♝b6. It's hard to imagine that, with ...♜ac8 coming, Black has any serious difficulties here.

**7...♝c6 8 ♜e1**

Now we have precisely the ...♜e8 Leningrad Dutch with the extra move c3 in. You'll also recognize the alternative 8 ♜a3 (*D*) from the reversed position:

B



This is a position rich in strategic ideas:

a) 8...d4 9 e4! dxe3?? 10 ♛xe3 is good for White because he hasn't yet played ♜e1 and left his d3-pawn hanging.

b) 8...b6 has various answers; for example, 9 h3, contemplating kingside action, or 9 ♜e1 again. 9 ♜a4?! is thought to be a strong move, yet 9...♛d7 10 e4 b5! 11 ♜c2 (11 ♜xb5?!) ♜b6) 11...b4 looks less than ideal for White. One possible continuation is 12 ♜b1 dxe4 13 dxe4 ♜b6 14 ♜bd2 bxc3 15 bxc3 c4+ 16 ♛h1 and now 16...♝g4?! 17 ♜xc4 ♜c5 with pressure or, more surely, 16...♛a6.

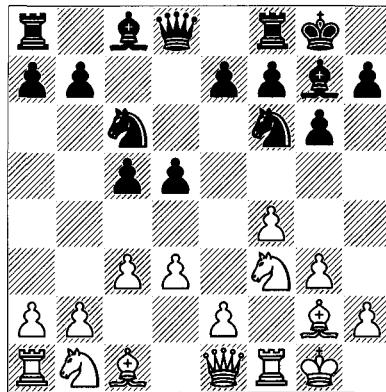
c) Danielsen-Lauber, 2nd Bundesliga 2001/2 continued 8...♝b8 9 ♜e5?! (9 ♜e1 b5 with the idea ...b4) 9...♜c7 (versus 9...♜e8, Vigus suggests 10 ♜b5?!, although I imagine that Black can play routinely with 10...♝f5, not afraid of 11 ♜c7 ♜d8 12 ♜a6 ♜c8 13 ♜xc5 ♜xe5 14 fxe5 ♜xc5 15 exf6 ♜xf6) 10 ♜a4?! ♜xe5 (other ideas are 10...♝d7 11 ♜xc6 bxc6 12 e4 c4 13 d4 c5 and 10...♝d8!, which is useful in the line 11 ♜xc6 bxc6 12 e4 c4?! 13 e5 ♜d7 14 dxc4 ♜c5 15 ♜d1 ♜f5) 11 fxe5 ♜d7 12 ♜h4! (Black has a pawn, two bishops and much

better-placed pieces for the exchange after 12 ♜f4 ♜h5 13 ♜f3 ♜xe5 14 ♜h6 ♜f6 15 ♜xf8 ♜xf8) 12...♜xe5 13 e4 dxe4 14 ♜f4 ♜e6 15 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 16 ♜f4 ♜c8 17 dxe4 ♜g4 18 ♜h3 h5 19 ♜c2. The game has been dynamically equal for some time, but here Black needs to protect against ♜e3, and blockade the isolated e-pawn, which can be done by 19...♝b5 20 ♜fe1 ♜e5 21 ♜g5 (and not 21 ♜xg4 hxg4 22 ♜d2?!) ♜c6) 21...♜f6 with a repetition.

d) An online game with 8...♜e8 shows White achieving his model attack: 9 ♜h4?! e5! 10 f5! ♜h5 11 e4 (Vigus recommends 11 ♜b3) 11...dxe4? 12 ♜xe4! (now e4 is an outpost and White is attacking) 12...♛d7? 13 fxg6 hxg6? 14 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 15 ♜xg6+ ♜e6 16 ♜xh5 (or 16 ♜b3+!) 16...♜f6 17 ♜b3+ ♜e7 18 ♜e3 b6 19 ♜f1 ♜e6 20 ♜g5+ 1-0 Danielsen-Relange, Internet Chess Club 2004.

We now return to 8 ♜e1 (*D*):

B



**8...d4**

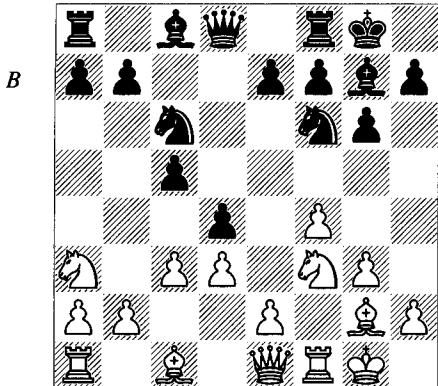
If White is a counterattacking Leningrad Dutch player, he will welcome this potential overextension and sharpening of the battle. For his part, Black gains space and cramps White's position. 8...b6 is a safe alternative, in that 9 e4 (9 h3 is more flexible) 9...dxe4 10 dxe4 ♜a6 11 ♜f2 e5! gives Black active counterplay. Then 12 f5 (12 fxe5? ♜g4 13 ♜g5 ♜c7) 12...♝g4 13 ♜d2 ♜e7 14 h3 ♜f6 15 g4 h6 doesn't bother Black. But if White doesn't play e4, Black can force simplification by threatening to make the ...e5 advance.

**9 ♜a3**

As always, White's extra move will serve to give Black himself new possibilities. 9 a4 is

the other reversed system, with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ . If Black plays ... $b5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , White's knight might come to  $b5$ . Again, however, the committal moves  $\mathbb{W}e1$  and  $a4$  combine to give Black an opportunity that he doesn't get in the reversed position: 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ , which is a safe enough deployment in any case, hits the newly weakened  $b3$ -square; for example, 10  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  not only weakens  $e3$ , but gets in the way of  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , so Black can play any useful move, such as 10... $\mathbb{W}c7$  or 10... $\mathbb{B}b8$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (or 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , since the usual 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is weak in view of 11... $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $dxc4$   $dxc3$  13  $bcx3$  (13  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) 13... $\mathbb{B}b8$  14  $e4$ ! and Black stands well after 14... $e5$  or 14... $\mathbb{W}d3$ .

We now return to 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (*D*):



#### 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$

Just as in the reversed position, Black doesn't want White's knight sitting on  $c4$ , so he removes the rook from the long diagonal in anticipation of ... $b5$ . 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  isn't so ambitious, but is safe and sound, and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is also equal. Of course, White's main idea in the Bird Opening is to get a complex battle, not necessarily a theoretical edge.

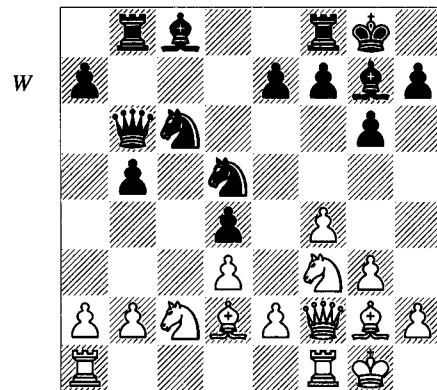
#### 10 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$

Black continues as White does in the reversed position; this lets White target his  $d$ -pawn. 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is a noncommittal and arguably better move; White might even be able to force through  $b4$ , but he's unlikely to get any advantage from a position in which he controls less territory.

#### 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$

11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $b5$  (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}ce5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  gives Black no special problems.

#### 11... $b5$ 12 $cxd4$ $cxd4$ 13 $\mathbb{W}f2$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ (*D*)



A familiar sight. Although Black had safer options earlier, it's not clear that White's extra tempo means much in this position either.

#### 14 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ?

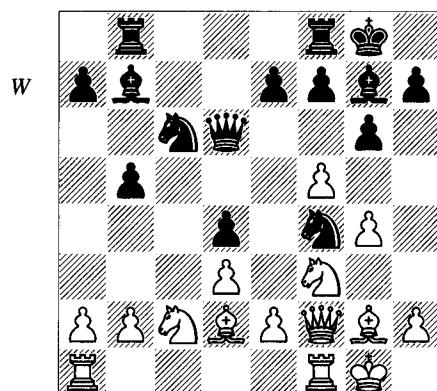
White wants to get the standard  $f5$  attack going, although he takes pressure off  $d4$ .

#### 14... $\mathbb{W}d8$ 15 $f5$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 16 $g4$ ?! $\mathbb{W}d6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ?

Taylor suggests 17  $g5$ ; otherwise the move 16  $g4$  is loosening without being helpful.

#### 17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ (*D*)

Eliminating one or the other bishop. Black has the upper hand now.



18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  20  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$   
21  $\mathbb{B}ab1$   $\mathbb{B}bc8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}a1$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{B}c2$  24  
 $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{B}fc8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}f4$

At this point, 25... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 26  $dxe4$   $d3$  would have been extremely strong. As the game went, Black missed several such opportunities, and the game eventually turned in his opponent's favour.

Let's return to the Dutch Defence and see what happens if White isn't so eager to play d5 himself.

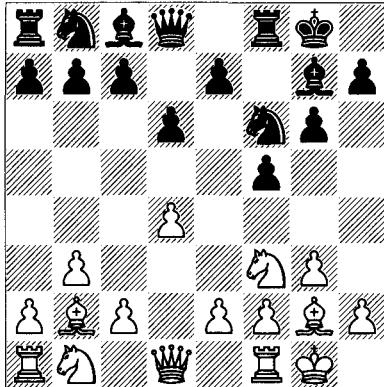
**Dreev – Malaniuk**  
USSR Ch, Moscow 1991

**1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♜f6 3 ♜g2 d6 4 ♜f3 g6 5 b3**

A popular set-up; this fianchetto can also be played after c4.

**5...♜g7 6 ♜b2 0-0 7 0-0 (D)**

B



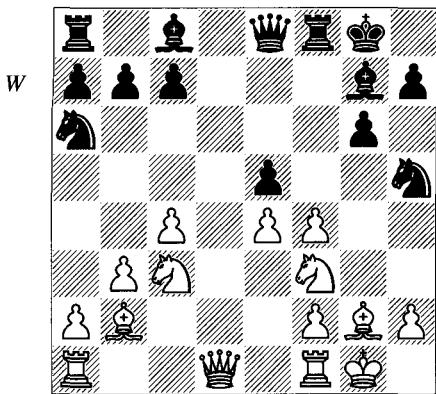
**7...h6!?**

With this move, Black anticipates a few possibilities. Directly, he wants to eliminate the combination of d5 and ♜g5. He is also planning ...e8, when ...g5 and ...h5 becomes a possibility; or, if he wants to play ...f7, the move ♜g5 won't be available. Finally, h7 can be a handy place to tuck the king away.

Of course, the move 7...h6 neglects the centre for the moment, which is a little bit risky. In place of it, Black can always play moves such as 7...c6 and 7...a5, the latter with an eye towards gaining space on the queenside. But his most frequent move is 7...e8, which bears a closer look. Then 8 d5 e5! 9 dx6 ♜c6 followed by ...x6 develops smoothly, with equal prospects. And after 8 ♜bd2, 8...♜c6 with the idea of an early ...e5 is better than usual, even if it doesn't immediately guarantee Black an even game. Finally, White's normal-looking 8 c4 has various possible answers, including 8...♜a6!?, intending ...e5; then 9 d5 c5 keeps a knight from travelling to e6 via d4, and it is apparently premature for White to embark upon 10 ♜g5 h6!? 11 ♜e6 ♜xe6 12 dx6, because 12...♜b8

with the idea ...♜c7xe6 and ...♜c8 scoops up the pawn on e6 without apparent punishment.

Given all that, White will often allow ...e5, but he needs to avoid a standard attacking theme that everyone should know, since it has appeared in hundreds of games like this one: 7...♜e8 8 c4 ♜a6 9 ♜c3 e5 10 dx5 dx5 11 e4! f4! 12 gx4 ♜h5! (D).



The point. Black's control of f4 is of enormous worth, as we see in many lines from a wide variety of openings. The game Barczay-Videki, Kecskemet 1990 continued 13 fxe5 c6 (versus ♜d5) 14 ♜a3 ♜f7 15 ♜c1?! ♜f4 16 ♜d6 ♜h3 17 ♜g5 (17 ♜xh3 ♜xh3+ 18 ♜g2 ♜e6) 17...♜g2 0-1. There might follow 18 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 19 e6 ♜xe6 20 ♜xf4 ♜xf1 21 ♜xf1 ♜h3+ 22 ♜g1 ♜xc3.

**8 c4 ♜e8 9 ♜c2 ♜a6**

Developing without getting in the way of the c8-bishop. Another function of this flexible move is to protect c7 against a potential ♜c3-b5/d5 by White.

**10 ♜bd2**

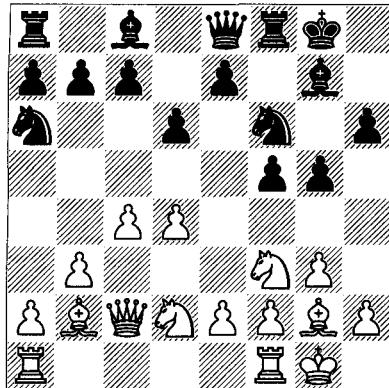
White makes it clear that his goal is to play e4.

**10...c6**

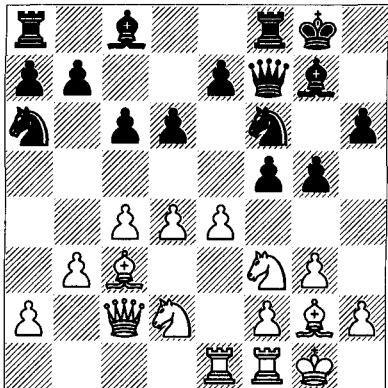
Alternatively Black can play 10...g5 (D), which is a normal part of his plan, opening a path for his queen to h5 or g6.

Skembris-Vlassis, Athens 1989 went much as in our main game: 11 ♜ae1!? (11 d5 is the obvious alternative, when 11...♜h5 12 ♜d4 f4! 13 ♜e4 ♜g4 14 h3 ♜e5 15 g4 ♜g6 isn't clear; given time, Black can continue ...♜d7 and ...c6) 11...♜g6 (to prevent e4) 12 a3 (this time, 12 d5 with the idea ♜d4 might be met by 12...♜b4 13

W



B



$\mathbb{Q}b1$  c5 14 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15 e4 fxe4 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ , which is more pleasant for White to play, but acceptable for Black) 12...c6 13  $\mathbb{Q}h1$ ?! (this looks wrong as it's generally better to have f2 covered; White's idea was probably to meet ...f4 at some point with gxf4 and occupy the g-file) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . As in many of these positions, an e4 break can be good, but the timing has to be right; otherwise White's light squares can become a little weak in combination with the open f-file. Here, for example, 14 e4 fxe4 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  might follow, with the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}af8$ .

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}ae1$

An interesting way to develop. Often White puts his king's rook on e1, but after Black's ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , he won't be able to play e4 without considerable pressure on f2 resulting from ...fxe4. With his queen's rook on e1, there's really no reason to avoid e4.

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7$

11...g5, with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , is more aggressive. Then White should probably be content with the modest edge afforded by 12 a3 or 12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , as 12 e4?!  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! gives Black enough play; for example, 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ! a5 (13... $\mathbb{Q}xa2$ ?? 14  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ) 14 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

### 12 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

It's still too early for 12 e4, which surrenders interior light squares after 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  fxe4 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4.

### 12...g5 13 e4! (D)

### 13...fxe4

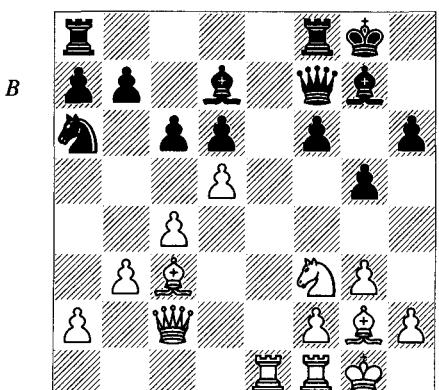
13...f4 is a thematic response to e4. Then Black threatens ...g4 and intends to sink the knight into f4 following 14 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !. In this

case, however, White is far enough ahead in development to counterattack effectively by 14 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ! (14... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  is answered by 15 exd6 exd6 16  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !, with the idea 16... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17 g4! or 16... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17 d5!) 15  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ !, intending 15...g4 (what else?) 16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  f3 17  $\mathbb{Q}dx3$ ! gxf3 18  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20 d5! (20 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  is also promising) 20...cx d5 21 cx d5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! with the idea 22... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ ? 23  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and Black's position collapses. There's a point at which space, centre, development and activity win out, even if it takes a piece sacrifice to prove it.

### 14 $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  gives White the bishop-pair and superior centre.

### 15 $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$ exf6 16 d5! (D)



This is basically what White has been looking for. He fixes the weakness on e6 and takes command of more of the board. Right away,  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ -e6 is threatened.

**16...c5 17  $\mathbb{Q}e6!$**

You'll see this sacrifice for light squares arise in numerous queen's pawn openings. Here it attacks d6 and gives White a much superior position.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}c7?!$**

Black decides not to open up a diagonal for White's bishop on g2. After 17... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18 dx6, his light-square weaknesses are almost impossible to deal with: 18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  attacks h7 and prepares  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 19  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  and Black's position is passive and depressing.

**18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$**

In return for granting White a valuable passed pawn, Black has some room to manoeuvre and hopes to bring his knight to d6 in a blockading role.

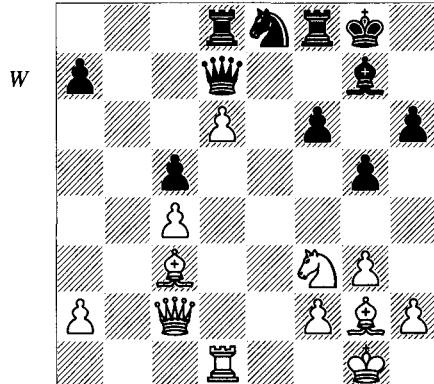
**20  $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

Good, but still better is 20  $\mathbb{Q}g6!$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with the idea 21... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$  22 b4! b6 23 bxc5 bxc5 24 d6  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ , etc.

**20... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$**

20... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  is worth a shot, to blockade the passed pawn. Still, White controls too many squares after 21  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  f5 24  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ .

**21 b4! b6 22 bxc5 bxc5 23 d6!?**  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (D)



**24  $\mathbb{Q}g6?!$**

24  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  will win: 24... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6?!$  (but 25... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  is also insufficient following 26  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  27  $\mathbb{Q}h3!$  and there's no good defence in spite of being a rook ahead) 26  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$   $\mathbb{Q}fxg5$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with too many available squares and threats.

**24... $\mathbb{Q}h8?$**

Black can fight on by 24... $\mathbb{Q}f7!$ , when 25  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  (or 27... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  28  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ ) 28  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  31  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  32  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  favours White. Now it's over.

**25  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$   $\mathbb{Q}fxg5$**

25... $\mathbb{Q}hxg5$  loses to 26  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}a5!.$

**26  $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

**29  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  31  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$**

White has five passed pawns for the piece!

**31... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  32  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  33  $\mathbb{Q}h8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  34  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  35 c5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  36  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  37  $\mathbb{Q}h8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  38  $\mathbb{Q}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  39  $\mathbb{Q}f4+$  1-0**

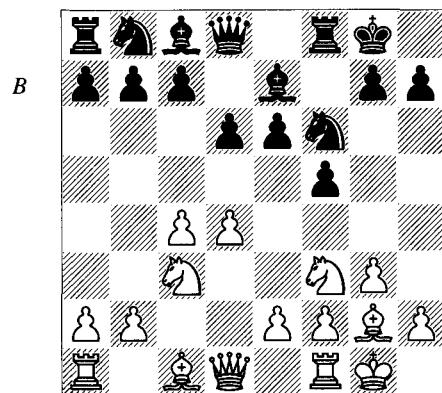
## Classical Dutch

The Leningrad may be the most popular interpretation of the Dutch, but it's not the only one, as we'll see in this game:

**De Boer – A. Rotstein**

*Wijk aan Zee 1993*

**1 d4 f5 2 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e6 4 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6 0-0 d6 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D)**

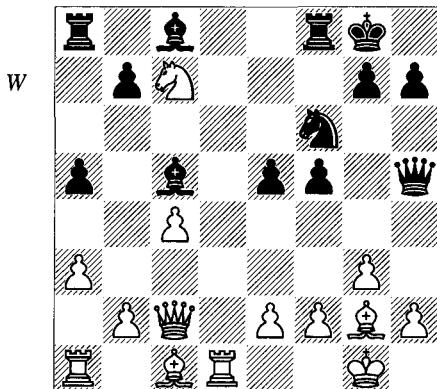


The formation with ...e6, ...d6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is called the Classical Variation, or the Ilyin-Zhenevsky Variation. It gives Black a rather cramped but solid position. White's obvious plan is to break with e4 (or sometimes d5), and Black's response is first and foremost to restrict the effectiveness of that advance. Then he can prepare ...e5 and/or turn his attention to a kingside attack. When we get to the reversed versions in the next game, we'll see that the

Classical lines are just as subject to the paradoxes of time and information as any other.

7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Bringing the queen to h5 is the standard manoeuvre in the Classical Dutch. Black has a number of other moves; for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and 7...c6. Of these, the modern 7...a5 is the most flexible. It has the idea of meeting 8 b3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ . The entertaining game Barlai-Canney, Colorado Springs 2003 went 7...a5 8  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (8  $\mathbb{M}e1$  with the idea 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  9  $\mathbb{W}c2$  is more direct) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  9  $\mathbb{M}d1$  (White wants to prevent ...e5; there's nothing wrong with this move, of course, but White has to be careful about drifting away from the kingside; he can prevent ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  by 9 a3, when 9...e5?! 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  exploits Black's weakness on e6; for example, 11...c6 12  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  13 dx6 e4 14 f3 d5 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 fxe4 fxe4 17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and  $\mathbb{M}ad1$ ) 9... $\mathbb{W}e8$  10 a3 e5 11 dx5!? (11 d5) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dx5 13  $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$  (tempting fate) 13... $\mathbb{W}h5!?$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  (D).

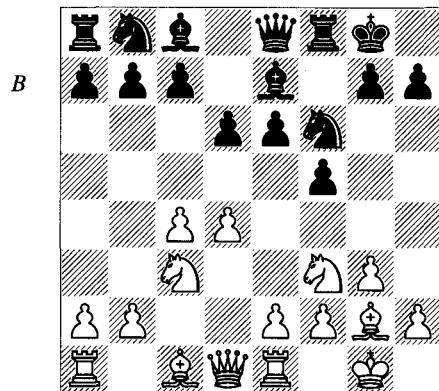


A rook sacrifice in the spirit of the opening; this type of attack is fairly common. The game continued 15 b4? (15  $\mathbb{Q}xa8!$  f4 16 e3!  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  17 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  fxe3++ 19  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ , and White has to walk a tightrope to draw; for example, 20  $\mathbb{W}e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  21  $\mathbb{W}xg2$  e2 22  $\mathbb{W}d5+!$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  exd1 $\mathbb{W}+$  24  $\mathbb{M}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  25  $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}h1+$  26  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}h5+$  with a perpetual) 15...axb4 16  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  f4! 17 axb4 (or: 17 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ; 17  $\mathbb{W}d3$  e4! 18  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}xh2+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  fxg3+; 17 e3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf2!$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  fxe3++ 20  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  and Black will win; compare 15  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$ ) 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  18 bxc5 (18 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  fxg3 is no better) 18... $\mathbb{W}xh2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f1$

$\mathbb{Q}e3+!$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  fxe3 21  $\mathbb{M}d8$   $\mathbb{M}xd8$  22  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  23 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  0-1. A great attack with themes that Black uses in a variety of Dutch Defence positions.

8 b3

The main variation for nearly a century has been 8  $\mathbb{M}e1$  (D).



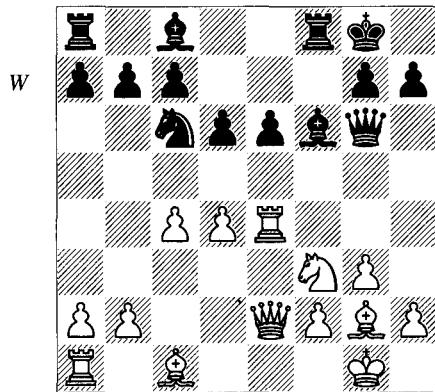
Out of the many, many possibilities, I'll give a quick overview of which lines might be the most important and/or capable of improvement:

a) 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  has a fair reputation, but I think 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d5 11 f3 should give White the nod; for example, 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (11...e3 12  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13  $\mathbb{M}f1$  dxc4 14  $\mathbb{W}c2$  is miserable for Black after both 14...b5 15 a4 and 14... $\mathbb{W}b5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ ) 12 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  13 e3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14 exd5 exd5 15 cxd5! with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

b) 8... $\mathbb{W}h5$  9 e4 fxe4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11  $\mathbb{M}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{M}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  14  $\mathbb{M}ae1$  is already clearly better for White, who has the dual ideas of d5 and c5, Keres-Simagin, Moscow 1951.

c) 8... $\mathbb{W}g6$  9 e4 (this thematic break doesn't lose a pawn due to a tactical trick on move 11; the rare 9  $\mathbb{W}b3!?$  has a good record in practice and is worth a look; one idea behind it is that 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  makes it impossible for Black to hold on to his material without large concessions, whereas normal moves such as 9...c6 and 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  are well met by 10 d5) 9...fxe4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11  $\mathbb{M}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (11... $\mathbb{W}xe4!?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  traps the queen, and while 12... $\mathbb{W}xh4$  13 gxh4  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is materially balanced, White's position is clearly better; alternatively, the gambit 11...e5!? 12  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13

$\text{dxe5 } \mathbb{Q}g4$  used to be popular, but for one thing I think that White can improve upon 14  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  with 16... $\mathbb{W}xf3!$ , based upon 16... $\text{dxe5}$  17  $\mathbb{W}e2!$  12  $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ? (12  $\mathbb{B}el$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 has been extensively tested; then 14  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{dxe5}$  is approximately equal) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D).



White has tried various ways to pursue an advantage here:

c1) The normal line 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e5! 14  $\text{dxe5}$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17  $\text{bxc3}$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is only equal.

c2) 13 d5 exd5 14 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  may be better than its reputation. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{W}xf5$ , Aagaard correctly suggests 18 g4!. He recommends instead 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  17  $\text{dx6}$  c5 for Black, but the simple reply 18  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  keeps White on top; for example, 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ?! (19... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21 e7!.

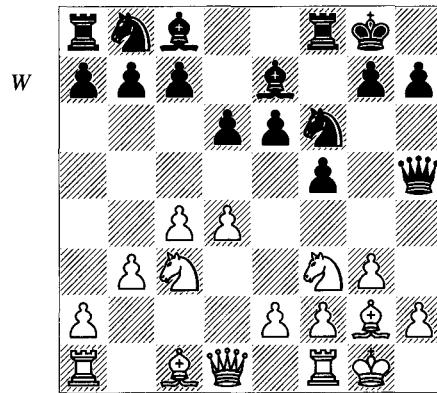
c3) After 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d5! (ceding the e5 point, but winning White's d-pawn) 14 cxd5 exd5 15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , White keeps modest pressure on Black's position; for example:

c31) After 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17  $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5, 18  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  led to an equal position in Iliushin-N.Pert, World Under-18 Ch, Oropesa del Mar 1998, but White could have secured a clear advantage with 18  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ .

c32) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !  $\mathbb{W}f7$ ! 19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5?! (19... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ) 20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$ ?! (21... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  22  $\mathbb{W}c2$  with an edge) 22  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  23  $\mathbb{W}h5$  leads to a comfortable advantage for White, Pomar-S.Johannessen, Varna Olympiad 1962.

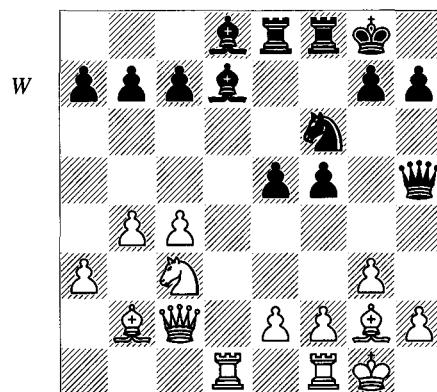
Black will have to do his own research into this main variation with 8  $\mathbb{Q}el$ . For the moment, the variations seem to favour White.

8... $\mathbb{W}h5$  (D)



9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !

One of White's oldest ideas; he exploits the unprotected state of the bishop on e7. A common alternative is 9  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ . A typical piece deployment took place in Koniushkov-Vager, St Petersburg 1995: 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  12 a3  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13 b4 (now is a good time for 13 d5) 13...e5! 14  $\text{dxe5}$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (D).

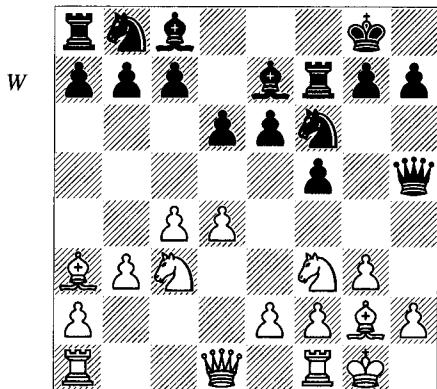


Here the game ended peaceably following 16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17 e3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  19 f4 (stopping ...f4 once and for all!) 19...c6 20  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  1½-1½. Black's idea was to answer 16  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  with 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17 h4  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ !, which seems to be justified after 18  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$ ! 19  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}g6$ . Then, since 20 fxg3?? loses the queen to 20... $\mathbb{Q}e3$ +, White is in turn forced to play 20  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ !

21  $\mathbb{Q}f1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$ , when 22... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  secures an unclear but ongoing attack. However, White can turn the tables with his own exchange sacrifice 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd7?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ , which wins the bishop-pair, cuts into Black's attack, and affords White a significant positional advantage. The only problem is that 17...e4 prevents his bishop from returning to the kingside for defence, so the situation isn't entirely clear.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}f7?!$ (D)

This makes sense, protecting e7, but it blocks the queen's retreat from h5. 9...a5 looks better, with the idea 10 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , but not 10...e5? 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !.



### 10 e3

Rather slow. 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ , with the idea of e4 or  $\mathbb{Q}d3-f4$ , would be a tempo up on Larsen-W.Schmidt in the Bird Opening game below. White should be better; for example, 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  e5! (11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ ) 12 dx5 dx5 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (or 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$  gxf6 16 e3! with a significant positional superiority.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ 11 $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 12 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ c6 13 d5?!

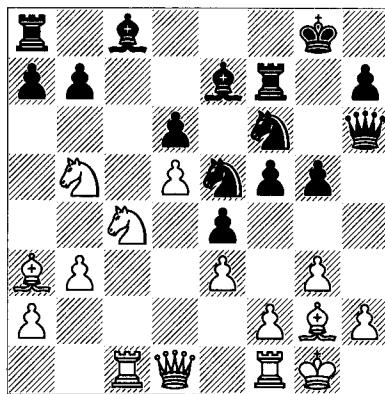
White tries to create something in the centre without delay. Allowing ...e5 doesn't appear as good; for example, 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e5 14 dx5 dx5 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  e4 17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19 h4 (versus ...g5) 19... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  with the idea ...g5 and sometimes ... $\mathbb{Q}ge5$ -f3+.

### 13...cxsd5 14 cxsd5 e5 15 $\mathbb{Q}b5$ g5

Black pursues the attack. It's also reasonable to play 15...a6, and then 16  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  or 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ ! 19

$\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  20 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , which is balanced, since 21  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  e4! may even favour Black.

### 16 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ e4 17 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ (D)



The position resembles a King's Indian Defence.

### 18... $\mathbb{Q}fg4?!$

Black can simplify the position to good effect by 18... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ .

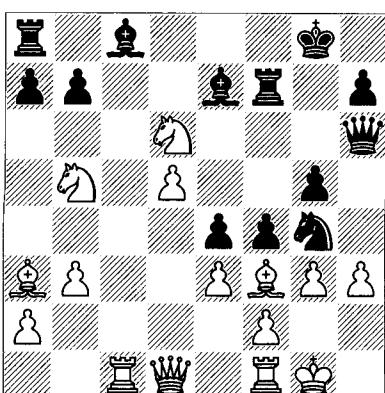
### 19 h3 f4??

A bold and thematic stroke; unfortunately, White's attack in the centre is at least the equal of his opponent's on the kingside.

### 20 $\mathbb{Q}cxsd6$ $\mathbb{Q}f3+??$

Black miscalculates. He can hang in there, albeit from an inferior position, by 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  (or 21  $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ ) 21...f3 22  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !?.

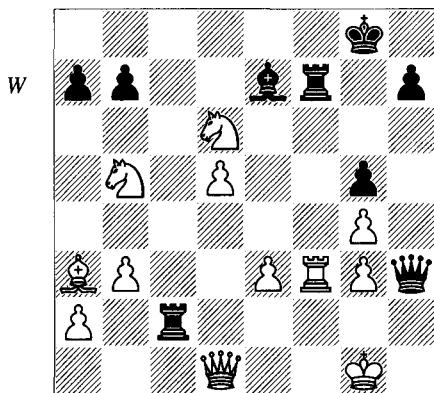
### 21 $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ (D)



### 21...exf3

Probably Black had counted upon 21... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ , but then noticed 22  $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$ !.

22  $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  23  $hxg4$   $fxg3$  24  $fxg3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$   
 25  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (D)



One last try.

26  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}c8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}b2+$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$   
 29  $\mathbb{Q}f5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3+$  31  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h3+$   
 32  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g2+$  33  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4+$  34  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g1$  35  
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $g4$  36  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}b1$  37  $\mathbb{Q}f5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  38  $\mathbb{Q}h2+$   
 1-0

Mate follows: 38... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  39  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  40  
 $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  41  $\mathbb{Q}xh7#$ .

In terms of structural issues and its variety of positional and attacking themes, the game above, with its notes, is one of the best in this volume. Try giving it a careful study.

Now let's take a look at the reversed Classical/Ilyin-Zhenevsky Variation as played by White in the Bird Opening. As usual, the challenge for White is to make use of his extra move without allowing Black opportunities beyond those already present in the position. That proves to be difficult.

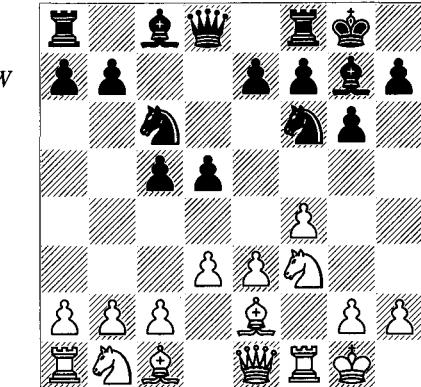
T. Taylor – Martinez  
*Los Angeles 2002*

1  $f4$   $d5$  2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $g6$  3  $e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $c5$  5 0-0  
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $d3$  0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D)

This is the main line of the Classical Dutch with colours reversed.

8  $c3$

A flexible move that covers d4, so as to play e4 without a piece landing on that square. The text-move also prepares queenside expansion by  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and b4. But it's almost unnecessary to say by now that Black can get counterplay by

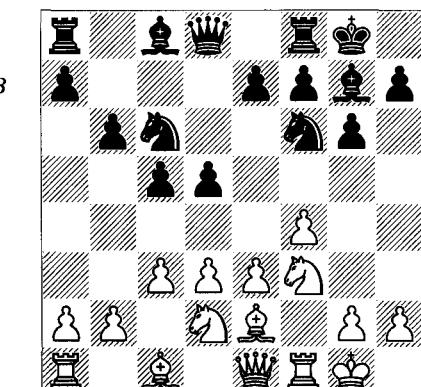


homing in on the drawbacks of White's extra move.

The Dutch Defence move 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  was well met in Larsen-W.Schmidt, Århus 1971: ... $b6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ?! (compare our last game with colours reversed; the extra move  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  isn't helping matters) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ! 11  $c3$   $e5$  (a good move, and 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  is also strong, threatening 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !, as we saw above; then 12  $e4$   $dxe4$  13  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $e5$ ! 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}axd8$  clearly favours Black) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $e4$ ! emphasizes the problems with d3, since 13  $dxe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $dxe4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?? loses to 15... $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  13  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and Black has a clear positional advantage.

8... $b6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (D)

White keeps his queen close to the centre. After 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! exploits the fact that White's d-pawn is pinned and the d3-square is weak, so achieving e4 will be difficult.

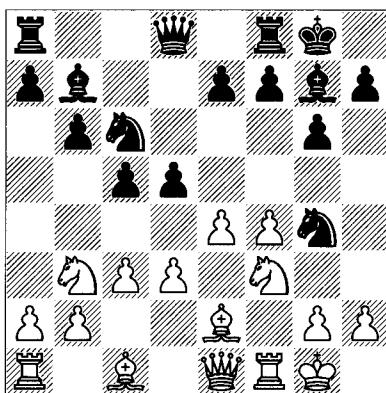


9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?

Black stands well here, and the knight's attack on e3 succeeds in disturbing White. But he can also play in straightforward fashion; for example, Taylor suggests 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$  with the idea 10 e4?  $\mathbb{W}xf4$  11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  13  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  or 13...f5. The natural response 10  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6!$  11  $\mathbb{B}b1$  is a common device on the queen-side, intending b4-b5, but apart from 11...e5, 11... $\mathbb{B}ad8$  is effective, with the idea 12 b4?! cxb4 13 cxb4  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ , and then 14 b5?  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  or 14  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ .

**10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  11 e4 (D)**

B



**11...c4**

Breaking up the centre. 11...d4 commits Black to playing ... $\mathbb{Q}e3$  in certain lines, but that's a common and effective move in the Dutch and King's Indian Defence, among other openings. For example, 12 c4?! (12 h3 dxc3 13 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  has the idea ...c4; White also gets nowhere in the line 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{B}xf7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  dxc3 15 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xd3$ ) 12...a5 13 a4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ .

**12 exd5 cxd3 13 dxc6 dxe2 14  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}fd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16 f5! (D)**

Here's this key theme again: White frees his c1-bishop, attacks the knight and begins a king-side attack.

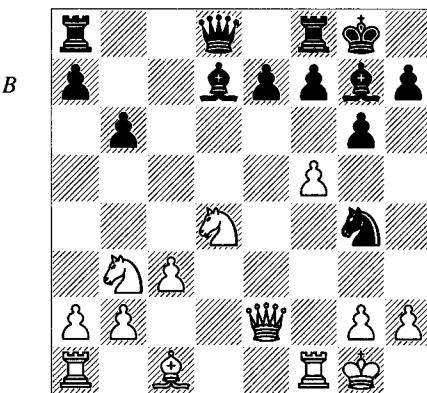
**16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  18  $\mathbb{B}ae1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{B}ad8$  21  $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6?$**

Perhaps 21...a6 should be played, asking White what he's doing.

**22  $\mathbb{B}h3$**

Taylor suggests simply 22  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .

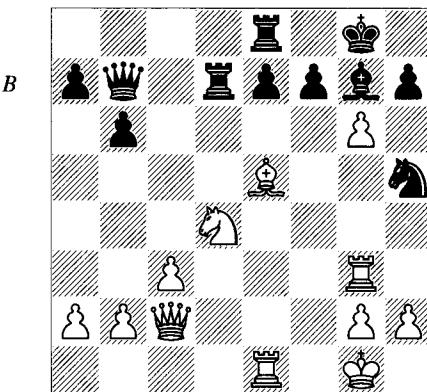
**22... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23  $\mathbb{B}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  26  $\mathbb{B}g3!$   $\mathbb{B}d7$**



26... $\mathbb{Q}h5??$  27  $\mathbb{W}xh5!$   $\mathbb{g}xh5$  28  $\mathbb{B}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  29  $\mathbb{Q}e6+$   $\mathbb{f}xe6$  30  $\mathbb{f}xe6$  spells doom for Black.

**27  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5?$  28  $\mathbb{f}xg6!$  (D)**

A nice finish that is a logical consequence of White's build-up.



**28... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$**

There's nothing to do: 28... $\mathbb{h}xg6$  29  $\mathbb{B}xg6!$   $\mathbb{f}xg6$  30  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{B}f8$  loses to 31  $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ .

**29  $\mathbb{g}xf7+$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  30  $\mathbb{W}xh7$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  31  $\mathbb{h}xg3$**

Or 31  $\mathbb{B}f1+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  32  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  33  $\mathbb{Q}e6#$ .

**31... $\mathbb{e}6$  32  $\mathbb{B}xg7$   $\mathbb{B}xg7$  33  $\mathbb{B}f1+1-0$**

There follows 33... $\mathbb{W}e8$  34  $\mathbb{W}h8+$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  35  $\mathbb{W}f8#$ . This nice game illustrates White's attacking potential, but again, the opening analysis demonstrates that White's extra move c3 fails to deliver any advantage.

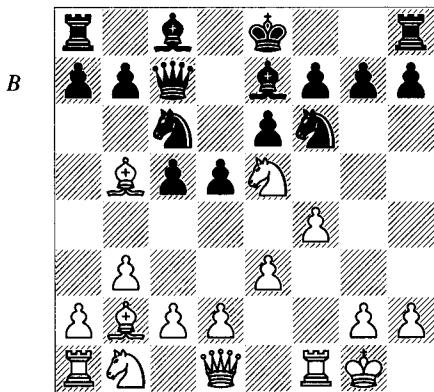
The Bird Opening can also become a reversed Nimzo-Indian Defence. I would be remiss not to show you the following attacking theme, variants of which have won many games against masters and even grandmasters.

**Hergert – Coenenberg**  
Pont 1986

1 f4 d5 2 ♜f3 c5 3 e3 ♜c6 4 ♜b5

Obviously Black doesn't have to allow this pin.

4... ♜f6 5 0-0 e6 6 ♜e5 ♜c7 7 b3 ♜e7 8 ♜b2  
(D)



This is a case of White playing a reversed Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian complex, one in which his extra tempo is extremely valuable and has no serious downside. The corresponding reversed position would arise via 1 d4 ♜f3 2 c4 e6 3 ♜c3 ♜b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♜f3 ♜e4 6 ♜c2 ♜b7 7 ♜e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♜xc3 9 bxc3 f5. To be fair, White won't usually play that way, and in our Bird Opening equivalent, a strong player will seldom be so cooperative as Black. As you know by now, he has plenty of other ways to react to White's opening, from the first few moves onward.

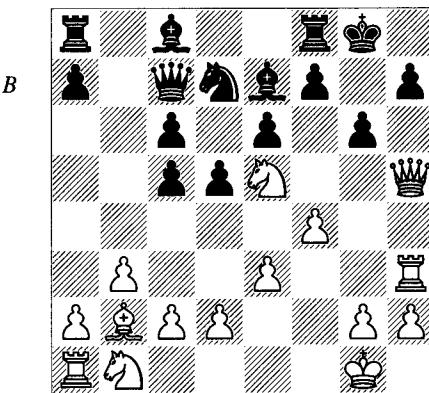
8...0-0 9 ♜xc6 bxc6 10 ♜f3

Very 'Nimzo-like' would be 10 d3 ♜a6? 11 c4! ♜ad8 12 ♜e2, intending ♜c3-a4, ♜a3 and ♜ac1 if necessary. Of course, the rook-lift targets the king, a piece of more consequence than Black's c-pawns!

10... ♜d7 11 ♜h3 g6?

This is played to prevent 12 ♜h5. However, the only correct move is 11...f6!; for example, 12 ♜xd7 (12 ♜h5 fxe5 13 ♜xh7+ ♜f7 14 fxe5 ♜a6 isn't so clear) 12... ♜xd7 13 ♜h5 h6 14 ♜g3 ♜h8 15 ♜c3 and White retains an edge because of the pawn-structure, but this should be within acceptable bounds for Black.

12 ♜h5! (D)



Anyway! This queen sacrifice arises in middlegames that can come from various openings, so it's good to know the associated tactics.

12... ♜f6

12...gxh5 gets mated after 13 ♜g3+ ♜h8 14 ♜xf7#. After 12... ♜f6, Black appears to be defending, but another surprise awaits:

13 ♜g4!!

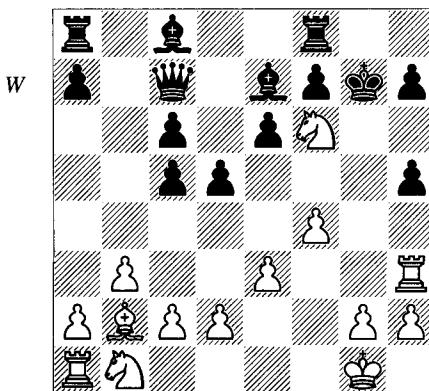
This attractive queen sacrifice threatens 14 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 15 ♜h7#.

13...gxh5

13... ♜xh5? 14 ♜h6#!

14 ♜xf6+ ♜g7 (D)

14... ♜xf6 15 ♜g3+ ♜g7 16 ♜xg7+ ♜h8 17 ♜xf7+ d4 18 ♜xc7 nabs a piece, with more to come. The win takes a bit longer after 14... ♜h8 15 ♜xh5. That threatens 16 ♜xh7#, and Black has to settle for 15... ♜g7 16 ♜xd5+ f6 (16... ♜g6 17 ♜xc7) 17 ♜xc7 ♜b8 and, for example, 18 ♜c3 ♜d8 19 ♜e4 ♜xc7 20 ♜g5+ ♜f7 21 ♜xf6, with three extra pawns.



15 ♜e8++! ♜g6

Or 15... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17  $\mathbb{B}g3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ .  
 16  $\mathbb{B}g3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g7+$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  18 d3# (1-0)  
 Try it on your friends!

## Stonewall Dutch

Finally, let's get a feel for the Stonewall Dutch, without any pretence of being thorough. This venerable opening produced some classic battles in the olden days, with Black trying to rip apart White's kingside. Today, we usually see it with a modern interpretation.

Gligorić – Tukmakov

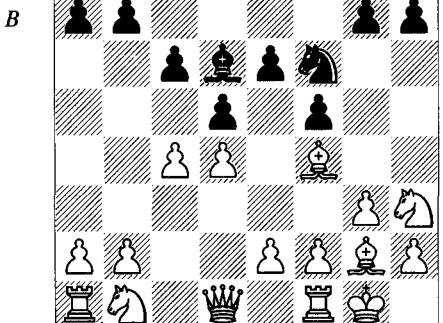
Palma de Mallorca (GMA) 1989

**1 d4 f5 2 g3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e6**

Black's move-order doesn't reveal which system he is heading for, which makes the following note significant.

**4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

White commits to playing the main line against either the Classical or Stonewall, according to Black's preference. As in other Dutch variations, this knight can also go to h3 by, for example, 4 c4 d5 5  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c6 6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (D).



**7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ !?** (a shrewd idea: Black wants to show that White's knight has no good square other than f4, which is now occupied by his bishop; retreating loses time, but Black will gain it back if White moves his bishop again, and sometimes Black can play an effective ...g5) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (obviously not the only move; upon 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , Johnsen and Bern like 8... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ! with a

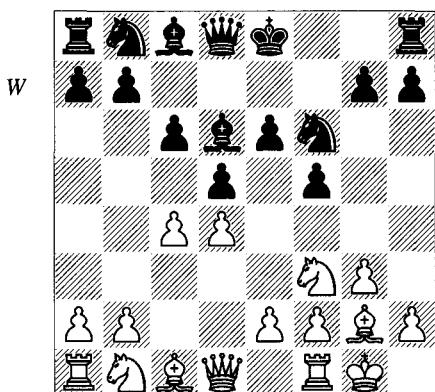
double attack on d4 and b2; then 9 cxd5 cxd5 10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  can be met by their suggestion 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  intending ... $\mathbb{Q}a4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , or 10...a5) 8...0-0 9  $\mathbb{W}d3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10 a3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11  $\mathbb{B}ac1$ . Black stands solidly, but White has more positive prospects.

Actually, if Black wants to play a Stonewall Variation after 4 c4, he can avoid such problems with the clever move 4...c6. This is designed to prevent  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ , since Black preserves the idea of booting the knight with ...d6 and ...e5; for example, 5  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 0-0 0-0 and now 7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d6, or 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d6 intending an early ...e5. Instead, 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 reverts to a normal Stonewall.

**4...d5 5 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

This active move has largely overtaken the older 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  in popularity, so we'll focus on it. 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  is still viable, however, and might even have some surprise value.

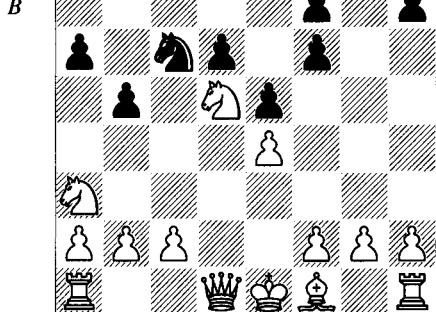
**6 c4 c6 (D)**



This is the starting position of the modern Stonewall Dutch. It has a rather anti-positional look to it, because Black's bishop on c8 is already very bad (even if he achieved ...e5, the pawn on f5 would be in its way). White also has the wonderful e5 outpost available to his pieces. In view of this, it's not easy to explain why the Stonewall Dutch is a respectable defence at all, but let's tackle the issue of that bishop on c8 first. Kramnik, who has played the Stonewall, defends the honour of that piece with the simple statement that it is no worse than White's bishop on g2! By this he means that White's fianchettoed bishop has virtually no scope as it runs into the 'stone wall' of

Black's pawns, which guard both e4 and d5 twice. In addition, White can hardly suppress the development of the c8-bishop forever. In normal practice, it will often come to b7 (or a6) after ...b6 or to h5 after ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-e8$ . The activation of this piece corresponds to what I think should be a chess mini-rule: that the earlier one assumes weaknesses or bad pieces, the more likely they are to be manageable problems, or not problems at all.

As for that outpost on e5, it is indeed a negative feature of Black's position. But in modern chess we can often accept a central weakness in return for other factors. For example, in the Sveshnikov Sicilian (and other variations of the Sicilian going back to the Boleslavsky), Black accepts a weakness on d5: 1 e4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5 6  $\mathbb{Q}db5$  d6 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  b5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 10  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (D).



From this point, ignoring the details (which will be familiar to many players), White can in most cases only reinforce his outpost on d5 by moving his a3-knight to e3 via c2, completing an elaborate journey of six moves with that one piece. Black will usually put his good bishop on e6, from where it helps to contest the outpost.

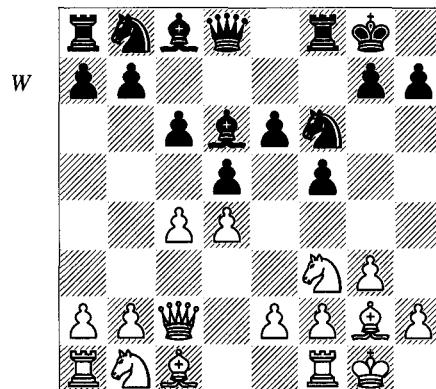
Returning to the diagram of the Dutch Stonewall after 6...c6, we find that in practice, White will have to make a similarly arduous trip with his queen's knight if he wishes to reinforce e5; for example, by  $\mathbb{Q}a3-c2-e1-d3$ . Black's bishop on d6 is analogous to his bishop on e6 in the Sicilian. Furthermore, in the Sveshnikov, Black's bad bishop will go to g7 and he will work around the outpost on d5 by playing ...f5. In the

Stonewall, Black very often plays ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  and ...c5. Well, it would be stretching things to claim too much for the analogy, because other factors in these positions obviously differ. But the Sicilian and Dutch Defences (whose first moves are mirror images of one another) share the principle that you can live with one significant enemy outpost in your midst.

Finally, returning to the virtues of the Stonewall Dutch, a black knight on e4 can be very powerful. True, that square isn't an outpost, as is White's e5, but White finds it difficult to expel the intruder. If he plays, for example,  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  and f3, then the pawn on f3 renders White's king's bishop particularly unimpressive, and a subsequent e4 has to be very carefully planned, because the d4-square can prove particularly vulnerable to ...c5 and ...e5 attacks.

### 7 b3

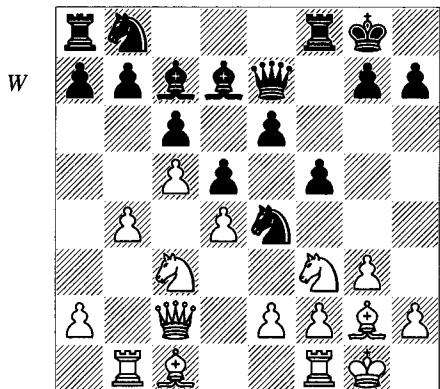
White pursues his best-known strategy: to exchange Black's good bishop on d6 by means of  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and thus strengthen his control of e5. He can also fortify that square by means of  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ . Let me show two instructive battles beginning with 7  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (the queen protects c4 from capture and potentially works along the c-file) 7...0-0 (D), and now:



a) 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  pursues a similar policy of exchanging off Black's good bishop: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  9 gxf4 (at first, the doubled pawns appear to assist in controlling key squares) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11 e3 (White's central pawns are on the colour opposite his remaining bishop, but again, that 'good' bishop hasn't much influence) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is fine for Black, who can

combine ... $\mathbb{A}e8-h5$  with the strategy that follows) 12... $\mathbb{A}h8!$  (this is the standard plan after ... $\mathbb{A}xf4$ : Black wants to prise open the g-file by ... $\mathbb{B}g8$  and ... $\mathbb{g}5$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{B}g8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{g}5$  15  $cxd5$   $exd5$  16  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (both sides have awful bishops) 17  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $g4?$ ! (Black should be holding the balance after 17... $gxf4$  18  $exf4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  with ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , with ... $\mathbb{W}h4$  when possible) 18  $fxg4$   $fxg4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20  $f5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21  $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  Portisch-Short, Reykjavik 1987.

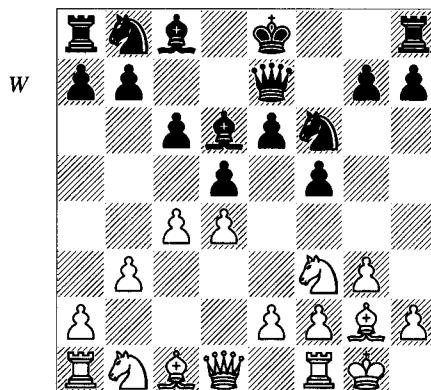
b) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  9  $\mathbb{B}b1!$  (White intends b4-b5; this is his best plan in several Stonewall positions) 9... $\mathbb{W}e7$  (9... $a5$  10  $a3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  and now 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  has favoured White, who follows simply with b4-b5, while 12 b4 is also logical; 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  with the idea 10 b4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $b5?$  looks interesting) 10 b4 (or 10 c5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11 b4 with an edge) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ! (Black initiates his ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-h5$  kingside plan, but most likely something slower like 10... $a6$  is sounder) 11 c5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (D).



Black's attack on the kingside is lagging behind White's on the other wing. Kastanieda-Ulybin, Russia Cup, Krasnoiarsk 1998 continued 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4?$ ! (simply 12 a4! and b5 looks correct, and seems to give White the better of it; perhaps he feared ... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  and ... $f4$  at some point, but Black lacks the forces to make that effective) 12... $\mathbb{A}xf4$  13  $gxf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{B}b3?$ ! (14  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{A}h5$  15 f3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16  $\mathbb{W}xc3$  is unclear; both bishops are mediocre, and Black's attack is no longer a threat to White) 14... $\mathbb{A}h8$  15 a4 a6 16  $\mathbb{B}fb1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17 b5 axb5 18 axb5  $\mathbb{A}h5$  19 bxc6 bxc6 20  $\mathbb{B}b7?$ ! (White has finally managed to break through, but Black is ready as

well; Schipkov suggests 20  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ , when 20... $g5?$  is messy) 20... $\mathbb{A}xf3$ ! 21  $\mathbb{A}xf3$   $g5!$  22 e3? (22  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  with the idea 22... $fxe4$  23 f5! grants some counterplay on account of 23... $exf5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $exd5$  25 c6 or 23... $\mathbb{B}xf5$  24  $\mathbb{B}c7!$ , although then 24... $g4!$  threatens ... $\mathbb{B}h5$  followed by ... $\mathbb{W}h4$ ) 22... $gxf4$  23  $exf4$   $\mathbb{B}g8+$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}g7!$  (suddenly White can't defend) 25  $\mathbb{B}e1$   $\mathbb{B}a3!$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $fxe4$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$  28  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  0-1. White is already a piece down, and 28... $\mathbb{B}h3$  threatens 29... $\mathbb{B}xh2+!$  30  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}h6#$ .

7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  (D)



Black develops and stops ... $\mathbb{A}a3$ .

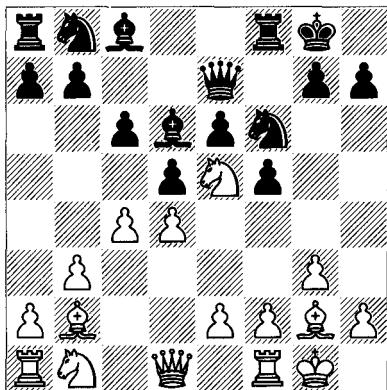
8 a4

White insists upon trading bishops, but this comes at the cost of a queenside hole on b4. Naturally, 8  $\mathbb{B}b2$  is also played, sometimes with the idea of  $\mathbb{W}c1$  and  $\mathbb{A}a3$ . Then a strange-looking but important main line goes 8...0-0 9  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $b5?$ !. Black's idea is to respond to 10  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with 10... $b4$ , and to 10  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  with 10... $a5$ .

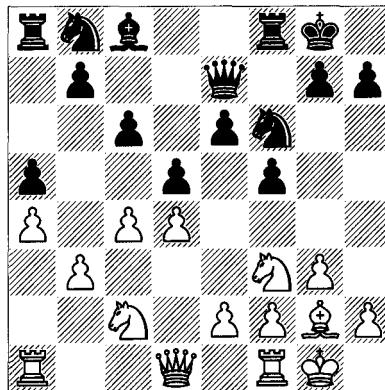
8  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  is a critical attempt to upset the balance in the Modern Stonewall. 8...0-0 9  $\mathbb{B}b2$  (D) and now:

a) After the normal-looking 9... $b6$ , White gets to demonstrate his main idea: 10  $cxd5$ , when after the natural 10... $exd5?$ ! 11  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  White finally gets to use the g2-bishop that Kramnik insulted! This tactic eliminates Black's dark-squared bishop while leaving White's on the board; after 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , an effective sequence is Johnsen and Bern's 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  a5 15  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , when White has a useful bishop-pair and good queenside play. Therefore Black has to make a structural concession by 10... $exd5$ , although this may

B



B



not be too great a problem. After 11  $\mathbb{W}c2$ , Johnsen and Bern suggest 11... $\mathbb{A}e6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{E}c8$  and perhaps ... $\mathbb{A}xe5$ , rather than the immediate 11... $\mathbb{A}xe5$ !?! 12 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  13  $\mathbb{A}a3$  c5 14 f3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with excellent central pressure and a substantial advantage to White.

b) Instead of all this, Moskalenko prefers not to weaken Black's queenside and has played 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5 on several occasions. His idea is some combination of ...a4 and ... $\mathbb{A}e4$ , worrying about his queen's bishop later. It seems a workable remedy.

#### 8...a5

Black duly proceeds to fix the weakness on b4. Johnsen and Bern designate 8...0-0 as '?!', and in the game Kasparov-Short, Rapid match (game 1), London 1987, after 9  $\mathbb{A}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ , they also disapprove of 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ . However, it's not clear where they think White should have improved following 11 a5 b6 ('!= according to Schipkov) 12  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  13  $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{A}b7$  (Schipkov gives 13... $\mathbb{A}a6$  "with pressure"; this looks fine) 14 b4?! (14 e3 is better, although Black stands nicely after 14...bxa5 15  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  dxc4 16 bxc4  $\mathbb{A}a6$ ) 14...bxa5 15 bxa5  $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fb1$ , and here 16... $\mathbb{A}a6$ ! would favour Black. So 8...0-0 appears to be a legitimate alternative.

#### 9 $\mathbb{A}a3$ $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ 0-0 11 $\mathbb{Q}c2$ (D)

A basic position. Now Black tries to get his problem bishop into play. His queen's knight has b4 in its sights.

#### 11...b6 12 $\mathbb{Q}ce1$

This is a standard idea, to put both knights in touch with the superb outpost on e5. Nevertheless, Black stands very solidly, and apart from a

knight on b4, one on e4 will be hard to drive away without concessions.

#### 12... $\mathbb{A}b7$ 13 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$ 14 $\mathbb{W}c1$

We're in one of the main lines of the Stonewall, and 14  $\mathbb{W}c1$ , 14 e3, 14  $\mathbb{Q}fe5$  and 14  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  have all been tried. The first three are well answered by 14...c5, and the last by 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ .

#### 14...c5! 15 $\mathbb{W}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !? 16 $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ $\mathbb{Q}fd8$

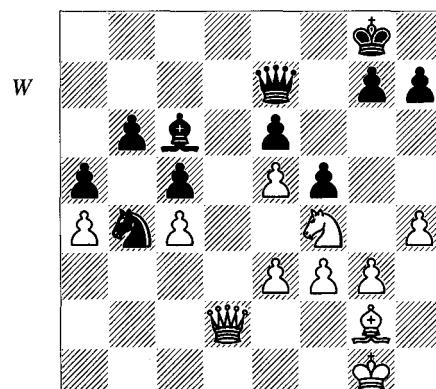
16...cxd4 with ... $\mathbb{Q}ac5$  to follow is a satisfactory alternative. The play around this point of the game is balanced.

#### 17 e3 $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 19 $\mathbb{Q}f4$ dxc4 20 bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 21 f3 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}d2$ $\mathbb{Q}cd8$ 23 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 24 h4?

Allowing an unfavourable simplification. 24  $\mathbb{Q}fd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  was roughly equal.

#### 24... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ 25 dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! (D)

The a-pawn can't be defended.



28 e4  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  29 exf5  $\mathbb{W}d7$ !? 30  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d1$ ! 31  $\mathbb{W}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  32 fxg6 a4 33  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a3 34 e7  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  35  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  36 cxd5 a2 37 d6 a1 $\mathbb{W}$  0-1

## King's Indian Attack

The King's Indian Attack is a simple system involving the moves  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , g3,  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 0-0 and d3, which can be played against nearly any set-up by Black. In most cases, the moves  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  and e4 follow, and in fact some lower-rated players will make those moves without thinking.

Lovers of chess and readers of Volume 2 understand that the King's Indian Defence is one of the most popular and exciting of Black's defences. And yet the King's Indian Attack, which reverses the King's Indian and even gains an extra move for White, is rarely played by grandmasters, international masters, or national masters, and its use is discouraged for most students by their teachers. That seems surprising at first, but by now you can probably guess what's going on: almost any logical defence by Black equalizes, all the more so ones that don't try for an advantage, and it's hard to find lines where White poses real problems to his opponent. That's not what White wishes for in the opening.

Again, the standard characteristics of reversed openings apply. First, Black is able to adjust to the new information that White gives him with his extra move, especially because the King's Indian Defence is mainly a reactive and counterattacking opening. It's worth noting in that regard that the defining moves of the King's Indian Attack (listed above) give White little direct control of the centre, nor even pieces with much scope; suddenly it's not so surprising that strong players aren't interested in it!

Incidentally, another such opening is the classical Colle system, which begins with the moves d4,  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , e3, c3,  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d3/e2$  and 0-0 in some order. It's practically unknown in modern grandmaster play. With reversed colours, assuming that the game begins 1 d4 d5, those moves make up the Semi-Slav, which is probably Black's most popular and dynamic response to 1 d4 in today's chess, and is used by many of the world's elite! The same reasons apply: versus the Semi-Slav, White has to play aggressively and allow sharp positions if he wants to claim any advantage. Against the Colle, by contrast, Black can equalize in any number of ways; after all, by move 7, White has managed

to put only one pawn on the 4th rank and has given himself a bad bishop on c1 which already can't move!

Returning to the King's Indian Attack, we find that, much as with the Bird/Dutch duo, Black needn't even play modestly to secure equality. Remarkably, he can use most of the formations that are main lines when White uses them with colours reversed, even though those are aggressive and committal. Let's look at some games and see how that can be.

### Larsen – Ljubojević Bugojno 1978

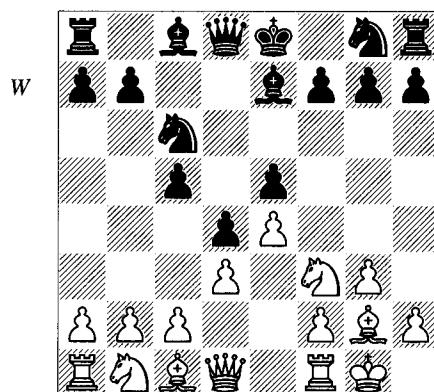
1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 g3 c5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  4 0-0 e5

Black is cooperating by setting up a big centre and daring White to use the attacking methods employed in the King's Indian Defence. You can argue that if this doesn't favour White, no other logical defensive set-up by Black will. In reply, White might say that the King's Indian Attack, like the Bird Opening, is not designed to produce an advantage, but only a game with chances for both sides.

5 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Black has a particular idea in mind that depends upon him *not* having the standard move ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  in. In the next game, Black plays 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and makes similar adjustments a few moves later.

6 e4 d4 (D)



7 a4

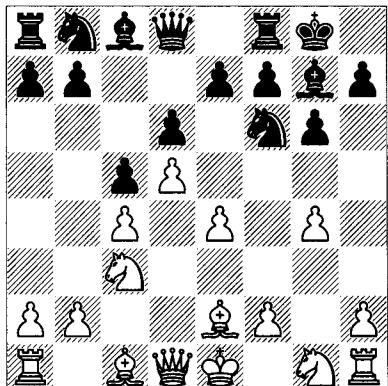
This secures a spot for White's knight on c4, as we often saw in the King's Indian chapter of Volume 2. If White wants to avoid what happens

next, he could speed things up by 7  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ . Then 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (7...g5!?) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  f6 is a playable set-up) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  9 a4 compares well with the game, although Black is not objectively worse, and apart from the conventional 9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  might even pursue the idea of 9...h5!?. For example, 10 h4  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ? 11  $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with the idea of trapping the queen and winning the piece back after 12... $\mathbb{W}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  15  $\mathbb{W}axd1$ ) 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  (or the similar 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12 dxc4  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  13 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$ ) 12 hxg5 (12  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ !?) f6 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  is dynamically balanced) 12... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ , planning some combination of ...h4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ -g6. This appears to yield at least equal chances.

#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?

This unusual flank thrust is a possibility afforded by the fact that Black hasn't played ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . Whether this equalizes or not (and it seems to do so handily), he is playing upon White's extra tempo to create new chances for himself. In fact, this is the case in more ways than one: compare the analogous situation in the King's Indian Defence following 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 e4 d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 6 g4, when Black's traditional recipe is 6...c5, to strengthen the effect of his bishop on the long diagonal after 7 d5 (*D*).

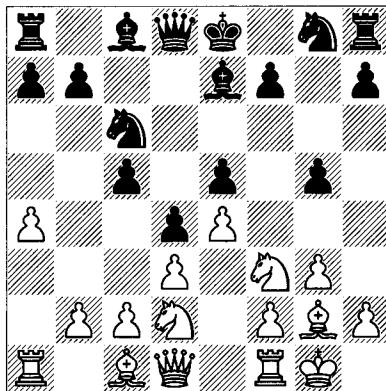
B



For example, 7...e6 and ...exd5 can follow, with Benoni-like themes. The move ...c5 would make little sense if ...e5 were already in; for one thing, Black's knights wouldn't have access to c5, as White's do (to c4, that is) in the main game. Thus White's extra move e4 in our main game, while obviously good in some respects, becomes a mixed blessing.

#### 8 $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ (*D*)

B



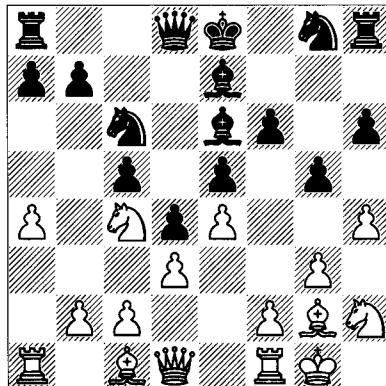
#### 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

Not bad, but a direct attack appears more promising, and provides justification for 7...g5: 8...h5 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  f6. Now 10 h4!? is an attempt to halt Black's advance. There can follow 10...g4!? 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12 f4! gxf3 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  with a dynamic balance. Another approach is 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !?,  $\mathbb{W}d7$  12 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  fxe5 14  $\mathbb{W}e2$  g4 15  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0-0 16 f4!?, gxf3 17  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18  $\mathbb{W}f5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ !?, 19  $\mathbb{W}e6$ , which apparently leaves White with a positional edge, but he may not be able to do anything with it after 19...h4 20 gxh4 (20  $\mathbb{W}f5$ !?) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  21  $\mathbb{W}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ .

There's a lot to think about in these variations.

#### 9 $\mathbb{Q}c4$ f6 10 h4 h6 11 $\mathbb{Q}h2$ ! (*D*)

B



A trick directly out of the King's Indian playbook.

#### 11...gxh4?!

11...h5 12 ♜f3!? (12 ♜f3 ♜g4) and now 12...♜f7 looks all right for Black. Instead, White seems to gain a small and rather unstable edge from the lengthy line 12...g4 13 ♜e2 f5!? 14 exf5 ♜xc4 15 dxc4 e4 16 ♜e1 ♜d7 17 ♜f1 ♜xf5 18 ♜g2 ♜f6 19 ♜g5 0-0-0 20 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 21 ♜xe4.

### 12 ♜h5+ ♜d7 13 ♜xh4 f5

Ljubojević gives 13...h5!? 14 ♜f3 ♜h6, presumably counting upon 15 ♜xh6! ♜xh6 16 ♜h3!? f5!? 17 ♜fxe5+ ♜xe5 18 ♜xe5+ ♜c7 19 ♜f4 ♜g5 to hold. Then 20 ♜f7+ ♜xf4 21 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 22 exf5 ♜d7 23 gxf4 ♜f8 24 ♜ae1 yields something for White, perhaps not enough to win with.

### 14 ♜h5+!

14 ♜h3! fxe4 15 ♜g4! ♜c7 16 ♜h5 is far from obvious, but seems to favour White.

### 14...♜f6 15 ♜e2 fxe4 16 dxe4?!

White should accept the slightly worse position after 16 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 17 ♜xe4 ♜xc4 18 dxc4 ♜g8! 19 b3 ♜h7.

### 16...♜g8 17 b3 h5!

Black has the initiative now. I won't go into the messy details, but he won in nice fashion:

### 18 f4 ♜xc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜xc4?!

19...♜xg3! wins quickly; nevertheless, Black has a large advantage and goes on to convert it after some inaccuracies:

20 bxc4 ♜ag8 21 fxe5 ♜xe5 22 ♜f4 ♜d6 23 ♜ab1 ♜c7 24 ♜f3? ♜xf3+ 25 ♜xf3 ♜xe4 26 ♜fb3 b6 27 ♜xd6+ ♜xd6 28 ♜d5 ♜g5! 29 ♜e1 ♜h7 30 ♜g2 ♜hg7 31 ♜h2 ♜f5 32 a5 ♜e3 33 axb6+ axb6 34 ♜a1 ♜xd5 35 cxd5 ♜d6 36 ♜xb6+ ♜xd5 37 ♜a3 h4 38 gxh4 ♜g2+ 39 ♜h3 ♜g1 0-1

### Piket – Timman

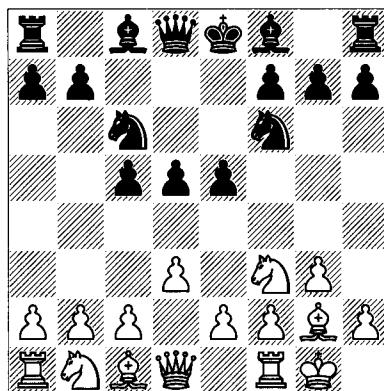
Dutch Ch, Amsterdam 1996

### 1 ♜f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♜g2 ♜c6 4 d3 e5

If Black plays 4...e6 here, the game may enter into a variety of French Defence positions after 5 0-0; for example, 5...♜f6 6 ♜bd2 ♜e7 7 e4 0-0, which is now regarded as fully equal for Black, or 5...♜d6 6 ♜bd2 ♜ge7 7 e4 0-0, which is another respected variation. For more equalizers against the King's Indian Attack, see Morozevich-Kramnik, the last game in this sequence.

### 5 0-0 ♜f6 (D)

In the previous game, Black played 5...♜e7 here. Incidentally, I've messed with the actual move-order of the game before us, which was 1 ♜f3 c5 2 g3 ♜c6 3 ♜g2 ♜f6 4 0-0 e5 5 d3 d5. As you might imagine, there are other ways to reach the position; for example, beginning with 1 g3 or 1 ♜f3 ♜f6.



### 6 ♜a3

This is the mirror image of ...♜a6, which is Black's second most popular move in the main-line King's Indian Defence. After 6 e4 ♜e7 the traditional main line would arise following 7 ♜c3 d4 8 ♜e2, with Black a move behind. As might be expected, he doesn't have to walk into the standard King's Indian pawn-storm, particularly as he has not yet castled. You might want to play around with these positions, as well as with 7 exd5 ♜xd5 8 ♜e1 f6, to see how they compare with the reversed ones.

### 6...♜e7 7 e4 d4 8 ♜c4 ♜c7 9 a4 ♜e6? (D)

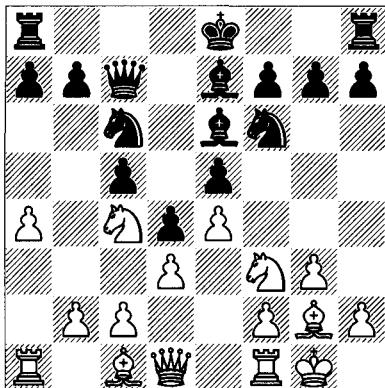
We've arrived at a reversed King's Indian position; in the regular King's Indian line, White would already have castled by this point. In this actual position, Black can seek to benefit from not having castled, for reasons that become clear in a moment.

### 10 ♜e1

Or:

a) 10 ♜fd2 h5! takes advantage of the delay in ...0-0: 11 f4 h4 12 f5 (12 ♜a3 hxg3 13 hxg3 exf4 14 gxf4 ♜g4) 12...♜xc4 (12...♜d7!?) 13 ♜xc4 hxg3 14 hxg3 0-0-0. In spite of his excellent knight on c4, White has no way to open lines safely and can become saddled with a terrible light-squared bishop, whereas Black has kingside prospects; for example, 15 g4?! (15

W



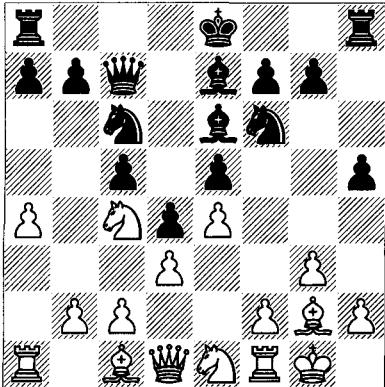
$\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{B}dg8$  16 g4  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  17  $\mathbb{W}c1$  {versus ... $\mathbb{A}g5$ } 17...g6 18 fxe6  $\mathbb{B}xg6$  19  $\mathbb{B}xf7 \mathbb{B}xg4$  15... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  16  $\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{A}g5$ , and White is left with a miserable bishop and no promising plan of action.

b) Black can also castle queenside if White plays 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ; for example, 10... $\mathbb{A}xc4$  11 dxc4 h6 12  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !? (12  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}h7$ ) 12...0-0-0, intending 13  $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{B}b8$  14 f4 h5!.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

The normal move. Here's the point at which White can be faulted for following the main moves of the reversed variation too faithfully. Black can change the entire dynamic by 10...h5! (D).

W



This primitive move is largely based upon discouraging White's standard attack with f4, followed by  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and/or f5 and g4. Some possibilities:

a) 11 f4 h4 12 f5  $\mathbb{A}xc4$  13 dxc4 hxg3 14 hxg3 0-0-0 15  $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{B}dg8$ , with the idea ...g6, launches a kingside attack. Note how bad the white bishop on g2 is.

b) 11  $\mathbb{A}g5$  and now 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  or 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  either exchanges White's good bishop or, upon its retreat, enables Black to pursue his kingside attack.

c) 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{A}xg5$  13  $\mathbb{A}xg5$  f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  h4 with good chances on the kingside.

d) 11 h4 is reasonable, but now if White plays the thematic f4, he loses the g4-square. Black could even castle kingside here, but it's consistent with the pawn-structure to expand on the queenside; for example, 11...b6 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{B}b8$  13 f4 (13 c3?! 0-0-0 14  $\mathbb{B}c1 \mathbb{B}fd8$ ) 13... $\mathbb{A}xc4$  14 dxc4 exf4 15 gxf4 (15  $\mathbb{Q}xf4 \mathbb{Q}d6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0 followed by ... $\mathbb{A}fe8$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  takes control of e5 and leaves White with a backward pawn) 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 17  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{B}bd8$ !, threatening ...d3.

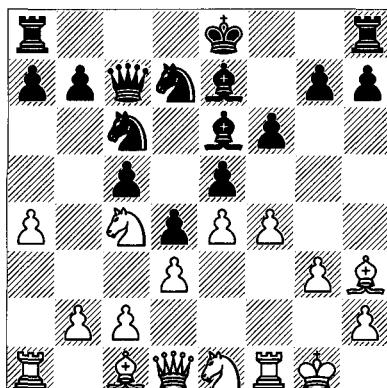
It's remarkable how being a move behind the reversed position opens up this whole set of new ideas for Black.

**11 f4 f6?!**

This is a positionally suspect move. Piket suggests 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , an unambitious attempt to simplify, after which there might follow 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !? (White doesn't seem to get anything special from 12  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  exf4 13 a5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14 gxf4 f6 or 12 b3  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13 bxc4 exf4 14 gxf4 0-0) 12...0-0 13 f5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14 b3.

**12  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ ! (D)**

B



You should remember this manoeuvre. By ridding himself of his only ineffective piece, White secures the better game.

**12... $\mathbb{A}xh3$**

Black would like to retain his share of influence over the light squares, but 12... $\mathbb{A}f7$  13

$\mathbb{W}g4!$  develops and attacks g7: 13...g6? (but 13... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  favours White) 14  $\mathbb{W}xd7+$ !  $\mathbb{W}xd7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  16 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17 exf6, etc., winning a pawn.

13  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 14  $\mathbb{W}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15 fxe5 fxe5

15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  fails to 16  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ : 16... $\mathbb{W}xe5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  or 16...fxe5 17  $\mathbb{W}e6!$ .

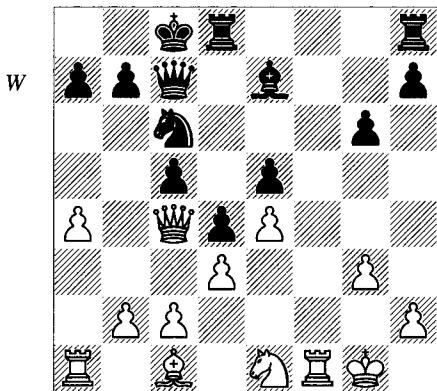
16  $\mathbb{W}e6$

16  $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$  axb6 17  $\mathbb{W}e6$  is more accurate, with the idea 17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{W}b3$  or 17... $\mathbb{W}d7$  18  $\mathbb{W}b3$  0-0-0 19  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ , preventing ...h5.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17  $\mathbb{W}xc4$

After 17 dxc4!?  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18  $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  20 cxd5 White's better bishop and lead in development guarantee him some advantage.

17...0-0-0 (D)



18  $\mathbb{Q}h6$

Piket suggests 18  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  h6 19  $\mathbb{W}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  20  $\mathbb{W}xg6$ , although White is still subject to attack after 20...h5.

18... $\mathbb{E}dg8$  19  $\mathbb{E}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  20  $\mathbb{E}g7$   $\mathbb{E}xg7$  21  $\mathbb{E}xg7$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  24  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  26  $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  27 h4

Now every white piece stands better than its black counterpart, although his advantage is difficult to convert into victory. He went on to do so after some inaccuracies.

### Nisipeanu – Volokitin

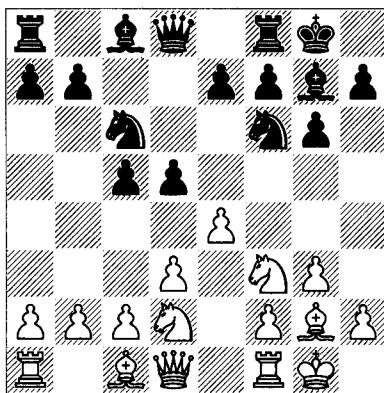
European Ch, Silivri 2003

In this game we'll see another major variation of the King's Indian Defence, the Classical Fianchetto, played with colours reversed. The players get there by means of a Sicilian Defence:

1 e4 c5 2 d3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 g3 g6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

It's worth noting that Black can play reliable, time-tested, systems with ...e5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  or ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$ .

6 0-0 d5 7  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 (D)



Again, Black has made no attempt to tone down his central commitment. The King's Indian Attack move-order would be something like 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 2 g3 c5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 0-0 g6 5 d3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 7 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ; of course you can get to the same position in a number of ways by slightly reordering the moves.

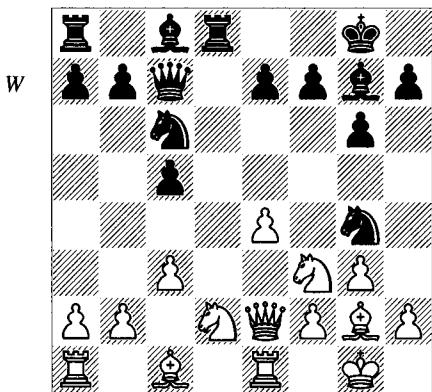
8 c3

In Radev-Přibyl, Tbilisi 1971, White did without c3 by 8 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e5!? (thumbing his nose at White's extra tempo, Black plays the move that makes his whole position most vulnerable!) 10  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  11 a4!?, and here Gufeld suggests 11... $\mathbb{Q}db4$ ('!), a trick which comes from the white side of a standard King's Indian Defence line. Then White can't evict Black's knight by c3 because his pawn on d3 would be lost. Nevertheless, White can target Black's weakness on d6 and the vulnerability of his c-pawn by 12  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! f5! 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h6 14  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ . Then Black should respond by 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4, and if 16  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17 b4, he has 17...a5! with dynamic counterplay.

8...e5!?

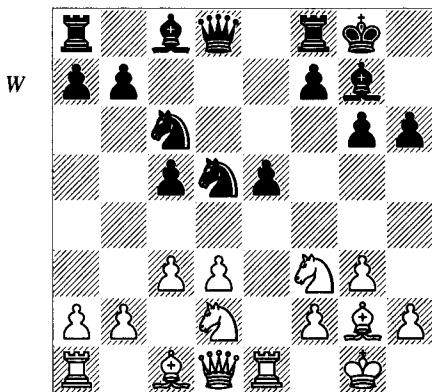
A daring move which exposes Black's centre to serious danger. He could also turn to the other standard technique in reversed positions, that is, picking a slow line which doesn't pretend to do more than equalize. In this position, one such line is 8...dxe4 9 dxе4  $\mathbb{W}c7$ , with the

idea of simplification; for example, 10  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{M}d8$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathcal{Q}g4!$  (D).



The fight for e5 defines the game: 12  $\mathcal{Q}c4$  b6!? (or 12... $\mathbb{M}b8$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathcal{Q}ge5$  14  $\mathcal{Q}fxe5$   $\mathcal{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathcal{Q}e3$ ?! (Petursson gives 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16 f4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  17 e5  $\mathbb{M}b8$  with equality, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) 15...e6 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{M}d7$ ! 17 f4 h6! 18  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  19  $\mathbb{M}e1$  and now 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ?! 20 c4!  $\mathcal{Q}e5$ !, with the idea of 21 fxe5 g5, was unclear in Vogt-Petursson, San Bernardino 1990. Instead, 19...c4! looks better, nailing down the knight on d3 and relying upon active pieces; for example, 20 e5  $\mathbb{M}b8$  21  $\mathcal{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$ + 22  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 23  $\mathcal{Q}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  b5 and ...b4 followed by penetration on the b-file. White's king is exposed to various attacking ideas, so he doesn't have time to undertake anything on the kingside.

**9 exd5  $\mathcal{Q}xd5$  10  $\mathbb{M}e1$  h6 (D)**



Now White is a full tempo ahead of the reversed position from the g3 King's Indian Defence. Since that variation has produced many

exciting wins for Black, it's surprising that White would have any problem drumming up an advantage. But he does.

**11  $\mathbb{W}a4$**

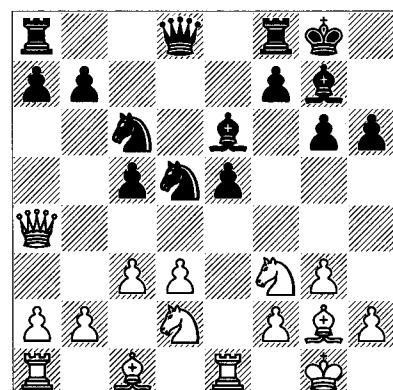
Or:

a) The natural 11  $\mathcal{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{M}e8$  12 a4 can be safely met by 12... $\mathcal{Q}b6$ , with a solid game, and 12... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13 a5  $\mathbb{M}b8$  is also fine.

b) 11  $\mathbb{W}b3$  is a tougher test: 11... $\mathcal{Q}c7$ ! (Nisipeanu's suggestion; 11... $\mathcal{Q}de7$  is the most common defence in this kind of position, but here 12  $\mathcal{Q}c4$ ! harasses Black's e-pawn, after which 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  renders the c5-pawn impossible to protect) 12  $\mathcal{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{M}e8$  13  $\mathcal{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{M}e6$ ! (not 13... $\mathbb{W}xd3$ ? 14  $\mathcal{Q}e4$ ! b6 15  $\mathbb{M}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e2$  16  $\mathcal{Q}ed6$ ; the alternative 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathcal{Q}e4$  b6 15  $\mathbb{M}d1$  (15  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16  $\mathbb{M}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  and Nisipeanu suggests 16... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !? 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  as a playable exchange sacrifice, which is true, although White needn't accept so quickly. He rejects 16...f5 due to 17  $\mathcal{Q}ed6$ , but then 17... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 18 a4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 19  $\mathcal{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  20  $\mathcal{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  leaves Black safe and in command of more territory.

**11... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ?**

11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ! (D) is the most direct way to equalize:



Black wants to play this anyway in order to develop and centralize while fortifying his position. Those familiar with King's Indian Defence theory will recognize this exact position as yet another in which White is playing the role of Black with an extra move. But White has the usual issue that if he plays the equalizing moves available to Black in the King's Indian

Defence, he can't expect more than a level game. And the tactical possibilities appear insufficient to produce an advantage; for example:

- a) 12  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}de7!$  13  $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xd3$ .
- b) 12  $\mathbb{W}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7!$  can be followed by 13  $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xd3$  or 13  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}d5!$ .

c) After 12  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , which is the main move with reversed colours, Nisipeanu gives 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13  $\mathbb{W}b5$  (13  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}xh4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ) 13... $c4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $a6$ , which is good for Black after the forced 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $axb5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}fxd8$ . Why does this work? In the King's Indian Defence position, White has played the extra move  $\mathbb{W}c2$ , which is the equivalent of ... $\mathbb{W}c7$  in this line. So, after 14  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $a6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ , 15... $axb5??$  would lose 16  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ . The extra move hurts!

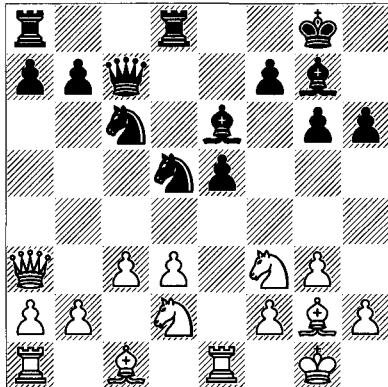
We should remember that White's position is a King's Indian Defence that is designed to give Black ways to react to White's advances, not necessarily to force the pace. The recurring exchange of a pawn on d3 for a pawn on c5 is an example of how Black can go for equality in a way that White wouldn't want to with colours reversed.

### 12 $\mathbb{W}c4!$ $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ 13 $\mathbb{W}xc5$ $\mathbb{W}fd8$

Black has a well-centralized position and pressure on d3, which seems enough for a pawn.

### 14 $\mathbb{W}a3$ (D)

B



### 14...b5

Nisipeanu suggests 14...a5!, when White's queen is running out of room, so there may follow 15  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $g5$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$ ) 17  $\mathbb{W}e4$  (17  $\mathbb{W}h5!?$   $\mathbb{W}c8!?$ ) 17... $a4$  18  $a3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-c5$ .

### 15 $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 16 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 17 d4

17  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $a5!$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $gxf5$  leaves White's knight stranded.

### 17... $exd4$ 18 $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{W}b6$ 19 $b4$ $\mathbb{Q}dxb4!$ 20 $cx b4$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 21 $\mathbb{Q}b2!$

21  $\mathbb{Q}xa8?$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  is virtually winning for Black.

### 21... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ 22 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $a5!?$

22... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$  is correct.

### 23 $\mathbb{W}e3!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7?$

Wrong timing. He can't play 23... $\mathbb{Q}c2?$  in view of 24  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  with the idea 24... $\mathbb{Q}xc2?$  25  $\mathbb{W}c3$ , but 23... $axb4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  25  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  gives Black some compensation.

### 24 $bxa5$ $\mathbb{W}xa5$

24... $\mathbb{W}b8$  25  $a6$  isn't much better. At this point White is simply winning.

### 25 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ $\mathbb{W}xa2$ 26 $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ $\mathbb{Q}xc8$ 27 $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 28 $\mathbb{Q}d5$ $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 29 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ $\mathbb{W}b4$ 30 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 31 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ 32 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$ 33 $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{W}d7$ 34 $\mathbb{W}e4$ $b4$ 35 $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}a4$ 36 $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$ $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ 37 $\mathbb{Q}b1$ $\mathbb{W}d1+$ 38 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 39 $\mathbb{W}xg6+$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 40 $\mathbb{W}e6+$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 41 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 1-0

**Morozevich – Kramnik**

*World Blitz, Moscow 2007*

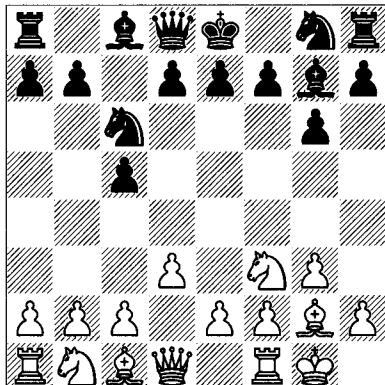
### 1 $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $d5$

We've had fun playing reversed main lines for Black against the King's Indian Attack, and Black came out fine in spite of the apparent risk of being so committal. It's important to realize, however, that the slower the system that Black plays, the more easily he equalizes, which is why the KIA can be so unrewarding for White. Let me describe some standard options, without detailed analysis:

a) 1... $c5$  is an extremely popular move; for example, 2  $g3$  (2  $e4$  is a Sicilian Defence; 2  $c4$  is a Symmetrical English) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $g6$  4  $0-0$  (4  $d4$   $cxd4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  forces the d4-knight to move and affords White little chance for advantage) 4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $d3$  (D).

Now Black can safely play 5... $e6$  or 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $e4$   $d6$ , both set-ups with good track records. A slightly more ambitious move is 5... $e5$  (or 5... $d6$  6  $e4$   $e5$ ), since 6  $e4$  (6  $c4$   $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 is a standard line of the Symmetrical English, which is equal; see Volume 3) 6... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  is not only equal, but easy to play. One frequently-played sequence is 7  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 8  $c3$   $d6$  9  $a4$  (9  $a3$  is more sophisticated, but both 9... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  10  $b4$   $b5$  and 9... $h6$  10  $b4$   $a6$  are fine) 9... $h6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$

B

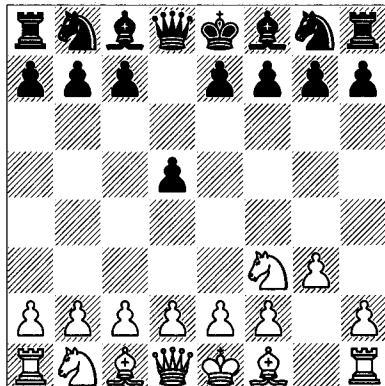


$\mathbb{Q}e6$  with smooth development for Black, who has ideas such as ... $\mathbb{W}d7$  and the possible pawn advances ... $f5$  or ... $g5$ , or simply ... $\mathbb{W}c7$  followed by ... $d5$ .

b) 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $g3$   $g6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 0-0 0-0 5  $d3$   $c5$  (5... $d6$  is still more flexible, if not necessary; then 6  $c4$   $e5$  is a 'reversed KIA') 6  $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (after 7  $c3$ , 7... $d5$  is fine, but 7... $d6$  can be effective if White tries to enforce  $d4$ ; for example, 8  $\mathbb{M}e1$   $h6$  9  $d4?$   $!cx d4$  10  $cx d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 7... $d6$ . This is a rather harmless type of Closed Sicilian. For White to create problems for his opponent, he would ideally have his pawn on  $f4$  in front of his knight, or his king's knight on  $e2$ . All of these lines are equal, of course, but the latter set-ups force Black to play accurately.

2  $g3$  (D)

B

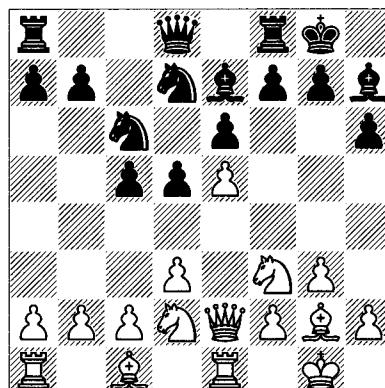


2... $c6$

This is the move we saw in the Réti Slav chapter. 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is another popular set-up: 4 0-0 (4  $c4$  can lead to some independent lines, including 4... $dxc4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ ?)

4... $e6$  5  $d3$   $h6$  (not strictly necessary, but it will probably be played later anyway) 6  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7  $\mathbb{W}e1$  (again the most popular move, to enforce  $e4$ ; I should mention that 7  $b3$  0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  is also played, when White will normally follow with  $c4$  rather than  $e4$ ; then the game can transpose into the Réti Opening) 7...0-0 8  $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (or 9  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $c5$ ) 9... $c5$  10  $e5$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  is harmless) 10... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  11  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D).

W



This position has occurred numerous times. Black's  $h7$ -bishop defends the kingside and will gain extra influence if ... $c4$  follows, whereas White's best strategy isn't clear. Stepak-Chandler, London 1985 continued 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ ? (12... $b5$  13  $h4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $c4$  15  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $cx d3$  16  $cx d3$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  gave Black a nice queenside initiative in S.Kravtsov-Y.Geller, Samara 2003) 13  $h4$   $\mathbb{M}c8$  14  $h5$   $f6$ ! 15  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16  $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $c4$ ! and Black stood better, since 18  $dxc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! 19  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  20  $\mathbb{R}b1$   $dxc4$ ! would leave him totally in charge.

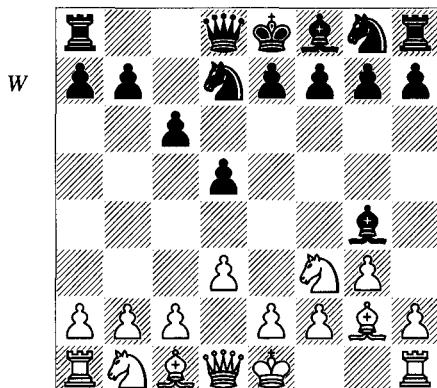
3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$

An extremely popular line among grandmasters. Unlike the extravagant variations in which Black exposes to attack a large centre with pawns on  $c5$ ,  $d5$  and  $e5$ , this deployment has simple ideas relating to a smaller centre.

3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  5  $d3$   $e6$  is a traditional defensive set-up – a reversed London System; it has an excellent reputation. As White plays moves such as  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ,  $\mathbb{W}e1$  and  $e4$ , Black follows up with ... $h6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ . At this point, White's standard manoeuvre 6  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7  $h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  8  $g4$  doesn't accomplish much because of 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ !, hitting  $h4$ . Instead,

the retreat 6  $\mathbb{Q}fd2!?$ , an idea from the London System versus the King's Indian Defence, deserves notice, if only to mix things up. Then 6...h6 7 e4  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  produces an unbalanced game.

**4 d3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D)**



**5  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

Or:

a) 5 0-0 is the natural move. Then Black has played a variety of plans; for example, 5...e6 (covering h4 and thus preventing the bishop from being exchanged following 6 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  7 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ), followed by development with ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and either ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ . Also possible is 5...e5 6 c4 dxc4 7 dxc4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  with equality.

b) 5 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (or 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e6; when White has spent a tempo on h3, the exchange on f3 becomes more attractive) 6 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  e6 (7...e5!?) 8  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ , and Black's h-file and smooth development balance out White's bishop-pair.

**5... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$**

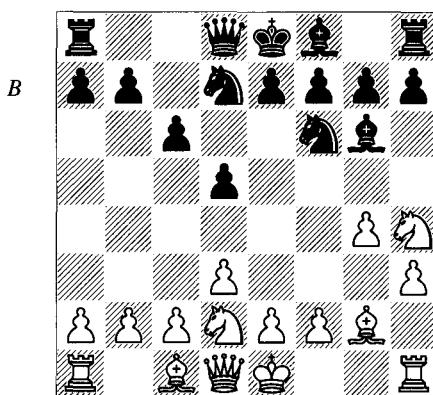
Naturally, 5...e5 and 5...e6 come into consideration, to prevent the following manoeuvre by White.

**6 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

With 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e5, Black gives White the bishop-pair in return for setting up an ideal centre and developing quickly. This has generally been satisfactory for him; for example, 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  lets White's knight into f5 with tempo after 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , which is slightly awkward) 9 c3!? (9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  0-0 10 e4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is about equal) 9...0-0 10 b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11 a4 a6 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  with a balanced

position, Petran-Westerinen, Cappelle la Grande 1988.

**7 g4  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (D)**



**8...e6**

There's nothing wrong with 8...e5. White has a wide choice, but he doesn't command enough space to expect any advantage; for example, 9 c4 (9  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  10 e3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 c4, Fuller-Greenfeld, London 1984; then heading queenside by 12...dxc4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  0-0-0 is a good course for Black) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (or 9...d4) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  11 e3?! (11 0-0) 11...0-0?! (11...d4!) 12 0-0 d4!?, 13 exd4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , J.Bradford-Ki.Georgiev, Catalan Bay 2007.

**9 e3**

Naturally, White has other moves, but he wants to avoid the positional difficulties which follow 9 e4!?, when his g2-bishop can end up locked in. A simple response is 9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  11 g5?!  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ .

**9... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11 0-0 0-0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  h6!**

Black concedes doubled pawns; his idea is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}h7$  and then ...e5 or ...g5.

**13  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  (D)**

**14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

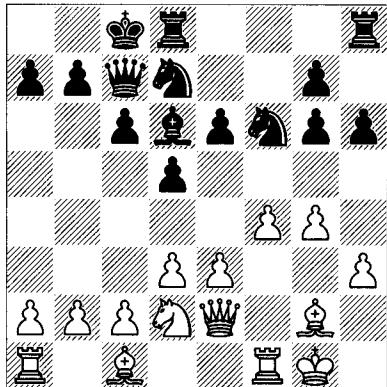
14 c4 g5! 15 d4 gxf4 16 c5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ !?, 17 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is totally unclear; Black has three pawns and an attack for the piece, but White can loosen up Black's king's protection by 19 a4 a5 20  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (20  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 20... $\mathbb{Q}he8$  21 b4!?, e5 22 bxa5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  with a disorderly position.

**14...e5 15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}he8$ !?**

16... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?, 17  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}he8$  is a more accurate continuation.

**17  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19 b4?!**

W



Effectively wasting a move. 19  $\mathbb{Q}xg6 \mathbb{Q}e4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$  21 c3! is better.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$  21 c3  $\mathbb{Q}de8$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  c5?!**

This breaks into White's position, although 22... $\mathbb{Q}e2$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}c2$  is a safer route to advantage.

23 bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}a4$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}xc3$ ? 26  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xc3$  28  $\mathbb{Q}ae1 \mathbb{Q}d8$

Black gets his pawn back and opens lines against White's vulnerable king.

**29  $\mathbb{Q}f5+?$**

29  $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}xd4+$  30  $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}f6$ ! with the ideas of ... $\mathbb{Q}c2$  and in some cases ... $\mathbb{Q}dd3$ .

**29... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  30  $\mathbb{Q}h2 \mathbb{Q}xd4$**

30... $\mathbb{Q}c2+!$  31  $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{Q}c3$  32  $\mathbb{Q}e5+$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  33  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}b2$  34  $\mathbb{Q}g3 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  is virtually winning for Black.

31  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a6 32  $\mathbb{Q}fe1 \mathbb{Q}a7$  33  $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}b6$  34  $\mathbb{Q}e5?$

But White has a terrible game anyway.

34... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  35  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  g5 36  $\mathbb{Q}xg5 \mathbb{Q}dd3$  37  $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}g3+$  38  $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}g1\#$  (0-1)

## Reversing Double e-Pawn Openings

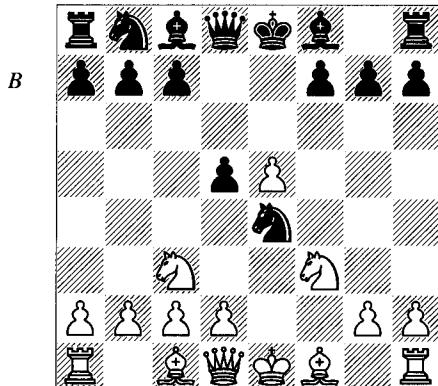
In this section, I'll present some examples of 1 e4 e5 variations in which either White or Black plays a known position in reverse (a tempo up or a tempo down, respectively). Let's start with a pairing of two openings that are out of today's mainstream: the Vienna Game and the Ponziani Opening. We'll see how the most modest of extra tempi impacts the resulting positions.

**Ljubojević – Ciocaltea**  
*Skopje Olympiad 1972*

**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}f6$  3 f4 d5!**

This is the standard reply, held in high regard for well over 100 years.

**4 fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D)**



**5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?**

Black intentionally loses a tempo to set up a pin that in turn forces White to lose time on the queenside. 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is a sensible alternative; for example:

a) 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! has the idea 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d4 8 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  dx $c$  10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11 bxa5, when White seems to have a modest edge. But Black might try 6...f5?!, which looks fully playable after 7 exf6 (7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 8 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  8 0-0 0-0 (a small joke is 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ?! 0-0 10 d4 and Black has gained a move!) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

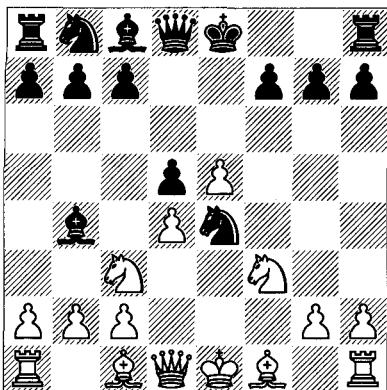
b) 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! may be as good as anything; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7 dx $c$  0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}e6$  9 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6 with active chances for both sides.

Compare the reversed position with 6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  in the Ponziani Opening game below.

**6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (D)**

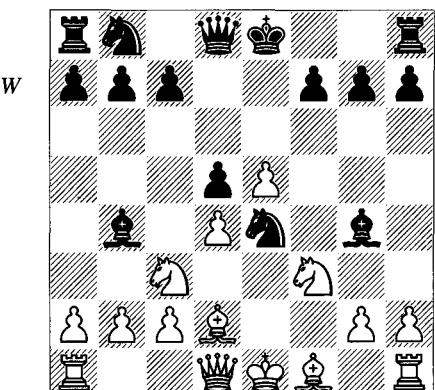
**7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  positions the queen slightly oddly: 7...0-0 (7...c5 is also satisfactory) 8 a3 (8  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ + 9 bxc3 c5 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}a5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c4 12  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}c6$  13 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . In this position, strongly reminiscent of a French Winawer, Black's knights are aggressively placed and White's bishops have yet to find active roles.



7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (D)

7...c5! is the main line, after which Black is considered to have levelled the game. He may even do better than that; for example, 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  (White achieves nothing from 8  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  9  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , when only Black can claim an edge after 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  or 10...0-0; 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! leads to the approximately forced line 8...dxe4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  cxb4 10  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11 d5 exf3 12 dxc6 f2+ 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  followed by ...bxc6; again, Black has some advantage) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9 0-0 0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 12  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  c4 16  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  intending 17 f4 f5, once more with the better of it. Compare the next game.



8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is the best chance to keep an edge, but after 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9 0-0 0-0 that seems unlikely.

8...dxe4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  exf3 10  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ?

After 10 gxf3  $\mathbb{W}h4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12 fxg4  $\mathbb{W}xg4+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}f4+$ , White should take the draw by repetition.

10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  12 h3

12  $\mathbb{Q}g1$ ! isn't pretty, but threatens to invade on g7 after gxf3, so Black will count upon his superior development to make up for the pawn after 12...0-0-0 13  $\mathbb{W}f4$  f2+! 14  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  h5 15 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ .

12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? 13 gxf3?

13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}xa2$  14  $\mathbb{W}g5$  0-0 15 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  g6 17 f4  $\mathbb{Q}a1+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a2$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  repeats.

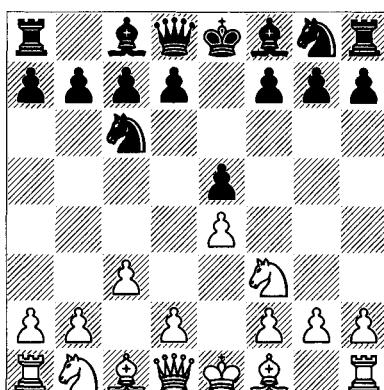
13...0-0-0 14 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}xa2$ ?

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! is better, with the idea 15 dxе5?  $\mathbb{W}xa2$ .

15  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18 h4 ½-½

Now compare this with theory from the dual opening:

1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 c3 (D)



B

This is the Ponziani Opening, which is perhaps a bit better than its reputation.

3...f5!?

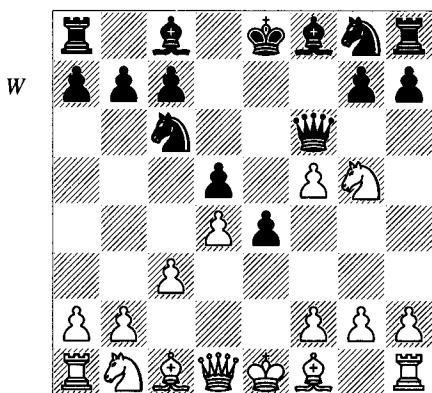
This is a Vienna Game (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 f4), with reversed colours and as if Black had an extra ...c6!

The moves 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and 3...d5 have always been the standard ones, but 3...f5 has a good reputation.

Speaking of reversed openings, Marin points out that after 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  5 dxе5?! (5 d5 is normal), 5...d5 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  leaves Black a tempo ahead of the respectable Pirc Defence line 1 e4 d6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . To clinch the case against 5 dxе5, 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! also looks effective; for example, 6  $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$ + 7  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  f5 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .

**4 d4**

It's logical to strike back in the centre in this way, as Black does in the Vienna Game. The only other reasonable way to counter Black's threat of ...fxe4 is 4 exf5, when the obvious course is 4...e4, but 5 ♜d4 with the idea d3, played in many games, seems to keep a small edge. Maybe Black could play 4...♝f6, trying to win the f-file in old-fashioned King's Gambit style. The play could go 5 d4! e4 6 ♜g5 d5 (D).



Here White needs to disturb the equilibrium: a) 7 ♜h5+!? g6 8 fxg6 hxg6 9 ♜e2 ♜d6, and in terms of space, open lines, and development, Black has quite a lot for a pawn.

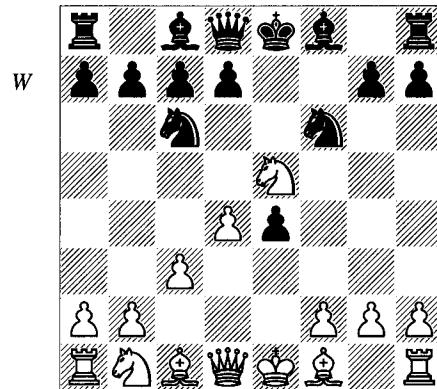
b) White can also try to undermine Black's centre by means of 7 c4; for example, 7...♜b4+ 8 ♜c3 (watch out for 8 ♜d2?? ♜xg5) 8...♜ge7! (development comes first; the pawns are not as important) 9 g4 (9 cxd5 ♜xd5 10 ♜gxe4 ♜xd4) 9...♜xd4 with an obscure position, which is about equal.

**4...fxe4 5 ♜xe5 ♜f6 (D)**

After 5...♜f6, the blockading manoeuvre 6 ♜g4 ♜g6 7 ♜f4 (or 7 ♜e2) 7...d6 8 ♜e3 has had some success, but the resulting positions are playable for Black. Instead, 5...♜xe5!? 6 dxе5 threatens ♜d5, when 6...d5 7 exd6 ♜xd6 8 ♜a4+ wins the e-pawn. That may not be the end of it, however, because Black can turn the opening into a gambit following 8...c6 9 ♜xe4+ ♜e7 10 ♜c4 (versus ...0-0) 10...♜c7 with the idea ...♜f5. Of course, White has a pawn and no weaknesses, so this is speculative.

**6 ♜c4!?**

As we've seen, this idea originates from the Vienna Game. White reasons that he'll be a

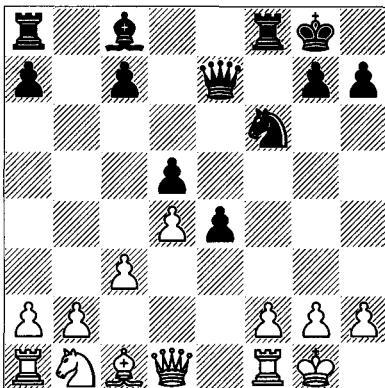


tempo up on what is after all a pretty good line for Black. Naturally, White has other ways to handle the position, of which 6 ♜g5 may be the most important. White stands well after 6...♜d6?!, 7 ♜g4! ♜e7 8 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 9 d5!, 6...♜e7 7 ♜b5! or 6...d6 7 ♜xc6 bxc6 8 ♜d2 d5 9 ♜a4 ♜d7 10 f3. Following 6...♜e7 7 ♜xf6 (7 ♜g4 d5!?) 7...♜xf6 8 ♜g4 ♜g6 White can try 9 ♜e3 or 9 d5. These ideas are barely explored, as is typical with some of the oldest openings.

The entertaining and instructive attacking game Nakamura-Becerra, USA Ch, Stillwater 2007 continued 6 ♜b5 ♜d6 (6...♜e7 may be best, as in the reversed position) 7 ♜c4 (7 f4! exf3 8 ♜xf3 is a fighting alternative; compare 6 ♜d3 f5 in the reversed line) 7...♜e7 8 ♜a4 (8 d5 a6 9 ♜a4 b5 doesn't improve much upon the reversed position, because White's extra move c3 isn't generally useful; he can win a pawn at the cost of development by 10 dxc6 bxa4 11 ♜xa4 d5 12 ♜e3 0-0, but Black has a strong centre and excellent attacking chances) 8...d5 9 ♜e5 0-0! (this is a typical sacrifice in double e-pawn openings, famously in the Two Knights Defence; it yields Black development and activity for a pawn) 10 ♜xc6 (10 ♜xc6? bxc6 11 ♜xc6 ♜b8 has ideas such as ...♜a6, ...♜b6 and ...♜d6 with ...♜g4) 10...bxc6 11 ♜xc6 ♜e8 12 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 13 0-0 (D).

White has an extra pawn and no weaknesses; however, Black has his attack ready, assisted by the cramping pawn on e4 and his half-open f-file. The game went 13...♜g4!? (threatening ...♜h4; 13...♜a6 and 13...♜b8 are good alternatives) 14 h3 e3! (threatening ...e2) 15 ♜xe3?! (15 fxe3! ♜a6 16 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 17 hxg4! ♜h4 18 ♜d2 ♜f2+ 19 ♜h2 ♜f6 20 g5 ♜h4+ 21 ♜g1

B

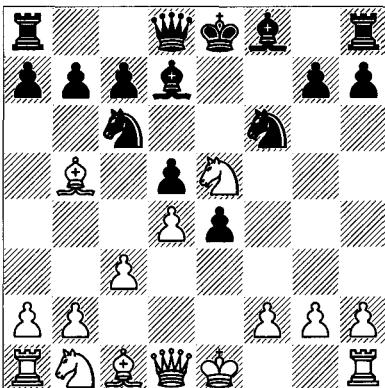


is only a draw) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  16  $fxe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ !?

(16... $\mathbb{W}xe3+$ ! 17  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{K}xf1$  18  $\mathbb{W}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ !) 17  $\mathbb{M}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 18  $\mathbb{M}xf8+$   $\mathbb{M}xf8$  19  $\mathbb{W}e1$  (19  $\mathbb{W}xg4$ ?)  $\mathbb{W}xe3+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}h6$ ! 21  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{W}f4+$  22  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}c1$ ! and Black wins) 19... $\mathbb{M}f6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{M}g6$  21  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  22  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  23  $g3$   $h5$ ! 24  $e4$ ?!  $\mathbb{W}g4$  25  $\mathbb{W}xc7$ ?  $h4$  with a decisive attack for Black.

6... $d5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (D)

W



We have arrived at the reversed Vienna Game (specifically, 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 f4 d5 4  $fxe3$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) with White having the extra move c3.

8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?

This actually produces a worse position than White would have without his extra move c3. White can also play 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$ , which is equal, or try 8 c4!. Then he has lost a full tempo (c3-c4) and transposed exactly to Black's position from the corresponding Vienna Game position from the last game (the note to 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ). As it happens, he gets better winning chances with that move than with any other!

8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  10  $exf6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$

Now White would like to be able to play 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , but can't! In fact, the bonus move c3 has hurt him and Black has a clear advantage.

To close out the subject of reversed positions, I'll put a number of other examples from the double e-pawn realm into the following game.

**J. Polgar – Ivanchuk**

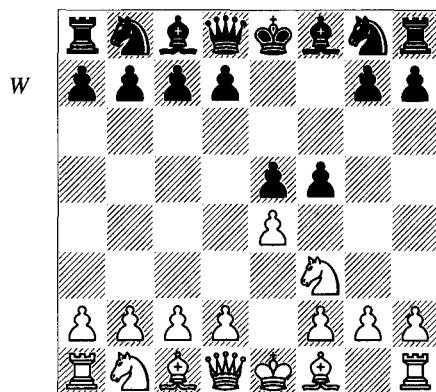
*Amber Blindfold, Monte Carlo 1994*

1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Or:

a) 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is a forcing move, but Black can still play variations with reversed themes, again involving the f-pawn:

a1) 2...f5 (D) is the Latvian Gambit.



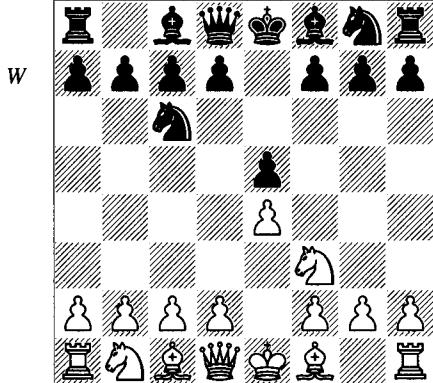
In comparison with the black side of the King's Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 f4), White has the extra  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , a vital move that plays a role in most 1 e4 e5 openings. But the knight development also has drawbacks. Now, upon 3  $exf6$ , Black has a move which would be pointless for White in the King's Gambit, that is, 3...e4, when 4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  and 4  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  are playable, but certainly not cause for abandonment of the Latvian. Similarly, if White tries to 'decline' the gambit by 3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , Black has the opportunity to play 3... $fxe4$ , meeting 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with 4... $\mathbb{W}g5$  or 4... $d5$ , both standard variations that have been heavily analysed for over 50 years and apparently still regarded as playable for Black, although that can be disputed. In the King's Gambit, the same idea 1 e4 e5 2 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  3  $fxe5$ ? loses to 3... $\mathbb{W}h4+$ . Another

example is 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  fxe4, when 4  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  is illegal – the extra move gets in the way, as opposed to 1 e4 e5 2 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 fxe5??  $\mathbb{W}h4+$ .

Finally, 3 d4, trying to reverse the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit upon 3...exd4?! 4 e5!, runs into 3...fxe4! 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ; note again that if White didn't have  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  in, 3...fxe4 would be a blunder due to 4  $\mathbb{W}h5+$ .

All of the 3rd moves above are playable for White, in spite of the differences I've noted, but they aren't convincing ways for him to secure the better game. As a consequence, you will see the move 3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  in most Latvian Gambit contests, which isn't a reversed variation, and yet offers the best chances for a substantial advantage.

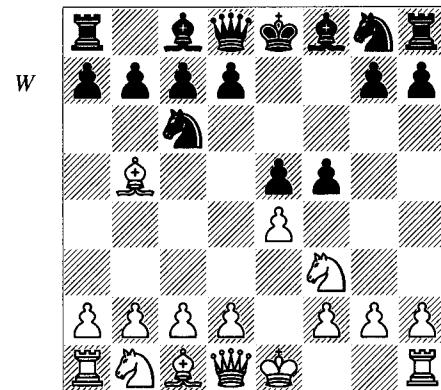
a2) 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D) has its own twists:



a21) 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is the Four Knights Game, which we shall look at in Chapter 7 as an example of symmetry in the opening. Now 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  dxe4 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  is yet another reversed position, probably favouring White slightly. Its twin is 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  5 d4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  6 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , and if 7... $\mathbb{W}h4$ , 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ . In this version, White's tempo helps, and his superiority is clear.

a22) 3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  f5 (D).

This is the Schliemann Defence, which has a decent reputation. In terms of a reversed opening, it's a Vienna Game (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 f4), in which White has the extra move  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . Strange to say, this would hurt White if he tried the standard remedy to the Vienna position, which is 4 d4 fxe4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?! (5  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is about equal), as 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  6 dxe5 c6 (in the reversed position, White's bishop is



still on f1, so this tempo-gain isn't possible) 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (having come this far, White normally tries the unclear piece sacrifice 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  cxb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ) 7... $\mathbb{W}a5+$  followed by 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  wins a pawn. White should play otherwise; for example, by 4 d3 or the traditional main line, 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

b) 2 d3 is a bit odd for White, but the idea is to delay the move f4 until Black commits. Then 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (the equivalent of 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 d3 e5) 3 f4 is a sort of reversed Philidor Counter-Gambit, an opening which goes 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 3 d4 f5. After 3 f4, there can follow 3...exf4 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (4 e5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  5  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! is good, with the idea 6 c4?!  $\mathbb{W}b4+!$ ) 4...d5 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !, and Black has a typical King's Gambit Accepted position, but with the move ...d5 in exchange for d3, clearly a trade-off in Black's favour. Compare the actual Philidor Counter-Gambit with 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 3 d4 f5 4 exf5 e4, when 5  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ?? loses a piece. On the other hand, White can play 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , which is theoretically favourable for him, so this comparison merely reveals a drawback to the line with 2 d3 and 3 f4, rather than providing salvation for the Philidor Counter-Gambit.

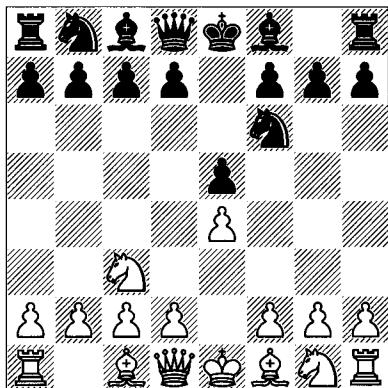
2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D)

3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Or:

a) One of several replies to 3 g3 is 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , a reversed Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  g6) in which g3 and  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  is enough to equalize, but too slow for White to expect an advantage. After 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , Mariotti-Korchnoi, Rome 1982 continued 4...0-0 (4...c6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 is also equal) 5  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  c6 6 0-0 d5!? (or 6...d6 7 d4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 7 exd5 cxd5 8 d4 exd4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?! (giving up his good bishop; it turns out that White's damaged pawn-structure isn't as important as his

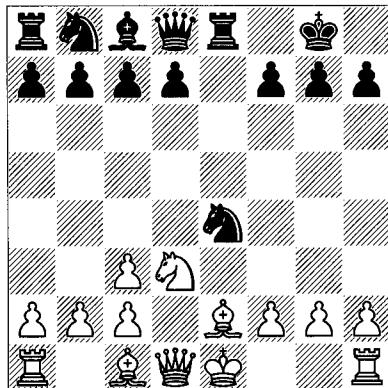
W



active pieces; 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is better) 10  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ ?! (14  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ; 14  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  with a pull – moves like  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  can follow) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ ?! (17... $\mathbb{Q}fe8$ ! 18  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ ) 18  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?! 22  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  23  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  with numerous threats, beginning with  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ .

b) 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is a reversed Ruy Lopez in which White has played the extra move  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Now the obvious try is 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  transposes to the main game) 4...0-0 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (another try is 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , producing an unbalanced ending after 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $dxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ + 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ + 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ , with a familiar situation with two bishops versus doubled pawns) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (after 5...d5?! 6  $exd5$ , neither 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  nor 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  7 0-0 gives Black enough for a pawn) 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $dxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (D).

W



This looks like a cross between an Exchange Variation and a Berlin Defence to the Ruy

Lopez. In spite of Black's weakness-free position, White is slightly better and can work to prevent ...d5 by 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ; for example, 8...d6 9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and now:

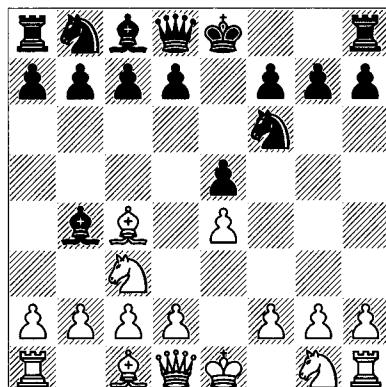
b1) 10 c4  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  (10...h6!?) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  b6 (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ) 12 f3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13 b3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}bd1$  and White's pieces make a better overall impression, Svidler-Gashimov, Dagomys 2008.

b2) In Shirov-Akopian, Linares 1995, White contested e4 by 10 f3! and got the better of it in spite of the weakness on e3: 10... $\mathbb{Q}ef6$  11 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?! 12 b3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , and here Shirov likes simply 15  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16 cxd5 with an edge because of the bishop-pair.

3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! (D)

A much-analysed Vienna Game line goes 3... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ; you will see the same idea in the next couple of notes.

W



Now we have a reversed Classical Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ), with Black a whole tempo down. The Classical can be a pretty active system, so let's see if White can make good use of the extra tempo.

4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

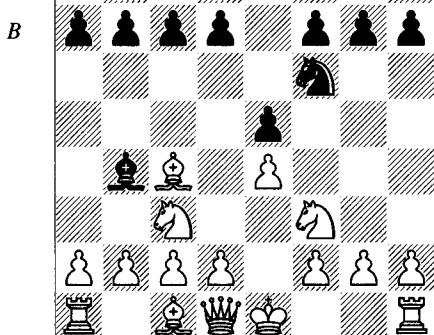
This is the purest reversed system, imitating the normal Classical Ruy Lopez with 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . Two alternatives:

a) 4 d3 isn't bad, of course, but it does make 4...d5 possible, which is at any rate close to equal, if not fully so, after 5  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 9  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !?) has the odd-looking intention of playing f4; this is probably about equal following 9...a5! 10 a3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ! 12 f4 a4 13  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  f5 14  $\mathbb{Q}4c3$ )

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  8  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{W}f6!$ ? 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0  
 10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}g6?$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is better) 11  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   
 $hxg6$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{B}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  
 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (15 f4! is strong) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16  $\mathbb{B}xe5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$ ? ½-½ J.Andersen-Velička, Germany tt  
 1993/4.

b) 4 f4 has White playing the Schliemann Defence to the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{B}b5$  f5; see the discussion above), but with the extra move  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . The problem is that this gives Black the tactic 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ . Then if White follows the normal Vienna Game strategy of 5  $\mathbb{W}h5$  (which is probably best, since 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 is at least equal), Black plays 5...0-0!, a move unavailable in the Vienna Game (as opposed to 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  6  $\mathbb{W}xe5+$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  7  $\mathbb{W}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with better-coordinated pieces for White; he has ideas of b4, d4, or in the case of 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , 11 c3 with the idea d4). Then 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 wins the piece back with a good position for Black.

We now return to 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D):



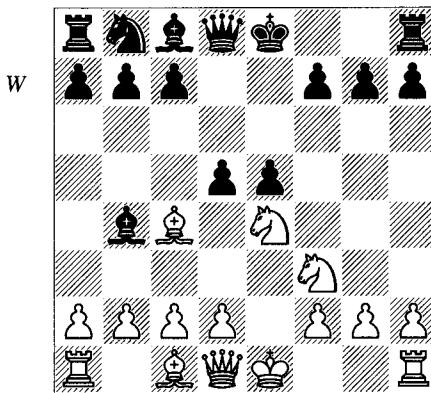
After this move, Black really should deviate from the reversed position at a fairly early stage, rather than put up with an attack by  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and/or d4. He picks a good way to do so:

#### 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

Or:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ ? 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (there's no 5  $\mathbb{W}h5$ , as in the Vienna Game) 5...d5 (D).

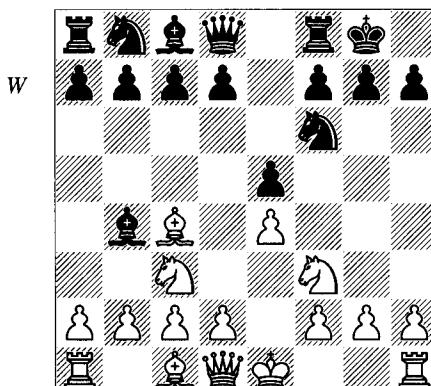
Once again we encounter this tactic. However, Black's bishop is poorly placed on b4, and 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $dxc4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  is almost certainly in White's favour. Compare the reversed line with 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{B}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ? 7  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ ? (but 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$  8



8  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}xc5+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  isn't adequate either) 8  $\mathbb{W}e1$  and White wins; in our position, Black hasn't castled.

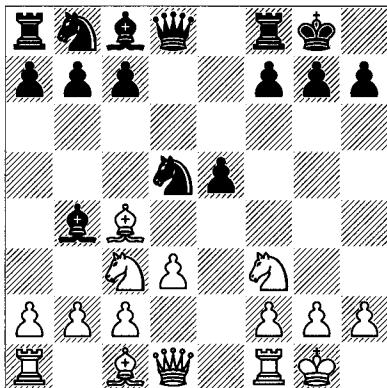
Interestingly, after 6 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  the sequence 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $dxc4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  f5 may not be as good, as the white c3-pawn sits on the knight's best retreat-square; so 9  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f4 follows, and Black gets practical chances after 10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  or 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  11 d3 f3. Nor is 7  $\mathbb{W}a4+!$ ? simple, in spite of winning a pawn after 7...c6! 8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $dxe4$  9  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10 0-0 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13  $\mathbb{W}h5$  g6 14  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15 d4  $\mathbb{W}e8$ .

#### b) 4...0-0 (D).



5 d3 (or 5 0-0, when 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  6  $dxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !? 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  favours White's superior development by a small margin) 5...d5 (5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7  $bxc3$  d5 8  $exd5$  9  $\mathbb{W}e1$ ! is a tempo-up version of a Classical Ruy Lopez line; White's development gives him some advantage after 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f6 11  $\mathbb{B}b1$  b6 and now 12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  or 12  $\mathbb{B}b5$  with the idea 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?! 13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !) 6  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  7 0-0! (D).

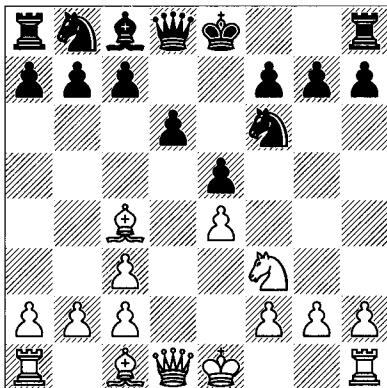
B



This is a thematic pawn sacrifice, based upon speed of development more than anything else. 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?! 8  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?! 9  $\mathbb{W}e1$  and  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  cedes the bishops for nothing) 8  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $h6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5$  with a nice initiative and notions of  $\mathbb{W}g6$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ .

**5  $dxc3$   $d6$  (D)**

W



The last reversal: Black has played the Exchange Ruy Lopez, and apparently given White much better development than he gets in the reversed position. But in fact, Black doesn't generate many powerful attacks in the Exchange Ruy Lopez, and in this reversed position, White has nothing to be particularly excited about.

**6  $0-0$**

White could try to lure Black into an inferior line by 6  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , and if Black replies 6...0-0, and then answers 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with 7...h6, White can play as Black does with reversed colours: 8  $h4$ !, with the idea 8...hxg5?! 9 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{R}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{R}dh1$ , etc. But

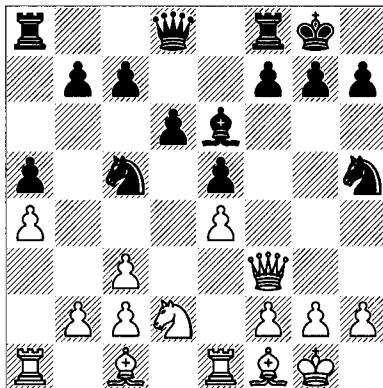
that is wishful thinking, and among other ideas, simply 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7  $\mathbb{E}e1$  0-0 8  $a4$ !?

**6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7  $\mathbb{E}e1$  0-0 8  $a4$ !?**

A strange move. 8  $b4$ ! would stop ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , a move which now puts White on the defensive.

**8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $a5$  10  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13  $\mathbb{W}f3$  (D)**

B



**13... $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

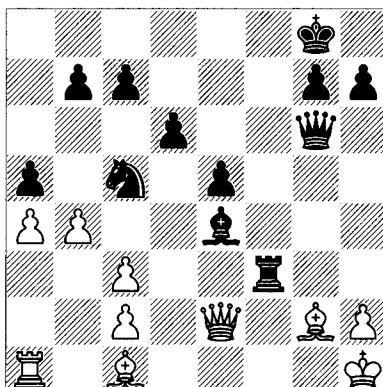
Black has already got the upper hand, and the game quickly turns worse for White:

**14  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?!  $f5$ ! 15  $exf5$   $\mathbb{W}xf5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ !**  
**17  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  18  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  19  $\mathbb{W}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  21  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  22  $b4$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  23  $f3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$ !**

**24  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (D)**

24  $bxc5$   $\mathbb{W}e3$ ! wins for Black.

B



**24... $\mathbb{W}g4$  25  $bxc5$   $\mathbb{W}f7$ ! 0-1**

Most of this 1 e4 e5 analysis has been in the nature of an exercise, but it might give you an idea of why the main 1 e4 e5 variations do not lend themselves to profitable reversals.

# 7 Symmetry and its Descendants

Students often complain about how this or that opening is ‘drawish’. However, it’s hard to find convincing examples. Even well past the opening stage, simplified and equal chess positions can be won by the better player on that day. This is all the more true when the players are below master strength, because their more frequent mistakes will present opportunities for the opponent.

The charge of drawishness is regularly levelled at symmetrical openings, or ones that involve a symmetrical pawn-structure. There’s a huge difference, however, between a ‘drawish’ opening and one which seems boring to you or not dynamic enough. In fact, I think that a distaste for dry openings can be a healthy thing for developing players; after all, most masters have energetic styles and strive for the initiative. And even those who ultimately adopt highly positional styles usually start out with some ambitious openings (Karpov and Kramnik come to mind). However, it’s important to realize that just because an opening seems tedious, it doesn’t follow that a drawn result becomes likely. Also, fortunately, you’ll find that positions which previously bored you become increasingly interesting as you study them more deeply.

Understanding the issues related to symmetry in the opening can expand your overall understanding of chess. The game would be impoverished if one side could simply imitate the other, or even if White were the only one who could productively avoid symmetry. As it happens, there are few if any variations in chess in which neither player can productively break symmetry. As is the case with reversed openings, information can be the key factor. That is, the knowledge of what White has done makes it easier for Black to find an independent set-up. For his part, White can break symmetry simply by setting up positions in which imitation leads to inferior positions. You will see how easy that is.

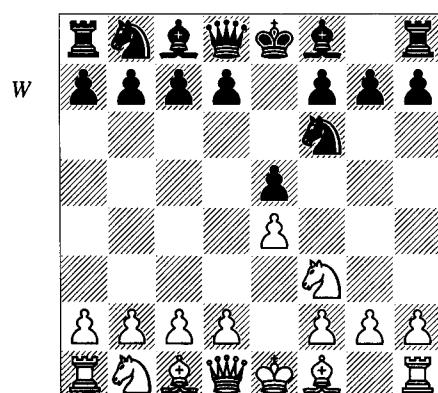
We’ve already seen numerous examples of symmetrical openings in this series, notably in Volume 3 with the many variations of the Symmetrical English ( $1\ c4\ c5$ ). After  $1\ d4\ d5$ , the best-known truly symmetrical opening is the Exchange Variation of the Slav Defence,  $1\ d4\ d5\ 2\ c4\ c6\ 3\ cxd5\ cxd5$ . We examined this in Volume 2, Chapter 3. While it’s true that some players use this variation to gain early draws, we saw that either player can deviate from symmetry with full confidence of maintaining equality while unbalancing the play. The symmetrical variation  $1\ d4\ d5\ 2\ c4\ c5$  is a different matter. Whether White plays  $3\ cxd5$  or  $3\ dxc5$ , he can quickly reach asymmetrical and favourable positions, which accounts for the obscurity of  $2\dots c5$ .

In this chapter, I’ll concentrate upon a few fairly important openings that aren’t dealt with elsewhere in this series, in which symmetry begins on move one. In doing so, I’ll also be able to consider a number of pawn-structures I haven’t previously addressed.

## Petroff Defence

### **1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 (D)**

This is called the Petroff Defence, also known as the Russian Defence.



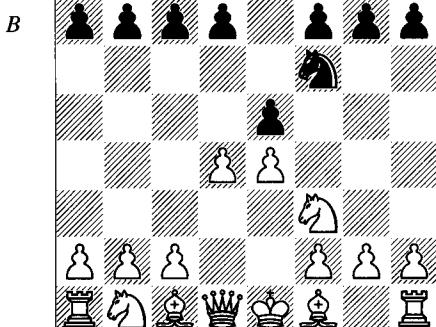
Like many symmetrical variations, it has a reputation for dry or even drawish play. This stems from the perceived drawish nature of games between elite players and years of commentary from books and magazines. To be sure, of the 900+ Petroff Defence games in my database between opponents who are both rated above 2600, we find that 63% of the games are drawn, as opposed to 50% for both the Sicilian and French Defences. Nevertheless, White has an overall success rate of 58% (well above average), and a solid lead over Black in performance rating. Clearly Black doesn't get his normal share of wins, a fact which can easily be missed as we see elite players like Kramnik using the Petroff in order to secure effortless draws (and even occasional victories) as Black. But just because a world champion manages to pull off a draw doesn't mean that you, as White, won't find ample winning chances.

Let's explore some theory of the Petroff Defence, keeping an eye on the way that symmetrical structures influence the play. At the same time, I'll give an overview of how this classic opening breaks down. Keep in mind that many variations are necessarily omitted, and this coverage doesn't reflect the proportion in which they are played in practice.

**Shirov – Yusupov**  
Ter Apel 1997

**1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 d4 (D)**

In the next game we'll see 3...♜xe5; the two variations can end up in similar positions. For a discussion of 3...♞c3, see the Four Knights section below.



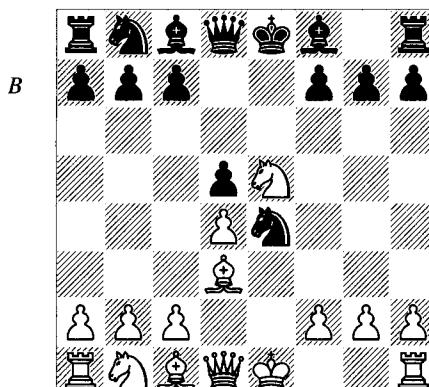
**3...♜xe4**

These days, 3...exd4 is less popular. One main line goes 4 e5 ♜e4 5 ♜xd4 d5 6 exd6 ♜xd6 7 ♜c3 ♜c6 8 ♜f4 with the idea of ♜e3 and 0-0-0, posing Black some problems.

**4 ♜d3**

If White plays 4 dxe5, Black usually replies 4...d5, when after 5 ♜bd2, 5...♜xd2 and 5...♞c5 are the main lines. White has been finding his way to modest advantages versus those moves. But 4...♞c5 may be considerably stronger than previously thought, especially with variations like 5 ♜c4 ♜xf2 6 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 (6...♝f8 7 ♜d5 ♜xh1 8 ♜h5! is unclear) 7 ♜d5+ (following very old theory) 7...♝g6!. This was played in Short-Smeets, Wijk aan Zee 2010: 8 ♜g5 ♜e8 9 ♜h4+? (9 0-0) 9...♝xg5 10 ♜d2 ♜h6? (10...d6! should win, as the black king survives its walk) 11 ♜f5+ ♜g6 12 ♜h4+ ♜h6 13 ♜f5+ ♜g6 14 ♜h4+ with a draw. Of course, White has many alternatives early on, but nothing that looks particularly attractive.

**4...d5 5 ♜xe5 (D)**



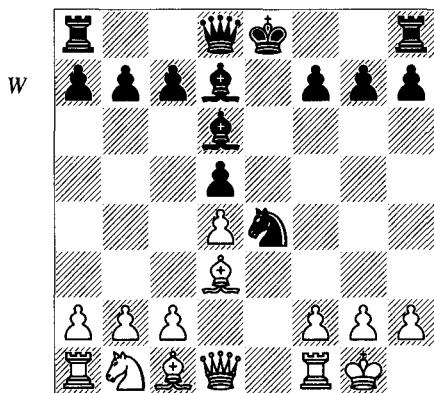
**5....♜d6**

Black opts for perfect symmetry. Countless high-level games have proceeded 5...♜d7 6 ♜xd7 (playing so as to preserve the pawn-structure without losing time; 6 0-0 ♜xe5 7 dxe5 ♜c5 8 ♜c3 c6 has the idea of an early ...♜xd3, to get another pair of pieces off – this position is unclear, but high-level games so far indicate that Black is close to equality) 6...♜xd7 7 0-0 and now:

- After 7...♝h4, 8 c4 0-0-0 9 c5 is complex and probably in White's favour; for example, after 9...g5!? 10 ♜c3 ♜g7 11 g3! ♜h3 12 ♜xe4

$\text{dxe4}$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$ , as in several games, White drums up a major attack after  $\mathbb{W}a4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}d1-d3-b3/a3$ . The modest 8  $g3$  is also good; then 8... $\mathbb{W}h3?$  is poor in view of 9  $f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1+$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ . So 8... $\mathbb{W}f6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10  $\text{bxc3}$  0-0-0 11  $\mathbb{W}h5$  usually follows, with pressure.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$  (*D*) pursues a quasi-symmetrical strategy:



Black is reasonably well developed, and it's difficult for White to remove the knight from e4 without oversimplifying. His most thematic approach involves targeting d5. Briefly:

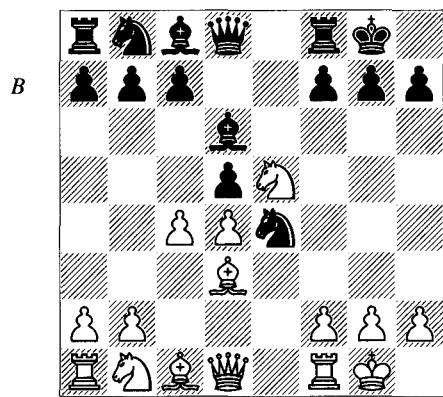
b1) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\text{bxc3}$  0-0 10  $\mathbb{W}h5$  f5 11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6 is solid for Black.

b2) 8  $\mathbb{W}h5$  creates more problems for Black. After 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (Kramnik has tried 8... $\mathbb{W}f6$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1+\mathbb{Q}f8$ , one example is 10  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (popular, but 10...c6 is probably better) 11 h3  $\mathbb{W}h4$  12  $\mathbb{W}f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 14  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$   $\mathbb{Q}e8?!$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  gxf6 and White has much the superior pawn-structure, Caruana-Motylev, European Ch, Plovdiv 2008.

b3) 8 c4 c6 9  $\text{cxd5}$   $\text{cxd5}$  10  $\mathbb{W}h5!?$  (again hitting d5; a similar line is 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $\text{bxc3}$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{W}h5$ , when Rublevsky-Volokitin, Poikovsky 2008 went 12...g6! 13  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  15  $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  with balanced play) 10...0-0! 11  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12  $\mathbb{W}h5$  g6. Here Black achieves sufficient counterplay; for example, 13  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  14  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and although Karpov twice chose 16... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  versus Anand, it seems easiest to regain material by 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ; for example, 17  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  18 f4 f5 19  $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

### 6 0-0 0-0 7 c4 (*D*)

White can't get much out of 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8  $\text{bxc3}$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (8... $c5!?$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  due to 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10  $\text{dxe5}$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ; for example, 11  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  12  $\text{cxd3}$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (shamelessly heading for ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or ... $\mathbb{W}f5$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}g4$  14  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  with a quick draw, Shanava-Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 2008.



### 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black develops and attacks d4. Other moves:

a) The line 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\text{bxc3}$  pretty much expresses White's strategic goals with respect to undermining the knight on e4 and maintaining central pressure. He generally keeps some advantage; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (in the game Maroczy-Marshall, Paris 1900, Black chose 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5?!$  10  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{dxc4}$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xd1?!$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , when White had the bishop-pair and a mobile kingside majority) 10 f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (or 11  $\mathbb{W}b3$ ) 11... $\text{dxc4}$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  c5 15 f5?  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , Z.Almasi-Forintos, Hungarian Team Ch 1993/4, and now 16  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  is the easiest way to maintain the pressure.

b) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8  $\text{dxe5}$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\text{cxd5}$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  10  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$  13 g4! is an ancient line that has been analysed at great length to a moderate endgame advantage for White.

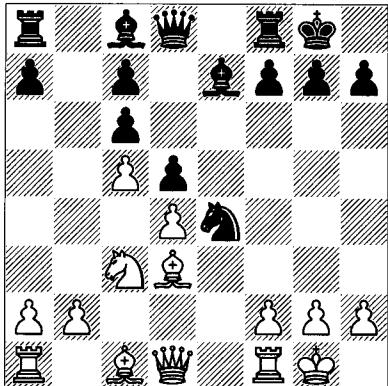
### 8 $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\text{bxc6}$ 9 c5 $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 10 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ (*D*)

#### 10...f5

10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  leaves White several ways to pursue an advantage, including these two:

a) 11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (covering f4 in addition to d4) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  12  $\mathbb{W}c2$  g6 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5 16 f3 and in Mulyar-Goodall, Cherry Hill 2007 Black miscalculated with 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$

B

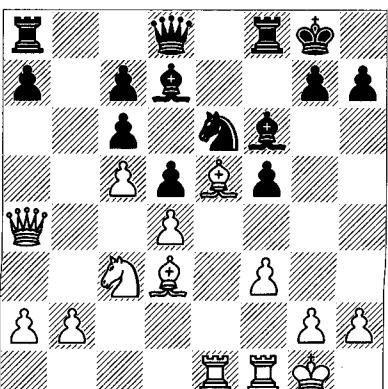


17 dxc5 d4? 18  $\mathbb{B}g5$  1-0. Since 16...f4?! 17  $\mathbb{B}xe4$   $\mathbb{B}xe4$  18 e5  $\mathbb{B}h4$  19  $\mathbb{B}a4!$   $\mathbb{B}xb2$  20  $\mathbb{B}xc6$  is also good for White, Black should try 16... $\mathbb{B}f6$  17  $\mathbb{B}g5$   $\mathbb{B}e6$  18  $\mathbb{B}e2!$ , when White can claim positional superiority, but it's still a game.

b) After 11  $\mathbb{B}xe4$   $\mathbb{B}xe4$  12  $\mathbb{B}xe4$ , Yusupov suggests 12... $\mathbb{B}a6$ ; then 13  $\mathbb{B}e3!$   $\mathbb{B}xf1$  14  $\mathbb{B}xf1$  looks to be a promising exchange sacrifice: White gains a pawn, the bishop-pair and the initiative.

11 f3  $\mathbb{B}g5$  12  $\mathbb{B}a4$   $\mathbb{B}d7$  13  $\mathbb{B}f4$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  14  $\mathbb{B}ae1$   $\mathbb{B}e6$  15  $\mathbb{B}e5$  (D)

B



White has achieved two basic positional advantages: the better light-squared bishop and an outpost on e5. In the meantime, Black's queen-side pawn-structure is less than ideal.

15... $\mathbb{B}xe5$  16  $\mathbb{B}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}h4$  17  $f4!$   $\mathbb{B}xf4$  18  $g3$   $\mathbb{B}h3+$  19  $\mathbb{B}g2$   $\mathbb{B}h6$  20  $\mathbb{B}xd5$  f4?

White stands clearly better after 20... $\mathbb{B}ae8$ ?! 21  $\mathbb{B}e7+$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  22  $\mathbb{B}c2$ !, but only moderately so following 20... $\mathbb{B}d2+$  21  $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{B}ae8$ ! 22  $\mathbb{B}e7+$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  23  $\mathbb{B}xh3$   $\mathbb{B}f7$  24  $\mathbb{B}d1$ .

21  $\mathbb{B}e7+$   $\mathbb{B}h8$  22  $\mathbb{B}f5$ !  $\mathbb{B}g5$

Shirov gives 22... $\mathbb{B}xf5$  23  $\mathbb{B}xf5$ !  $\mathbb{B}ae8(?)$  24  $\mathbb{B}d1$ !.

23  $\mathbb{B}h4$   $\mathbb{B}h6$  24  $\mathbb{B}f5!$   $\mathbb{B}fxg3$  25  $\mathbb{B}hxg3$   $\mathbb{B}g6$ ?

Black's last shot was 25... $\mathbb{B}g5$ ! 26  $\mathbb{B}d1$ !  $\mathbb{B}gh4$  27  $\mathbb{B}xd7$   $\mathbb{B}g6$ ! 28  $\mathbb{B}g4!$   $\mathbb{B}f4+$  29  $\mathbb{B}h2$   $\mathbb{B}d5$  30  $\mathbb{B}f5$ , although White is still well on top.

26  $\mathbb{B}xd7$   $\mathbb{B}d2+$  27  $\mathbb{B}xh3$   $\mathbb{B}xf1$  28  $\mathbb{B}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}af8$  29  $\mathbb{B}g2$   $\mathbb{B}1f2$  30  $\mathbb{B}d7$   $\mathbb{B}g5$  31  $\mathbb{B}e7$   $\mathbb{B}c2$  32  $\mathbb{B}e4!$

White finds a pretty finish, marching his king up the board.

32... $\mathbb{B}h2+$  33  $\mathbb{B}g4$   $\mathbb{B}xh4+$

33... $\mathbb{B}e2+$  34  $\mathbb{B}f3$ .

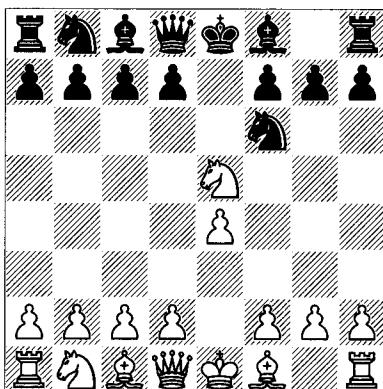
34  $\mathbb{B}gxh4$   $\mathbb{B}e2+$  35  $\mathbb{B}xg5$   $\mathbb{B}g8+$  36  $\mathbb{B}f6$  1-0

### Solodovnichenko – Backlund

Rochefort 2005

1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  3  $\mathbb{B}xe5$  (D)

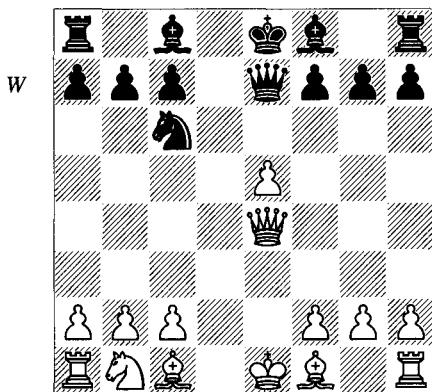
B



3...d6

Full-blooded symmetrical play can be pursued by the amazing 3... $\mathbb{B}xe4$ !?, which for years books assigned a '?', simply giving the line 4  $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{B}f6$ ?? 5  $\mathbb{B}c6$ +. Actually, 4  $\mathbb{B}e2$  isn't the disaster that it looks like, because of 4... $\mathbb{B}e7$ ! 5  $\mathbb{B}xe4$  d6 (granted, 5... $\mathbb{B}xe5$ ?? would be taking symmetry too far!). Black recovers his piece and is sacrificing a pawn for compensation. It's hard to believe that White can't retain some advantage, but it's fun to see how even this discarded line is taken seriously in the age of computers. Briefly, the main line is 6 d4 (the only important alternative is 6 f4, when after 6...dxe5, 7  $\mathbb{B}xe5$ ?!  $\mathbb{B}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{B}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}c6$  9  $\mathbb{B}b5$   $\mathbb{B}d7$  10  $\mathbb{B}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  gives Black obvious compensation;

instead, 7 fxe5 f5! is a line analysed in depth by O.Cohen – whether or not it equalizes completely, as he suggests, Black has lots of play) 6...dxe5 7 dxe5! (7 ♜xe5 ♜xe5+ 8 dxe5 ♜f5 is equal, based upon 9 ♜d3?! ♜xd3 10 cxd3 ♜c6, with moves such as ... ♜b4 and ...0-0-0 to follow) 7... ♜c6 (D).



We have seen the idea of exploiting such an e5-pawn on an open file in many openings before. The success of this strategy depends upon developing quickly and maintaining the initiative; for example:

a) 8 ♜b5 ♜d7 9 ♜c3 ♜b4! was played and analysed by Friedrich Volkmann and others and seems sufficient for equality.

b) 8 f4!? may be underrated. Then 8... ♜g4 with the idea ...0-0-0 has been recommended, along with 8... ♜b4+ 9 ♜xb4 ♜xb4, but I suspect that White retains the better game in both cases.

c) 8 ♜f4 g5! 9 ♜d2 (not 9 ♜g3?? in view of 9...f5!, and ...f4 will win the bishop) 9...f5 10 ♜e2 ♜g8 with the idea ... ♜e6 and ...0-0-0, Baron-O.Cohen, Givataim 2007.

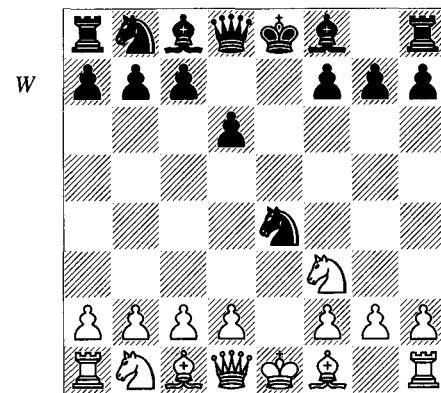
d) Of course, White has less ambitious possibilities; for example, Cohen analyses 8 ♜c3 ♜xe5 9 ♜xe5+ ♜xe5 10 ♜f4 f6 with a slight edge for White, which is perhaps not the goal of either player!

#### 4 ♜f3

I'll mention some lesser-played lines as I go along. A rather silly sacrifice that has had periodic success is 4 ♜xf7?!! ♜xf7, the Cochrane Gambit, and now White can play 5 ♜c3, 5 ♜c4+ or 5 d4. Having written about these moves in detail, I can only say that this sacrifice is

wildly overrated, and that Black gets a definite advantage with correct play. On the other hand, Black seldom plays correctly, and in fact the few times elite players have faced 4 ♜xf7, they have reacted with playable but inferior moves!

#### 4... ♜xe4 (D)



#### 5 d4

The Petroff Defence is not as limited as you might think from watching top-level technical games over the years, most of which repeat the same lines over and over. Here is a brief outline of some early alternatives for White, of which 'c' and 'd' are the most attractive:

a) 5 d3 ♜f6 6 d4 d5 (an Exchange French) is not the most inspiring of symmetrical positions, but the players can always get creative later.

b) Another attempt to break symmetry has been used extensively over the years: 5 ♜e2 ♜e7 6 d3 ♜f6 7 ♜g5, threatening to double Black's pawns on f6. This has tended to allow Black easy equality; for example, 7... ♜bd7 (or 7... ♜xe2+ 8 ♜xe2 ♜e7 9 ♜c3 h6 10 ♜h4 ♜bd7) 8 ♜c3 ♜xe2+ 9 ♜xe2 h6 10 ♜h4 g5 11 ♜g3 ♜h5 12 ♜d5 ♜d8 with a good game, Reinderman-Kasimdzhanov, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

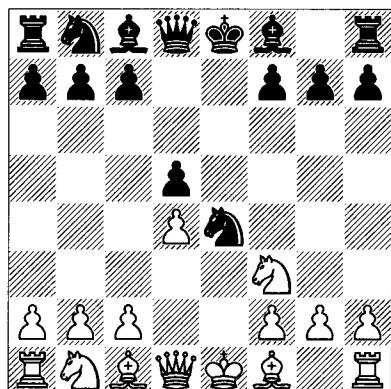
c) A very interesting asymmetrical line at this point begins with 5 c4?!. Then if Black plays slowly by 5... ♜e7, White can try to transpose into a pleasant main line by 6 d4, and upon other moves such as 5...c6, 5... ♜c6 and 5...d5, he plays 6 ♜c3, answering 6... ♜xc3 with 7 dxc3, a pawn-structure which lends itself to active development. For those looking for variety, it's worth experimenting with this.

d) 5 ♜c3 ♜xc3 6 dxc3 has been played a great deal at the very top levels. If Black is

well-prepared, he should equalize; often, however, the resulting position will be sufficiently unbalanced for either side to play for a win. I'll leave this one for you to research as well.

### 5...d5 (D)

Some strong players have done all right with 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , but after White sets up with h3, 0-0, c4 and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , he has more territory under control and an undoubted, if small, advantage.



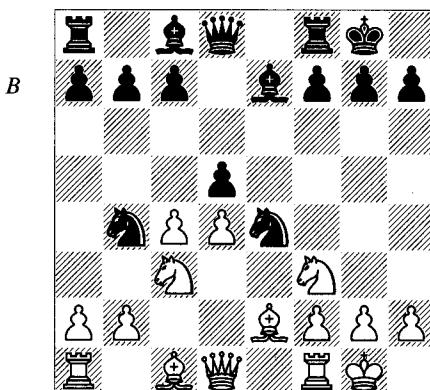
W

A funny picture. It's as though Black had the first move of the game, and after four symmetrical moves (e.g., in an Exchange French), played 5... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ . Normally, in other openings, such an advanced and supported knight is a force to be reckoned with. But here it is actually a minor disadvantage, in that White can undermine the knight's support by c4 and  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , subsequently forcing its retreat or exchanging it under more favourable terms than are presently available. He usually does this via moves such as  $\mathbb{E}e1$ ,  $\mathbb{W}c2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Crucially, the knight on e4 doesn't defend d5, which can be attacked. By contrast, White's knight on f3 protects the d4-pawn. Note also that there is only one file open in this position, so you might think that rooks would inevitably be exchanged on it. However, as in the Exchange Variation of the French Defence, that seldom happens unless the players are mutually intent upon drawing. For one thing, all the key squares down the e-file are protected by pawns or minor pieces, so the rooks may find better prospects somewhere else on the board.

### 6 $\mathbb{Q}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$

Maintaining the near-symmetry. The other main line is 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (after 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7 0-0, 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

transposes, while 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{W}e2+?$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  gives White the better of it, since Black can't castle and 12... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is quite risky for him) 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 c4 (there are a few alternatives here, and many more along the way; 8  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  has been played and analysed extensively – of late, 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{W}d1$  has been a critical theoretical line) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (over the years, 9 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{W}e5$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  has proven equal, or close enough) 9...0-0 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D).



B

Now:

a) After 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , the odd and time-consuming 11  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  f6 12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  has actually had plenty of success due to the loosening of Black's central position and the a2-g8 diagonal. The moves  $\mathbb{W}b3$  and  $\mathbb{E}e1$  are thematic follow-ups.

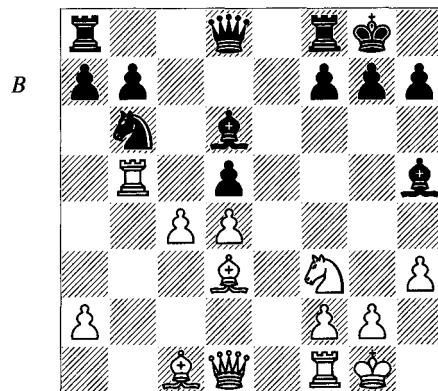
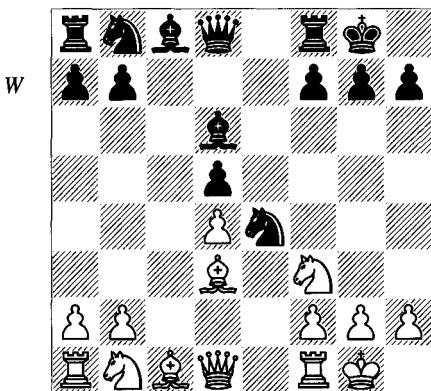
b) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  14 cxd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  is perhaps slightly better for White, and has been the starting point for many grandmaster battles. Anand-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2010 continued 16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17  $\mathbb{W}c1+?$   $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$  18  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  19 c4!  $\mathbb{W}d8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  21  $\mathbb{W}c3$  with a considerable advantage in space and activity.

### 7 0-0 0-0 8 c4 c6 9 cxd5

9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is also used extensively by leading players, the most frequent continuation being 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10 bxc3 dxc4 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

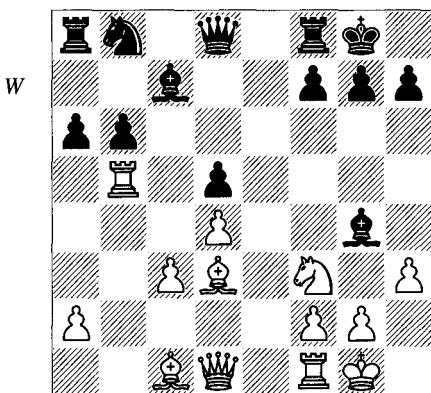
### 9...cxd5 (D)

This is the last juncture at which we'll be involved in issues of symmetry; the position becomes structurally unbalanced after White's next move.



**10  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}g4$  12  $\mathbb{B}b1 \mathbb{Q}d7$**

White gets an excellent attack following 12... $b6$  13  $\mathbb{B}b5 \mathbb{Q}c7$  14  $h3$   $a6$  (D).



15  $\mathbb{B}xd5!$  (15  $hxg4 axb5$  16  $\mathbb{W}c2 g6$  has won some pretty games for White, but is probably about equal after 17  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{E}e8$  18  $\mathbb{B}xb5 \mathbb{E}e4!$  19  $c4 \mathbb{W}xg4$  20  $cxd5 \mathbb{Q}f4$  21  $\mathbb{E}e1 \mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{B}xf4 \mathbb{W}xf4$ ) 15... $\mathbb{W}xd5$  16  $hxg4$  gives White a nice initiative in return for the exchange; for example, 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5 h6$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h7+ \mathbb{Q}h8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{W}d6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{W}fe8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{W}d7$  22  $g5$  with a terrific attack, Benjamin-Sammour Hasbun, Philadelphia 1999.

**13  $h3 \mathbb{Q}h5$  14  $\mathbb{B}b5$**

White attacks the d-pawn and pins it laterally. Instead of this, 14  $\mathbb{B}xb7!?$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  traps White's rook, but it's not clear whether that can be exploited. The sequence 15  $g4 \mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}a6 \mathbb{W}e8$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{W}c6$  is still being debated, and undoubtedly other possibilities will be discovered.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15  $c4!?$  (D)**

White insists upon grabbing the initiative. The threat is  $c5$ , and Black's loose bishop on  $h5$  has tactical drawbacks.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$**

Other moves are worse:

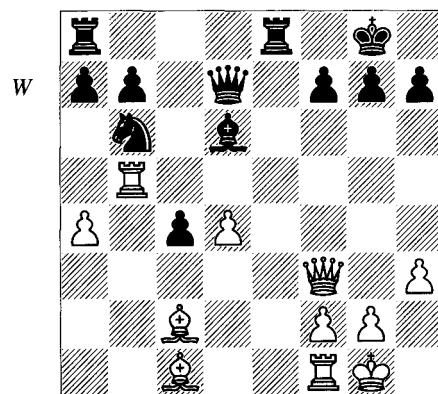
a) Black will suffer after 15... $dxc4!?$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+ \mathbb{Q}xh7$  17  $\mathbb{B}xh5+ \mathbb{Q}g8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}h4!$  with the idea of  $\mathbb{W}g4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .

b) White's two pieces will be superior to Black's rook after 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc4!?$  16  $\mathbb{B}xd5 \mathbb{Q}h2+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh2! \mathbb{W}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{W}xc4$  19  $\mathbb{W}xh5$ , as in Brandenburg-S.Ernst, Dieren 2008.

**16  $\mathbb{W}xf3 dxc4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c2$**

White has the bishop-pair, open lines and a potential kingside attack; Black has an extra pawn and active pieces.

**17... $\mathbb{W}d7$  18  $a4 \mathbb{Q}fe8!?$  (D)**



**19  $h4$**

There's a saying attributed to Larsen: when in doubt, advance a rook's pawn! With this move, White gains space, helps fortify some kingside attacking ideas, and leaves open his

options as to the placement of his dark-squared bishop, which might go to e3 or to the a1-h8 diagonal. In other games, forcing the pace with 19  $\mathbb{B}f5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  hasn't been effective: 20  $\mathbb{B}e4$  (20 a5  $\mathbb{W}c6$  has scored well for Black) 20...a6 21  $\mathbb{B}g5?$   $\mathbb{B}xe4!$  22  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$ . This position occurred in both Ponomariov-Safin, Erevan 2001 and Kristjansson-J.Gunnarsson, Icelandic Ch, Seltjarnarnes 2002. Black's queenside pawns should prove superior to White's temporary threats.

**19... $\mathbb{Q}c7?!$**

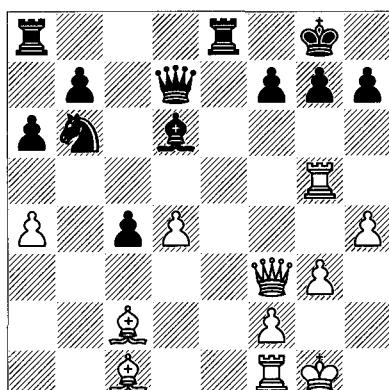
Black has the double idea of playing ... $\mathbb{W}d6$  and attacking White's d4-pawn. But neither idea means that much, so Black might prefer 19... $\mathbb{B}ad8$  or M.Ivanov's suggestion 19...h6 20 g3  $\mathbb{B}e7!?$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{B}ae8$  and ... $\mathbb{B}e1$ . Then White still has to prove the worth of his bishops.

**20 g3 a6**

20... $\mathbb{B}ab8$  21  $\mathbb{B}f5!$  is complex, with the immediate idea 21... $\mathbb{W}xd4??$  (21... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ) 22  $\mathbb{B}b2$  and White simply mashes Black on the kingside; for example, 22... $\mathbb{W}d8$  23  $\mathbb{B}xh7+$   $\mathbb{W}xh7$  24  $\mathbb{W}xf7$ , etc.

**21  $\mathbb{B}c5!$   $\mathbb{B}d6$  22  $\mathbb{B}g5!$  (D)**

B



**22... $\mathbb{B}f8$**

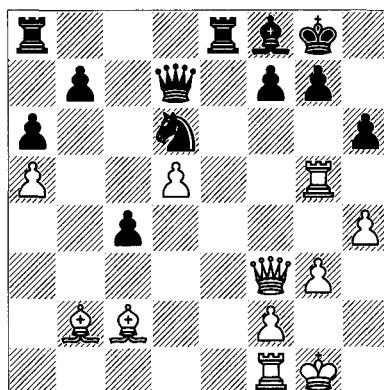
A standard but nevertheless very pretty combination is 22... $\mathbb{Q}xa4??$  23  $\mathbb{B}xa4$  (23  $\mathbb{B}xh7+$  also wins, based on 23... $\mathbb{W}xh7$  24  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{W}g8$  25  $\mathbb{B}xg7+!$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$  26  $\mathbb{B}h6+$ , mating) 23... $\mathbb{W}xa4$  24  $\mathbb{B}xg7+!$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$  25  $\mathbb{B}h6+!$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  26  $\mathbb{W}g4+$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  (26... $\mathbb{W}xh6$  27  $\mathbb{W}g5#$ ) 27  $\mathbb{B}g5+$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  28  $\mathbb{W}e7+$   $\mathbb{B}h6$  29  $\mathbb{W}g5#$ . Everyone should know these tactical patterns.

**23 a5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  24 d5!  $\mathbb{Q}d6?!$**

Probably Black should stunt White's attack by going into the simplifying line 24...g6 25  $\mathbb{B}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}xg7$  27 h5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  28  $\mathbb{B}xh6!$   $\mathbb{B}xg6$  29  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{B}f6$ , when 30  $\mathbb{B}f5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  31  $\mathbb{B}g5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  is equal, and White may have to take chances if he is to do better.

**25  $\mathbb{B}b2$  h6 (D)**

25...f5?! 26  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  27  $\mathbb{B}xf5$   $\mathbb{B}ac8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  with the idea h5 gives White some edge.



**26  $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4?$**

Black had to try 26...f5 27  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , but then 28  $\mathbb{W}h5!$  intends 28... $\mathbb{Q}xg5?$  (28...c3 29  $\mathbb{Q}xc3!)$  29  $\mathbb{B}xg5$ , winning, because 30 g6 follows.

**27  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  28  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  f5 29  $\mathbb{W}g6$   $\mathbb{B}g4$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  fxg4**

At this point, instead of 31 h5?! (which could have been answered by 31... $\mathbb{B}c8$ ), White had the clever 31  $\mathbb{B}e1!$  intending  $\mathbb{B}e5$  or  $\mathbb{B}e4$  with a clear superiority. The point is that upon 31... $\mathbb{W}xd5?$ , 32  $\mathbb{B}e7!$  wins outright.

These last two games demonstrate how, although the symmetry of this opening can hurt its reputation, both sides have more than enough ways to unbalance both the pawn-structure and the position.

## Four Knights Game

**Yuldashev – Kholmov**

Kazakhstan 1994

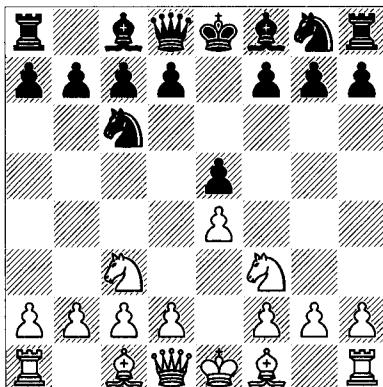
**1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

The Petroff Defence, 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , also affords White the chance to aim for the Four Knights

Game by 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , to which Black can acquiesce with 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . However, Black can deviate and play a reversed Ruy Lopez with 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , as we described in Chapter 6 in the context of reversed openings (see the notes to the game J.Polgar-Ivanchuk there).

3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D)

B

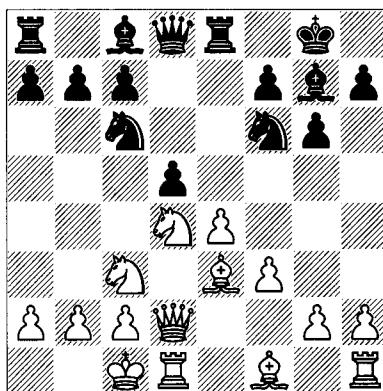


3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

This introduces the Four Knights Game, the most symmetrical double e-pawn opening.

Black can also ‘surrender the centre’ by 3...g6 4 d4 exd4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c6 is considered equal) 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ . Then the main line goes 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 8 0-0-0  $\mathbb{E}e8$  9 f3 d5 (D) (9...d6 is a direct transposition to the Philidor Defence from Volume 1, in which the move ... $\mathbb{E}e8$  is less than ideal; White can play 10 g4 or 10  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  with the better prospects).

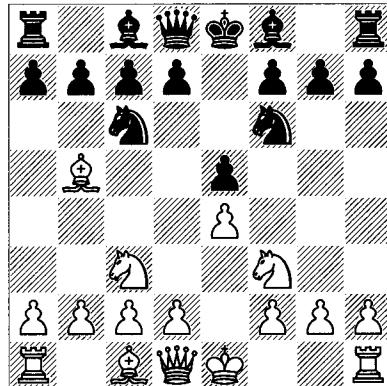
W



13  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$ , and here 14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is probably better than theory’s recommendation 14  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  15 c3, because in that case 15... $\mathbb{E}ac8!$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{E}ce7!$  is quite strong) 10...bxcc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}h8?$ ! (11... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ) 12 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  15 c3  $\mathbb{Q}f5?$ ! ½-½ Potkin-Khrushev, Moscow 2000; White should have continued with 16  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ , intending 16... $\mathbb{E}ed8$  17  $\mathbb{W}c6$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (this is a place to look for improvements) 14  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  18  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  20  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  21 b3 and although Black still has dangerous play, White consolidated the pawn in Svidler-Geller, Moscow 1992.

4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (D)

B



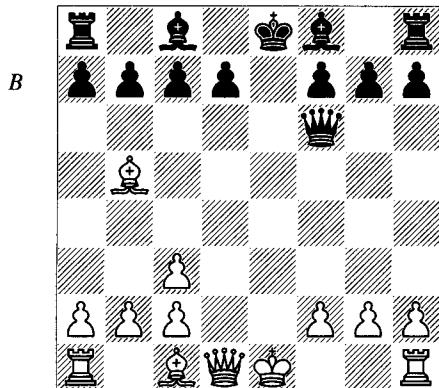
4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Or:

a) Rubinstein’s move 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , with the idea 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$ , has traditionally been a sound theoretical answer to the Four Knights with 4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . White has many ways to proceed, such as the traditional main line 5  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  and less common ideas such as 5 0-0, 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  or 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . There is currently a good deal of research going into the Four Knights, and this last move, 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , in particular is unresolved. For example, after 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$ , 6 gxf3! is enjoying consistent success, even on a grandmaster level (d4 and/or f4 follow), and some analysts believe that 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , while risky-looking, results in a small advantage for White. From Black’s point of view, a potential drawback to 4... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 6 e5 dxcc3 7 exf6  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  (Black falls too far behind in development following 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ ? 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and

10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  can become double-edged after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  11 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$

then 11... $\mathbb{W}g5$  12  $\mathbb{H}e5!$  or 11... $\mathbb{W}d6$  12  $\mathbb{W}f3$  c6 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  14  $\mathbb{H}e8!$  with a very strong attack) 8 dxc3 (D).



Marin points out that Black has “no active prospects at all if White so wishes”, and that he “has to play carefully ... to avoid falling behind in development”. This is true, but the majority of games are drawn, so as a practical matter this can’t be to White’s liking either. Alekhine-Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914 was an early illustration: 8... $\mathbb{W}e5$  9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?) with the idea 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  10 0-0 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  d5!? 12  $\mathbb{W}f3$  gives White a few chances) 9... $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  d5 11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c6 12 c4  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15  $\mathbb{H}fe1$  0-0 16  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{H}fe8$  17 a3 f6 18  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  g6 19 f3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  with dead equality. The point is not that 4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is a superior move, but that it seems to be a better way for Black to guarantee himself an unbalanced game.

b) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ !? illustrates the creativity in modern opening play. Black has had reasonable success with this move, which prepares the re-organization by ...0-0, ... $\mathbb{H}e8$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  and perhaps ...d5, while protecting the e-pawn so as to give the opportunity for ...a6 if desired.

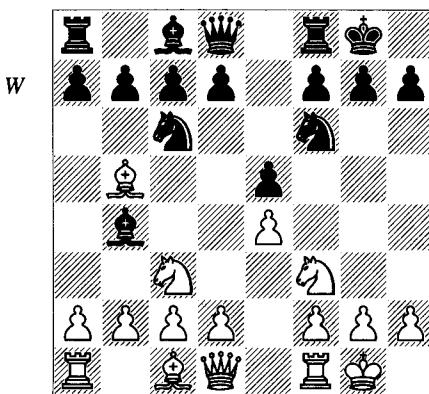
### 5 0-0 0-0 (D)

Once again, White has to decide when and how he wants to break symmetry.

#### 6 d3

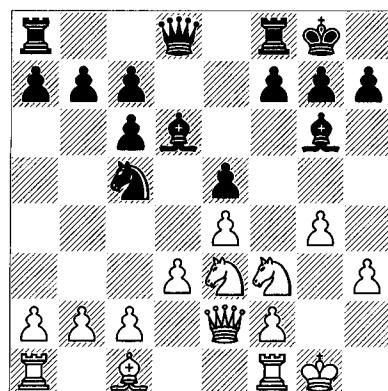
Or:

a) The natural 6  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  7 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 returns to a symmetrical position in which White hasn’t yet demonstrated an effective way to disturb the equilibrium. In this regard, however, he might try 9 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  10  $\mathbb{W}f3$ , or the more ambitious, if committal, 9  $\mathbb{W}g4$



$\mathbb{Q}c5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !? d6 11  $\mathbb{W}f4$  with the idea b3 and  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , or sometimes c3.

b) After 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  dxc6, White gets nowhere with 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{H}e8$ , and so plays 7 d3. This is another type of Exchange Ruy Lopez position. Black has tried many moves here, such as 7... $\mathbb{W}e7$ , 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , 7... $\mathbb{H}e8$  and 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ . They are all playable, but direct and active solutions are generally easier to handle, so I like Marin’s recommendation of 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8 h3 (after 8  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , Black can play 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  with the idea 9  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$ !) 8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . Then Soffer-Alterman, Tel-Aviv 1998 continued 9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (9 g4?  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ ! 10 hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  f5 is too strong; this is a sacrifice which comes up in several e-pawn openings) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10 g4!?  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ! (D).



Black imitates White’s idea: he intends to play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ , hitting the weak point at f4. The game continued 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  f6 14  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  with a balanced contest. In place of this, Alterman suggests the tactical device 13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?

14 f4. After 14... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  15 f5  $\mathbb{W}h4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , Marin says that Black should choose among 16... $\mathbb{Q}ae8$ , 16... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and 16...h6!?. The first two moves let White reorganize with 17  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and in some cases  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , but 16...h6!? forces 17 fxg6 fxg6, which establishes control of some dark squares and keeps White's knight from f5. That should be fine, and 16...h5 17 fxg6 fxg6 might be even more accurate, since 18 gxh5? allows 18... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !..

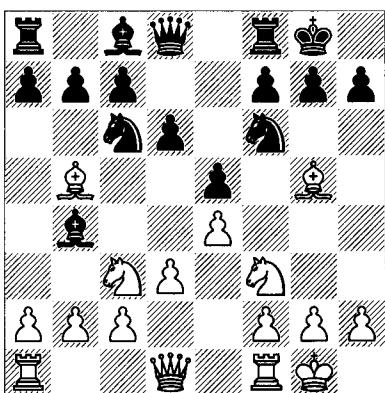
### 6...d6

Maintaining the symmetry. 6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  7 bxc3 d6 is also possible, if only to avoid White's alternative in the next note.

### 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ (D)

With this move White threatens 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ . 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is another standard idea; then Black's bishop is a bit stranded on b4 and the move  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  is useful for kingside action. In top-level encounters stretching back to Tarrasch, Rubinstein and Euwe, Black has chosen to imitate White by 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (Smyslov once played 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 8 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c6 10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  with a perfectly symmetrical position. After 11 d4, Black finally deviates with 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ; for example, 12  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  h6 13 h3  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and now 14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is sound enough, but 14...d5! is also sufficient, particularly if after 15 exd5 (as in Kozlov-Atalik, Moscow 2005) Black chooses 15...e4!..

B



### 7... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

White's last move has truly succeeded in breaking symmetry in view of 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ! gxf6 (not 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ? 9  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  10  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  gxf6 11  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13 c3, etc.; 8... $\mathbb{W}xf6$ ? loses at least two pawns: 9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

$\mathbb{W}d8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  a5 12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$ ) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !) 9...bxc6 (9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ ) 10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !, when White threatens to conquer f5 by  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , and after 11...f5, 12 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  13 c3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  has the ideas of  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$ , d4 and  $\mathbb{W}a4$ .

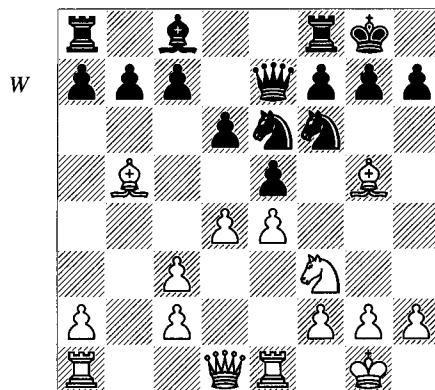
### 8 bxc3 $\mathbb{W}e7$

Sometimes called the Metger Unpin, Black's idea is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}d8-e6$  and drive the bishop away from g5. This has been the main line since the first part of the 20th century, and constitutes the bulk of master practice, but naturally there are other moves such as 8...a6, 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and 8...h6.

### 9 $\mathbb{Q}e1$

White protects e4 and plans to use his extra time to expand in the centre.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 10 d4 $\mathbb{Q}e6$ (D)



This position, the result of a manoeuvre by Black which is not intuitively obvious, has nevertheless been reached in over 800 games in my database. After 115 years or so of practice, it is still the main line of the Four Knights Game. Historically, 4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  has a drawish reputation, but in fact White has a 57% score from this point, and a considerable lead in performance rating. Even the drawing percentage, at 37%, is not out of the ordinary, and includes a large number of quick draws in which the variation went essentially untested. In other words, this position is full of life.

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}c1$ !

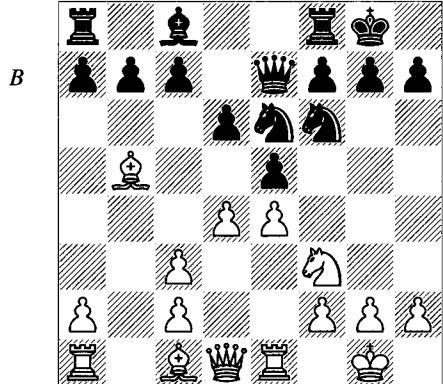
White has ideas of using this bishop on a3, but his retreat is also a reaction to the lack of promising alternatives. He has to preserve his bishop-pair as compensation for his structural

problems, but 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  loses the pawn on e4 and 11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is passive. After 11  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , 11... $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  intends ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ . For example:

a) 12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (played in anticipation of ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and, in some variations, ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ) 12... $\mathbb{Q}h8!?$  (Marin points out that the simple 12... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  breaks the pin, with easy equality) 13  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h6! 14 f3 g5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h5 18 c4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19 c3  $\mathbb{Q}ag8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  21 exf5 h4 22  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , Kamsky-Timman, Tilburg 1991, and here 22...c5 (versus dxe5 followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ) leads to double-edged play.

b) 12 h3 h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}hf4$  with a solid defence. As previously explained in the context of the King's Indian and Pirc Defences, a knight on f4 has more effect if there's a pawn on h3.

We now return to the position arising after 11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  (D):



After this bishop retreat, we can see the basic features of the position developing. White has a bishop-pair and prospects of gaining space, which is generally a good combination. But the difficulties with his structure are worth noting. White has three options regarding what to do with the d-pawn:

1) He can exchange it on e5, but that isolates his c-pawns and frees the c5-square for one of Black's pieces.

2) He can advance the pawn to d5, but this seriously reduces the mobility of his pawns, because c4-c5 is easily prevented (by ...b6, if nothing else). Worse, if Black can play ...c6 and ...cxsd5 (or recapture with a piece if White plays dxc6), then White's pawns on c2 and c3 will be especially exposed down the half-open c-file,

and Black will have permanent outposts for his pieces on c4 and c5. Therefore White will normally make the advance d5 only when he has a strong attack elsewhere (for example, on the kingside with f4), or when Black has already committed to ...c5 and cannot open the c-file. These themes are almost the same ones that we saw in the Nimzo-Indian Defence in Volume 2, and especially in the Sämisch Variation.

3) White can and usually does leave the d-pawn where it is, exerting some pressure on e5. Then he can organize f4, to attack that square further, and/or play  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ -f5.

Black would like to neutralize White's bishops by locking the position, but there's no way to rule out some pawn-break by White, regardless of whether d5 has been played. So he will generally try to reserve activity somewhere else on the board. Depending upon circumstances, that may well involve a queenside advance such as ...b5 (particularly in the ...c5 main lines); sometimes he can aim for ...d5, either with or without ...c6. Black will also try to prevent or anticipate any attempt to play f4, and in doing so he can even play on the kingside himself if the opportunity arises.

11...c5

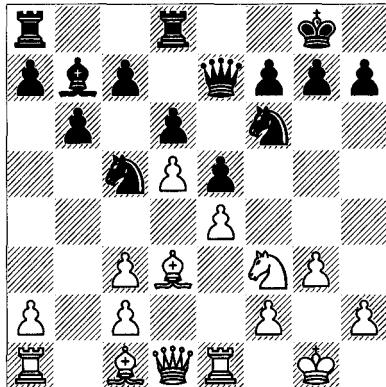
The most direct move, trying to resolve the central situation. Black has a row of legitimate alternatives; for example:

a) 11...c6 12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (intending a double capture on e5) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (or 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14 g3 (14  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  might be better) 14...h6 15 f4!? $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , Sturua-A.Mikhailovski, Biel 1999, and now Mikhailovski suggests 16  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  exf4 17  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ , but then the tactic 17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  wins back material, in view of 20  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1+!$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}f3+$ . In all of these positions, White has to prepare f4 carefully or risk overextending his position.

b) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ) 12...b6!? introduces a strategy of luring the d-pawn forward so as to eliminate the central tension and target White's queenside. For example, 13 g3 (in Grishchuk-Morozevich, Dubai 2002, White avoided committing to d5 by 13  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g6 14 g3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14 d5?! (14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (D).

This is Fauber-Bisguier, Las Vegas 1973. Now the most promising course comes directly from Nimzo-Indian positions in which

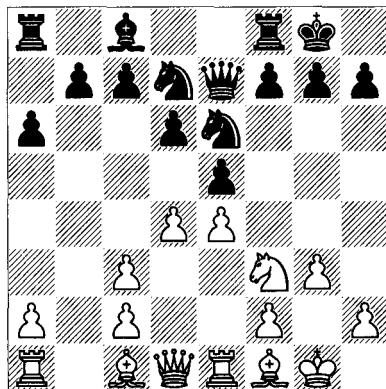
B



White has doubled c-pawns: Black should play 15...c6!, when 16 dxc6 ♜xc6 leaves White's c-pawns exposed along the c-file, and 16 c4 can be answered by 16...b5! or 16...cxd5 17 cxd5 ♜c8 with the idea of ...♝d7 and ...♜ac8.

c) 11...a6 12 ♜f1 ♜d7 13 g3 (D) (13 a4 would restrain Black's queenside for the moment) and now:

B



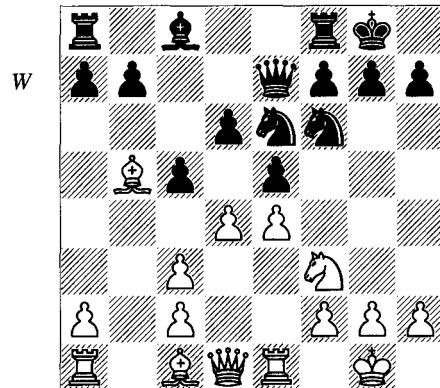
c1) In the game Shabanov-Hecht, Dresden 2004, Black simply overprotected the e5-pawn by 13...♜f6 14 ♜e3 ♜e8 15 ♜g2 h6 16 ♜d2 b6, at which point the players agreed to a draw. White might try 17 ♜h4, intending f4, when 17...♜b7 18 ♜f5 ♜g5! hits e4 and plans 19 f3 d5! 20 h4!? dxe4 with great complications.

c2) 13...c5 14 ♜g2 ♜b8 15 h4 b5 16 h5 a5 17 ♜h4 (Aagaard suggests 17 d5 ♜c7 18 ♜h4) 17...g6. Here, instead of 18 ♜e3 b4 19 d5, as in Conquest-Ledger, British Ch, Liverpool 2008, when Black should have played 19...♝f4!, White can close the centre and try to activate his bishops by 18 ♜h6 ♜d8 19 d5 ♜c7 (19...♝f4??

20 gxf4 ♜xh4?? 21 ♜g5) 20 a4 b4 21 ♜d2 with the idea f4.

These are not dull positions. You can see that the symmetrical nature of the Four Knights doesn't limit its strategic complexity.

We now return to 11...c5 (D):



12 ♜f1

Another bishop retreat to its home square! There are several points to this move, but the main one is that White would like to play g3 in order to support the move ♜h4 and, in the best of worlds, f4. But if he is to do this, his bishop is needed to defend the kingside light squares.

Instead, 12 dx5 dxe5 13 ♜xe5?? loses to 13...♜c7, and 12 d5 releases the tension before it's necessary; in response, Black can smoothly develop his queenside play via 12...♜c7 13 ♜f1 ♜d7 14 a4 ♜ab8, with ...b5 to follow shortly.

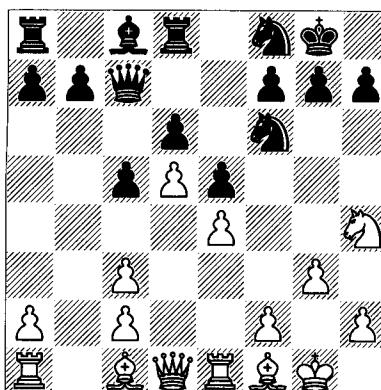
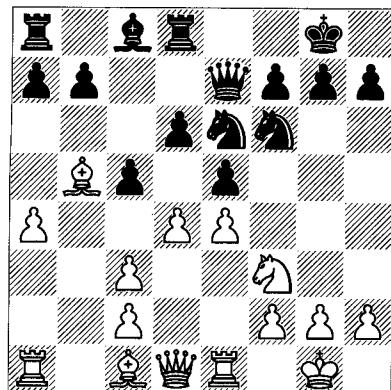
White's main alternative is the flexible move 12 a4, to restrain ...b5 and see how events develop. Then:

a) In Spassky-Xie Jun, Copenhagen 1997, Black committed a common error by opening up the central position: 12...♜c7 13 ♜f1 ♜g4 14 h3! ♜xf3?! 15 ♜xf3 cxd5 16 cxd5 exd4 17 e5! ♜d7 18 ♜a3 ♜xe5 19 ♜xb7, threatening 20 ♜xe5!.

b) 12...♜d8 (D) is much better:

b1) In Short-Anand, Linares 1992, White clarified the centre and tried to advance on the kingside by 13 dx5 dxe5 14 ♜e2 ♜c7 15 ♜c4 h6 16 ♜h4 ♜e8 17 ♜f5 ♜f4 18 ♜f3, whereupon Anand suggests that 18...♜e6 19 ♜f1 c4 would at least equalize.

b2) After 13 d5, Black can employ a standard set-up by 13...♝f8 14 ♜f1 ♜g6 15 g3 h6.



b3) 13  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $h6!$ ? 14  $h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $cx d4$  (Shirov gives 15...g5! 16  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  17  $exf5$  e4, when 18  $h4!$  puts some pressure on Black) 16  $cx d4$   $exd4$ ?! (Black shouldn't open the position) 17  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  d5?! (this faulty combination leads to a nice finish) 18  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20  $dxe6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (Shirov analyses 20... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21  $exf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , when the easiest way to win is 23  $\mathbb{Q}f1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  25  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g6 26  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  with material and attack) 21  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ ) 22  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ) 23  $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  25  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and in Shirov-Lesiège, North Bay 1994 White went on to win.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}d8$ 13 g3

A sort of main line, although 13 a4 is often played.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$

After 13... $cx d4$  14  $cx d4$  b6, Marin recommends 15 a4, which is probably a bit better for White. He also suggests that Stoica's 13...d5!? might be best, with lines like 14  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15 c4  $dx c4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  18  $f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$ .

### 14 d5 $\mathbb{Q}f8$ 15 $\mathbb{Q}h4$ (D)

This direct move aims for an early f4. 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $h6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  g5! 18  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  produced a fairly balanced game in Short-Tukmakov, Solingen 1991.

### 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ?

Stopping f4. Other defensive possibilities:

a) In Bondarevsky-Lilienthal, USSR Absolute Ch, Leningrad/Moscow 1941, White generated an attack after 15... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18 f4 h6 19  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $exf4$ ?! (19...b6 20  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ) 20  $gxf4$  g5 (a familiar manoeuvre from the Sicilian Defence) 21  $fxg5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  22 e5!  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

23  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $hxg5$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  f6, and instead of 25  $\mathbb{Q}h4?$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , as played in the game, White had at his disposal 25  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $dxe5$  26  $\mathbb{Q}g6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  28  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  29 d6, when the bishops are very strong.

b) 15...h6 looks best, since White should avoid 16 f4?!  $exf4$  17  $gxf4$  (17  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  g5 18 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ) 17... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , which threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .

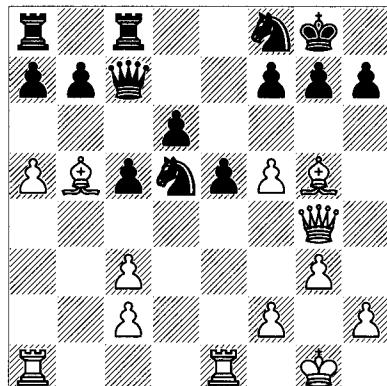
### 16 $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 17 $\mathbb{Q}h5$ !

White's pieces are clustering around the kingside.

### 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 18 a4! $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Serper gives the cute line 18...a5 19  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  with the idea 20... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ ? 21  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? (or the more brutal 22  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ +, forcing mate), winning (22... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ ).

19 a5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  21  $exf5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}ec8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (D)



### 24 $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ ?

24  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25 f6  $gxf6$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}eg6$  27  $\mathbb{Q}ed1$  is much easier.

### 24... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ?

24...h5! delays matters, although White stays on top after 25  $\mathbb{W}xh5 \mathbb{Q}xc3$  26  $\mathbb{A}c4$  d5 27  $\mathbb{E}xd5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  28  $\mathbb{A}xd5$  (28  $\mathbb{E}e4!!$ ) 28... $\mathbb{E}d8$  (28... $\mathbb{W}d7$  29  $\mathbb{A}e4$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  30 f6) 29  $\mathbb{A}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  30  $\mathbb{A}xe5$   $\mathbb{A}h7$  31  $\mathbb{A}e6$ .

### 25 $\mathbb{A}f6$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 26 fxg6 gxf6

Serper gives 26...hxg6 27  $\mathbb{A}c4!$  gxf6?! 28  $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{A}f8$  29  $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  30  $\mathbb{E}e4!$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  31  $\mathbb{E}h4$   $\mathbb{A}e8$ , when 32  $\mathbb{A}e6!$  wins.

### 27 gxf7++ $\mathbb{A}h8$

27... $\mathbb{A}xf7$  loses to 28  $\mathbb{A}c4+$  or 28  $\mathbb{W}c4+$  and 29  $\mathbb{W}xc3$ .

### 28 $\mathbb{A}e6$ 1-0

The end would be 28... $\mathbb{A}g7$  29  $\mathbb{E}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  30  $\mathbb{W}xf6+$   $\mathbb{A}f8$  31  $\mathbb{W}h8+$   $\mathbb{A}e7$  32  $\mathbb{E}xe5+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  33  $\mathbb{W}f6+$ .

## Symmetry in the English Opening

The English Opening with 1 c4 c5 is a major source of symmetrical play (as well as a gold-mine of reversed lines). As you can see by examining Volume 3, most variations become unbalanced by move 5 at the latest, but a few are likely to exhibit extended symmetry. Two generalizations seem to apply to these lines. First, Black can depart from symmetry in various ways with little risk. However, the longer Black imitates White's moves, the greater are White's chances to reach a favourable and double-edged position. Let me briefly cite some variations from Volume 3 to illustrate this.

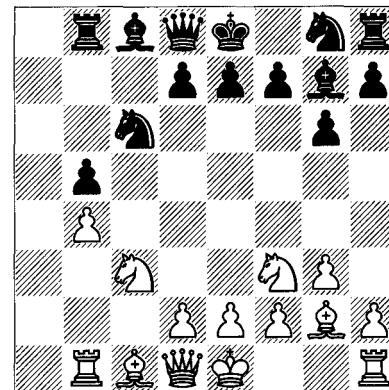
One of the best-known symmetrical variations is 1 c4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 g3 g6 4  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}g7$ , when after 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , the old main line is 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6 0-0 (or 6 d4) 6...0-0 7 d4 cxd4 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ . Then White has a small advantage and has enjoyed excellent results. However, Black doesn't have to imitate White to this extent; he can break the symmetry earlier with 5...e5, 5...e6 or 5...d6, all respectable moves which grant him fully-fledged play.

Similarly, after 5 a3, Black can imitate his opponent for a long time, notably in this variation:

1 c4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 g3 g6 4  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}g7$  5 a3  $\mathbb{A}6$  6  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  7 b4 cxb4 8 axb4 b5 9 cxb5 axb5 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D)

### 10...e5

B



Black decides to be the one to break symmetry. Continued imitation is risky, but not fatal; for example, 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11 d4 d5 12  $\mathbb{A}f4$  (12  $\mathbb{A}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 12... $\mathbb{A}f5$  (12... $\mathbb{B}b6$  is also possible) 13  $\mathbb{A}xb8$   $\mathbb{A}xb1$  14  $\mathbb{A}f4$   $\mathbb{A}f5$  (14... $\mathbb{A}e4$  probably improves) 15 0-0 0-0 16  $\mathbb{A}e5!$ , and now the symmetry is finally broken, in view of 16... $\mathbb{A}e4??$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18  $\mathbb{W}e1$ . Black should play 16... $\mathbb{A}b6$  17  $\mathbb{A}xd5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18  $\mathbb{A}xf7+$   $\mathbb{A}xf7$  19  $\mathbb{A}e3$  and White will emerge a pawn up) 18 dxe5 (18  $\mathbb{A}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}c8$ !) 19... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , although he hasn't yet equalized following 19  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20  $\mathbb{A}d5$ . This is a typical result of too slavish an imitation, but it was fun while it lasted!

### 11 d4!

White chooses the best point at which to seek an imbalance, rather than play 11 e4 and revert to the status quo.

### 11...exd4 12 $\mathbb{Q}d5$

This unresolved and unclear position is analysed in Volume 3, Chapter 7, in the notes to M.Domingo-Alekseev, Berlin 2006. The point is that you can find plenty of promising material in a symmetrical variation if your goal is to play for a win.

Here's another variation that is traditionally considered drawish, probably more so than any other imitative line in the English. It won't surprise you that its evaluation is also unclear.

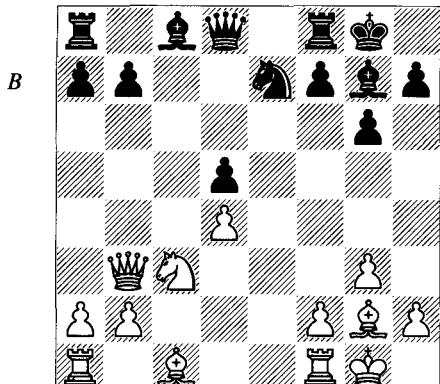
1 c4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 g3 g6 4  $\mathbb{A}g2$   $\mathbb{A}g7$  5 e3

Black can easily break symmetry with sound and interesting variations such as 5...e5 and 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , and the ambitious 5... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !? completely unbalances the situation.

**6 ♜ge2 ♜ge7 7 0-0 0-0 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♜xd4  
d5 10 cxd5 exd5?**

Rather than retain his passive knight on e7, Black does better to play 10...♜xd5!, when 11 ♜xd5 exd5 returns to complete symmetry and almost no prospects. Instead, 11 ♜b3 poses certain difficulties, but if you have studied the variation, they are quite manageable. On the other hand, 11 ♜e1 creates winning chances that seem real enough, and avoids excessive simplification. This rook move was played in Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Amber Rapid, Monte Carlo 1995, which is analysed in Volume 3 in the notes to the game Andersson-Gheorghiu, Moscow 1981.

**11 ♜b3! ♜xd4 12 exd4 (D)**



White has reached a clearly superior position; see the game Benko-Geller, Wijk aan Zee 1969 in Chapter 7 of Volume 3.

## English Double Fianchetto Variation

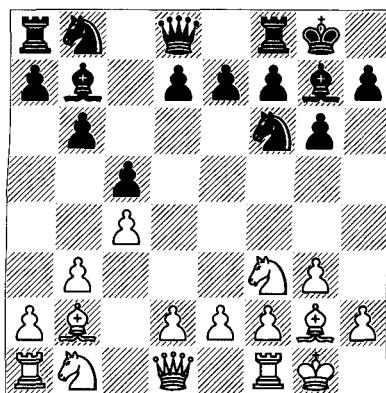
In Volume 3, I bypassed coverage of the Double Fianchetto Variation of the Symmetrical English, a set-up with ...b6 and ...g6 which goes well with the fianchetto openings in this volume. The issues will be familiar by now: can Black break symmetry without disadvantage, or can White force a favourable deviation from symmetry? The games and notes that follow by no means represent high theory, but will hopefully serve as a guide to some of the major themes and issues of this opening.

**Andersson – Kasparov  
Match (game 4), Belgrade 1985**

**1 c4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 g3 b6 4 ♜g2 ♜b7 5 0-0  
g6**

This defines the Double Fianchetto Variation. Note that 5...e6 introduces the Hedgehog Variation, examined in Volume 3.

**6 b3 ♜g7 7 ♜b2 0-0 (D)**



White has chosen to enter into the truly symmetrical version of the Double Fianchetto. Black is supposed to equalize rather easily here, and indeed, the variation has a high percentage of draws. The key for Black is that he's under no pressure, and can therefore break the symmetry without much risk. Often this takes the form of a central liquidation.

**8 ♜c3**

In a position this flexible, there are always too many lines to mention, so I'll limit myself to some common ones:

a) 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♜xd4 d6 10 ♜d1 ♜bd7 sets up a standard Hedgehog structure. 11 ♜e1 (11 ♜c3 ♜e4 12 ♜e3 ♜xc3 13 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 14 ♜xc3 ♜c8 presents Black few problems; for example, 15 ♜d4 ♜f6 16 ♜ac1, and 16...♜c7 with the idea ...♜c5 is equal, whereas 16...♜c7 17 ♜e3 ♜a8 is a bit more interesting) 11...♜b8 (or 11...♜xg2 12 ♜xg2 ♜c5) 12 ♜c3 ♜e4 13 ♜e3 ♜xc3 14 ♜xc3 ♜xc3 15 ♜xc3 ♜f6 16 ♜ac1 ♜c8 17 ♜e3 ♜c7 18 ♜d3 ♜xg2 ½-½ Dzilarević-Psakhis, FIDE Knockout, New Delhi 2000.

b) 8 e3 d5 9 cxd5 leads to tedious play: 9...♜xd5 (9...♜xd5 equalizes as well: 10 ♜c3 ♜d7 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♜xd4 ♜d8 13 ♜c1 ♜xg2 14

$\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}c6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}cb5 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}ac8$ , Gerber-Babula, Zemplinska Sirava 2004) 10  $\mathbb{Q}xg7 \mathbb{Q}xg7$  11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ ? (or simply 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  cxd4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f7f6$ ) 12  $\mathbb{W}e2$  cxd4 13  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{W}e7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}fd8$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}ac7$  with an uneventful position, Kurajica-Atalik, Sarajevo 2001.

8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

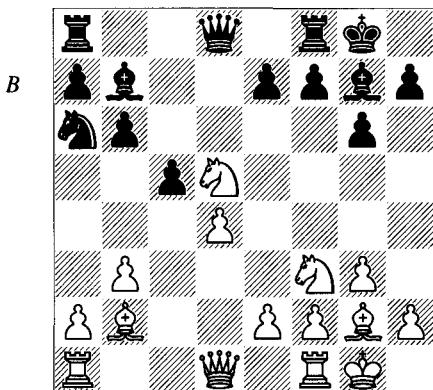
The move ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  shows up in several variants of the Double Fianchetto line. It leaves the b7-bishop's diagonal open, while positioning the knight to go to c5 if White plays d4 and Black replies ...cxd4. The most important role of ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , however, is to support Black's central pawn-break, as follows:

9 d4 d5

This is the standard solution. 9...e6 and 9... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  are among the sound alternatives. For those looking for longer-term play, a Hedgehog set-up might be of interest; for example, 9...cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xg2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}c5$  12 f3 e6 13 e4 a6 14  $\mathbb{W}d2$  d6 15  $\mathbb{Q}fd1 \mathbb{W}c7$  16  $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}fd8$ .

10 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (D)

Moves such as 11  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  and 11 e3 aren't much more exciting.



11... $\mathbb{W}xd5$

11... $\mathbb{W}xd5$  is also satisfactory; then a plausible follow-up would be 12 e3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13  $\mathbb{W}e2 \mathbb{W}b7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fe1 \mathbb{Q}e4$ .

12  $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{W}d7$  13 dxc5  $\mathbb{W}xd1$  14  $\mathbb{Q}fxd1 \mathbb{Q}xb2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{Q}xc5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xa8 \mathbb{Q}xa1$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xa1 \mathbb{Q}xa8$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$

It's hard for either side to find a serious plan in this position.

18...a5 19  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a4!?

20 bxa4  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  b5 23  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}d6$  24  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  ½-½

It's worth noting that, although the positions in this variation are equal and often dull, most of them can be played for a win by either side. An opening like this can signal drawish intent in grandmaster play, because White doesn't aim for the initiative or an attack. But that doesn't preclude a normally contested game if the players choose to pursue one.

Having said that, it's still a relief to turn to the following modern treatment:

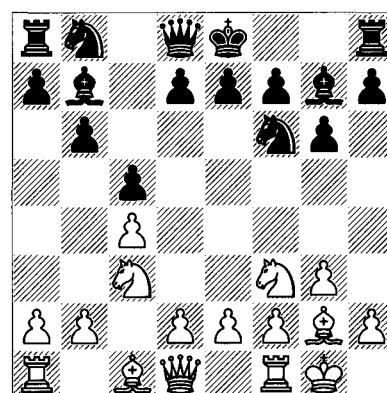
### Pantsulaia – Gelfand

FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005

1 c4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}f6$  3 g3 b6 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{Q}b7$  5 0-0 g6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White avoids the excessively symmetrical b3 lines above.

6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (D)



7 d4

This is the most ambitious move. There are two alternatives which delay immediate confrontation:

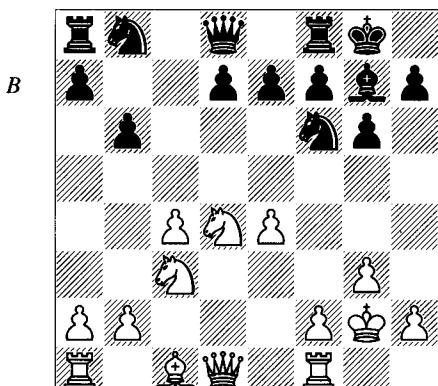
a) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  tries to enforce e4, and secures long-term chances if White can get e4 and d4 in. One problem with it comes from the move 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , which has generally proven satisfactory. For example, 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$  9 d3 (9 d4 cxd4 10  $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ ? is clever-looking, but not particularly effective after 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}c6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}ad1 \mathbb{Q}c8$  14 h4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , Stohl-Tukmakov, Bled 1997) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10 e4 0-0 (10... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  0-0 is dead equal) 11 e5!? (trying to stir something up by laying claim to some territory; 11 d4 cxd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  and now 12...d6 is a pleasant Hedgehog position for Black, since White's

king's bishop is restricted, while 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is another good way to develop) 11...d5!? (after the logical 11...d6, 12 e6!? is worth a whirl, but Black should be fine after 12...fxe6 13  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}f5!$  16 f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 12  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (12 e6 dxc4) 12...dxc4? 13 dxc4  $\mathbb{W}xd1$ ! 14  $\mathbb{W}axd1$  and it's not easy for Black to develop, Beckhuis-Sulskis, Vienna 2005.

b) 7 d3 has the same idea of e4 and prevents ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , but now it will take two moves to play d4: 7...0-0 (after 7...d5, 8 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 is equal: ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , and in some cases ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}cd4$  can follow; White might as well try something like 8  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 8 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9 h3 d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e6 (10...e5 is equal and dull) 11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! 12  $\mathbb{W}d3$  d5 13 cxd5 exd5 14 dxc5? (14 e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  is better) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15 cxb6 axb6, Berkes-Z.Almasi, Budapest 2003. Black has very active pieces, plans of ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , and a modest advantage.

### 7...cxd4 8 $\mathbb{W}xd4$

In contrast to the lines with 6 b3 above, the symmetrical characteristics of the opening have vanished. 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  is an older move, which was dealt a blow after 8... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  0-0 10 e4 (D).



Here Black found 10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ! (hitting c4) 11 b3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}e5$ , a pseudo-sacrifice that neither Karpov nor Kasparov was able to crack as White in their 1984/5 match. To this day, it remains the principal deterrent to 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ .

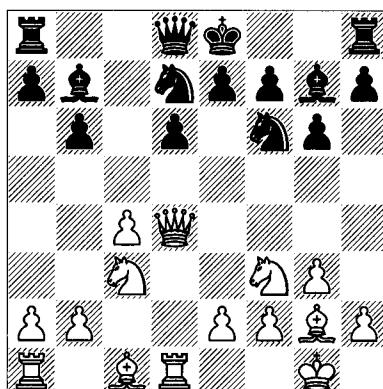
### 8...d6 9 $\mathbb{W}d1$

The slightly odd-looking 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is the most popular move at this juncture. It very often transposes to the note to Black's 10th move

after 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{W}fd1$ , so I'll defer a discussion about it until then.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ (D)

Black often delays castling in these lines to keep more options open. Here 9...0-0 should be answered by 10  $\mathbb{W}h4$ , as in the game. If the queen remains on d4 it is subject to discovered attack by ... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .



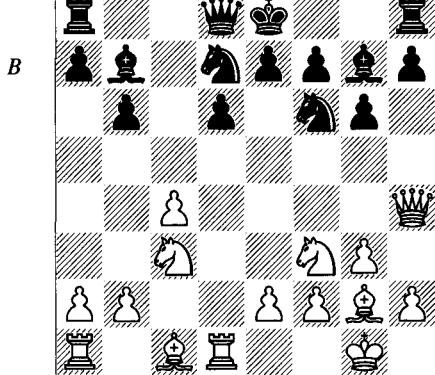
You may recognize this as the Hedgehog Variation from Volume 3, but with ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  replacing ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . It's an interesting trade-off. At first blush, this seems to favour Black, who can boast that his bishop is more active on the long diagonal, and that he has no weaknesses, in contrast to the weakness of the pawn on d6 which can be so important after ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . Needless to say, that's not the end of the story. For one thing, in the Hedgehog, a pawn on e6 covers d5, so Black needn't worry about  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  in most lines. In addition, Black's kingside structure (with pawns on f7, g7 and h7) is ideal for protection against a direct attack, whereas Black's structure with ...g6 in the Double Fianchetto leads to the possibility of attack via  $\mathbb{W}h4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ . In the end, the two systems are roughly equivalent in worth, with the Double Fianchetto having a slightly safer feel, and the Hedgehog giving more counterattacking prospects.

### 10 $\mathbb{W}h4$

The most common move-order is 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (which is the equivalent of 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10  $\mathbb{W}fd1$ ). As mentioned, the bishop covers c5 against a rook-lift, and it also aims at b6; the latter tends to be a sensitive point because the move ...a6 is almost always included in Black's

plans. One game went 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11 b3 0-0 12  $\mathbb{W}h4$  a6 13  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (protecting c3; 13  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  invites 14...b5!) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (this prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}a8$ ; see the next note) 14  $\mathbb{Q}h3!$  (you'll see this in many games: now White can play  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  without exchanging bishops, and the bishop on h3 proves to be an influential piece) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a8?$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}c5?$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  gives White some extra space, but Black seems comfortably placed) 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  16  $\mathbb{W}xe7$ ; 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (White threatens  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  and wins a pawn) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  18 exf3  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  and White went on to win in Anand-Gomez Esteban, Santurtzi 2003.

We now return to 10  $\mathbb{W}h4$  (*D*):

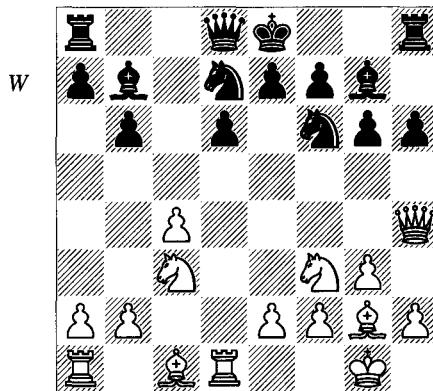


### 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

This is sometimes played after ...0-0, and will often transpose. Black wants to have ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  available at the right moment, helping to defend against a potential kingside attack by White; to that end, ... $\mathbb{Q}c5-h5$  is a theme. He also prepares ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , in order to shift his queen to a8 and then double rooks on the c-file. The latter manoeuvre, in conjunction with ...a6 and ...b5, can create great pressure on White's queenside. In fact, Black's discovery of this rook manoeuvre was key to making the Double Fianchetto popular some years back and remains essential to the variation today.

As regards move-orders, the game's 10  $\mathbb{W}h4$  is less frequently played than 10  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , perhaps because of the response 10...h6 (*D*).

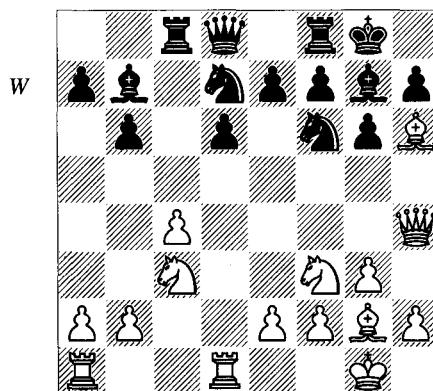
Then the simple idea of ...g5 can be a problem in various lines, especially since the retreat



$\mathbb{Q}h3$  runs into ...g4, and  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  might subject the queen to discovered attack. Kramnik-Nikolić, Amber Blindfold, Monte Carlo 1999 continued 11  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (11  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8?$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  g5! 15  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16  $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}hf6$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  was later drawn in Korchnoi-Gulko, Hastings 1988/9; 11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  12  $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$  has the idea 13 b3?! g5 14  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  g4 15  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  g5! 13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (what else?) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$  15 exf3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  e5 18  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  19 b3  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  ½-½. In fact, Black has had the better game for some time, and following 20 bxc4, he would stand better after either 20... $\mathbb{W}d7$  or 20... $\mathbb{W}a4$ .

### 11 $\mathbb{Q}h6$ 0-0 (*D*)

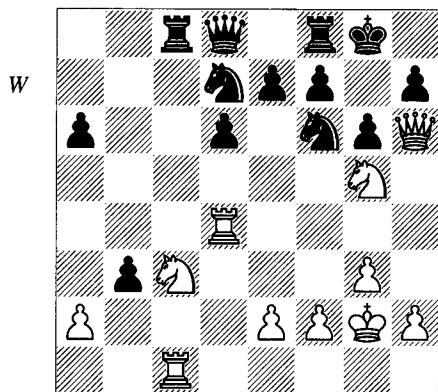
After 11... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  12  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$   $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ ! 14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  White wins the exchange.



### 12 b3 a6 13 $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ $\mathbb{Q}c5!$

Threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ . Instead, 13... $\mathbb{Q}xh6?$  14  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  b5 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16  $\mathbb{W}xg2$  bxc4 17  $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is very difficult for

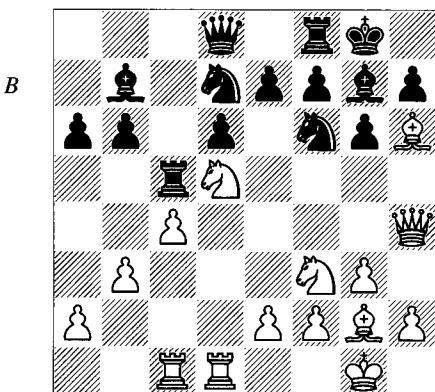
Black. In Gustafsson-Babula, Hamburg 2004, Black continued 17...cx b3? (D) (17... $\mathbb{E}e8$  18  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  20 bxc4! threatens g4).



Now Kosten points out the winning move 18  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!!$ , based upon the beautiful line 18... $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  19  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $exf6$  22  $\mathbb{W}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  24  $\mathbb{E}e4!!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  25  $\mathbb{W}h8+$ . After the seemingly better 18... $\mathbb{E}e8$ , 19  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  21  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  threatens  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ; then 21... $\mathbb{W}d7$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e5, to protect f7, still falls short after 23  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ . A great set of tactics!

#### 14 $\mathbb{Q}d5?$ (D)

White has his own ideas about Black's rook, and this move cuts it off from the kingside. A calmer approach is 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}a8+$  16 f3 (or 16 e4) 16... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  17 a4 with the idea of e4. White has a bind, although the position is only slightly better for him.



#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ ?

Or:

a) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?! 15 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  has no tactical refutation, but White can switch sides by 16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  with a clear positional superiority after 19  $\mathbb{W}xa6$ .

b) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! is a good solution, with the idea 15  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (15 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  17  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !.

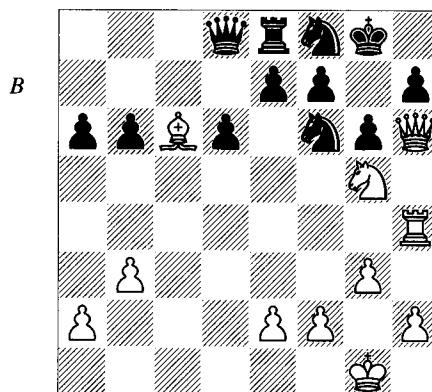
#### 15 $\mathbb{W}xh6$ $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?

Again, 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is best; for example, 16  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$ ! 19 e4 b5 20  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (20...bxc4?? 21 e5!  $dxe5$  22  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  threatens  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ) 21 exd5 (with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ) 21... $\mathbb{W}g4$ ! 22  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  23  $\mathbb{W}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  with approximate equality.

#### 16 cxd5 $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?

16... $\mathbb{W}c7$  17  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  gives White an outpost on c6 and a solid positional edge. But the capture on d5 is worse.

17  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  20  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  21  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (D)



B The hidden point of White's combination, netting the exchange.

#### 21...d5 22 $\mathbb{Q}xe8$

Or 22 e4!  $dxe4$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{W}xe8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , etc. White consolidated successfully anyway:

22... $\mathbb{W}xe8$  23  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e5 24  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  d4 25 e3 d3 26  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}8d7$  27  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  28 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  29  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}fxe4$  31 b4 d2 32  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  33  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}ac3$  34  $\mathbb{Q}d8+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  35  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  36 a3 a5 37 bxa5 bxa5 38  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  1-0

# 8 Irregular Openings and Initial Moves

In this series, I've focused primarily upon what I call the 'important' openings, which are generally the ones used most, but also on those that have an established history of practice. In this chapter I'll devote some time to a discussion of irregular openings, and then look at unusual first moves in detail. I'm using the adjective 'irregular' to denote openings that are not frequently employed by master players, but still enjoy a following on lower levels. Sometimes such openings are called 'unorthodox'; that isn't such a bad word, but from the point of view of strategy, 'unorthodox' techniques can still be popular ones, whereas certain 'orthodox' treatments of positions fall into relative disuse (perhaps because they are too easy to meet). For example, the Trompowsky Attack 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  has become popular and universally accepted, but one could argue that 2  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  itself is not an 'orthodox' move; on the flip side, the form of the Torre Attack with 1 d4 d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is orthodox by the classical standards of development, but it isn't very popular any more. In a similar way, classically-oriented openings such as the Ponziani Opening (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 c3) and the Hungarian Defence (1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ) are orthodox in strategic terms, but rare in master practice; today, they could legitimately be called 'irregular'. This distinction can extend to eccentric-looking openings which were until recently irregular and have moved into the mainstream; for example, the Chebanenko Slav (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6). While this variation could hardly be called 'irregular' any more, being the respectable subject of books and articles, I'm still not sure who is so advanced as to call Black's strategy 'orthodox'! Of course, the terminology isn't terribly important; the point is that the openings I refer to as 'irregular' in this chapter aren't yet used by masters or grandmasters on an ordinary basis, although many remain stubbornly popular with average players.

## The Appeal of the Irregular

Some irregular openings are perfectly playable; others are used merely for surprise value and have limited or no logic behind them. In either case, their attraction is undeniable. The Web is surfeited with articles on various unusual ways to begin the game, and there are numerous sites solely devoted to them. If you go often enough to any chess club, or to the skittles rooms of tournaments, you'll eventually run into people who are discussing some strange and dubious opening, usually having a great time doing so. What is the appeal? First, there's something liberating about playing around with an opening that you haven't seen before, and having the feeling (illusory or not) that the move you're suggesting hasn't been thought of by anyone until this moment. Along the same lines, chessplayers like having 'their own' special opening, be that an eccentric first move, a speculative gambit, or even something that they've invented.

Furthermore, a lot of irregular openings have an exciting, paradoxical feel to them: you make counterintuitive moves, waste time, or sacrifice pawns, and yet some not-so-obvious factor is working in your favour to give you positive chances. It's a break from the drudgery of 'correct' play and following those tired old principles. Even if you don't secure the better game, you can at least irritate your opponent and present him with multiple opportunities to go wrong. The most entertaining irregular openings also contain tactical traps into which one innocent victim after another falls. It takes a confluence of forces for this to happen, but makes everything more fun.

Then there's the issue of convenience, underestimated by the professionals who write chess literature. The most obvious reason to go out of the mainstream is to have something to play without needing very much preparation.

Depending upon the time you have available, getting away from your opponent's favourite opening can be a practical necessity. Just don't forget that opening preparation has benefits that go well beyond the immediately practical; as I'm constantly stressing, it will increase your understanding of middlegames and of chess in general. Perhaps that's why we see so few uncompromising adherents of irregular and even out-of-the-way openings reach the top of the chess hierarchy. There are exceptions, of course, but you will find that the successful grandmasters who play anti-theoretical lines (including obscure sidelines of mainstream openings) have previously or concurrently spent years playing and studying more conventional openings. The knowledge and skill derived from knowing a wide variety of standard opening ideas and associated middlegames informs their use of irregular openings; it's not so clear that the reverse is true. In any case, most masters who employ unconventional openings aren't simply tossing out the moves; they have usually put a great deal of time into examining their consequences. Properly motivated, this kind of investigation can increase your understanding and playing strength, just as any other kind of opening study can. Thus, by itself, playing out of the mainstream shouldn't do damage to one's results; after all, a strong player can win with any opening. But playing something just because it gets you 'out of the books' probably won't pay off, because your overall understanding of how to play openings is a more important factor than the specific opening you use. Finally, the major openings have for the most part achieved their status because they tend to produce the best practical outcomes in master play. I don't believe this consideration affects the inexperienced player much, if at all, nor even the average one. Playing gambits, for example, can be very healthy for your rating at the club level. Nevertheless, as you begin to improve and play stronger opponents, the objective worth of an opening takes on more significance. So there's a point at which you will want to know which irregular openings are actually inferior, which are acceptable but unpopular, and which are easy to play. In addition, if you're going to use such an opening, you'll want it to conform to your personal tastes.

We still find a widespread snobbishness about irregular openings among masters and teachers, many of whom seem to ignore the finer distinctions among them. Teachers find it easy to inculcate their students with the popular openings they themselves are studying and playing; that is fine, but at the same time many become dismissive of everything outside the received wisdom. Thus we see juniors who feel that anything except main-line Sicilians are inferior (and, as a result, we see a monotonous stream of Dragons, Najdorfs and Sveshnikovs at scholastic tournaments).

It turns out, however, that much of what is irregular today becomes conventional tomorrow. The contemporary literature on irregular and unusual moves, in both book and periodical form, is increasingly professional, much of it written by masters and grandmasters. They are discovering that more opening ideas, including old ones, are playable and can lead to rich positions. By keeping an eye on such literature, you can more easily separate openings with real worth from those with only shock value.

## Adventures with 1 e4

It's staggering how much is going on at the most fundamental levels of opening theory. By way of example, and with an eye on ways that we might spice up our chess experiences, let me list a selection of unconventional variations following from the initial move 1 e4. They all arise within just the first five moves, all have been played by grandmasters, and all are good enough to be worthy of consideration for practical play. Most of them are truly irregular lines; to the extent that a couple have assumed top-level respectability, they have only done so recently. And, in spite of being recommended by players and theoreticians, the majority of these lines haven't gained large followings or elite approval. To be clear: I'm not including the countless ingenious new ideas that are refreshing already established openings. Rather, I am selecting very early moves that define a unique opening variation.

Let me begin with what is easily the most popular 1 e4 opening, the **Sicilian Defence**.

Players on both sides of the board are discovering that variations previously ignored at the top levels are in fact legitimate. To put that in context with an older example, it's worth remembering that about two decades ago, 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 (the Rossolimo Variation) was still considered somewhat irregular (or at best harmless), and now it has driven some grandmasters away from their lifelong preference for the move 2...♜c6!

As **Black** in the Open Sicilian, there are many irregular set-ups which now seem quite playable; for example:

a) The Löwenthal Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 e5 5 ♜b5 a6, allowing 6 ♜d6+. When I compare the various recent books and articles on this system, including those by grandmasters recommending particular systems for White, I see nothing to indicate that Black doesn't stand perfectly well.

b) The Grivas Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜b6. This isn't terribly ambitious, but gives you thematic Sicilian positions without requiring memorization of the ultra-critical variations of, say, Dragons and Najdorfs. A related and playable irregular system is the 'Gaw-Paw': 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♜b6, and a move earlier in this sequence 4...♜b6 is also used (the Kveinys Variation).

c) The O'Kelly Sicilian: 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 a6, which is undergoing a great resurgence of interest. Properly handled, it consistently produces unbalanced positions in which the better player on that day will win the majority of games.

d) Various lines of the amazingly flexible Paulsen/Kan Sicilian. For example, 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 a6 5 ♜d3 g6 is still an irregular line, but has serious theoretical backing. After five moves, Black appears to have the weakest dark squares imaginable – but a playable position!

Next, let me turn to some irregular early moves on the white side of the Sicilian. As **White**, you can have fun with slow and eccentric moves because of your extra tempo:

a) 1 e4 c5 2 a3. This is Grandmaster Bezgodov's move; he has written a 200+ page book on it. White's idea (among others) is to play b4 in some lines to get a favourable form of Sicilian

Wing Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 b4) while avoiding some of Black's most active defences. Each of 2...♜c6, 2...e6 and 2...d6, for example, are answered by 3 b4. There are also elements of the English Opening reversed; for example, 2...g6 3 c3!? is 1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 with the extra a3 for White. Incidentally, there have been a number of articles about the Wing Gambit itself, and that might be another choice for the well-prepared player.

b) A related, somewhat older line is 1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 f4 g6 4 ♜f3 ♜g7 5 a3. White intends to play b4 (especially on a move like 5...e6) and otherwise uses a2 as a potential retreat-square for his bishop (for example, after 5...d6 6 ♜c4), while holding up ...b5-b4 under some circumstances.

c) 1 e4 c5 2 ♜a3 has been played by the strong and experienced grandmaster Zviagintsev (7 times against 2600+ rated opponents!), as well as a few other prominent grandmasters such as Malakhov and Sashikiran. This is a sound line with some surprisingly positive features. It's also a real mix-and-match. For example, White can enter into a sort of c3 Sicilian with ♜c2 or ♜c4 via a sequence such as 2...e6 3 c3 d5 4 e5 ♜c6 5 ♜f3 with the idea ♜c2 and d4. Or, against 2...♜c6, the Rossolimo-like 3 ♜b5 leaves the Grand Prix move f4 available to be played later.

Moves like 2 a3 and 2 ♜a3 will probably never become wildly popular, but they are sound lines which will doubtless see periodic usage by strong players.

d) The Closed Sicilian with 1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 g4. The idea is to accelerate White's expansion on the kingside; normally, he plays 3 g3 and only later, g4. Another offbeat Closed Sicilian is 1 e4 c5 2 ♜c3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5, used by a number of grandmasters.

e) I'll also mention Vasiukov's variation 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4, playing for rapid development, which is orthodox by comparison with the ones above. This has been around for ages, and although it has never really caught on at the elite level, it has scored reasonably well. It is also wide open to new interpretations.

What about 1 e4 e5? For **Black**, irregular old lines are being reconsidered; for example:

a) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 g6, played by Smyslov, is an interesting alternative to the conventional Ruy Lopez lines.

b) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 f5, the Schliemann Defence, is still irregular but has been appearing in elite practice and has much new high-level theory devoted to it. As a practical consideration, very few opponents will enter the lengthy and tactical main lines of the Schliemann (starting with 4 ♜c3), so you will often see modest responses, such as 4 d3, which is generally regarded as more or less equal.

After 1 e4 e5, many of **White's** newer approaches come well beyond the first few moves and don't define independent systems. However, we do see the revival of some older lines. Remember that the Scotch Game (1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4) had arguably become an 'irregular' opening by the time that Kasparov revived and popularized it. Here are some other double e-pawn openings which have recently had attention drawn to them:

a) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 ♜bd7 5 g4 is Shirov's gambit in the Philidor Defence (an opening which nowadays more often arises via 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 ♜f3 ♜bd7). It continues to do well and for many players, that beats 20 moves of positional manoeuvring!

b) In Chapter 7, I covered the Four Knights Game, 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜c3 ♜f6 (this is also a possible outcome of the Petroff Defence: 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜c6). White is playing several 'irregular' moves following 4 ♜b5 ♜d4, whereas Black has deviated successfully before that with 4... ♜d6!?. A half-move earlier, White can get a fresh set of positions out of 4 a3!?, the Gunsberg Variation; this little move prepares d4 without having to worry about ... ♜b4, and tries to create new problems based upon 4... ♜c5?! 5 ♜xe5 and 4...d5 5 ♜b5.

c) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♜b5 a6 4 ♜a4 ♜f6 5 ♜e2, the Worrall Attack, has never been in bad standing, but has generally been treated as an irregular variation. Now it is seeing a revival. Incidentally, various Ruy Lopez lines with 4 d3 and 5 d3 have been increasingly employed by top grandmasters.

In the **French Defence**, **Black** has always had great leeway in how to bring his pieces out. For example:

a) Recently, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜d2 is being answered by irregular moves such 3...h6 and 3...b6, even at master and grandmaster level, as well as by the better-established but still non-mainstream moves 3... ♜c6 and 3...a6.

b) In the Advance Variation, after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5, 3...b6 is increasingly respectable. Black can also play the odd-looking 3... ♜d7, which reserves the option of the normal ...c5 (when d7 is the most common square for the bishop), but also ...a6 and ... ♜b5 in the right situation.

c) After 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3, 3... ♜c6 has been an irregular byway for years, but now has strong adherents and a respectable body of theory behind it. Strange to say, even 3... ♜e7 and 3...h6 are being played by strong players. With regard to the latter move, the seemingly unrelated and bizarre 1 ♜f3 h6!? (the subject of intense analysis by Wind), may well have drawbacks, but it can lead to 2 e4 e6 3 d4 d5, and the pawn on h6 proves useful. Indeed, 4 ♜c3 ♜f6 is then a transposition to the French Defence variation 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 h6 4 ♜f3 ♜f6, a line which has been played by numerous masters and grandmasters.

For his part, **White** periodically experiments with irregular moves in order to keep the play outside the main lines of the French; for example:

a) On the second move, in addition to the previously irregular but now-established 1 e4 e6 2 ♜e2, 1 e4 e6 2 b3 d5 3 ♜b2 is being seen as a provocative way to mix things up.

b) 1 e4 e6 2 ♜f3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 cxb4 5 a3 (or 5 d4) is the French Wing Gambit. Although infrequently used at grandmaster level, it has an earnest following below that and considerable theoretical backing.

In the **Caro-Kann Defence**, **Black** has many new ideas in established variations, but also some within the first few moves:

a) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 b5, with the idea 4 exd5 b4, is an old line by Gurgenidze. It is being reinvestigated and seems a useful weapon.

b) Against 1 e4 c6 2 ♜f3 d5 3 ♜c3, often a dull variation, some high-level players have used the line 3... ♜f6 4 e5 ♜e4.

Much of the experimental action for **White** is taking place in the Advance Variation:

- a) After 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♕f5, the variations 4 ♖e3 and 4 ♗d2 have gone from being wholly irregular to respectable enough that they now have numerous grandmaster practitioners.
- b) Versus 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5, we are seeing 4 c4 and 4 ♗f3 ♗c6 5 c4. Up until recently, these moves were virtually unknown.
- c) The pseudo-Advance variation 1 e4 c6 2 ♖e2 d5 3 e5 has drawn some high-powered attention of late, both in theoretical articles and grandmaster play.

In the **Pirc and Modern Defences**, Black's flexibility is such that irregular or at least unusual move-orders are commonplace. Essentially, he can play the moves ...g7, ...c6, ...a6 with ...b5 and ...0-0 in almost any order to keep White guessing. Several unconventional lines have recently attracted attention in the Modern Defence:

a) 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♕g7 3 ♗c3 d5!? is a surprising thrust, mentioned in Chapter 3, with the idea that 4 ♗xd5 c6 wins back White's d-pawn, and 4 exd5 ♗f6 will either do so or extract other concessions from White. I'm doubtful that Black can achieve real equality after 5 ♖c4 (5 h4!? intending 5... ♗xd5 6 h5 could be tried) 5... ♗bd7, but it's a position into which many strong players have entered.

b) A whole complex of ...a6 systems, sometimes referred to as 'Tiger's Modern', can be played against White's main set-ups, especially 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♕g7 3 ♗c3 d6 (even 3...a6 is possible) 4 ♗f3 a6, 4 ♖e3 a6, and 4 f4 a6. I examined these in detail in Chapter 3.

**White** can also play outside the main lines; for example:

a) He can launch early h4 attacks, the most common one going 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♖e2 ♕g7 5 h4.

b) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♖e2 ♕g7 5 g4, less frequently seen, has had some success.

c) In the Austrian Attack, 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 f4 ♕g7, the move 5 a3 was almost unknown a decade ago. Pushing the a-pawn avoids the standard line 5 ♗f3 c5 and the large amount of theory associated with it (that is, 5 a3 c5 6 dxc5 ♕a5 allows 7 b4). 5 a3 0-0 6 ♗f3 (equivalent to 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 a3) is a related line which has met with some success.

The Modern Variation of the **Alekhine Defence**, 1 e4 ♗f6 2 e5 ♗d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♗f3, is an astonishing example of the increasing interest in what had been minor sidelines. First, the top grandmasters are treating 4...dxe5 5 ♗xe5 as the main line of the entire defence (with first 5...g6 and more recently 5...c6 as the follow-up), even though it was a minor irritant just two decades ago compared to 4...g6 and 4...♕g4. Then, on the same move, we see a distinct revival of the irregular moves 4...♗b6 and 4...♗c6, accompanied by much analysis. Even Miles's unlikely-looking move 4...c6 has a following and continues to perform reasonably well.

Finally, in the **Scandinavian Defence** with 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♕xd5, so much has been discovered over the last decade that it's hard to distinguish what's irregular from what isn't. As a general observation, I find it amazing that after 3 ♗c3, Black's popular move 3...♗d6 was an irregular sideline just 10 years ago. It is now arguably the main line, especially at grandmaster level. Incidentally, it wasn't so long ago (perhaps 30 years or so) that the Scandinavian was seldom played and considered marginal by most masters. A number of older opening books even dismissed it entirely on the basis of Black's loss of time with his queen. The great Bent Larsen was instrumental in changing that assessment.

In this by no means complete review, I've limited myself to 1 e4 openings, and to the first five moves; as you can imagine, a similar array of irregular lines is associated with 1 d4 openings. There's a feast of offerings out there. Of course, some of these ideas will prove wanting in the long run, just as new ones will appear. The real point is not to fill your repertoire with unusual openings. In fact, I personally advise against that, and believe that you will learn more about chess if you mostly play (and study) major openings. But I also think that the judicious use of some irregular variations can make your chess more fun, and stimulate you to think creatively.

## Responding to the Unfamiliar

Of course, a lot of the time you'll be on the other side of the board when the surprising

move or variation appears. What should you do when faced with an unfamiliar opening, or even an unfamiliar move in an opening that you know? Your first reaction should be to take a deep breath and try to understand what your opponent is doing. Is he attacking or planning to attack any weak points? Is he preparing a certain positionally desirable move? Are there any tactics involved? Once you've got a feel for the key factors of the position, you can react accordingly.

For example, against most slow moves that don't engage your pieces, it's appropriate to occupy the centre with pawns (many irregular openings permit you to do so, which is part of the reason that they're irregular!). Then develop pieces towards the centre, just as you would do in the majority of openings. Of course, even if your moves are more principled than your opponent's, you shouldn't expect an immediate payback. The game of chess is forgiving enough that most pawn and piece deployments, however strange, can be coordinated in some logical fashion, so that the disadvantages of most irregular openings won't lead to disaster.

If the situation is turning tactical or exceptionally dynamic, you should take extra time to assess the problems and do as much calculation of concrete sequences as possible. In that way, you may not be able to solve the position but you'll get a clear idea of what the issues are. You shouldn't be intimidated; after all, it's unlikely that an irregular opening will win by force, and it's quite possible that there's some serious flaw or drawback to it. Be alert and take advantage of specific mistakes. Say that you have a fair general knowledge of openings, but within the first few moves, your opponent plays a gambit that you've never seen. It's likely that the reason you haven't seen it is because you can safely accept the pawn. For example, the sequence 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 g4 has a cult following, and might make some sense in conjunction with the moves g5 and perhaps  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ . But 2... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  3 e4 really isn't very impressive; among others, 3...d6, followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  if the knight is attacked, leaves White short of compensation. Similarly, a gambit such as 1 d4 e5 2 dx5 d6 should be accepted by 3 exd6; White has no weaknesses to assist Black, who has only slightly better developmental prospects.

Declining such gambits lets your opponent off the hook.

Assuming that the irregular opening is logical and contests important squares, it's useful to keep your pawn-structure in mind. Quite often, unusual openings either come with weaknesses or they allow you to create weaknesses in your opponent's position. Regardless of the specifics, replying with common-sense moves and applying what you know about analogous situations will serve you well.

## Assessing the Initial Moves

If you look through a listing of irregular openings, you'll find that a majority of such openings include weakening moves, unjustified sacrifices, or a disdain for central control. You are also confronted with an intimidating reality: irregular openings, even limiting ourselves to named ones, are more numerous than conventional ones! The cynic might say that's because there are more bad moves in chess than good ones. Indeed, when we find out that there are at least four named openings beginning with 1 a4, including 1 a4 b6 2 d4 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d7$  (with the 'idea' 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}b7$ ), which has been called the 'Cologne Gambit' of the 'Ware Opening', it's easy to agree with that. By the time we get to move 5, the number of 'irregular' moves explodes for both sides. Rather than tackle the near-infinite subject of irregular openings in general, I thought that it would be fun and indeed revealing to look at openings defined by the very first move. This exercise is particularly appropriate for the average player, because the logic of these openings does not depend upon prior knowledge of variations leading up to it. As it is, there's not nearly enough room to cover even these first moves in a comprehensive fashion. But I think that there's much to learn from how the variations break down, even if they can't be subject to detailed analysis.

For many players, unusual first moves are the most attractive; after all, what's better than playing an initial move that makes your opponent think? This psychological motivation has its effect, as evidenced by the number of games played with the least promising of first moves. For example, in one of my combined databases,

here is the number of games (in parentheses) with the following first moves for White. In every case, numerous masters (over 2200 rating) are represented: 1 f3 (166); 1  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (231); 1 c3 (437); 1 e3 (1,190); 1 a3 (1,829); 1 g4 (2,845). Non-transpositional games with 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (which is used frequently for transpositional purposes) number 9,152; and 1 b4, respectable but nowhere near mainstream, is represented by 20,689 contests, more than the main lines of many major openings. These figures include some joke draws and 1-move contests, but not enough to have a significant effect. And, to be sure, they represent small percentages of the entirety of games. Nevertheless, given the thousands of conventional (and unconventional) variations to choose from that stem from 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4 and 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , I'm surprised that tournament players are inclined to choose those above so frequently. And you should keep in mind that these numbers would surely balloon if you included amateur and club games (which are for the most part absent from standard databases).

So what are the characteristics of these first-move openings? First, it's useful to classify them according to evaluation. I'll call some openings 'good enough' (if they were worthy of an unqualified 'good', they'd probably not be irregular!), others 'substandard', and still others 'bad'. 'Bad' and 'good enough' are readily understandable categories; I'll get more specific on a case-by-case basis. A 'substandard' opening is generally uninspiring and tends to produce below-average results. This kind of opening is functional at lower levels, especially if it's tricky and has surprise value; however, a substandard opening becomes difficult to handle as you come up against stronger opponents.

Of course, any assessment depends upon what you expect to get out of the opening. I often hear advocates of irregular openings for White bragging about how their opening 'hasn't been refuted'. That's not a very good criterion! After all, it takes some pretty poor play for White to actually come out of the opening with a disadvantage, and when White goes through contortions merely to reach equality, we shouldn't be impressed. To the extent that the opening is harmless, easy to play, and leaves White with the ability to pose as many problems as Black, that's

'good enough'. But if, in practice, the opening is more difficult for White to play than Black and also doesn't yield any advantage, it qualifies as 'substandard'.

When it's Black who is playing an irregular opening, my assessments are naturally more forgiving. If Black can achieve a normal (i.e. very slight) disadvantage with perfect play, that's probably 'good enough'. An exception might be when the resulting position, although theoretically only moderately worse, requires a sophisticated handling that is out of the range of the average player. For example, Black may come out of the opening with quasi-permanent weaknesses or horrible-looking doubled pawns. A top player might know how to play around them, find a complex way to liquidate them, or even use them productively. However, if that involves extremely refined moves and/or extraordinary accuracy, then the opening isn't really satisfactory in practical terms and I'd call it 'substandard'. You can see that my evaluation isn't perfectly objective, and it is skewed towards the 'average' player, which in this case covers the broad range from developing players to experienced ones who are nevertheless below master level.

It turns out that everything has a name, and usually multiple names. For example, according to irregular openings aficionado Eric Schiller, the "greatest living exponent" of the move 1 h4 is the Hungarian master Kadas, after whom he names the opening, but he points out that it is also known as the 'Desprez Opening' and the 'Reagan Attack'. This reflects the fact that chess-players crave immortality; it also confirms the old saw that 'bad publicity is better than no publicity'. Curious, I went to my large combined database and found 354 non-trivial games with 1 h4, including 23 games by a fellow named Ats, which swamped the number by his countryman Kadas or anyone else. A number of masters have used 1 h4, among their ranks even a couple of 2400+ players. It somehow didn't surprise me that the overall success rate of 1 h4 was only moderately lower than White gets in chess overall. In over-the-board play, versus Black's replies 1...d5 and 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , White has a typical edge over Black in raw score and performance rating, but he does quite

poorly in both respects versus 1...e5. In correspondence play, White does reasonably well except when playing against 1...d5, which scores exceptionally well for Black. Remarkably, looking through the games themselves, I didn't find any in which h4 made a significant contribution to an opening advantage for White! I suppose that should be no surprise either: on a lower or even average level of play, 1 h4 can be used without disastrous consequences, because both sides' more serious mistakes later will easily outweigh the disadvantages of the first move. Nevertheless, I believe most leading grandmasters would assess White's game after 1 h4 as already inferior. If nothing else, it's a major concession when you forfeit the possibility of castling kingside in a large majority of positions. In addition, the g4-square will often be occupied by an active black piece that will be hard to get rid of, because the move f3 would create further weaknesses. If we had a large sample of games between master players, I'm convinced that 1 h4 would score considerably below 50%, and trail significantly in performance rating. In my judgement, then, 1 h4 is simply 'bad'.

To get a feel for the consequences of the choice of first move (and have some fun), let's run through every initial move for White, and a selected group of them for Black.

First of all, the 'regular' first moves 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4 all occupy and/or control central squares without exposing the king or creating weaknesses. 1 ♜f3 controls two central squares and develops in a way that is compatible with a wide range of good systems for White. These four moves are indisputably good ones.

Continuing with moves for White, both first-move fianchettoes 1 g3 and 1 b3 are logical and safe. Having studied 1...g6, we can infer that 1 g3 must be satisfactory. Most of the time, it transposes to openings such as the English Opening and Réti, or to any number of d-pawn openings featuring a fianchetto by White. But 1 g3 has also been played in many games which haven't transposed into other variations; for example, it often becomes a reversed Pirc Defence such as 1 g3 d5 2 ♘g2 e5 3 d3 c6 (or 3...♝c6) 4 ♜f3. The same comparison holds for 1 b3 (which we looked at in Chapter 4),

since it is an 'improved' 1...b6. Both 1 g3 and 1 b3 are a bit too passive to produce an advantage against solid play, but that's a different issue. Similarly, the Bird Opening (1 f4) was examined in Chapter 6. It has a longer history of master play and is clearly sound.

That leaves what I consider truly irregular first moves, divided by colour. We begin with White. Most of White's irregular first moves are 'good enough', even though some of them are passive and fail to challenge Black at all. The only reason that some of those survive 'substandard' status is that they are not particularly difficult to play. A few irregular first moves have positive qualities, and are sufficiently attractive to recommend for the occasional experiment, and I'll start with those:

## Sokolsky/Polish: 1 b4

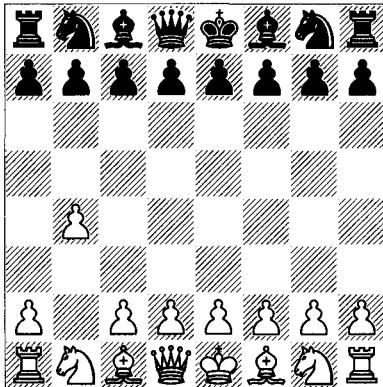
As discussed above, this is the most popular and respectable of the irregular first moves. To the untrained eye, it may seem a bit bizarre. Yet several books, including two very recent ones, are solely devoted to 1 b4, which is called, variously, the Sokolsky Opening, the Polish Opening, the Orang-Utan, and probably a few other things. 1 b4 is obviously good enough; it will probably never break through on the grandmaster level, but it can lend a lively flavour to the game and deserves special attention. With that in mind, here are two games in very critical variations, with notes to indicate a few other directions.

**Schiffler – Skirl**  
corr. 1950

### 1 b4 (D)

What's the idea behind this move? First and foremost, White wants to fianchetto his bishop, as he does when he plays 1 b3. In addition, he takes some queenside space and discourages the move ...c5. In some cases, White will play b5, and the mere possibility of that move can dissuade Black from playing ...♝c6. As we have seen following 1 b3 and 2 ♘b2, White can develop in a variety of ways. Most frequently, he plays e3, ♜f3 and c4, but a double fianchetto by g3 and ♘g2 is also possible. Sometimes

B



White will play f4 before developing his knight to f3, in order to strengthen his control of the long diagonal.

Black is also flexibly situated. First, there's a decent chance that ...e5 or ...e6, attacking the b-pawn, will gain a whole tempo without a meaningful concession. Since White isn't placing a pawn in the centre, Black frequently takes the opportunity to do so himself by ...d5 and/or ...e5. He also faces no serious threats, so he can pick from a number of set-ups and develop quickly.

### 1...e5

I'm going to focus on this thematic move, which attacks the pawn on b4, since it is by far the most frequently played, as well as the best chance to 'refute' 1 b4, in the sense of giving Black the better game by force. That may or may not happen with best play, but White has to be careful in many lines. Here, extremely briefly, are two of the main alternatives:

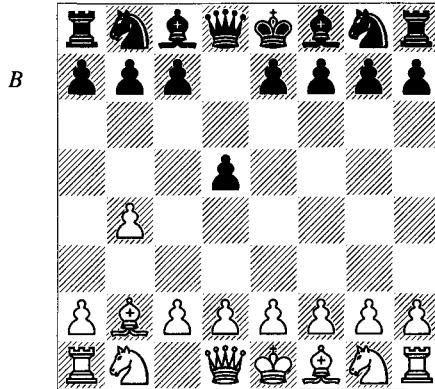
#### a) 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 2 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ and then:

a1) 2...g6 is a safe line, with a typical continuation being 3 e3 (3 c4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 5 g3 was used by Réti; 3  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 isn't so effective when White doesn't gain a knight outpost to offset the bishops; compare 1 b3 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 c4 g6?! 4  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , controlling d5) 3... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 c4 d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6 d4  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (or 6...c5) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 8 0-0 (8 dx5 dx5 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ), and Black has a broad choice; for example, 8...exd4, 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and 8...e4 9  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ .

a2) 2...e6 3 a3 is playable, of course, but 3 b5 is more challenging, planning to maintain the pawn there as long as possible and cramp Black's game a bit. This position has occurred

in many games, without dramatic results for either side.

b) 1...d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (D) also gives Black numerous options, among them:



b1) 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 e3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (4 f4 e6 5 a3 a5 6 b5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and Black's rapid development ensures a good game) 4...e6 5 a3 (5 b5!?) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 c4 c6 with a standard London System formation and equality.

b2) 2... $\mathbb{W}d6$ ! has the dual ideas of ... $\mathbb{W}xb4$  and ...e5; for example, 3 a3 (after 3 b5, 3... $\mathbb{W}b4$  wins a pawn, even if 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  5 e4 offers White some compensation; Lapshun and Conicello prefer simply 3...e5) 3...e5 4 e3 (4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f6!? 5 d4!?) e4 6  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  f5 7 c4 c6 is unclear; White has a sort of reversed French Defence with extra tempi, but Black hasn't had to play the obstructive ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ; compare 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 e5 ( $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ ) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6 c4 c6 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ! with the idea of cxd5, and exerting some central pressure.

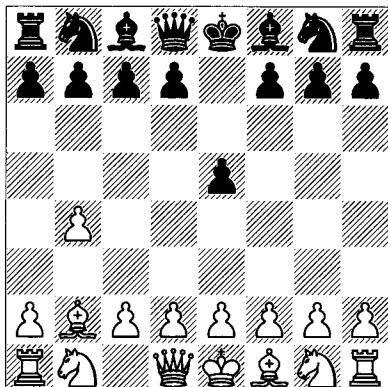
b3) 2... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  makes sense, interfering with White's kingside development and planning to set up with, for example, 3...c6, 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , and either ...e5 or ...e6. The play can go almost any direction; for example, 3 c4, 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 3 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  4 c4 (4 g3) or the odd-looking but logical 3  $\mathbb{W}c1$ , preparing 4 e3.

#### 2 $\mathbb{Q}b2$ (D)

White sometimes plays 2 a3, although this isn't challenging and uses valuable time. Black gets time to construct and successfully defend an ideal centre: 2...d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  4 e3 (4 f4 exf4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}h4+$  6 g3 fxg3 7  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}f4!$  (or 7...gxh2+! 8  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !) 8  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !! doesn't essentially differ from the 1 e4 b6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3

$\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5 4 exf5, etc., of Chapter 4) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 c4 c6 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$ , with a sort of reversed 1 e4 b6 line in which Black stands at least satisfactorily.

B

**2...f6**

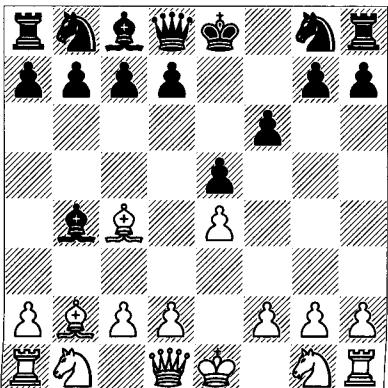
The intent here is not only to protect e5, but to set up a barricade against White's bishop on b2. In the next game we'll see 2... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ . Naturally, a solid move such as 2...d6, although not ambitious, can't be bad. And oddly enough, 2...e4 is an established answer, as it is after 1 b3 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ .

**3 e4!?**

This is a speculative gambit by means of which White gains dangerous chances. Objectively, 3 b5 d5 4 e3 is a safer way to maintain equality while reaching an interesting position. Then 4... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  prevents c4 and prepares to develop naturally.

**3... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (D)**

B



White has prevented Black from castling, and will aim to play f4 in most cases.

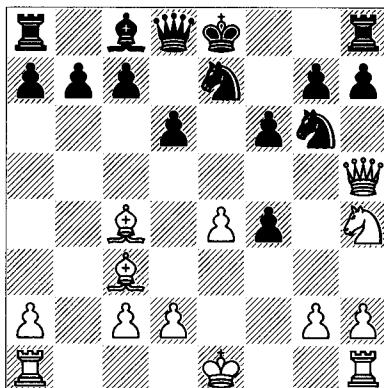
**4... $\mathbb{W}e7$** 

Black seeks to discourage 5 f4, which gives White a King's Gambit-style attack.

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is a sound alternative. Then 5 f4 exf4 6  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  has been played, but 6... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ! has the idea ... $\mathbb{W}xe4+$ , and prevents 7 0-0?? because of 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ .

b) A game involving Bobby Fischer himself, Fischer-Gloge, Cleveland (simul) 1964, went 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  (Tartakower-Réti, Vienna 1919 is a classic example with 5 f4: 5...d5 6 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  7 fx5 fxe5 8  $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10 0-0 0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! 12 d3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13  $\mathbb{W}g5$  h6 14  $\mathbb{W}g3$  with an unclear position) 5... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (5...g6 6  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}ec6$  7 f4 is complex) 6 f4 (6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is suggested by Konikowski and Sosynski, and approved by the computer – the ideas are d4 or  $\mathbb{Q}h4/f4$ ; for example, 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  8 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  9 f4! d5! 10 exd5 exf4 11 0-0 and White controls the e-file with attacking chances, although this is double-edged) 6...exf4 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (Lapshun and Conicello contribute 8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  9 a3, when Black should counterattack by 9...d5! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  d6 10  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (D).

W



11  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (11 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  {12  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !}) and now 12...hxg6? 13  $\mathbb{W}g4+$  f5? 14 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15  $\mathbb{W}f3+$  d5 16  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  led to a quick victory for White in Trockenheim-Kusmerik, corr. 1994, but 12... $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  is better) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! (11...d5! is given by several analysts; Black may even stand a touch better) 12 0-0?! (12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ! is strong, in view of 12...gxf6? 13  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}g7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}h3+$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !, with a decisive king-hunt) 12... $\mathbb{W}e8$ ? (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !) 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  (13...gxf6?? 14  $\mathbb{W}h6\#$ ) 14 exf5 d5? 15 fxe6

$\text{gxf6}$  16  $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17  $g7$  and White wins. This line is fun for a tactician, but you can see that it is fundamentally satisfactory for Black.

5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Thinking about either  $f4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ .

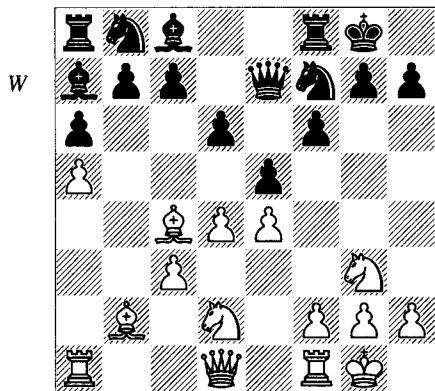
5... $\mathbb{Q}h6!?$

5...d6 is a natural alternative.

6  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  d6 7 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8 d4

Now the game looks more like a conventional 1 e4 e5 gambit, and in particular an Evans Gambit, since White's b-pawn has been captured.

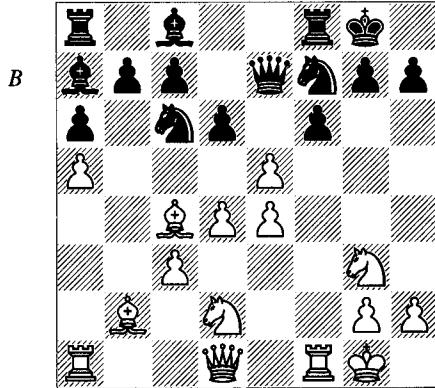
8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9 a4 a6 10 a5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  12 0-0 0-0 (D)



13 f4?

White has the right general idea, to activate his rook and put further pressure on Black's centre, but it's premature. 13  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and 13  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  are better ways to proceed.

13... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  14 fxe5 (D)



14...fxe5

14... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  and 14...dxe5 15  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}d7!$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$ , with more than ample compensation, are also good for Black.

15  $\mathbb{W}b3$  exd4 16  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  dxc3?

16...d3! returns one of the two pawns to damage White's pawn-structure.

17  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!?$

20  $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  leads to a clear win according to Konikowski and Soszynski.

20...gxf6 21  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  f5? 22 exf5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  23  $\mathbb{W}g3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24 f6  $\mathbb{W}d8?$

24... $\mathbb{W}e8$  25  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  26  $\mathbb{W}g7+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  27  $\mathbb{Q}e4!.$

25  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  1-0

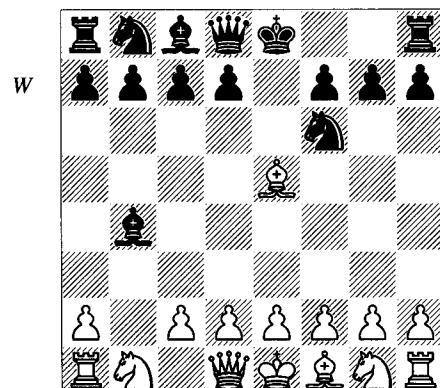
R. Franke – A. Löffler

ICCF corr. 1986

1 b4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

This has been the bane of the Sokolosky Opening's existence, leading to all kinds of sacrificial wins for Black, as well as positional binds. It's remarkable how many leading grandmasters have played 2... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ . Still, the best Sokolsky players manage to get their share of the play.

3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D)



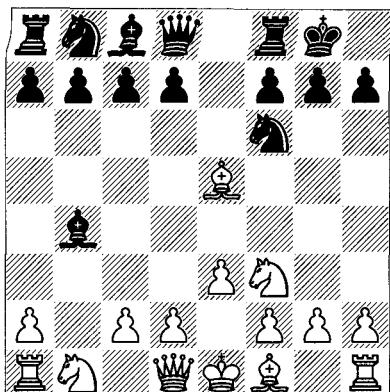
4 e3

It's possible to play c4 at any point; for example, 4 c4 0-0 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  and now 6 e3 d5 7  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  transposes to the game. Kosten shows the interesting line 6 a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  7 e3 d5 8 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ , when the sacrifice in the notes below, 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5!?$ , is less convincing due to 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}xa1$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$ , a consequence of

the insertion of a3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ; compare the similar line below. Of course, Black can play 9...c5! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , when he has gained a tempo in lines where ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  follows (that is, he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  unprovoked in lines below, and a3 is unproductive for White).

**4...0-0 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (D)**

B



Here White has traded a flank pawn for a centre pawn, usually an advantage in chess (think of all the gambits in which one side sacrifices a flank pawn in order to gain a central majority). In fact, we might compare White's strategy with the Sicilian Defence, in which Black willingly falls behind in development in order to secure the extra central pawn. However, there are a couple of flaws in this comparison. First, after Black wins a tempo on the bishop on e5 with ... $\mathbb{B}e8$  and/or ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , he owns the dangerous e-file, which aims through the thickets at White's king. That is significant because White is so far away from castling (a consequence of spending time on the moves b4,  $\mathbb{B}b2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ ). Furthermore, there are idiosyncratic qualities to this variation, in which the particulars often trump general considerations. For one, White's d-pawn is pinned, which makes d3 impossible for the moment and, as we shall see, creates some awkward defensive problems on e3. Furthermore, White's bishop is committed to the long diagonal and can get shut out of play by ...d5-d4. In what follows, you'll see many examples of the attacking chances these factors produce.

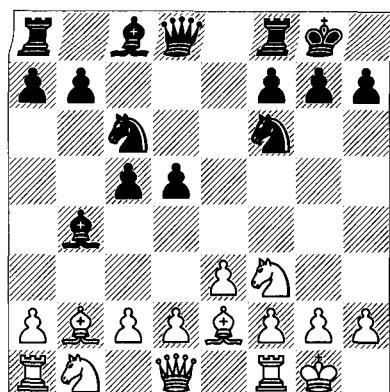
**5... $\mathbb{B}e8$**

This presages some tactical ideas. Naturally, Black has other options:

a) Sometimes he attacks with 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , which is reasonable, but it's nice to retain the option of ...c5; for example, if White doesn't play c4, then Black can set up with ...d5 and ...c5, as in 'b'.

b) 5...d5 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (D) is a well-known position.

B



Play can go:

b1) 8... $\mathbb{B}e8$  9 d3!? (here 9 d4?! c4! cannot be recommended to White) can be answered by 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (compare line 'b4'). Instead, Pommerel-Mrkvicka, email 1990 saw 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  d4 11 a3  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ ! 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13 e4, when 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  has the idea of ...c4 and is dynamically balanced.

b2) Naturally, 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  is a sound alternative.

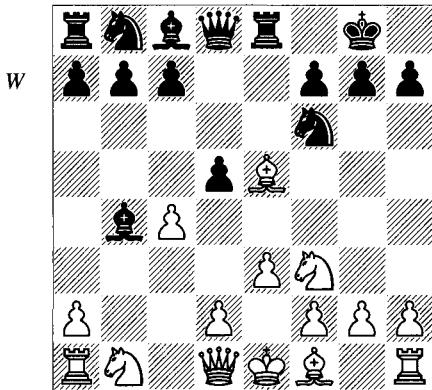
b3) The advance 8...d4 produced a curious and unbalanced position following 9 c3! d3! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}xd3$  11 cxb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}g6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  in E.Pedersen-T.Christensen, Danish Team Ch 1998/9.

b4) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ! is a slightly strange move used by many experts in this line; it is relatively non-committal, and has the idea of ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , taking aim at White's kingside if the opportunity arises. For example, 9 c4!? (upon 9 d3, Black plays 9...d4! with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ; 9  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  has been suggested, but 9...b6 10 d4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  makes this look like a waste of time) 9...d4 10 exd4 cxd4 11 d3 (Benoni-like; however, White's bishops aren't as well located as in that opening) 11... $\mathbb{B}e8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$ ! (12... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ?; 12... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) 13  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (Kocandrle-Bertel, IECG email 2004) and here 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xe1+$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{W}xe1+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  looks correct.

**6 c4**

White could also have played this last move. The safer 6 ♜e2 d5 7 0-0 c5 8 ♜b2 ♜c6 transposes to the previous note.

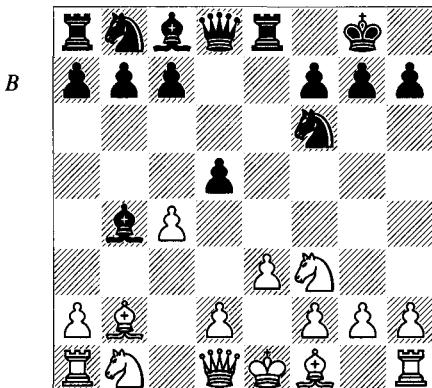
**6...d5 (D)**



**7 cxd5**

Or:

a) Palliser mentions 7 ♜b2 (D). Then Black has several possibilities:



a1) 7...c5 8 cxd5 ♜xd5 9 ♜e2 ♜c6 is solid. I think that White should play 10 ♜c2, preventing ...f5, rather than 10 0-0 ♜f5!.

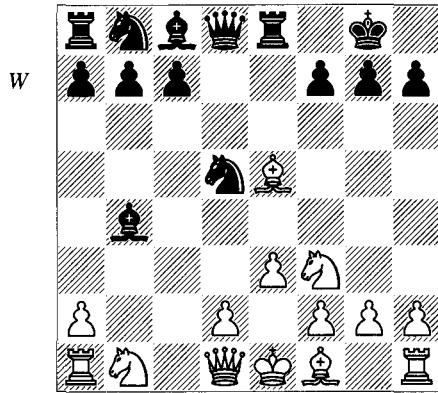
a2) 7...f5 threatens ...dxc4 and ...d3.

a3) 7...♜c6 8 cxd5 ♜xd5!? has been a fairly popular set-up for Black, since 9 ♜xf6 is the fourth move by White's bishop and leaves d3 vulnerable to attack by ...f5 and ...ad8.

b) 7 ♜e2 is arguably White's safest way to proceed, but it allows simplification by 7...♜c6 8 ♜b2 dxc4 9 ♜xc4 ♜e6, securing light-square influence in White's camp, although this time there are no tactics.

**7...♜xd5 (D)**

7...♜xd5 8 ♜b2 ♜c6 is line 'a3' of the previous note.



**8 ♜b2**

Black has won several games with tactical tricks on the e3-square; for example:

a) 8 ♜e2? ♜xe5! 9 ♜xe5 ♜f6 (now both the knight and d-pawn are pinned) 10 f4 ♜xe3 and now:

a1) 11 ♜a4 b5!? (11...♜d7 12 ♜xd7 ♜xa1 13 ♜f2 ♜d5 is also strong) 12 ♜xb5 c6 13 ♜d3 ♜xg2+ 14 ♜d1 ♜xf4 15 ♜e3 ♜xe2 16 ♜xe2 ♜a6+ left Black the exchange down but with a winning attack in Jaskulski-Zehm, corr. 1985.

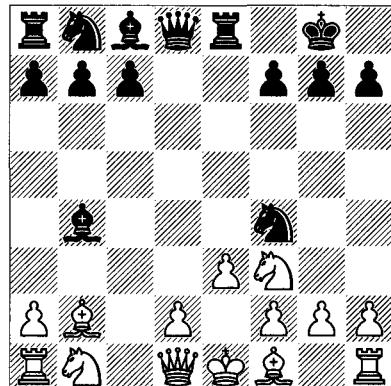
a2) 11 ♜b3 ♜xg2+ 12 ♜d1 ♜xf4 13 ♜xf7!? (there is no remotely satisfactory move for White) 13...♜xf7 (or 13...♜e6) 14 ♜c4 ♜e6 15 ♜xe6 ♜xe6 16 ♜e1 and 16...♜c6 was good in Lindqvist-Sörenfors, corr. 1975, but 16...♜d4! 17 ♜xb4 ♜bc6 threatens moves such as ...♜g5, ...♜h5+ and ...♜d8, and wins for Black straight-away.

b) 8 ♜c4 ♜g4 9 ♜b2 ♜xe3! (or 9...♜c6) 10 ♜xe3 ♜xe3+ 11 ♜f2 ♜xf3+ (11...♜e4!?) 12 ♜xf3 ♜h4+ 13 ♜g1! ♜h3 14 ♜f1 and now 14...♜g5+ 15 ♜f2 ♜h4+ 16 ♜e2 ♜e7+ is perpetual check, but 14...♜c6! has been played as well, trying to win.

**8...♜c6**

White might prefer another move-order (such as delaying cxd5), since here 8...♜f4! (D) poses problems. White has to avoid all kinds of dangerous tactics; for example:

a) 9 ♜e5 ♜g5! 10 exf4 (not 10 g3? ♜xe5! 11 ♜xf4 ♜xe3+! 12 ♜xe3 ♜h4+ 13 ♜e2 ♜g4+) 11



10... $\mathbb{W}xf4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{B}xe5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14  $\mathbb{d}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , Billing-Bogert, corr. 1993. This has all been forced, and Black has two pawns for the exchange with a much better position.

b) Palliser analyses what is probably the best move, 9 a3!: 9... $\mathbb{Q}d6!$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}a5??$  10  $\mathbb{W}a4!$ ) 10  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12 0-0-0!?

$\mathbb{Q}g6$  with complications.

c) 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is depressing for White. Palliser continues 10  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f1?$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{W}xe8$  with the idea 14  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4!!$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f7+$  (or 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b5+)$  15... $\mathbb{W}xf7$  16  $\mathbb{W}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}f4+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d3+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d3+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  21 f3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  and Black wins.

9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$

After 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5!?$  and 9...a6 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  give Black active play; in both cases, he will try to put pressure on White's light squares, in particular d3.

9... $\mathbb{B}xe3!$

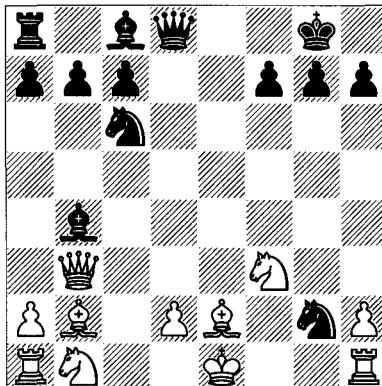
A bold and wonderful shot, giving up a rook for a handful of pawns and an attack. Actually, Black's position is flexible, and he can get a perfectly good game by 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (or 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ) 11 a3 a6 12 d4 h6 13  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  with equality, Baranov-Yudasin, St Petersburg 1998.

10  $\mathbb{fxe}3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  11  $\mathbb{W}b3$

Two other playable, if not thrilling, courses are 11  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and 11  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14 d4  $\mathbb{B}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (Dziel-Zarebski, corr. 1993) when 15... $\mathbb{W}f6!$  is best.

11... $\mathbb{Q}xg2+(D)$

12  $\mathbb{Q}f2!?$



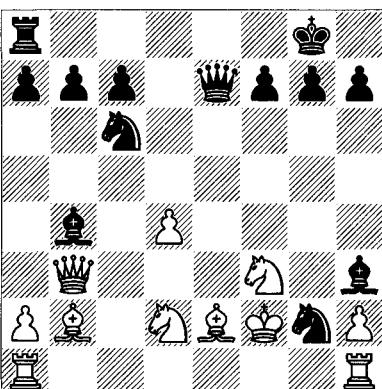
In spite of appearances, things don't always go badly for White; for example, 12  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}e7?$  (13... $\mathbb{W}xd3!$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  16  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8+$  and with three pawns and an attack for the rook, Black has adequate compensation, Dziel-Szimmat, corr. 1997) 14  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  16  $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}b3+$  17  $\mathbb{axb}3$   $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  1-0 Lapshun-Sinn, Philadelphia 2003.

12... $\mathbb{Q}h3!$  13  $\mathbb{d}4?!$

Konikowski and Soszynski improve by 13  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5+$  16 d4, which remains quite unclear following 16... $\mathbb{W}f5$  or 16... $\mathbb{W}d6$ .

13... $\mathbb{W}e7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}bd2??$  (D)

A blunder. Black still has an attack after 14  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  15  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  (it's not clear who stands better after 15... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 16  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  19  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{W}xe8$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  21  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}g6+$ , when Black's superior activity gives him an obvious advantage.



14... $\mathbb{W}e8?$

This doesn't ruin everything, but 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd2!$  wins outright, in view of 15  $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  16  $\mathbb{W}xh3$  (16  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{W}h4+$ ) 16... $\mathbb{W}xe2+$  17  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  and now 17...f5 or 17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .

15  $\mathbb{W}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  16  $\mathbb{W}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ? fails to 17... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  with the idea 18  $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{W}h4+$  19  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4+$ .

17... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  18  $\mathbb{W}d1??$

But the much better 18  $\mathbb{W}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$  19  $\mathbb{W}xe1$  c5! 20  $\mathbb{W}g4$  cxd4 21  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  f5! 22  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}b4+$  23  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  still leaves Black with enough pawns to win, in spite of White's bishop-pair.

18... $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  19  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}g5+$  20  $\mathbb{Q}xh3$   $\mathbb{W}e4$  21  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{W}xf5+$  22  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}g4+$  23  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}xg4+$  24  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}f3+$  25  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}f2#$  (0-1)

## Linkspringer: 1 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

The immediate development of the queen's knight is called by an assortment of names, including the Meštrović Opening, Van Geet's Opening, the Sleipner, the Dunst, and *Linkspringer* (roughly, 'knight on the left side'). Although the move hasn't ever inspired a tidal wave of interest, it has a solid reputation and a number of strong adherents, with periodic use by grandmasters. Even the chess stars Morozevich and Ivanchuk have given it a whirl.

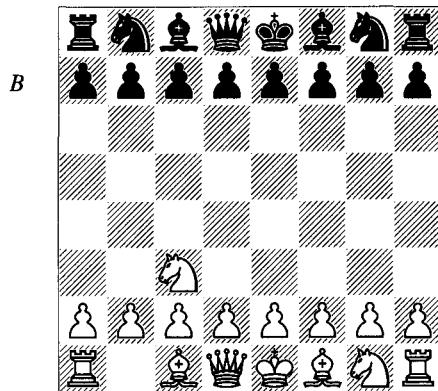
In fact, whole books with extensive analysis have been devoted to the intricacies of 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . I shall only present one game including a general outline of early moves, but you will see how extraordinarily rich a set of ideas can spring from the knight development. Of the irregular first moves presented in this chapter, it might well be the most fruitful to play and study. For one thing, the pawn-structures that result are often related to those in mainstream openings.

### A. van den Berg – Liubarsky

*European Seniors Ch, Arvier 2004*

1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D)

White's basic notion is that 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is a flexible centralizing move that looks out at e4 and d5, just as 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  controls d4 and e5. Depending upon Black's reply, White can either transpose to more conventional openings or find a formation in which the knight on c3 serves a useful

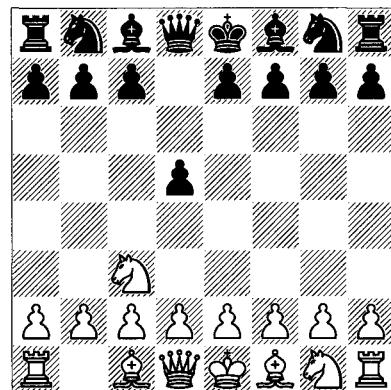


function. This is best explained by example, as are Black's counter-strategies.

1...e5

1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  can lead to an outrageous number of potential transpositions and original paths, which makes it rather attractive if you want to try something new on the first move. I'll just present a tree-structure overview with a limited selection of starting points. Keep in mind that a good deal of theory is attached to some of the following variations:

a) 1...d5 (D) is the main alternative to 1...e5, and introduces the idea of ...d4.



w

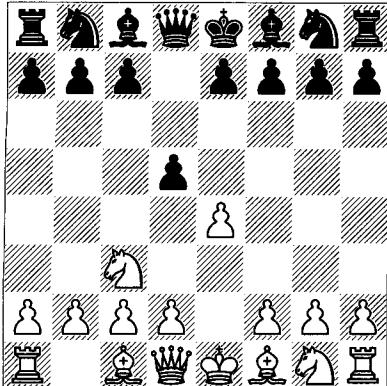
Now 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  can lead in various directions; for example, 2...d4 3  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 d3!?. A funny reversed line would be 2...c5 3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ , which is a Queen's Gambit Declined, Chigorin Defence, with the extra tempo  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ; there might follow 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 e4!?,  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  8 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9 0-0.

The solid 2 d4 is an invitation to the Veresov Opening following 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , or White

can play 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , to be followed by 4  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  or even 4 g3.

But by far the most important move is 2 e4 (D).

B



White attacks Black's pawn on d5 directly, and challenges him to exchange, advance, or transpose into a conventional opening. Here are some possibilities:

a1) 2...e6 is a French Defence. White can transpose to main lines by 3 d4, or play the less popular variation with 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Moves such as 3 g3 and 3 f4 are playable, but unimpressive.

a2) Similarly, 2...c6 3 d4 is a main-line Caro-Kann. White has the option of a Two Knights Variation by 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , and a number of unusual tries such as 3  $\mathbb{W}f3$  d4 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! 5 e5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ !? 6 exf6  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$ , when neither recapture is particularly clear.

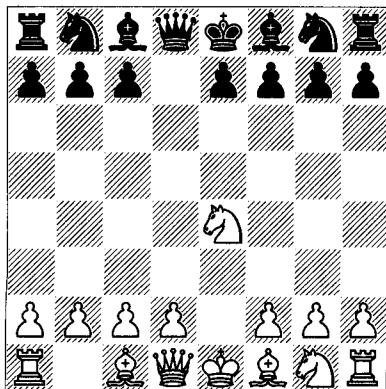
a3) 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  is a line of the Alekhine Defence by transposition: 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5. This is looked upon as relatively harmless after 3 exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  or 3 e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ . Sometimes Black meets 3 e5 with 3... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ?, when the most critical move is 4  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$ , by which White prepares, with d3, to drive Black's knight away with tempo; or he can play d4 and threaten to win the knight on e4 by f3. All of this can be found in theoretical works and databases.

a4) 2...dxe4 3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (D) is commonly seen, with the usual wide choice for Black:

a41) Strangely, 3... $\mathbb{W}d5$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !? is the same position that arises from 1 e4 d5 2 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , a Scandinavian Defence!

a42) 3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and now 4  $\mathbb{W}f3$ !? has the idea, hardly forced, of 4... $\mathbb{W}d5$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ +  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  6  $\mathbb{W}xf5$ . Alternatively, 4  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  5 h4 h6 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

B



is possible, when play can continue 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 8 d3?!, while after 7 d4 e6 8 h5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}xd3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ , Black hopes to play ...c5 and save a tempo over similar lines in the Caro-Kann Defence.

a43) Another common continuation is 3...e5 4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , when 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (not the common blunder 4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ??, which loses to 5  $\mathbb{W}h5$ ) 5 d3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0-0-0 is a fair position from which to begin a game.

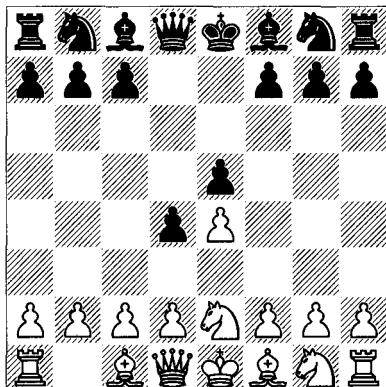
a44) 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is one of Black's soundest moves; for example, 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 5  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , which is based upon 6 d4?  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !. Instead, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 e6 8 d4 or 8 d3 keeps all the play on the board.

a45) A natural continuation is 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !?(or 4 d4  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ) 4...e6 (4... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is risky, for both sides!) 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  6 d3!?(this is Keilhack's favoured move, frequently used in the games of 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  advocates) 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7  $\mathbb{W}e2$  0-0 (7...a6, intending ...b5, is a common idea) 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ! c5!? 9 0-0 b6 10  $\mathbb{W}fe1$  with easy play for White, Schlenker-Klovans, Forchtenberg 1996. The point is that all of these lines give plenty of scope for individual interpretation.

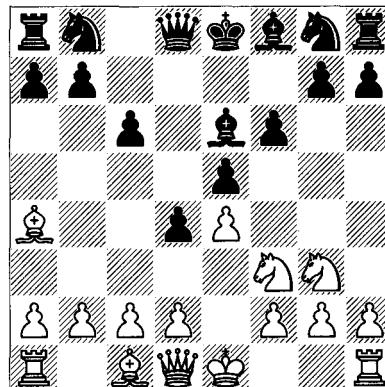
a5) 2...d4 3  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  e5 (D) (3...c5 can be answered by 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  or 4 f4, but the most common idea is 4  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ , intending  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  or  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  followed by d3, and ideally White plays f4 at some point – these ideas resemble the ones that follow 3...e5; of course, Black has other 3rd moves, including 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , but these two are the most common).

The position after 3...e5 has been contested quite often between strong players. White normally proceeds with one of two strategies, First,

W



B



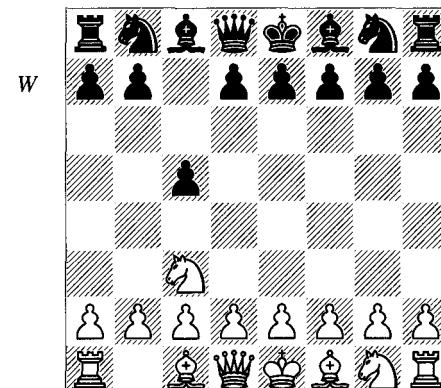
he can set up with d3, g3, ♘g2, ♘f3 and 0-0, reversing a King's Indian position; or better yet, he can get f4 in before ♘f3. The latter requires accuracy to implement; for example, the immediate 4 f4!? (rather than the normal 4 d3) can run into 4...♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♘g4!, when instead of 6 d3? ♘xf3 7 gxf3 ♖h4+ 8 ♕d2 exf4 9 c3 0-0-0, as in Ardaman-Yermolinsky, Philadelphia 2002, White should consider 6 ♘xe5. Somewhat riskier but more interesting is 6 fxe5 ♘xf3 7 gxf3; for example, 7...♘xe5 8 ♘g3 ♖h4 9 d3 ♘g6!?(9...♗b4+! 10 ♖f2 ♘e7) 10 ♖d2! ♘d6 11 ♖g5, as in Sydor-Kapengut, Lublin 1973. White has the bishop-pair and mobile kingside pawns to compensate for his lack of space and poorly-placed pieces.

White's second main idea is get his bishop out to c4 or b5 in front of the pawn-chain (that is, before closing it in with d3); for example, 4 ♘g3 ♘e6! (versus ♘c4; naturally there are many other moves) 5 ♘f3 (5 c3 c5 6 ♘b5+ gets the bishop out safely, but Black has nothing to complain about following 6...♗d7 7 ♘f3 f6) 5...f6 6 ♘b5+! c6 (or 6...♗d7) 7 ♘a4 (D).

7...♗a6 (7...♗d7 8 ♘b3 is similar, although Black lacks the option of ...♗b4; one line is 8...♗xb3 9 axb3 d3 10 c3 a5 11 0-0 ♘c5 12 ♘e1, which is not easy to assess; another tempting move is 7...♗a5, when 8 c3! prepares 9 ♘b3) 8 ♘b3 (or 8 0-0 ♘c5 9 ♘b3 ♘xb3 10 axb3 d3) 8...♗xb3 9 axb3 d3 10 0-0 ♘b4 11 cxd3 (11 c3!?) ♘c2 12 ♗a2 ♘c5 13 ♘e1 is double-edged) 11...♗xd3 12 ♘e1 ♘h6 13 ♖c2 ♘xc1 14 ♖xc1 ♖c7 15 ♘f3 ♖d8, Lammens-Ehlvest, Vlissingen 1996, and now 16 d4! exd4 17 ♖fd1 secures some advantage, with ideas of ♘xd4, ♖c4 and ♘h5.

You can see by all this that 1...d5 is certainly an acceptable way for Black to play, and gives both players opportunities to unbalance the position.

b) 1...c5 (D) is likely to be the Sicilian player's choice. Then

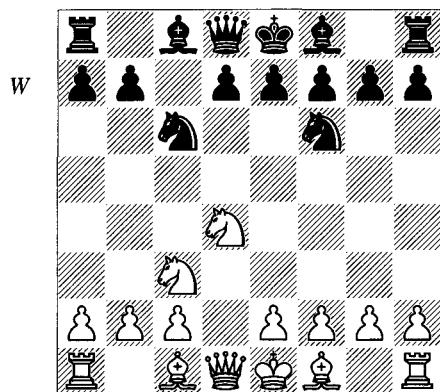


b1) Indeed, 2 e4 transposes to a Closed Sicilian.

b2) 2 d4 cxd4 3 ♖xd4 ♘c6 (3...e6) 4 ♖h4 is quite interesting, and occurred in no less elevated a game than Morozevich-Kasparov, Frankfurt rapid 2000, which continued 4...♗f6 (4...d5 is the most frequent choice) 5 ♘f3 (White could transpose to a Trompowsky Attack by 5 ♘g5, that is, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘g5 c5 3 ♘c3 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♘c6 5 ♖h4) 5...d5 6 ♘g5 ♗a5 7 0-0-0 ♘e6!. Then, apart from the game's 8 ♖d2, 8 ♘d4 ♖xd4 9 ♖xd4! is inviting.

b3) White usually plays 2 ♘f3, when Black can play almost any move, and 2...e6, 2...d6, 2...a6, 2...b6 and 2...♗f6 can all go their own way. 2...d5 3 d4 is mentioned under 1...d5 2

$\mathbb{Q}f3$  above, while 2...g6 allows 3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{W}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f6$ , when perhaps 5  $\mathbb{W}h4$  with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is the most attractive choice. The richest line may be 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}f6$  (*D*) (4...d5 is usually answered by 5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! or 5 e4; after 4...g6, 5 e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is a Sicilian Accelerated Dragon, while 5 g3 and 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  are unique options; in reply to 4...e6, 5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  is attractive, since 5...a6 6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 7  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  should yield some edge).



This has close parallels with standard openings, but needn't actually transpose:

b31) 5 e4 is a standard Sicilian.

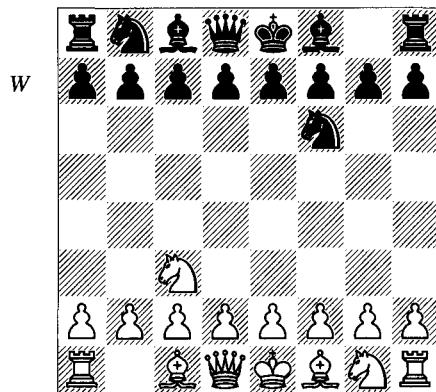
b32) 5 g3?! d5 (Black can also play the safe 5...g6) 6  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e5 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 is a reversed Exchange Grünfeld with White having the extra  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , a mixed blessing; his plan would be 0-0,  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  and c4.

b33) 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? and now 5...e5?! 6  $\mathbb{Q}db5$  is not a Sveshnikov Sicilian, as can be seen by 6...d6? 7  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , etc. The calm 5...d6 is sound enough; if he wants unique play, White might try 6  $\mathbb{W}d2$  with the idea 0-0-0. Black can also play 5... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ; for example, 6  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  e6 7 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ; or 5... $\mathbb{W}a5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6, when 7 e3 e6 8  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  leaves the whole game ahead.

The most natural reply is perhaps 5...e6 6  $\mathbb{W}d2$ !? (intending 0-0-0; instead, C.Beyer recommends 6  $\mathbb{W}d3$ , while 6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}db5$  doesn't do much after 7... $\mathbb{W}e5$ !) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  7 a3  $\mathbb{W}a5$ !? (Keilhack suggests that after 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , the move a3 may even constitute a weakness) 8  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! (10... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  with the idea ...b6 is better-timed) 11  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$ !? (Keilhack indicates both 11...bxc6 and 11...dxc6 as superior,

even if White's bishop-pair ensures a modest edge) 12  $\mathbb{Q}xa7$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !  $\mathbb{W}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15 0-0-0 with a comfortable advantage for White, C.Beyer-Ortmann, Stuttgart 1999.

c) 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (*D*) and now:



c1) After 2 e4, 2...e5 is a Vienna Game and 2...d5 is the Alekhine Defence line 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 discussed above via 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 2 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

c2) 2 d4 (equivalent to 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) allows Black to play a Pirc Defence following 2...g6 3 e4 d6, or he can choose 2...d5, when 3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  is the Veresov Attack, well worth knowing for both colours.

c3) 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is the most independent move. Then 2...d5 (naturally, there are alternatives) 3 d3!?,  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and 3...c5 are other ideas) 4 g3 (4  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  d4 looks fine for Black) 4...e5 5  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  is a sort of reversed Pirc Defence with White having the extra move  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . That might not be an unqualified advantage if Black can play an effective ...d4; for example, 5...d4 6  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  7 dxе4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ + 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  9  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  with quite respectable play. Instead, Keilhack gives 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g8$ !?, although 8 e4! looks to be a challenging reply.

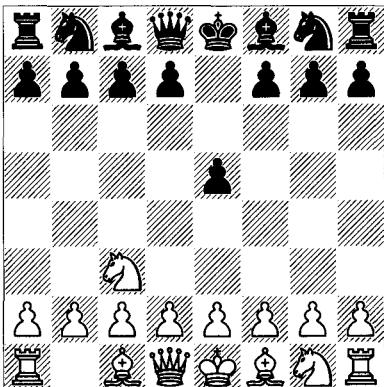
d) The most natural response to 1...e6 is 2 e4, when 2...d5 is a French Defence and 2...c5 is a Closed Sicilian.

e) Likewise, after 1...c6, 2 e4 d5 3 d4 and 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  are normal Caro-Kann Variations. This time, 2 d4 d5 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is of some interest, with  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  to follow, just to get out of the books.

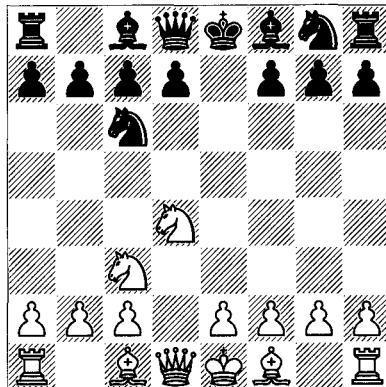
Let's return at long last to the main game with 1...e5 (*D*):

2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

W



B



2 e4 is a Vienna Game. In that regard, you will find many such transpositions after 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  that are theoretically harmless; still, White may be able to move his opponent into unfamiliar territory by employing them.

A refreshing alternative is 2 d4!? exd4 3  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ , which is a reversed Scandinavian Defence with an extra  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . This leads to distinctive positions; for example, 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 g4!?) is a bizarre idea from C.Horvath-Lukacs, Budapest 1994: 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{W}e3$ +  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  6 g5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  7  $\mathbb{W}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{W}xd5$ , and now 9...f6 is best, since in the game 9...d6? 10 f4! deprived the knight of squares) and now:

a) 4  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , as in the 3... $\mathbb{W}d6$  Scandinavian, is of course playable, but not so impressive with a knight on c3, preventing the move c3. The popular idea of a3 and b4 doesn't go that well with  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , which blocks off White's long a1-h8 diagonal. Nevertheless, an extra tempo is an extra tempo, and White might want to investigate independent ideas such as 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 7  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  0-0 8 0-0-0.

b) 4  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (4...d5 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  has the idea 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  7 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  8 bxc3 h6 9  $\mathbb{W}h4$ ) 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 7  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  g5 8  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  d6 9 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10 e4 with a complex battle.

2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

After 2...d6 3 d4 (3 e4 and now 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 d4 is a Philidor Defence; instead 3... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  4 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !) appears to favour White after 5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or even 5 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ) 3...exd4 (3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  4 e4  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  is another Philidor Defence) 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , and here 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5 e4 (5 g3!?) is yet another Philidor Defence, while 4...d5! 5 e4! has the idea 5...c5 6  $\mathbb{Q}db5$ ! a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  axb5 8  $\mathbb{Q}xb5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ .

3 d4 exd4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (D)

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

4... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  5  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  6 bxc3 bxc6 7  $\mathbb{W}d4$  is unclear, with themes resembling those in the game. 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  can be met by 5  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! or 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !, both giving the play a unique flavour.

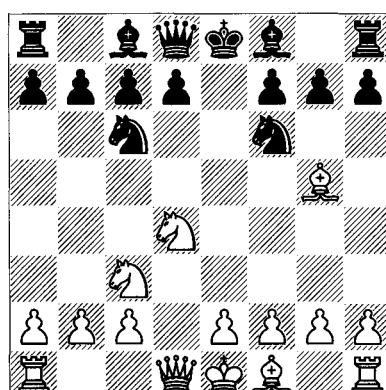
4...d5 is also playable, but White's position looks preferable after 5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .

White has great fun after 4...g6? 5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! (threatening 6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 5...a6 (5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  7  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  with the ideas of  $\mathbb{W}e5$ + and 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ? 8  $\mathbb{W}c5$ !) 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! f6 (6... $\mathbb{W}xg5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ?? 8  $\mathbb{Q}de6$ +) 7  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8 e4  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and White can be very happy with his position. In fact, Van Geet-V.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 1970 continued 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ? 10 e5! with a winning game for White.

5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (D)

5 e4 is a Scotch Four Knights Game. It doesn't hurt for either side to be familiar with a lot of different openings and structures when 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is involved!

B



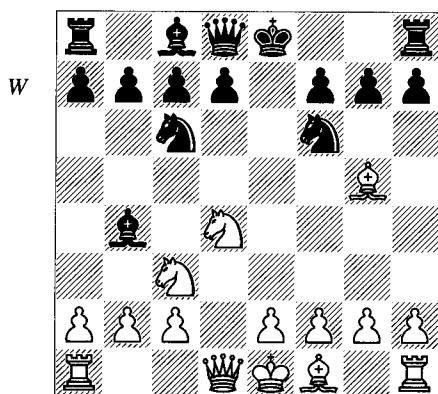
5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !

It's hard to argue with the logic of pinning White's knight once the c1-bishop has travelled to the kingside. 5... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  is also perfectly acceptable, when, for example, 6 e3 0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  can follow. But Black should avoid these natural moves:

a) 5...h6?! 6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}db5$   $\mathbb{W}e5!$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}d8?$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc7!$ ; 7... $\mathbb{W}d8$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  10  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11  $\mathbb{W}e3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12 0-0-0 and Black's king position is a problem) 8  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$  (8  $\mathbb{W}d5$  is a solid option) 8... $\mathbb{B}b8!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bxc7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (Keilhack isn't happy with this move, but it suffices, and 10 c3 a6! 11 e3 with the idea 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}a8!$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , still isn't clear following 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  b5) 10... $\mathbb{W}xb2$  11  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  (11... $\mathbb{W}xa2$  12 e4 a6 13  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 12 e3 with a comfortable advantage for White, H.Steiner-Morris, corr. 1995.

b) 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7?$  results in a clear superiority for White after 6  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 10 c3. Keilhack indicates that this position has occurred 'incredibly often'!

We now return to 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (D):



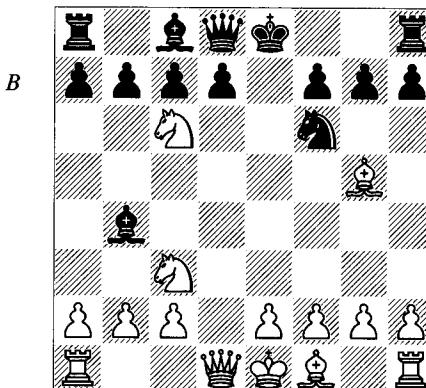
**6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (D)**

Or:

a) Ivanchuk's flirtation with 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  versus Anand in blindfold chess in Monte Carlo 1998 ended badly after the slow 6 e3 0-0 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2+?$  h6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is natural) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+?$  (or 8... $\mathbb{W}xf6$  9 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10 exd4 c6) 9 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  10 0-0 d5 11  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+?$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  13  $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b6 15 c4? (Kostakiev suggests 15  $\mathbb{B}fd1!$  with the idea  $\mathbb{B}d2$ ,  $\mathbb{B}bd1$  and c4) 15... $\mathbb{W}ab8$  (or 15... $\mathbb{W}d6!$ ) 16  $\mathbb{B}b4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  17 c5

$\mathbb{W}e7$  18 c6  $\mathbb{B}d6$  19  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  and White's pawn falls.

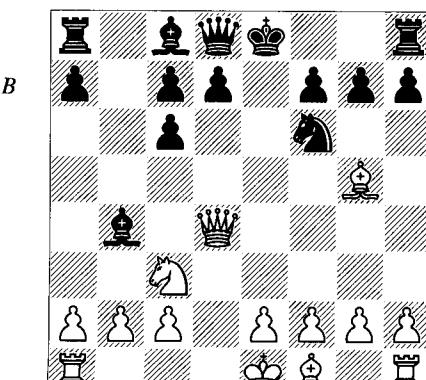
b) 6  $\mathbb{W}d3$  seems roughly equal; the play might go 6...0-0 7 a3 (7 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  has the idea 8  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , so Suba-Korneev, Zaragoza 1999 continued 8 bxc3 h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  d5 10  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 11  $\mathbb{W}d4$  g5 12  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13 f3  $\mathbb{W}e8$  with active pieces) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}a5+?$ ) 8 e3 h6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ .



**6... $\mathbb{B}xc6$**

6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  7 bxc3 dxc6 (7... $\mathbb{B}xc6$  8  $\mathbb{W}d4$  seems slightly to favour White) 8  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  gives White a kind of abstract advantage with his bishop-pair and kingside majority (Black's queenside majority isn't likely to produce a passed pawn). Then instead of Keilhack's 9 0-0-0+, 9 f3 seems to be the most accurate move, since neither the king's nor the rook's best squares are apparent as yet.

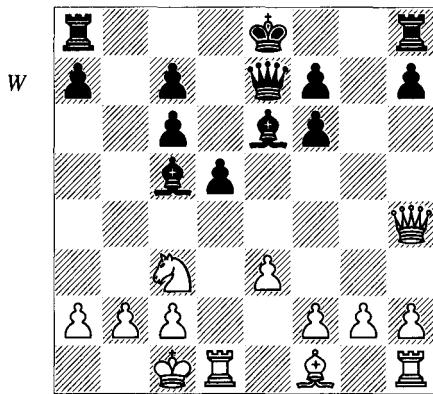
**7  $\mathbb{W}d4$  (D)**



**7... $\mathbb{W}e7+?$**

7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! is solid and equal, although still interesting; for example, 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 e4 d6 (after 9...c5!, Keilhack prefers 10  $\mathbb{W}d3$  to 10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  d6 11 f4?! h6 with the idea of 12  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !); Pell-R.Bellin, Montecatini Terme 1995 continued 12  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  and Black was for choice) 10  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  12 f4 a5 13  $\mathbb{Q}hel$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14 e5!?  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! (14...d5 15  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ) 15 exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ , Kielczewski-E.Romanov, Warsaw rapid 2005, and now 16  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  cxd6 17  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  keeps a positional edge.

**8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 9 e3 d5 10 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?** 11  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (D)



**12 g3**

Black's structure is shot. Easier ways to stay on top were 12  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! (with the idea 12... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ).

**12... $\mathbb{B}b8$  13 a3??!**

To prevent ... $\mathbb{B}b4$ , apparently, although that wouldn't accomplish much.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ??!**

13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ! threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , to grab the long diagonal and threaten the knight on c3. Then 14  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{W}xa7$  0-0 gives Black at least enough counterplay for the pawn.

**14  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ?**

14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}hel$   $\mathbb{W}e5$ .

**15  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  fxg6 16  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  17 e4!  $\mathbb{Q}xf2$  18 exd5 0-0**

White is winning now. If 18...cxd5, 19  $\mathbb{W}f4$ ! hits f2 and f6, when 19... $\mathbb{W}f5$  20  $\mathbb{W}xf5$  gxf5 21  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  results in White having an extra pawn and Black a horrendous structure.

**19 dxcc6  $\mathbb{W}e6$  20  $\mathbb{W}e4$ ??**

20  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ! with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  would lead to a quicker win.

**20... $\mathbb{W}fe8$  21  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$ +** 22  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ? 23  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $\mathbb{W}e5$  24 b4 f5 25  $\mathbb{Q}hel$   $\mathbb{W}xe1$  26  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ + 27  $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  28  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h1$  29  $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  30  $\mathbb{W}f2$  1-0

## The Strange Ones

Now let's turn to some truly eccentric first moves for White, beginning with the 'good enough' category:

a) 1 a3 can't be too bad (it creates no weaknesses), although it is difficult to recommend. In fact, the move a3 can be useful in the 1 e4 e5 openings and the Sicilian Defence; there's even a whole book on 1 e4 c5 2 a3, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. However, if played on the first move, there are too many lines in which it is hardly relevant. For example, the 'irregular-move killer' 1...g6 makes you wonder why anyone would trade a3 for ...g6. White could argue that after 2 c4, there are many lines in which a3 will eventually prove useful, but that's a little lame. More ambitiously, Neil McDonald tried to solve this problem by means of 1 a3 g6 2 f4!?  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (2...e5!?) would be a strange spin-off of the From Gambit) 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4 g3, a reversed Leningrad Dutch Defence with an additional a3, which is interesting but no more than equal. Of course, a properly-handled 1...d5 can also render 1 a3 harmless.

b) 1 e3 has little going for it in a positive sense, but it's trouble-free, since 2 d4 can always follow, and 2 f4 with a Bird Opening is often possible. After 1...e5, French Defence players might like 2 d4, and English Opening players 2 c4; also, 2 b3 would be an Owen Defence reversed with the normal move e3 included. Against 1...d5, 2 d4 will probably become a Colle Opening or Queen's Gambit Semi-Tarrasch, whereas others might like 2 f4 or 2 b3. And so forth; the point is that, while 1 e3 is a thoroughly uninspired move, and I'm not recommending it, it isn't 'substandard' or 'bad'.

c) 1 d3 is slightly more conventional in spirit, because White can slip into default Pirc Defence/King's Indian Attack mode by 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 3 g3, 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  and 5 0-0. Otherwise, the comments about 1 e3 apply here too.

d) 1 c3, sometimes called the Saragossa Opening, commits White rather early on. This

rather pathetic-looking move has been associated with the truly abysmal  $\mathbb{W}c2$ , but if White keeps wasting time in that manner, Black really will stand better. So 2 d4 should probably follow. As applies to 1 e3, Black can play almost anything, but 1...e5 2 d4 exd4 3 cxd4 d5 is a form of the Exchange QGD that is harmless to Black, and 1...d5 suggests itself, because then 2 d4 is equivalent to the anaemic 1 d4 d5 2 c3, 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  doesn't inspire, and otherwise Black has nothing to fear.

The following two first moves may in some theoretical sense be adequate, but will be difficult to handle and are somewhere between good enough and substandard:

e) 1 a4 strikes me as playable, much more so than 1 h4, although I can't particularly recommend it. You can generally pick conservative openings in which a4 tends to be useful, or is at least not harmful. Let's see how this might go. My own sense is that King's Indian Attack set-ups are compatible with a4; for example, 1 a4 d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 3 g3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e5 5 d3 (the equivalent of 1 a4 e5 2 d3 d5 3 g3 c5 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ) is a King's Indian in which, regardless of whether Black plays for ...f6, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or otherwise, White's move e4 will at some point (perhaps after  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  or  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ) secure the use of c4. There are any number of move-orders for both sides, of course and Black by no means has to commit to either ...c5 or ...e5 when he plays 1...d5, nor White to  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . But I think there are clever ways for White to squeeze at least some utility out of the inclusion of a4.

Versus 1...e5, White can play in similar fashion with a reversed Pirc Defence (2 d3, 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 4 g3, etc.), or even a Philidor-style formation, getting a playable game in which a4 can help his cause somewhat. There are more provocative ways to set up. After 1 a4 e5, for example, it seems to me that 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , a reversed Alekhine Defence, is a legitimate try; many variations of the Alekhine utilize the move ...a5, as you can verify by going through the main lines, although naturally Black can benefit too (versus lines with  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , for example, ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  might be useful).

Don't get me wrong: 1 a4 is basically only a waiting move and you have little positive reason to play it. It allows instant equality, which White shouldn't really concede to Black on the

first move. For Black, the possibility of coming to an actual disadvantage is reduced dramatically, almost regardless of what his first move is; in that sense, 1 a4 isn't really to be played except as a matter of fancy. I should also note that against 1 a4, 1...g6 is a sound and useful reply. That will apply to many other irregular first, second and third moves as well. I made the same point in Volume 3, when talking about irregular moves in the English Opening.

f) 1  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  is definitely ugly, but not so bad. I actually played many games with it as a 2100+ player. Against 1...e5, I liked to try 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ?, when 2... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  3 bxa3 is a double-edged decision, since White gains the bishop-pair and b-file and, as noted elsewhere, doubled a-pawns tend not to be much of a problem until the end-game. Moreover, the move  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  sometimes proves useful in the reversed Alekhine Defence positions after 2...e4 3  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , because the move c4 can justify some otherwise marginal formations. Versus 1...d5, White can play 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (c4 is safe but less flexible); for example, 2...c5 3 c4 or 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 b3 (or 3 c4). 1  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 2 e4 is a Zviagintsev Sicilian, which turns out to be perfectly respectable; White can also play 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Finally, as always, 1...g6 is quite satisfactory. The rationale given by some books for 1  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  is that the knight will be re-routed to c2 after White plays c3; that is rather sad-looking, however. A more interesting course for White against 1...g6 is to set up with e4, d4 and c3 and await the chance for a profitable  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . I won't go into more details about this eccentric knight development, but you can probably put together enough ideas to elevate it to the 'good enough' category.

Finally, we have some moves that I'll assess as simply 'bad':

g) The unpalatable 1  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  simply puts the knight on a bad square from which it will soon have to move again. In contrast to 1  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ , White cannot normally permit his h-pawns to be doubled after ... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ . If he prevents that with g3, the knight is still subject to attack by ...h5-h4 or the queen and bishop along the h3-c8 diagonal. Normally one might be able to use this knight productively to support the move f4, but here that will dangerously weaken White's kingside. It's hard to argue with 1...e5 as a response, but 1...d5 2 g3 e5 is the obvious course, when 3

$\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathcal{Q}c6$  4 0-0? h5! is not what White wants!  
Another logical set-up is 3... $\mathcal{Q}f6$  4 d3 c6.

h) 1 h4 is described above. It has no redeeming value that I've found.

i) 1 h3, Basman's Opening, moves a rook's pawn for no reason, except perhaps to play 2 g4, with a transposition to 1 g4 below. True, 1 h3 doesn't create as serious a weakness as 1 h4. On the kingside, however, every situation tends to be more delicate; after 1 a3, for example, an early c4 is often desirable. After 1 h3, by contrast, White would court disaster by playing the mirror-image move f4. A more serious problem for White is that 1 h3 wastes a tempo and essentially hands the advantage of the first move to Black. That's because, unlike most slow first moves by White, it doesn't go with or support many (if any) logical piece deployments. That is, if Black plays 1...d5 or 1...e5, it's unlikely that White will be able to arrive at a position in which h3 is useful without making concessions elsewhere.

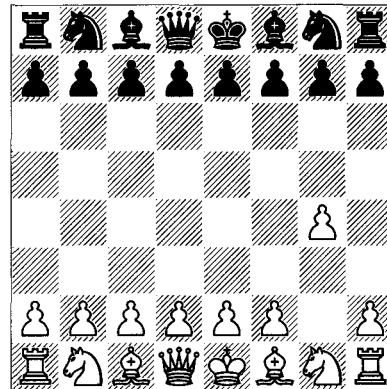
j) 1 f3 is sometimes used to set up strange formations with, for example,  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ , g3 and e3, and sometimes White plays g3 and  $\mathcal{Q}h3-f2$ . Unfortunately, 1 f3 does more than forfeit the advantages of the first move. It hurts White's future chances for occupying the centre with pawns (for example, e4 exposes White along the a7-g1 diagonal), and it is highly inflexible (weakening the king's protection and taking a good square from White's king's knight).

## Grob: 1 g4

### 1 g4 (D)

This is called Grob's Attack, or 'The Spike'. It has a serious following, and has stimulated considerable analysis in articles, chapters of books, and even small books by strong players. Indeed, calling 1 g4 'bad' is bound to offend some fans of the opening. But at best, with proper play for both sides, White squanders any chance at a first-move advantage, and usually finds himself the one who has to find the more difficult moves in order to reach equality. That in itself is at least a substandard situation. But I'd go further and say that White can't even equalize against best play. It would be interesting to see if most grandmasters agree with that,

B



or merely find it difficult and impractical to play. At any rate, because of the cultish status of 1 g4, here's a serious look at some of the most critical lines.

**Basman – Kudrin**  
*Manchester 1981*

### 1 g4

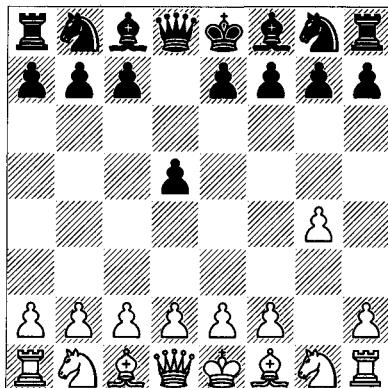
White has the same basic goals as in the Sokolsky/Polish with 1 b4. He will fianchetto quickly and at the same time grab some kingside territory; this is obviously more ambitious than 1 g3. It also has terrible drawbacks: by not covering h4 and encouraging a timely ...h5, White reduces his chance of castling kingside. If he plays for e4, as he might in the King's Indian Attack (which includes g3), he creates another hole on f4. In addition, the move g5 is often forced and can expose his position further. By contrast, in the Sokolsky, the move b5 can serve to cramp Black's game.

### 1...d5 (D)

I'm going to concentrate upon this reply for the same reasons as I focused on 1...e5 versus 1 b4: it is the most popular move, directly attacks g4, and can be played with the hope of a forced advantage for Black. Of course, Black can go for the same goal with the natural 1...e5. I won't go into the details, but one very attractive approach for him after 2  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (2 d3, perhaps best, is usually answered by 2...d5, but 2 h3?! h5! is already awkward for White) is 2...h5! 3 gxh5 (3 d4 hgx4 4 dx5  $\mathcal{Q}c6$  has fared no better) 3... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Then 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ! 5  $\mathcal{Q}c3$  (5 d3) 5... $\mathcal{Q}f6$  is already in Black's favour, and 6 e4? (6 d3 c6) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  7 d4!?  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$

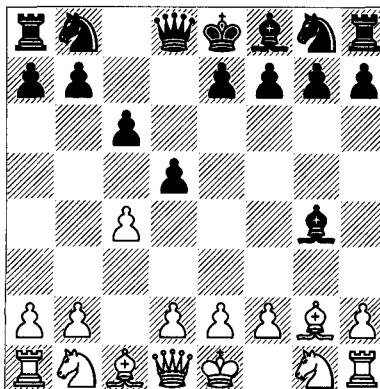
$\mathbb{A}xc3+$  9  $bxc3$   $\mathcal{Q}xh5$  made things worse in Skembris-Mariotti, Budva 1981.

W



but leads to a fun position following 4  $\mathcal{Q}xb7$   $\mathcal{Q}d7$  5  $\mathbb{A}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$ , when White must go in for 6  $f3$   $e5$ , since after 6  $\mathcal{Q}f3??$   $d3$  he loses a piece!; alternatively, 4  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathcal{Q}d7$  5  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  6  $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $e5$  gives Black plenty of compensation).

W



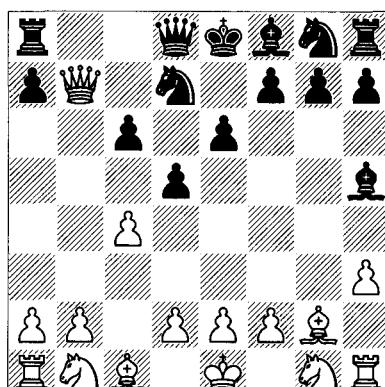
White is a pawn down and his options are not enviable:

a) 4  $\mathbb{W}b3$  has several good replies:

a1) 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$  5  $cxd5$   $\mathbb{W}xb3$  6  $axb3$   $cxd5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathcal{Q}c6$  is more comfortable for Black, although White can almost equalize by 8  $\mathbb{A}xc6+$   $bxc6$ ; for example, 9  $\mathbb{A}a6$   $\mathcal{Q}c8$  10  $\mathbb{A}a4$   $e5$  and in place of 11  $\mathcal{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathcal{Q}c4$   $e4!$ , as in O. Vovk-Kernazhitsky, Kiev 2000, White should accept the mild discomfort that follows 11  $\mathcal{Q}f3$   $f6$  12  $d3$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$ .

a2) 4... $e6!$  is a more advantageous approach: 5  $h3$  (or 5  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathcal{Q}d7$  6  $cxd5$   $cxd5$ ) 5... $\mathbb{A}h5$  6  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathcal{Q}d7$  (D).

W



Now 7  $\mathbb{W}xc6??$  is well met by 7... $\mathbb{A}c8$  8  $\mathbb{W}a6$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  9  $\mathcal{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ . Instead, 7  $\mathcal{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  leaves

## 2 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

This is the traditional move, introducing a sort of gambit in which White hopes to put pressure on Black's d-pawn via c4; he usually regains the pawn soon. If this fianchetto, consistent with the purported aggressiveness of 1  $g4$ , doesn't work, that's a very bad sign for the Grob.

The passive alternative 2  $h3$  will transpose into our main game if Black chooses 2... $e5$  3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $c6$ . He can also play 3... $\mathcal{Q}c6$ , which has a good record. Then Basman-Miles, Manchester 1981 tested the consistent move 4  $c4!?$ , but Black gained the advantage after 4... $dxc4$  5  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  6  $\mathcal{Q}f3!?$  (6  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is very awkward; for example, 7  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{W}d4!$  8  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  9  $\mathcal{Q}c3$   $h5$  10  $g5$  0-0-0 6... $\mathcal{Q}g6$  7  $\mathcal{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  8  $h4!?$  (but White is already a pawn down with the inferior position) and here, instead of Miles's (perfectly good) move 8... $\mathbb{A}b4$ , 8... $\mathcal{Q}f4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  would be extremely strong. Perhaps White should resign himself to the passive 4  $d3$ , but then it's difficult to justify 1  $g4$  with its attendant weaknesses.

## 2... $c6$

Black simply blocks the long diagonal and maintains the threat of ... $\mathbb{A}xg4$ ; White will find it hard to justify the move  $g4$  in the resulting structures. Nevertheless, in my opinion, 2... $\mathbb{A}xg4!$  provides a good reason for condemning White's move-order. There follows 3  $c4$   $c6$  (D) (3... $d4!?$  is called the Romford Gambit; given the excellent alternatives, this speculative exchange sacrifice isn't recommended,

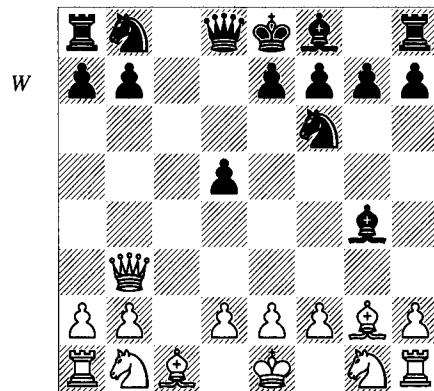
Black with the better development and a structural advantage following, for example, 8 d4  $\mathbb{W}b8!$ .

a3) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  is also very effective: 5  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  (5 cxd5 transposes to line 'b1') 5... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6 cxd5 cxd5 7 h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ ) 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 9  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$ , Lambiris-Martidis, Athens 1987. Compare the position after 4 cxd5 cxd5 5  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 7  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  below; the insertion of h3 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  doesn't matter.

b) 4 cxd5 and now:

b1) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  is a promising option, when Kosten gives 5  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (for 5...cxd5, see 'b2') 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  cxd5 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  "with free development"; after 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$  exf6 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , either 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  or 9...0-0-0 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}he8$  might follow, which looks rather depressing for White. 8  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  can be answered in various ways, such as 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  9  $\mathbb{W}a4$  g6 10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  11 0-0 0-0 12 d3  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ .

b2) 4...cxd5 5  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{W}b3$  transposes to line 'b22') 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (D) and now:



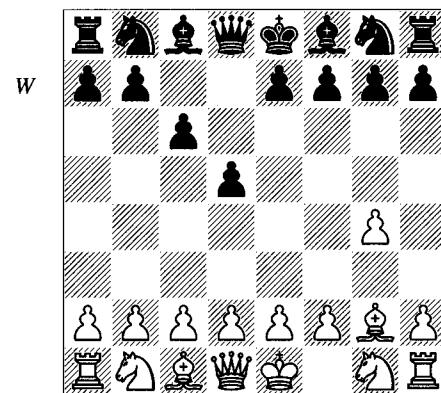
b21) 6  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  and now 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is fine, but simply 6... $\mathbb{W}c8$  7  $\mathbb{W}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  gives Black slightly more central control. In addition, his half-open b-file is more important than White's g-file; for example, 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 9 d3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , etc.

b22) 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e6 (6... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  has the ideas 7  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$  or 7  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$ , transposing to line 'b1'; 6... $\mathbb{W}d7$  is an immediate transposition to that same line) 7  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , Polliotto-Figeac, Montpellier 1998. Black has a lead in development, and if White grabs a pawn by 9  $\mathbb{W}xa7$  (9  $\mathbb{Q}xa7?$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  10  $\mathbb{W}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8!)$ , that lead expands; for example, 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

10  $\mathbb{W}a4$  0-0 11 d4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  with great pressure.

I suspect that 2... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$  constitutes a virtual refutation of 1 g4 d5 2  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ . It doesn't bode well for White that Black has so many options which appear to give him the advantage.

The game's 2...c6 (D) remains relevant, however, since it can transpose to 2 h3 e5 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c6, and in any case it produces standard pawn-structures whose understanding is relevant to several mainstream openings.



### 3 h3

Surprisingly, White is at a loss for realistic alternatives:

- a) 3 c4? loses a pawn to 3...dxc4.
- b) Sometimes 3 e4? is suggested, but the reply 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  is already very good for Black: 4 exd5 (4 e5  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  5 d4 g6) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  5 dxc6  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  and he dominates the centre, in addition to having better development and a superior pawn-structure.

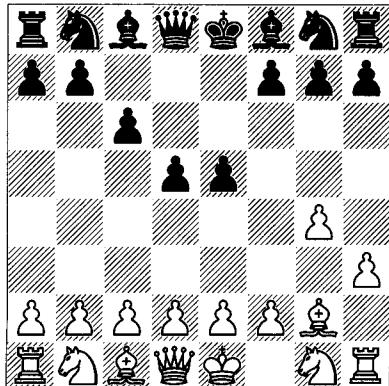
c) 3 g5?! is awfully loosening, and one good answer is 3...h6! 4 h4 hxg5 5 hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ , which threatens ... $\mathbb{Q}h2$  and intends 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e5 with ...e4 in store. Of course, Black can also play 3...e5.

### 3...e5 (D)

As if this position weren't difficult enough for White, he also has to be ready for 3...h5!?, 4 g5 e5, when 5 d4 is probably best, as in the main line.

### 4 d4

This provocative move tries to justify g4 by luring Black's pawns forward. 4 d3 doesn't challenge the centre and compels White to attend to his kingside weaknesses; for example,



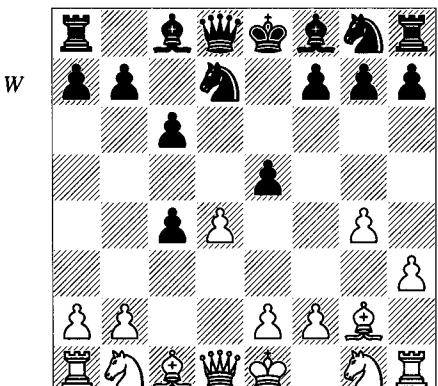
W

4... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (contemplating ... $\mathbb{Q}g6-h4$ ; 4...h5 is also good when, in order to avoid split pawns, 5 g5 is probably best, but the resulting position after 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  or 5... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  can't be attractive) 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  h5 7 gxh5 (7 g5 lets Black play ... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  without worrying about  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}h4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  9 e4 d4 10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  with the better pawn-structure.

#### 4...e4

This is played most often, although with White's weaknesses, it should come as no surprise that more restrained moves also do well. For example, 4...exd4!?, 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  has an excellent practical score.

4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is also convincing: 5 c4!?, (White gambits a pawn; otherwise, how does he gain any activity for his pieces? 5 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  leaves him with a serious disadvantage in the centre) 5...dxc4 (D).



6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (after 6 dx5 Kosten gives 6... $\mathbb{Q}a5+!$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (or 6... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ ) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and now 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  gave Black an edge in

Basman-Strauss, British Ch, Brighton 1984, but 7...h5! is even better; for example, 8 g5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10 dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14 0-0-0+  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ . Lines like these illustrate a general disadvantage for White that goes beyond any particular move-order.

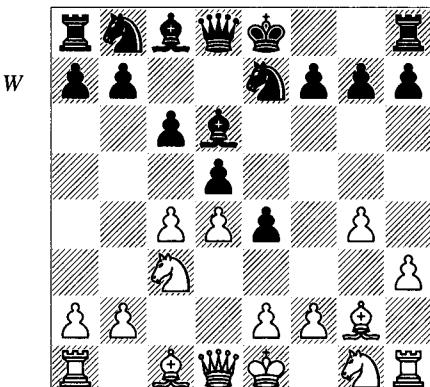
#### 5 c4

Otherwise Black develops casually and plays on the kingside by ...f5.

#### 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

This is the most ambitious move; nevertheless, 5...h5, 5...f5, 5... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and 5... $\mathbb{Q}b4+?$  have all functioned satisfactorily.

#### 6 $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ (D)



#### 7 $\mathbb{Q}g5+?$

White's idea is to provoke ...f6 and thereby open the a2-g8 diagonal; then  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  will have more effect. Two alternatives are particularly revealing:

a) 7 g5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  8 h4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (9 e3?  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$ ! 10  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ ). Now in Basman-Keene, Manchester 1981, Black won a fine game after 9...0-0 10 cxd5 cxd5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  (11  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  is better) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g3!$ , but more convincing is simply 9...dxc4!, which nets a substantial advantage after 10  $\mathbb{Q}c2$  0-0 11  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  g6! or 10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  0-0 (or here 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 12 e3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ).

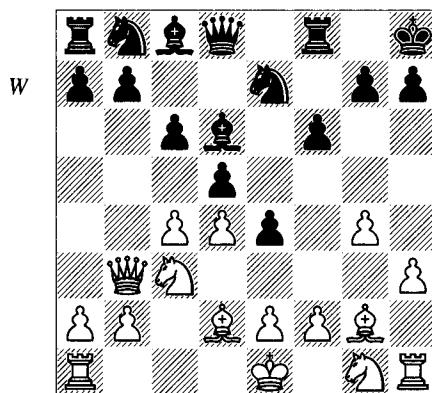
b) 7  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  can be met in several ways (for example, 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ). The most important response is 7...0-0 8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (after 8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , the simplest way to a better game is 8...dxc4 9  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  f5) 8...f6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$ ! (10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !? $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ! transposes to the note on 10 cxd5 below) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  12 d5  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ! 13  $\mathbb{Q}e3$

$\mathbb{Q}a6$  and Black will win back the d-pawn with much the better position.

7... $f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0!

Precisely the move that White was hoping for, since after 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$  he can try to use a pin on d5 to amplify his pressure. Nevertheless, it turns out that Black can easily defend against any threats. 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is also acceptable; for example, 9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b6!$  10 cxd5  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  11 axb3 cxd5.

9  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  (D)



10  $\mathbb{W}c1$

Bücker likes Black after 10 0-0-0 a5 11 c5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  with the idea ...f5.

The most critical line is 10 cxd5 cxd5, and now:

a) 11 e3  $\mathbb{Q}bc6$  12 0-0-0 (walking into an attack, but 12  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  f5! and 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7!$  are no fun either) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  with a promising queenside attack for Black, Queratato-Golmon, CompuServe 1994.

b) 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}bc6!$  13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (13  $\mathbb{W}xb7?$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14  $\mathbb{W}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ) 13... $\mathbb{B}b8!$  14  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , and White is reduced to 15  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}e8!$  17  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{W}xe4$  18 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$ , which is hardly desirable.

10... $\mathbb{Q}a6?$

10...f5! looks better still. These positions all favour Black; almost as importantly, they are difficult for White to play.

11 e3

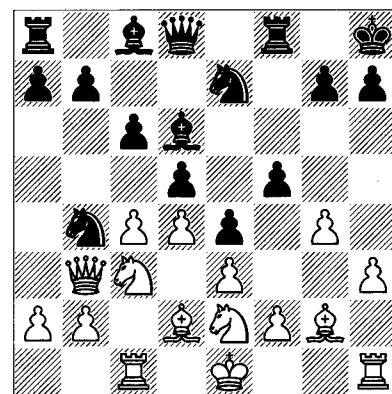
11 cxd5 cxd5 has the idea 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  (12 e3 f5) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14  $\mathbb{W}xa6$  e3!.

11...f5!

White's kingside is weaker than Black's queenside.

12  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$  (D)

12... $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ , threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , is both better and strong.



13  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xd6?!$

An interesting try, but White will come up short of compensation for the exchange. 14  $\mathbb{W}xa2$  fxe4 15 0-0 is unclear.

14... $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  15  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  16  $\mathbb{Q}b4$

At this point, instead of 16... $\mathbb{W}c7$  17 cxd5 cxd5, when 18  $\mathbb{W}c3!$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d3-f4$  would initiate some counterplay on the dark squares, Black had the clearer 16... $\mathbb{W}f6!$ , forcing 17  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$ , which neutralizes White's initiative and produces a clear advantage.

Even if you're satisfied with the game's main line, which is hardly likely, Black's many early alternatives should prove discouraging. As far as I can tell, 1 g4 is competitive with 1 h4 for the honour of being White's worst first move. Against an informed or skilled opponent, it is simply masochistic.

## Universal First Moves for Black

Since the quality of Black's first move depends upon White's, we shall have to talk about individual cases. But some first moves have a 'universal' character, in that they can be played against any first move by White. For example, 1...g6, while thought of as eccentric and/or inferior in the past, is now an approved way to answer 1 e4, 1 d4 and 1 c4 (see Chapter 3). The acceptance of 1...b6 has taken longer, and it is

still viewed askance in some quarters, although that mainly applies to the 1 e4 b6 lines (see Chapter 4). Probably 1...b6 can be given the assessment of ‘good enough’, but it’s a bit more marginal than 1...g6.

Two other irregular opening moves, 1...d6 and 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , can be played as universal systems. They aren’t seen a great deal at top levels, but are effective enough to have grandmaster adherents. In part, that’s because Black can pick and choose against which of White’s first moves to play independently, and against which to transpose into conventional openings. I should mention that playing these systems will repeatedly expose you to ideas and manoeuvres that crop up in mainstream openings, and of course mainstream opening ideas inform the use of all four universal systems that I’ve mentioned.

## Black Plays 1...d6

1...d6 has long been used as a transpositional device but has grown into an independent weapon against 1 d4. Recently, strong players have used 1...d6 with increasing frequency and promoted it in books and DVDs. Let me outline some possibilities:

### 1 d4

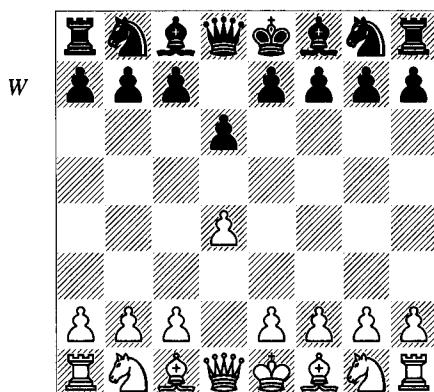
a) 1 e4 d6 is the Pirc Defence, a mainstream opening. Some players like to use the Pirc move-order to get to Philidor Defence-related systems, via 1 e4 d6 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5, when 4 dx5 dx5 5  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  has thus far proven of little value for White, with 6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  adequately answered by 6... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  or 6... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ .

b) 1 c4 d6 can lead to any number of variations from Volume 3. In whatever order White plays  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , g3 and/or  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , Black can enter either a Reversed Closed Sicilian with ...e5 or a Symmetrical English with ...c5. He can also play a King’s Indian set-up with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ . 1...d6 provides a particular type of flexibility in ...e5 systems; that is, if he is not committed to ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , he can still play ...f5. See, for example, the Volume 3 discussion of 1 c4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 with 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 and 3 g3 f5.

c) 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 is likewise very flexible and will often transpose to an English Opening after White’s c4. If White plays for a King’s Indian Attack by 2 g3, Black can play, among other set-ups, ...e5 & ...f5, ...c5 & ...e5, ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

& ...g6, or simply ...g6 & ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  with Modern Defence themes. Finally, 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  transposes to 1 d4 d6 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

### 1...d6 (D)



### 2 $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Or:

a) 2 g3 e5 3 dx5 (3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  f5) 3...dx5 4  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  is regarded as perfectly safe for Black. A bishop on g2 can be opposed by ...c6.

b) 2 c4 e5 (some players prefer 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5; 2...g6 will usually transpose into a Modern Defence or King’s Indian Defence after 3 e4 or 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (again, 3 dx5 dx5 4  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  is considered equal; 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is a transposition to the English Opening – see Volume 3 under the move-order 1 c4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 3 d4) 3...e4 (there are options like 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , but this is the most attractive move) 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f5 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . This is covered in Volume 3 via the move-order 1 c4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 4 d4 e4 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . According to theory, Black stands reasonably well.

### 2... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

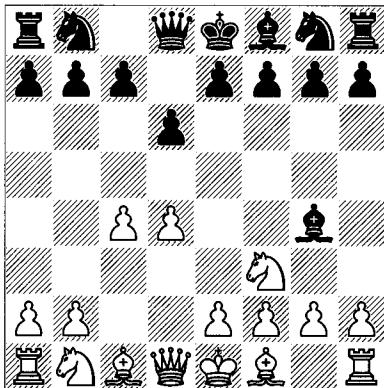
Black announces his willingness to part with the bishop-pair in the interest of central control. Alexander Finkel has championed 2...g6 3 c4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  5 e3 c5, with pressure down the a1-h8 diagonal, including ideas of ...cxd4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6-f5$ . Perhaps that’s objectively the best non-transpositional system, and it’s also a good practical choice because Black’s strategy is easy to implement.

### 3 c4 (D)

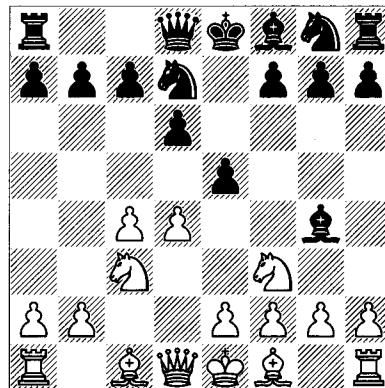
### 3... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Black is preparing to defend his queenside against  $\mathbb{W}b3$ . Furthermore, once he gives up his

B



W



g4-bishop, Black wants to be assured of getting ...e5 or ...c5 in. The alternative 3... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  looks premature, but is playable; for example, 4 gxf3 (4 exf3 g6 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6 has been played in many grandmaster games; Black counts upon White's relatively immobile pawn-structure to compensate for the bishop-pair) 4...g6 (or 4...c6, having in mind ...e6 and ...d5 in some cases) 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6 f4!?  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and White has usually chosen 7 e3, but there is also 7 d5. Probably White has the better prospects in all of these ... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  lines, but the positions are unbalanced and reward good play.

#### 4 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Upon 4 g3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  5 exf3, one route is 5...g6 (or 5...e6 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ) 6  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  with the idea ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . Compare what follows, where Black's bishop is more passively placed on e7. White can prevent doubled pawns by 4  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (protecting f3 while attacking b7); then 4... $\mathbb{W}b8$  5 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  6  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  again gives Black active play. His usual plan is ...c5, trying to extend the range of his dark-squared bishop.

#### 4...e5 (D)

Some grandmasters play 4... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  here. Versus either recapture, 5...g6 and 6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is a good way to contest the central dark squares. White will generally control more space, however, and can claim a small advantage in most lines.

#### 5 g3

White agrees to take on doubled pawns in return for the bishop-pair and easy development. 5 e3  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  is less ambitious, although it can lead to complex strategic struggles. Black's most popular method of play is then 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7

0-0 0-0; for example, 8 b3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (or 9...c6; in either case, Black would like to play ...e4 and possibly ...d5) and now:

a) White can play h3 at several junctures, when Black has to consider whether ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  is worth it, allowing White to play g4 and after ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  to win the bishop-pair at the cost of kingside weaknesses. After 10 h3 in this position, most players will prefer 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  and now 11...c6 or 11...e4 12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6, with well-placed pieces and the prospects of territorial gain to offset his opponent's bishops.

b) 10  $\mathbb{W}c2$  c6 11 dx5 dxe5 12  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  with equal prospects, Pfleger-Lobron, Bundesliga 1993/4.

#### 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 6 exf3 exd4??

Here Black has a variety of moves such as 6... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ , 6... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and 6...g6; in general, White should have a very modest edge, but with plenty of ideas for both sides. Although the text-move has been played in many games, Black gives up the centre and comes up short of space.

#### 7 $\mathbb{W}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 8 $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 9 0-0 0-0

Now White undoubtedly has some advantage with 10 f4 or 10 b3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b2$ , because his bishop-pair outweighs other factors. Because of this, Black might want to look into his 6th-move alternatives. Earlier, I would recommend the plan with 2...g6 as a good way to obtain a solid position with a clear-cut strategy.

#### Black Plays 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The fact that 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is playable is perhaps surprising, in that the reversed move 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  leads to so many delicate positions. This suggests that for Black to play 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , he has to proceed

more conservatively than White usually does when he embarks upon 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . Let's see a game with notes which outline the possibilities.

### Campora – Wockenfuss

Amsterdam 1985

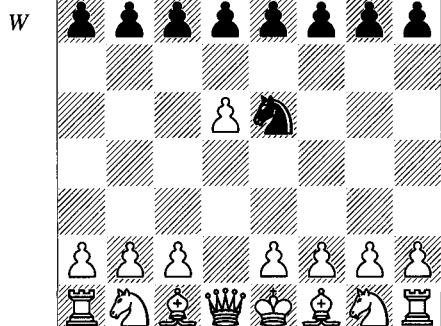
#### 1 e4

1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! is daring, and usually considered slightly inferior because of 2 d5. In view of that, Wisnewski, who champions 1... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  against other moves, prefers to play 1...d5 and then ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  next, regardless of White's second move. That is somewhat less than a 'universal' system, but it's in a similar spirit. Anyway, let's look at 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ :

a) 2 e4 transposes to our main line 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  2 d4.

b) 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  can be met by 2...d5, with a type of Chigorin Defence, and it can transpose to that defence upon 3 c4. Most books on that opening cover moves such as 3  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and 3 g3. Instead, 2...d6 3 e4 is mentioned below, via the move-order 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 3 d4.

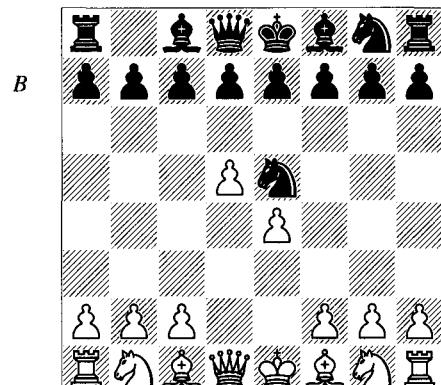
c) 2 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (D).



Black is playing a mirror-image Alekhine Defence. As in that opening, he hopes to lure White's pawns forward and then decimate his centre. Most of what follows depends more upon specifics than principles, but a general difference consists in Black's ability to play ...c5 in many Alekhine lines, whereas in the variation before us, ...f5 could only be played at some risk to Black's king and kingside. Having said that, Black has the resources to make a real game out of it:

c1) 3 f4 is a reasonable move, and after 3... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , Black's knight is immobilized and lacks immediate prospects. Still, the move f4 is itself weakening, and White has to be careful about overextending his centre. After the natural 4 e4, Black has 4...e5!, preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , when White must avoid 5 f5? (simply a mistake) 5... $\mathbb{Q}h4+ 6 \mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}f6!$  (this is better than 6... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  7 fxg6  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  hxg6, as given in some sources, which may be only slightly in Black's favour) 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (the knight on g6 can't be taken due to 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$ , but there's also no good way to defend the e-pawn; for example, 7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  or 7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9 fxg6  $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  and Black ends up with four pawns and a strong attack for the piece) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xe4+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4+$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9 fxg6 hxg6, with an ongoing attack, is also promising) 9  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and Black is clearly better; for example, 12 c4?! d6 13  $\mathbb{Q}xf4?$  g5+! 14 fxg6  $\mathbb{Q}h6+$  15  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  fxg6 and ...0-0, which is simply awful for White. Instead, 5 dx6! is best, when 5...fxe6 6 h4!? might be better than it looks, with the initial point 6... $\mathbb{Q}xh4?$  7  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ . Another line is 6... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ? 7 h5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  7 h6 g6 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , intending 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ . There is a lot to explore here.

c2) 3 e4 (D) is White's most common and natural move:



3...e6!? (presumably 3...c6 is playable, with the idea that the natural response 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  blocks a later c4; then 4...d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  with the idea of ...g6, either before or after ...cxsd5, looks fairly normal; for some reason, 3...c6 is represented by only one game in my

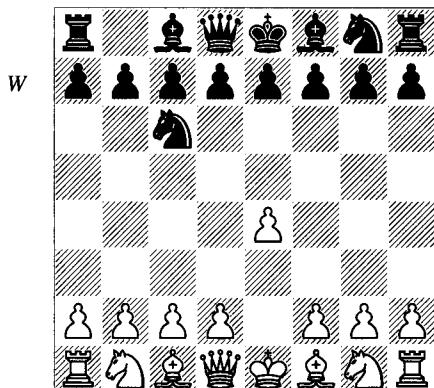
databases, and that with a spectacularly weak 4th move by Black – maybe I’m missing something) 4 dx6! (this simple solution is a problem for Black; if White continues in a type of reversed Alekhine Four Pawns Attack by 4 f4 ♜g6 5 c4, then either 5...♞c5 or 5...♝f6 is satisfactory – the latter is a variation from the Knight’s Tango, which goes 1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 ♜c6, and is one of the most respectable irregular openings) and now we have:

c21) 4...fxe6 5 ♜c3! waits for Black to commit: 5...b6?!? (5...♞c5?? 6 ♜h5+ picks up a piece; 5...a6 6 f4 ♜f7 7 ♜f3 b5 is worth a shot) 6 f4! (after 6 ♜f3, 6...♜f7?! 7 ♜f4 ♜c5 8 ♜e2 ♜e7 doesn’t look too bad; instead 6...♜xf3+ 7 ♜xf3 ♜b7 was cleverly answered by 8 ♜h5+! g6 9 ♜e5 ♜f6 10 ♜b5!, threatening ♜xe6+, in Volkov-B.Savchenko, Moscow 2006; 6 ♜f4 ♜g6 7 ♜g3 should also give White an edge) 6...♜f7 (6...♜g6) 7 ♜f3, and Black’s development is awkward; he might try 7...♞c5?! 8 ♜a4 ♜e7 9 ♜d3 ♜b7 10 0-0 a6 with the idea ...b5 and ...♜f6.

c22) 4...dxe6 5 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 and now 6 f4!? ♜g6 may slightly favour White, but is a bit loose; instead, 6 ♜f4 seems to yield an edge: 6...♜g6 (6...♜d6?!? 7 ♜g3 ♜e7 may be better) 7 ♜e3 ♜f6 8 ♜c3?! (8 f3! with a modest central advantage) 8...♜g4, and Black equalizes after 9 ♜d1+ ♜d7 10 ♜c1 ♜c5 11 ♜h3 ♜e7 12 ♜e2 ♜f6.

Let’s return to the game:

1...♜c6 (D)



This is the long-debated Nimzowitsch Defence, one of the best of the irregular openings versus 1 e4. Black will usually attack the centre

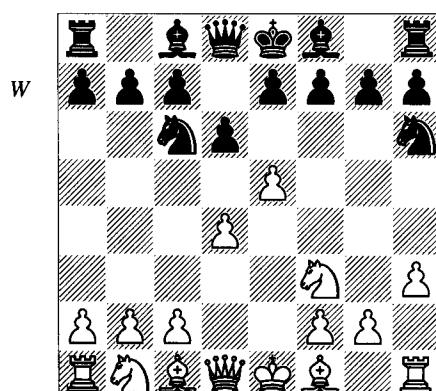
by ...d5 or ...e5, but he hasn’t committed yet. Again, over the years, several books and many theoretical articles have been produced about 1...♜c6, mainly by the move’s advocates, but it still isn’t used at the elite level. I’ll outline selected variations, trying to concentrate upon critical lines.

## 2 d4

2 ♜f3 is the main alternative, and a popular way to side-step Black’s speciality lines. Then Black can switch to a main-line double e-pawn opening by 2...e5, or enter a somewhat shaky form of the Scandinavian Defence by 2...d5 3 exd5 ♜xd5 (the development of the knight to c6 is usually deferred or skipped altogether). Another reasonable line that has been played by numerous grandmasters is 2...d6 3 d4 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 ♜g4, with the main line going 5 ♜e3 e6 6 h3 ♜h5; it is theoretically somewhat in White’s favour. Even the absurd-looking continuation 2...f5?! has had serious analysis devoted to it.

But the most intriguing independent reply to 2 ♜f3 is 2...♜f6, when after 3 ♜c3, 3...e5 is a Four Knights Game, interesting but not usually feared by Black. Or Black can enter less charted waters with 3...d5; for example, 4 e5 can be answered by 4...d4!? or by 4...♜d7 5 d4 ♜b6, after which Black’s bishop will get to g4 or f5 with approximate equality.

So the main line after 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 is 3 e5! ♜g4 (3...♜d5 will transpose to a line of the Alekhine Defence that is considered a little risky, but is nevertheless quite respectable; note that Black’s move-order has avoided the Four Pawns Attack of that opening) 4 d4 d6 5 h3 ♜h6 (D).



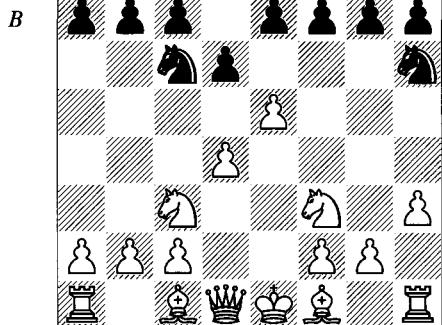
Black has a pretty ugly position that nevertheless has some merits. His decentralized knight is an undoubted disadvantage, but he has prospects of chipping away at White's centre, after which that piece might be reintroduced by ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ . Of course, White can hardly complain about his prospects, but he shouldn't expect too much from the capture  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ , which gives up the bishop-pair. 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  introduces a wide range of eccentric possibilities that are typical of irregular openings; for example:

a) 6 e6!? $\mathbb{Q}fxe6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}gxh6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ ?! (8  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9 0-0-0 is comfortably equal; Wisnewski gives the cute line 10  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ !, threatening both ... $\mathbb{Q}g8+$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ! 9  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ +  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  10 c3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and now 11... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  was fine in Trias-J.Ramirez, Catania 1990, but 11... $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  e5 would definitely favour Black.

b) 6 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 looks strangely similar to a Scandinavian Defence with 3... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ .

c) 6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ + bxc6 8 0-0 g6 is OK.

d) 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D).



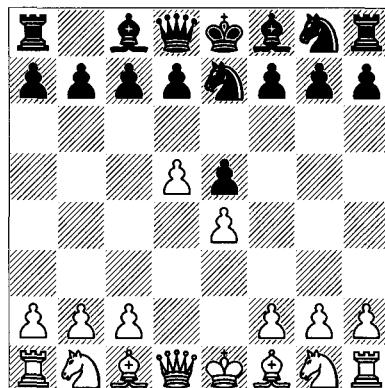
Now 6...a6!? intends 7 exd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . This favours White somewhat, but seems better than Narciso Dublan's 6...dxe5?! 7 d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}hf5$ , when many moves have been tried and analysed, but not the simple 9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !

e) 6  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}gxh6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 8  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ + bxc6 9  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$ !, Sprenger-Keilhack, corr. 1996. Now if 10 g3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11 b3, Wisnewski recommends 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5, although 13 0-0-0 or 13 d5 looks better than his 13 dx5 dxe5 14  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ .

In general, White seems to keep the advantage in the lines after 5... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , but Black's position is within playable boundaries.

## 2...d5

2...e5 3 d5 (3  $\mathbb{Q}dx5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is another story; without going into the details, it seems that 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and 4  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  all achieve a modest advantage, which is perhaps enough to discourage Black from 2...e5; on the other hand, my database shows over 1000 games after 3... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , so not everyone feels this way) 3... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  (D).



This is the reverse of 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 2 e4 d4 3  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  e5, as discussed earlier. As in that line, Black's goal is to play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$ , and bring his bishop to c5 or b4. Now White has many possible moves, of which I'll note just a few:

a) In keeping with the reversed variation, 4 f3 has the idea 4... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! (compare 1  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 2 e4 d4 3  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  e5 4  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !). But since White's queen is cut off from h5, Black might try 4...f5?!, to which White could reply 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ! h6 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  or 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . For any plan in which Black plays ...g6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , White can claim the normal advantage that he gets in the Sämisch Variation of the King's Indian following c4,  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , f3,  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and 0-0-0, because Black's knight really doesn't belong on e7 in that case. Also, h4-h5 might gain in force.

b) With the above in mind, it seems to me that 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  also deserves a closer look, with the same ideas.

c) Another interesting idea is 4 h4, with the idea of advancing the h-pawn in the case of either ... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  or ...g6.

d) The usual version of the h-pawn advance has gone 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  5 h4, when A.Ivanov-Benjamin, USA Ch, Parsippany 1996 continued 5...h5 6  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !? (7  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (Ivanov analyses 7... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  8

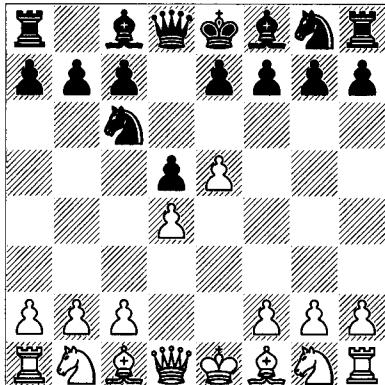
$\mathbb{W}d3!$ ?  $\mathbb{A}xc3+$  9  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{A}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11  $\mathbb{A}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12  $\mathbb{A}xe5$  with an edge for White, in view of Black's inferior pawn-structure) 8  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ?! (8  $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 9 0-0-0 is better) 8... $\mathbb{A}b4$ ! 9 c3  $\mathbb{A}e7$  10  $\mathbb{A}xf6$   $\mathbb{A}xf6$  with approximate equality, or perhaps a very slight edge to White because of his superiority in space after 11 g3.

### 3 $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White attacks the centre directly, but this isn't his only move:

a) 3 e5 (*D*) bears some resemblance to the French and Caro-Kann Advance Variations.

B



It's true that Black's knight on c6 prevents him from attacking the d4-pawn by ...c5, but in modern openings Black attacks the front on the pawn-chain (in this case, e5) as often as the 'base' (d4); after the move ...f6, that attack is assisted by his knight on c6. In terms of development, Black gets the best of both openings: in contrast to the French Defence, he can get his queen's bishop out to f5 or g4, and in contrast to the Caro-Kann Defence, he can put his queen's knight on c6! White's main advantage is his firm command of territory and the cramping influence of his e5-pawn. For example, in both the French and Caro-Kann, he finds it difficult to shore up his pawn-chain with f4; here it's easy. Unfortunately, he creates some light-square weaknesses by so doing. Let's see how this plays out; Black has two main moves:

a1) 3... $\mathbb{A}f5$  isn't approved by most theoreticians, but it is sufficient to establish a meaningful stake in the position.

a11) An entertaining example went 4  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e6 5  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{A}g6$  6 h4 h5 (6...f6 7 h5  $\mathbb{A}f7$  8 f4

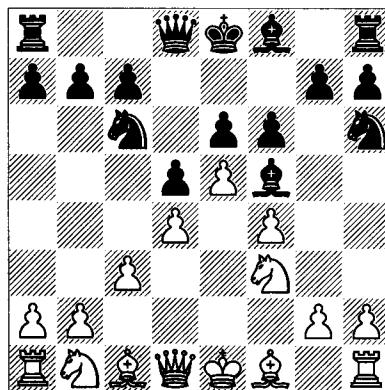
$\mathbb{W}d7$  is probably a better approach) 7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?! (a little outrageous; White neglects his development, but threatens  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 7... $\mathbb{A}f5$ ?! (the third bishop move) 8  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (and the fourth by this knight!) 8...g6 9 c3  $\mathbb{W}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (10 b4!) 10...f6! 11 exf6 e5?! 12 dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , Romanishin-Mariotti, Leningrad 1977, and here 13  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is dynamically balanced.

a12) Instead, 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  can be met by 4... $\mathbb{W}d7$ , 4...f6 or 4...e6. In the last case, 5  $\mathbb{A}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ?! 6  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  c5 7 c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8 0-0 with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}c2-e3$  is a possible continuation; compare the Short Variation of the Caro-Kann Defence.

a13) White's most important move may well be the ultra-flexible 4 c3. The play can go in a great many directions at this point. 4...f6 5 f4  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  resembles 'a2' and 4... $\mathbb{W}d7$  is often played with the idea of an early ...0-0-0. The obvious 4...e6 defines the light-squared pawn-chain with Black's bishop outside it. After 5 f4, Black should consider restraining White's kingside first with ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  or ...h5 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  before undertaking action elsewhere. Compare line 'a2'.

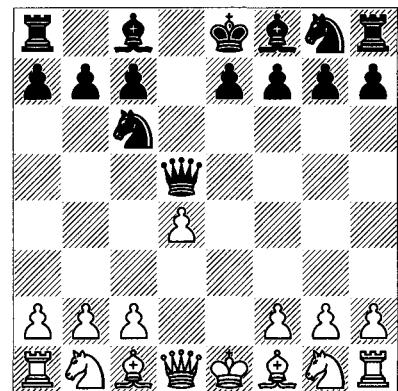
a2) 3...f6 has several possible replies. Perhaps the most significant is 4 f4 (4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  can be met by 4... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?! or 4...g6; 4  $\mathbb{A}b5$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  has the idea 5... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , familiar from the French Defence, so 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  fxe5 6 dxе5 e6 7  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  might follow, with perhaps a slight edge for White after 8  $\mathbb{A}xc6$ ) 4... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (trying to take over light squares; f5, g4 and e4 are all potentially vulnerable; simply 4... $\mathbb{A}f5$  5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  is also playable) 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (or 5... $\mathbb{A}g4$ , which White could have avoided by 5 c3 first; with the text-move, Black has in mind some combination of the moves ...e6, ... $\mathbb{A}e4$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and ...fxe5) 6 c3 e6 (*D*).

W



7  $\mathbb{A}e2$  (7  $\mathbb{A}d3 \mathbb{A}e4!$  8  $\mathbb{W}e2 f5!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{W}d7$  10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ , Bengsch-R.Becker, Kassel 1998 – Black will play for ...g5 by ...h6, ... $\mathbb{A}e7$  and ... $\mathbb{B}g8$ , and White has no equally productive plan; 7  $\mathbb{A}b5$  doesn't achieve much after 7... $\mathbb{W}d7$  8 0-0 a6) 7... $\mathbb{A}e7$  8 0-0-0 0-9  $\mathbb{Q}a3 \mathbb{A}e4!$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{W}e8!$  11  $\mathbb{Q}e3 fxe5$  12 fxe5  $\mathbb{W}g6$  13  $\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{A}f7$  14  $\mathbb{Q}h1 \mathbb{A}af8$  with play on the light squares and kingside pressure to counterbalance White's spatial advantage, F.Gomez-Castro Rojas, Medellin 1977. In general, 3...f6 seems satisfactory for Black.

b) 3 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  (*D*) is equivalent to 1 e4 d5 2 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  3 d4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ .

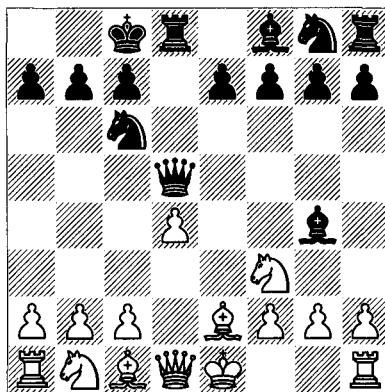


Black intends to play ...e5 and bring his pieces out quickly (as in the Chigorin Defence to the Queen's Gambit). Since this is critical for the fate of 2...d5, we need to be careful about details: 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (4  $\mathbb{A}e3$  e5! has scored very well for Black after 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{A}b4$  6 a3  $\mathbb{A}xc3+$  7 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , the most frequently seen line, as well as after 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{A}g4$  and 5 c4  $\mathbb{W}a5+$ ) and now:

b1) 4...e5 has to be taken into account. After 5  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{A}b4$  6  $\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{A}xc3$  7  $\mathbb{A}xc3$  e4 8  $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$  9 dxe5, if Black tries 9... $\mathbb{A}e7$ , then 10  $\mathbb{W}e2!$  is probably the best try to extract something from the position, and indeed, 10... $\mathbb{A}e6$  probably won't equalize after 11 g3! e3 12 f3, as in T.Schmid-Vitouch, Bundesliga 2008/9, while White's bishop-pair gained life after 10... $\mathbb{A}f5$  11  $\mathbb{A}d1 \mathbb{W}c6$  12 g4! e3 13  $\mathbb{A}g1$  exf2+ 14  $\mathbb{W}xf2$  with the idea  $\mathbb{B}b5$  in Arribas-Bruzon, Havana 1997. Probably 9... $\mathbb{A}e6$  is more accurate, when 10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  can be met by 10...0-0-0.

b2) 4... $\mathbb{A}g4$  (the most ambitious move) 5  $\mathbb{A}e2$  (5  $\mathbb{Q}c3?$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  {or 5... $\mathbb{W}a5$ } 6  $\mathbb{A}e2$  0-0-0 is

wild and unclear: 7 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8 h3  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{A}xe2$  10  $\mathbb{Q}cxe2$  e5 or 7 d5  $\mathbb{A}xf3$  8  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}e5+$  9  $\mathbb{A}e3$  e6 10 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) 5...0-0-0 (*D*).



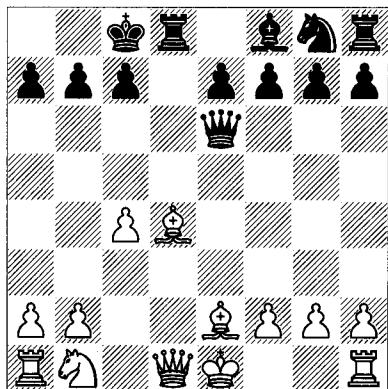
We've reached a curious juncture. Now 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}a5$  is a major line of the Scandinavian Defence, and 6... $\mathbb{W}h5$  is also played. White has two other important moves:

b21) 6  $\mathbb{A}e3$  e5 (after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 0-0 both 7...e6 and 7... $\mathbb{W}f5$  have been satisfactory for Black) 7 c4  $\mathbb{W}a5+$  8  $\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{A}b4$  9 d5  $\mathbb{A}xf3$  10  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  (even better than 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}xd2 \mathbb{Q}d4$  12 0-0  $\mathbb{W}b4$  13  $\mathbb{A}e1$ , C.Koch-Rahde, corr. 2005, when 13... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  is correct) 11  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}a6$  12  $\mathbb{A}e2 \mathbb{Q}f6$  13 a3  $\mathbb{A}he8!$  14  $\mathbb{A}d3?!$  e4 15  $\mathbb{A}f1$  e3! 16 fxe3  $\mathbb{A}xc3$  17 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with a winning game for Black, Draeger-Bellmann, corr. 1999.

b22) 6 c4  $\mathbb{W}f5$  (6... $\mathbb{W}a5+$  7  $\mathbb{A}d2 \mathbb{W}f5$  {not the only move} 8  $\mathbb{A}e3$  transposes to 6... $\mathbb{W}f5$  without allowing 7 0-0, and other 8th moves have not been effective; if nothing else, 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{A}xf3$  9  $\mathbb{A}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  transposes to the 7  $\mathbb{A}e3$  main line) and now 7  $\mathbb{A}e3$  (after 7 0-0, Black has equalized with both 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{A}xe2$  9  $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , which requires some care, and 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{A}e3$  e5; by using 6... $\mathbb{W}a5+$ , Black bypasses the issue entirely) induces Black to combine by 7... $\mathbb{A}xf3$  8  $\mathbb{A}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (9  $\mathbb{A}g4 \mathbb{Q}c2+$  10  $\mathbb{W}xc2 \mathbb{W}xg4$ ) 9... $\mathbb{W}e6+!$  10  $\mathbb{A}e2$  (*D*).

Now:

b221) Curiously, 10...c5 hasn't been played much, but my engines approve, and White hasn't won any of the games I've found. Keilhack and Schlenker suggest 11  $\mathbb{W}a4$  cxd4 12  $\mathbb{W}xa7$ , but instead of their 12...d3 13  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , either 12... $\mathbb{W}e5$

**B**

or 12...Qf6 13.Qa3 Wa6 should favour Black. My guess is that this would be an easy way for Black to play the position, with the proviso that it is relatively untested.

b222) 10...We4 11 0-0 Wxd4 (even 11...Wxd4 12.Qd2 We6 13.Wa4!, previously thought to give White good chances, only draws after the forcing 13...Wxd2! 14.Qad1 Wxd1 15.Wxd1 Qf6 16.Wxa7 Wa6 17.Wd4 Wd6 18.Wa7 Wa6, etc., D.Bosković-Savić, Vrnjačka Banja 2009) 12.Wa4 e6 13.Qc3 Qd6! (after 13...Qf6, White has succeeded with 14.Qb5 Wb6 15.b4 c6 16.c5, but it is probably unsound, whereas 14.Wfd1 Wb6 15.Wxd8+ Qxd8 16.b4 a5 or 16...c5 only very slightly favours White) 14.Wfd1 (14.Qb5 We5 15.Wxd6+ cxd6 16.Qf3 Qb8 leaves White with compensation, but no more than that) 14...We5 15.g3 Qb8 16.Qb5 a6 17.Qxd6 cxd6 18.Qf3 Qf6 19.Qd3, Michna-Prié, San Sebastian 2009, and here 19...Qe4 is most accurate, again leaving White with compensation for the pawn, but only just so.

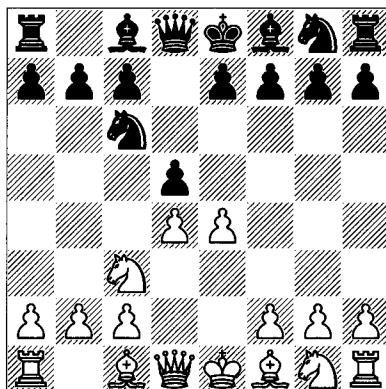
The line with 6.c4 Wf5 7.Qe3 has been part of White's claim to advantage after 3.exd5, but it now appears harmless for more than one reason.

We now return to 3.Qc3 (D):

**3...dxe4**

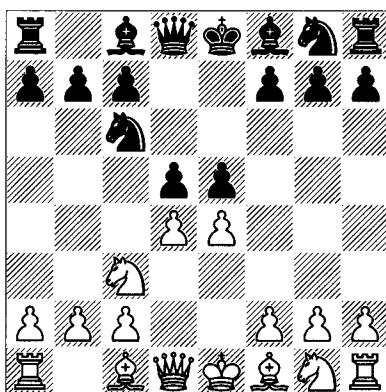
This is the main move, but White apparently comes away with some advantage, so Black's alternatives are noteworthy:

a) 3...e6 transposes into a line of the French Defence, 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Qc3 Qc6, that has been played regularly and accumulated a great deal of theory over the last decade. I'll leave it to the reader to research the details, but its current reputation is good, and, for example,

**B**

1...Qc6 specialist Wisnewski builds his repertoire around 3...e6.

b) 3...e5!? (D) is a bold attempt to clear out the centre.

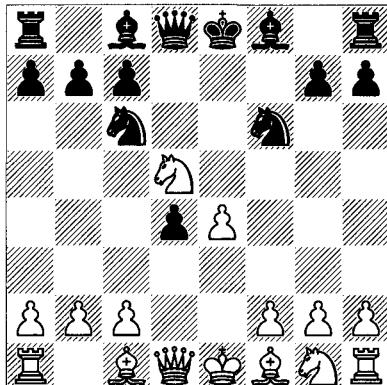
**W**

White's best reply seems to be 4.dxe5 (4.exd5 Qxd4 and 4.Qb5 dxe4 5.d5 a6 6.Qa4 b5 7.Qxb5 axb5 8.Qxb5 Qe7 are not serious threats to Black's position) 4...d4 and then:

b1) After 5.Qce2!?, 5...f6 is recommended by Keilhack and Schlenker, perhaps not so convincingly after 6.exf6 Qxf6 7.Qf3. Instead, 5...Qc5 could be considered, with the idea 6.c3 Qg4 7.f3 dxс3!, which is lively, if hardly forced. Black threatens ...Qf2+, and after 8.Wxd8+?! Wxd8 9.fxg4? Qb4 he wins material.

b2) 5.Qd5! and now Keilhack and Schlenker put loads of engrossing analysis into the amazing 5...f5 (5...Qge7 6.Qg5 Qe6 might be objectively superior), which has been played surprisingly often (perhaps as a consequence). 6.exf6 Qxf6 (D) and now:

W



b21) One of the nicest lines goes 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (8  $\mathbb{Q}xc7+$   $\mathbb{W}xc7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  turns out to be quite unclear) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xd5!!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  (9  $\mathbb{W}h5+$  g6 10 exd5 gxh5 11  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  bxc6 can probably be held by Black) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (10  $\mathbb{Q}f1?$   $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  11 fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}xc4+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$ ! with a winning attack) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c3+$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  is also unclear) 11 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc4+$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0+ 13  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6+$  with an ongoing attack.

b22) Speaking objectively, however, the whole line beginning with 4 dx5 must favour White. For one thing, 7  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  poses Black serious problems. If he tries to transpose by 7... $\mathbb{Q}e6?!$ , 8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  is strong. And here 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  doesn't work, if only because the simple 9  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11 exd5 leaves White a clear pawn ahead. So Black apparently has to be satisfied with 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , which is rather depressing after 9  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  or 9  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

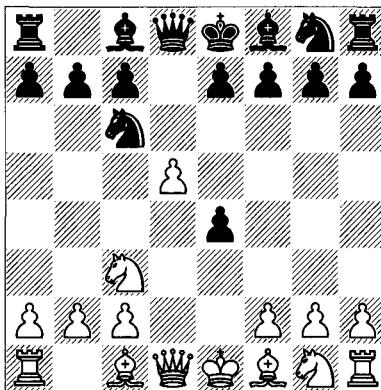
c) 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  combines French Defence and Alekhine Defence themes after 4 e5:

c1) 4... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  works out tolerably well in the popular lines 5 f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ , 5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  6 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  with the ideas ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and ... $e6$ , and 5 e6 fxe6 6  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (or 6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6) 6...g6 7 h4?! e5 8 h5 exd4 9 hxg6  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ . Unfortunately, the simple 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{Q}db8$ , which used to be considered equal, favours White whether the knight retreats to c3 or e3; for example, 6  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ , with the idea 7... $\mathbb{W}xe5$  8  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  9  $\mathbb{W}e2$  or 7... $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12 e6! fxe6 13  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$  0-0-0?! 14  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15 a3 1-0 Soln-Haas, Faakersee 2001.

c2) 4... $\mathbb{Q}e4?!$  5  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  (threatening to trap the e4-knight with 6 f3; 5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 6 c3 has also enjoyed success because Black's e-pawn is vulnerable) 5...f6 6 f3  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  fxg5 8  $\mathbb{W}d2$  e6 (8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  looks a better try for Black) 9  $\mathbb{Q}h3!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10 f4 and White has the initiative.

#### 4 d5 (D)

B



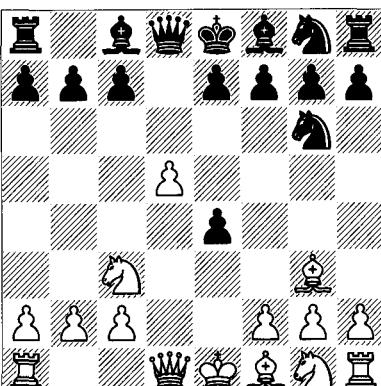
#### 4... $\mathbb{Q}e5$

4... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  is also played, but it is quite slow and requires precise defence in many variations, including the main line 5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (or 5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ) 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ . Black should be well-prepared if he wants to take up such an un-developed position, which is not to say that it is objectively bad.

#### 5 $\mathbb{W}d4$

White gains a small but safe edge with this move. 5  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (D) is more active and critical.

B



Then Black has two serious tries:

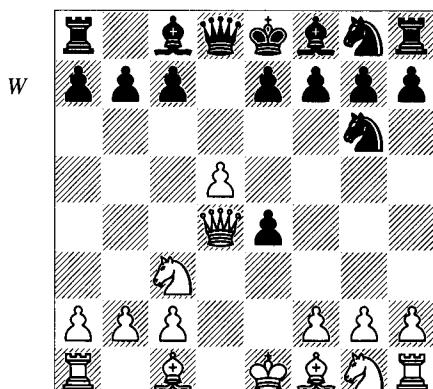
a) 6...f5 7  $\mathbb{Q}h3!$  (with the idea  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 7...e5 (7...a6 8 f3!  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  9 fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 11  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  and White recovers the pawn with a positional advantage) 8 dx $\mathbb{e}$ 6 and now:

a1) 8...c6 9  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  10  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  could be answered by 11 h4!  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12  $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ) 11 0-0-0+  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , Apicella-Vaisman, French Ch, Angers 1990, and now 12 h4! is very strong.

a2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$  9  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!$  10  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 11  $\mathbb{W}d4$  (or 11  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ , when 11... $\mathbb{Q}f7?$  fails to 12  $\mathbb{W}c7+!$ , while 11... $\mathbb{W}xd6$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8!$  14 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  gives Black some but not full compensation for the pawn) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , Rogers-Dunne, Philadelphia 1986, and here White can keep an edge with 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13 0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}b6!$  14  $\mathbb{Q}xb7!$  h6 15  $\mathbb{W}c5+$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  16  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ .

b) 6...a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (7 h4!? has the idea 7...h5 8  $\mathbb{Q}c4+?$  b5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  e3 11 0-0-0! exf2 12  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and Black is under great pressure, but 7...e5 8 dx $\mathbb{e}$ 6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  improves, when 9  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}e7!$  threatens 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  as well as 10... $\mathbb{W}b4+$ , so 10  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0-0 11  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  might follow, with equality) 7...f5 (7...f5 8  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  b5 9  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and in place of 10 0-0-0 h5, White can try 10  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b4 11  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12 0-0-0 with some compensation; for example, 12...e6 13 f3 exf3 14 gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}hel$  with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ ) 8  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9 f3 exf3 10  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  12 hxg3  $\mathbb{W}c8$  13  $\mathbb{Q}hel$  with open lines and a dangerous attack, J.Peters-T.Taylor, Los Angeles 2004.

5... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  (D)



6  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$

6  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  is also somewhat better for White: 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (6...a6 7  $\mathbb{W}a4+!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{W}b3$  forces an

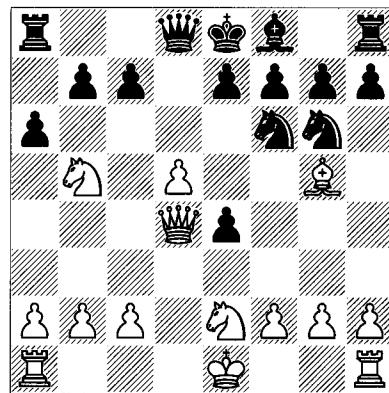
awkward defence of b7) 7  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8  $\mathbb{W}b5$  (or 8  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  9  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ) 8...a6 9  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  10  $\mathbb{W}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}de5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14 0-0-0 and White's quick development combines with his cramping d-pawn, Barle-Knaak, Pula 1975.

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Or 8  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with some advantage.

8... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a6 (D)

9...c6 10 dxc6! bxc6 11  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5 13  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$ .



10  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  h6?

10...e5! almost equalizes after 11 dxe6  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 14 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  15 bxc3.

11  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 12  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14  $\mathbb{Q}2g3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16 h3  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  17 g4 with a bind on Black's position.

## Specialized Black Debuts

Apart from these universal first moves, Black has other irregular first moves designed for use against specific White debuts:

1 e4 a6, usually called the St George Defence, was famously employed by Tony Miles to beat Karpov in Skara 1980. Were it not for the fact that Black has kept his disadvantage down to manageable proportions in practice (as indicated by White's lead of only 100 points or so in performance rating), I'd call 1...a6 outright 'bad'. It is at least substandard, and very risky, as indicated by this game fragment and notes:

## Volovik – Kozlov

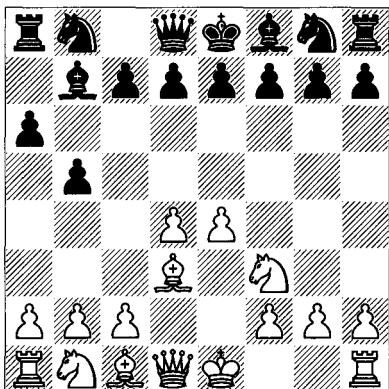
USSR 1987

**1 e4 a6 2 d4 b5**

This is a reversed version of the Sokolsky/Polish variation 1 b4 e5 2 a3 d5.

3 ♜f3 ♜b7 4 ♜d3 (D)

B

**4...♜f6??!**

An important juncture. Although it has been played in many games, this move-order has grave drawbacks. 4...e6 would transpose after 5 ♜e2, but White is more likely to play 5 0-0 or, still better, 5 a4!, which leaves Black with nothing but undesirable options. 5...b4 may be best, but then 6 c4! is strong, among others. I think that this simple and neglected point puts 1...a6, already marginal, into serious doubt.

**5 ♜e2**

There are two good alternatives to committing the queen:

a) After 5 ♜bd2 e6 6 0-0, several games have continued 6...c5 (everything else is depressing) 7 dxc5! ♜xc5 8 e5 ♜d5 9 ♜e4 (or 9 a4 first) 9...♜e7 10 a4 b4, and 11 c4 bxc3 12 bxc3 with the idea ♜a3 is good, while 11 ♜fd2 with the idea ♜c4 yields a large advantage. But the most fun line is 11 ♜g5 f6 12 exf6 ♜xf6 13 ♜e5!! with the idea 13...0-0 14 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 15 ♜h5 g6 16 ♜xg6 hxg6 17 ♜xg6+ ♜h8, and after the remarkably slow 18 ♜ad1! (intending ♜d3-h3#) 18...♜xg5 19 ♜d3 ♜h4 20 ♜h3, White will mop up.

b) 5 e5!, though seldom played, also casts 4...♜f6 into doubt: 5...♜d5 6 a4! b4?! (but the alternatives are miserable), and now 7 c4 bxc3 8 bxc3 is certainly difficult for Black, but 7

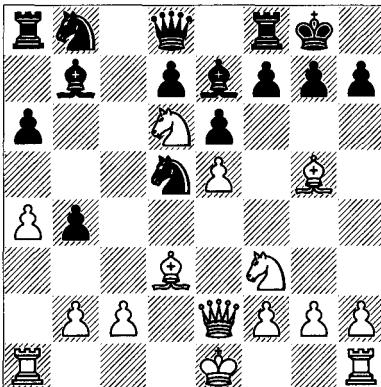
♜g5! is much more fun: 7...g6? (the cutest line after 7...h6? is 8 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 9 ♜h5+ ♜g8 10 ♜g6! ♜h7 11 ♜f5!, although of course 8 ♜h5 hxg5 9 ♜xh8 is also winning; the best defence is 7...e6, but 8 ♜f3 f5 9 g4! ♜e7 10 h4! keeps the pressure on) 8 ♜f3 f5 9 ♜xf5! ♜c8 10 ♜e4 1-0 Ochoa de Echagüen-Gómez, Seville 1994.

5...e6 6 a4 c5 7 dxc5 ♜xc5 8 ♜bd2 b4 9 e5 ♜d5 10 ♜e4 ♜e7 11 ♜g5!

Up to here the game has followed Karpov-Miles, European Team Ch, Skara 1980. In that famous game White played 11 0-0, which isn't as incisive.

**11...0-0 12 ♜d6! (D)**

B

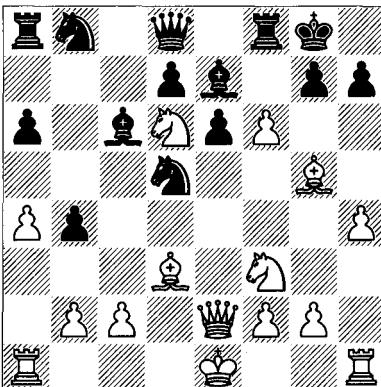
**12...♜c6 13 h4??!**

The best way to proceed is 13 ♜xe7! ♜xe7 (13...♜xe7? loses to 14 ♜xh7+! ♜xh7 15 ♜g5+ ♜g6 16 ♜g4) 14 ♜e4 f5 15 ♜d4 with a beautiful outpost on d6 and control of the position.

**13...f6 14 exf6??! (D)**

White still stands better after 14 ♜e4! f5 15 ♜d4 h6 16 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 17 ♜e2.

B



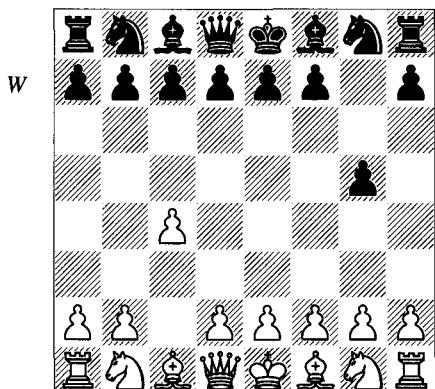
**14...gxf6?**

14... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ? is unclear.

After 14...gxf6?, White played the inspired 15  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ?! and won, but that would only have drawn if Black had defended correctly. The right move was 15  $\mathbb{W}e4!$  f5 16  $\mathbb{W}e5$  with domination of the dark squares.

**1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5** has a decent reputation (the related 1 d4 b5 gives White extra options; for example, 2 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  or 3 f3), although 2 e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (2...a6 3 d4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  takes us back to the St George) 3  $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  4 0-0 is a full tempo down for Black compared to the Sokolsky/Polish main line 1 b4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . Even the reversed 1 b4 e5 version is difficult for White to negotiate, and adding a tempo here makes Black's task much harder.

1...g5 is a horrible choice versus 1 e4 (when 2 d4 is a tempo-up version of 1 g4) and even worse against 1 d4 (2  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ !), but it makes some sense versus 1 c4, and **1 c4 g5 (D)** has actually been played in over 400 games in my database.



The idea is that White can no longer defend his long a1-h8 diagonal by c3, as he did with ...c6 versus 1 g4. Nevertheless, Black's kingside is weakened, and pawns can't move backwards. I'll settle for 'substandard' here, because the superior positions that White gets aren't devastating ones. Here's an example:

**Mednis – Hodgson**  
New York 1990

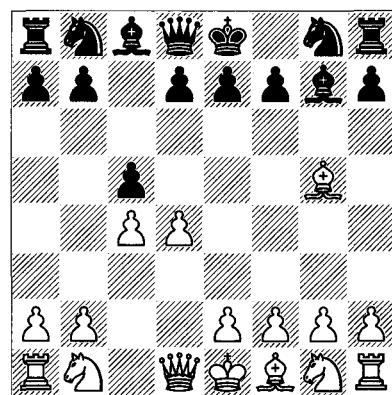
**1 c4 g5 2 d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$**

2...h6 is slow, and White can pick a comfortable route to advantage via most common-sense moves; for example, 3 h4 (or 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 h4 with the idea 4...c5 5 e3 or 4...g4 5 e4, transposing) 3...g4 4 e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 (5...c5 6  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !) 6  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  and now 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  or 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 8 d5  $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !. A 'theoretical' line goes 3 e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5, and now 5  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  is a good alternative to 5 dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  6 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}a5$  7  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (7... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  8  $\mathbb{W}d4$ !), when at least Black has something to play for.

**3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

Or:

a) 3  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  c5 (D) is Black's point, although if White gives the pawn back he should emerge with the advantage.



For example, 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ! (after 4 e3, rather than 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  6  $\mathbb{W}c1$ !  $\mathbb{W}xc1+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  cxd4 8  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , Black should play 4... $\mathbb{W}a5$ ! 5  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$ + 6  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  cxd4 7 0-0-0 dxe3 8  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 10 h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd4$  with approximate equality), and now:

a1) 4... $\mathbb{W}b6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ !  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  leads to positional disaster following 6  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$ + 7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}a3$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  9  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  10  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ .

a2) 4...cxd4 5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  also favours White; e.g., 6...a6 7  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$ + 8  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

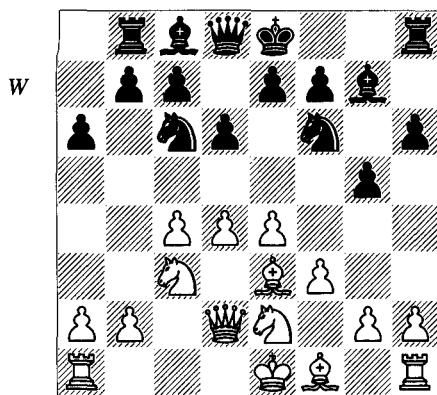
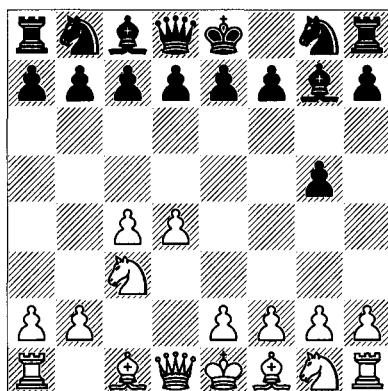
a3) 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5 d5  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  6  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  with the idea 6... $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ ?! 7  $\mathbb{W}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 9  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  f6 10  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , when White has way more than enough for a pawn. 6... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is better, but still unsatisfactory following 7  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  8  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  cxd4 9 e3.

b) 3 e4 c5 4 d5 is a standard position, but with Black's pawn on g5 instead of g6. It's hard

to believe that improves anything, and White obviously stands better after 4...d6 (4... $\mathbb{W}a5+$  5  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  h6 6  $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  with h4 to follow. Nevertheless, it's a game and with care, Black shouldn't get into immediate trouble.

We now return to 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (D):

B



W

h4 g4 10 0-0-0, since 10...b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  b4 14  $\mathbb{Q}cb5$  isn't attractive for Black.

9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  e6

Awfully passive. 10...e5 is a better practical try, even if it gives White targets; for example, 11 0-0-0 (or 11 d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12 h4) 11...exd4 12  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  b5?! 14 cxb5 axb5 15 h4! b4 16  $\mathbb{Q}cb5$  gxh4 17  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ .

11 0-0-0 b6 12  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13 g3 e5 14  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 15 dx5 dxe5 16 c5! a4

Black is paralysed and pitches a pawn for activity, but it doesn't help.

17  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  bxc5 19  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  0-0?? 20  $\mathbb{Q}b3?$

20 f4! has multiple threats and wins straightaway: 20...gxf4 21 gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  22  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 23  $\mathbb{Q}hg1$ , etc.

20...c5 21  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  22  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ ! 23 axb3  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  24  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 25  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  26  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  g4 27  $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  28  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  gxf3 29  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  30  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

and White is winning.

I'm afraid that 1...g5 is just too much to ask of Black.

Hopefully it's been both enlightening and fun to examine these irregular openings and tackle the most difficult ones. Remember that they are an authentic part of opening theory, not merely an afterthought, and should be studied in order to round out your general knowledge of the game.

3...h6

Upon 3...c5, one good reply is 4 dxc5. For example:

a) 4... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  5 bxc3  $\mathbb{W}a5$  6  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  7  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}a3$  8  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (here Wind believes that 8 g3! leads to a clear advantage, one point being 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9  $\mathbb{W}b3$ !, and otherwise 8... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  intending  $\mathbb{Q}h3-f4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ; this is very convincing) 8... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  9  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  10  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

b) 4...h6 5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  7 bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{W}c2$ ) 7  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8  $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  9  $\mathbb{W}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  10 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  11  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  with an impressive centre and better-placed pieces, Benjamin-Heinola, Honolulu 1996.

4 e4 d6

Black foregoes ...c5 this time.

5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7 f3 a6 8  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

(D)

9  $\mathbb{Q}c1$

We have arrived at precisely a line of the Sämisch King's Indian, but with ...g5 and ...h6 substituted for ...g6 and ...0-0. White's knight retreat is customary in that line, to get out of the way of the f1-bishop (and so incidentally preventing ...b5) and strengthen the queenside. An even better use of the 'extra' move might be 9

# 9 Choosing and Preparing Openings

Every student eventually comes up against the issue of how to select and prepare openings. As it turns out, the problem never completely goes away, not even for the strongest players in the world. Teachers and writers express various opinions about how to choose openings, but they disagree firmly with each other and haven't even begun to arrive at a consensus. Some fundamental questions arise: whether to specialize in one opening, whether to pick extremely thematic or open-ended openings, how to match openings with your style and predilections, and how much time to devote to opening study. On a concrete level, we have questions about how to organize and record a specific repertoire, how to learn it, how to get practice with your chosen openings, how to improve your play in a certain opening, and so forth.

In my opinion, some of the most common answers to these questions fall short in that they don't distinguish students by their level of strength and experience. In reviewing the literature, I find that most of the books are written from the standpoint of grandmaster needs and circumstances; for their examples they use the experiences of some titled player or other and explain how they prepared their openings or solved their opening problems. Of course, what the near-beginner needs out of his chess openings is quite a different matter from what the average club player requires, or the casual Internet Chess Club aficionado, or the professional tournament player. In what follows, I'll try to draw upon my experience as a teacher to accommodate that factor.

## How Important is Opening Study?

We hear it again and again: players spend too much time studying the openings. Variations upon this theme abound, and the issue takes on

particular significance because of the limited number of hours the average person has for chess. In lieu of so much attention to openings, would our time be better spent on, e.g., middle-games, endgames or tactics? Naturally these are all interrelated areas and, in varying degrees, essential for improvement. Still, I think you'll find that the much-maligned emphasis on opening study isn't such a bad thing after all. In fact, it's probably no coincidence that in the real world, most experienced players from lower master level all the way up to World Champion spend *far* more of their time studying openings than all the aforementioned options put together! I don't think that we can write this off as a mass delusion among players (and their coaches), or as something that is fundamentally against their best interests. For one thing, opening study provides a disciplined entrance into the broader area of middlegame study.

It's also interesting to see what other areas of the game our top players study away from the board. After years of being around masters and professional players, I would say that reviewing, studying and writing about their own games consumes the second largest amount of time after opening preparation. As far as I know, every top-level teacher recommends self-critical analysis of your games, and it should be given high priority for anyone seeking to improve. But even that process includes in-depth consideration of the openings in those games and the typical positions arising from them. Actually, my own teaching priorities in this respect are somewhat different where the average player is concerned. Apart from openings, I think that exercise with tactical problems is the other most valuable use of study time, especially right before a tournament. Incidentally, tactics can be usefully connected with openings that typically generate them, and I try to construct exercises that do that.

What about other areas of the game? Let's look at some of the alternatives to investigating

openings. One is to study the middlegame. But in modern chess, as has been pointed out by many writers, the middlegame is very often subsumed within the opening. That is, when players study the opening, they are in part studying what we used to call the middlegame, and in some cases beyond that. The most useful kind of middlegame knowledge, and the easiest to retain, has to do with frequently-arising, thematic structures. It's difficult enough to know where your pieces should go and what their future might be, the more so when you haven't seen the structure before, or something similar. This knowledge can be picked up by investigation of particular openings, and enhanced by playing over exemplary games (preferably annotated), comparing different interpretations and absorbing specific theory. Important tactical devices and attacking schemes will recur, very often also applying to tactics that arise in unrelated situations. Naturally, the study of a finite set of openings can't cover the broad diversity of possible middlegames, and it's helpful to read books which talk about strategies in the abstract. However, middlegame theory that is too general tends to be of little use in over-the-board situations.

Apart from openings and middlegames, the student is commonly advised to study the endgame, sometimes with an admonition to stay away from serious opening preparation until an unspecified 'later'. When I was beginning to play chess four decades ago, this advice was ubiquitous, accompanied by the 'fact' that all the Soviet children learned endings in depth before they were allowed to play any games. That turned out to be an utter myth, but there's no doubt that learning a limited set of basic endings is absolutely essential for your development as a player. What's less certain is how many endings this involves, at what stage you need to learn them, and how many of them you will absorb by experience, just as you do with openings. Students to whom I assign endgame study constantly point out that they seldom get as far as the ending, at least not to one that doesn't already have a clear result; and when they do, it is usually decided by tactical means. Part of this has to do with the level of play, but grandmasters say the same thing, attributing it to the complex and often sharp openings played

at their level. For the majority of us, the dearth of challenging endings may also come from the short time-controls that are now customary. Taken as a whole, I think that there's much wisdom in most players' intuitive feeling that openings and middlegames can take priority without damaging their long-term prospects. Fortunately, the majority of ending types, apart from a set of standard and recurring elementary ones that everyone should know (and periodically refresh their knowledge of), are those that you will commonly get from the openings you play. In most mainstream openings, there are characteristic endgames that arise repeatedly from the structure of that opening. If you think about your own favourite openings, you'll probably recognize connections to representative endings. In fact, speciality books upon particular openings will very often include an explicit discussion of the typically-occurring endings. So a serious study of complete games in your opening will go a long way towards improving your practical endgame results, as well as developing your ability to think about endgames in general, which is the most important skill in the long run.

Let's face it: it would be ideal to have time to study middlegames, endings and openings, along with the great games of masters; and it's also hard to argue with doing tactical exercises and problems, annotating your own games, and playing as much as possible. To the extent that you can do so, explore all of these options. In the context of this book, however, I would argue that the tremendous amount of time spent upon the openings by leading players young and old reflects the importance of such study. While other types of knowledge are necessary if you are to become a complete player, opening study is the single most practical and efficient means of improving your mastery of the game as a whole.

## Openings Selection

Before moving on to suggest methods of study and preparation, I'll make a stab at the most difficult question to answer with any kind of specificity: what openings should I play? Once a player decides upon an actual set of openings to

play, however provisionally, the subsequent sections about how to study and prepare them will take on a concrete significance. Of course, there are myriad openings with countless variations, and any suggestions that I make will be fundamentally arbitrary. Nevertheless, I'd like to give some concrete examples so as to make a general point: your choice of openings should be based upon your level of playing strength. With that in mind, I'll separate advice into broad sections, distinguishing choices and objectives that apply to players of various strengths who wish to improve their opening preparation. Within each general section, I shall break down the material on the basis of playing level. Of course, given sufficient knowledge, a player can succeed with any conventional chess opening. Nevertheless, you can improve your play more quickly and less painfully by tailoring your openings to the development of needed skills. With that in mind, I'll talk on a broader level for the less experienced player, whereas for more advanced players, discuss mainly the practical implications of opening choices. In general, I suggest learning a wide variety of position-types in order to become a stronger player.

Assessing your own level and degree of sophistication in handling opening situations is difficult. Rather than get too picky, I've divided players into four very broadly defined skill categories, from the lowest, D, through to the highest, A (these are chosen to minimize confusion with the many other standard divisions of chess strength by letter). Naturally, these are approximations and my advice will significantly overlap between them, so your precise category isn't crucial:

**Category D:** beginners, near-beginners and relatively inexperienced players (e.g., the latter might have three years or fewer of playing regularly, and not necessarily devotedly).

**Category C:** players with a moderate level of experience and some opening competence. This broad group might include club players, intermittent tournament players and consistent online players. People in this category probably lack sufficient free time for intensive study and play, or they may be stuck in a rut, have bad habits, etc.

**Category B:** players of considerable strength (say, 1700 Elo and above) who already have a

fairly stable repertoire and have looked into at least some of their openings in depth. But the general level of their openings is clearly below someone rated a few hundred points above them, and that is demonstrated by the inferior positions they often fall into.

**Category A:** Players above 2000 Elo up to about 2300 Elo with the typical problems that arise in finding openings that combine the ambition for opening advantage with some degree of safety. I won't presume to give professionals, who exceed this level, advice about their opening choices, so this section applies to advanced amateurs who are, for example, regular tournament players, rapidly-improving juniors, and/or devoted online activists.

The advice and potential repertoire choices that I'll suggest next are necessarily broad, if only because they don't take into account the distinctive traits of individuals. For fine tuning, or to decide which pieces of advice given below apply, you may want to consult a chess teacher. Alternatively, a disciplined, self-aware student can make those decisions based upon an analysis of his own games and some study. I'd be a little careful about plunging into complicated opening variations that just happen to present themselves to you because of, for example, a recent grandmaster game or a friend's enthusiasm. Study of any sort can only help one improve, of course, but this might not be the most efficient use of your time.

Regardless of your category, the most basic goals will be obvious: to survive the opening without serious disadvantage; and to gain an advantage sufficient to discomfit your opponent. Beyond that, always pay attention to the typical middlegames and endgames that your opening produces.

Finally, remember that I am only indicating some personal thoughts on how to make progress with openings. You should follow your instincts, especially if you find a method that works for and motivates you.

### ***1. Choose openings corresponding to your skill level and available study time***

This is fairly obvious, but some teachers will entice you into playing their own, sometimes too sophisticated, openings. It's important to

stick within your capabilities, and at the same time master traditional concepts before taking on exotic piece and pawn deployments. Let me explain this by means of specific examples. I won't build a complete repertoire for you, of course, but I'll try to indicate what would be involved in doing so.

## Category D Openings

For players with very limited experience, I recommend using openings in which the play can be clarified at an early stage, often with a degree of simplification. To accomplish this safely will take a little study, because you will have to get used to playing with open lines for both sides' pieces, but you can't eliminate risk entirely in the opening anyway. If that approach doesn't appeal to you, you should at least try to occupy the centre and bring your pieces out quickly, aiming them at central squares if possible. I think that it's best to avoid manoeuvring games in which most of the pieces remain on the board for a long time and don't come into contact with each other. At this level, you should be studying tactics independently, and it's good practice to play openings of at least a partially tactical nature.

There's nothing new about this advice. For example, teachers all over the world suggest that inexperienced players begin with 1 e4. Advancing your e-pawn may be unoriginal, but it allows you to control the direction of the game to a greater degree than other first moves. You will undoubtedly see the reply 1...e5 most often when playing at or near a beginner's level, when I recommend using some system with an early d4 to at least partially clear out the centre and give your pieces room. In that context, the most common move 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is a good one. For example, if Black plays 2...d6, you can get practice playing with extra space by 3 d4. Black may not often answer 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (the Petroff) at this level, but again, 3 d4 is a straightforward answer for the inexperienced player, intending 3...exd4 4 e5 (and if Black plays 4... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  or 4... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ , 5  $\mathbb{W}xd4$ ) or 3... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , to get developed quickly. Another choice is 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , and if 3... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (the Four Knights Game), 4  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  or 4 d4. One advantage of this latter choice is that you can also play 2

$\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , when 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  will transpose. The Four Knights is a sensible opening choice as you start out.

After 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  will occur in the bulk of your games. Then the Scotch Game, 3 d4 (intending 3...exd4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ) is a possible first opening, but I recommend taking up the classical and instructive move 3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  at an early stage. Then, against 3... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , it's thematic to try to establish the ideal centre by 4 c3 and 5 d4; after that, things can get complicated enough that you need to take a look at some theory and learn the basics; for example, you could use Chapter 5 of Volume 1 (or any standard source). Versus 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , you might pick 4 d3 as a solid beginning point, and be sure to get castled and bring your pieces out quickly. Both 4 d4 and 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  are more adventurous, but they absolutely require serious hours of study, as you will see by glancing at Volume 1, Chapter 6.

The Sicilian Defence, 1 e4 c5, is the most popular grandmaster opening, but when lower players use it, they usually do so with some memorized systems in mind. I recommend playing simple, principled moves against it; for example, 2 c3 makes sense, intending to capture the centre with 3 d4, which is what you should do versus most slow moves anyway. A typical line is 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  4 d4, when after 4...exd4, 5  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  is a handy first system with open lines and quick development. You can follow with  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d3/c4$  and 0-0, moving your queen to e4 if attacked by ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . If Black plays 2...d5 in response to 2 c3, then 3 exd5  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  4 d4 will also open up lines; generally  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and 0-0 follow, with  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  if necessary. A slightly more advanced possibility against the Sicilian Defence would be to clear out the centre with the Morra Gambit: 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxcc3 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ , as described in Chapter 5 of this volume; beginners should delay taking this up, however, as it's important to learn the value of material before experimenting with openings that sacrifice it for other gains.

Against the French Defence and Caro-Kann Defence, the easiest way to stick to the open-lines policy is to avoid e5 and develop quickly. In the French, for example, a possibility is 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , followed by  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (or  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ) and 0-0. Or you can do something similar starting with 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , playing 3... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  4

exd5 or 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4 exd5 (in the latter case, experienced players may wince at allowing theoretical equality so early on, but at a lower level such moves can be recommended as both sound and instructive).

Versus the Caro-Kann, the exchanging policy of 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , again intending  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 0-0, is a good starting point, with the same philosophy that we applied to the French Defence. You won't see the Alekhine Defence, 1 e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , very often. But if you do, you might want to play 2 e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  3 d4 d6 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , usually followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and 0-0. Most other moves, such as 1...g6, 1...d6 or 1...b6, can normally be met by 2 d4, 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  and 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , followed by a move by the f1-bishop and 0-0.

Of course, you can also play 1 d4, the other central move, but then you probably want to keep the position fairly quiet, because it takes a longer time to castle to safety than it does with 1 e4. A solid and more-or-less universal set-up is 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 3  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , followed in most cases by 4 e3, 5  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and 6 0-0. I'd rather see my students fight their way through open positions instead; however, if you're not getting out of the opening alive after 1 e4, this method of playing 1 d4 deserves consideration.

A word of advice: notice that a commonly suggested 'easy' repertoire for White with 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and the King's Indian Attack (that is 2 g3, 3  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ , 4 0-0 and 5 d3, with  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  and e4 to follow) doesn't lead to an open game, or one with a clear plan for White. Furthermore, it encourages mechanical play. Similarly, teachers sometimes recommend the Colle System (with 1 d4, 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , 3 e3 and usually  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , 0-0, c3 and  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ ), which can also be played too automatically, and usually doesn't lead to an open position. For true beginners, the King's Indian Attack and Colle System have the benefit of offering a safe position that nearly guarantees passage to some kind of playable middlegame; they may be a reasonable alternative if other openings are too intimidating. But having gained even a small amount of experience, you really should switch to more open and less automatic play.

As Black, I think that a Category D player would do well to proceed classically. That means playing 1...e5 versus 1 e4 and 1...d5 versus 1 d4. In this, again, I am repeating the

advice of teachers since time immemorial. The idea is similar to that behind White's 1 e4: you are guaranteed a strong presence in the centre and relatively quick development. When starting out, it's useful to play positions in which you control space. After 1 e4, 1...e5 serves that purpose. By contrast, the Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5) normally leaves you with little room to manoeuvre and is best left until your positional skills develop. If you don't take to 1...e5, you can also consider answering 1 e4 with the Caro-Kann Defence (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5) or the French Defence (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5), both of which put the d-pawn on the 4th rank and stake a claim on the centre. They have the advantage of being slightly less expected at this level, but they have the drawback of allowing your opponent to create fairly closed positions if they choose to play e5. Versus 1 d4, 1...d5 achieves similar results in terms of central control. It's true that 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  also stops 2 e4 and introduces a number of established defences. The latter tend to require some sophistication, however, and it's easy for the inexperienced player to end up facing a large and dangerous white centre.

In more specific terms, let's assume that you've decided upon 1 e4 e5. It will involve a fair amount of preparation even on a low level. In chess, playing Black tends to require more study, since you are at more risk of serious disadvantage when moving second. I'm not going to go into detail, but you'll need answers to various less common but perfectly legitimate openings such as 2 f4 (the King's Gambit), 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 (the Danish Gambit), as well as 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (the Vienna Game) and 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (the Four Knights Game). This is easier than it sounds, because there are fairly simple ways to proceed against them. In Volume 1 of this series, for example, I examined some fairly easy responses to the King's Gambit, and in this volume you'll find suggestions against the Danish Gambit and Four Knights Game. If you don't see something that appeals to you or I haven't mentioned something, you can look for master games in a database or use an opening encyclopaedia. Just be aware that all of these moves are perfectly playable for White and you can't force your way to an advantage against them.

Assuming that you narrow your difficulties down to 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , one option is to conserve your

study time, and play something relatively simple like the Philidor Defence (2...d6). It's a legitimate choice, but gives you a cramped game, so as early as possible you should take the plunge with 2... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Doing so requires more work, but it will teach you more. By now you may be familiar with 3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , and you'll have a good idea what to do about it. Again, refer to Volume 1 of this series and/or outside sources. White's most respected line is 3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (the Ruy Lopez), when it's a lot easier to avoid the complications of 3...a6 and play 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . Then after 4 0-0, you can opt for a move with familiar themes like 4... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

You won't be seeing 1 d4 too often from inexperienced players. As mentioned, 1...d5 gives you a firm central presence, and you can bring your pieces out relatively quickly to establish some central control. If White plays the most important move, 2 c4, inexperienced players might want to begin classically with 2...e6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and .... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (see Volume 2, Chapter 2). Slower moves such as 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  or 2 e3 are less challenging. It's logical and safe to start out with 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and 3...e6 (although if you can play .... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  before ...e6, it makes your development even easier). Then you can set up a formation with ...c5, ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  and ...0-0. If you feel confident about your handling of open positions, you can play ...c5 on your 3rd or 4th move and create some open lines.

Finally, it's important to use the 'What if?' procedure that I recommend below. That is, as you study openings, ask yourself why moves other than the ones listed aren't played. In doing so, watch for basic captures and tactics. At this level, it doesn't help you to win games if you memorize certain moves and then drop a pawn or piece the minute the opponent plays something different. On the other hand, that will inevitably happen – it has happened to all of us – so don't become discouraged. You'll be surprised how studying chess in any form will improve your visualization and reduce errors.

## Category C Openings

At this level, the benefits derived from playing with space and open lines still take priority, but it's also a good point to begin including variations which can yield other types of positions.

For most players, 1 e4 will probably still be the most attractive move, especially if you have already played it while at a Category D level. On the other hand, there are practical benefits to taking up 1 d4 – namely, your opponents will have seen it less and you will expand your bank of familiar positions. The English Opening with 1 c4 is a different matter. It tends to put opponents of equal strength on their own, which is good, but requires sophisticated positional handling, and unless you are conversant with specifics, it may not yield enough open positions to provide the valuable training such positions offer. Similar considerations apply to 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . Nevertheless, these openings are acceptable as long as you determinedly look for active play with parts of your repertoire. There's always time to emphasize slow positional systems as you improve.

You can play solidly at this level, of course, but you might also begin to incorporate the ideas of setting initiative off against material. As White, along with some main lines, you might want to incorporate a gambit line, or even two. As a 1 e4 player facing 1...e5 (which is still the most likely response at this level), 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  is a type of Danish Gambit that will often transpose via 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  to the Göring Gambit. One advantage of playing this way (with the 2 d4 move-order) is that you bypass Black's second-move alternatives that follow 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (such as 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and 2...d6). This is described in Chapter 5. The Göring Gambit is a good practical attacking system, in that Black's position can easily come under fire, while White retains a lead in development in any case. If nothing else, you can have it as a surprise weapon to supplement something less adventurous.

Understandably, giving up material may not appeal to everyone, and you should try to balance that activist tendency with learning classic variations as well. Unless you have a lot of study time and motivation, it's best to do so without being laden with too many double-edged and/or heavily analysed positions. After 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , 3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is a conventional choice – you can utilize and expand upon the knowledge that you gained if you played this move as a Category D player. Or you might prefer to play 3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (the Ruy Lopez), but stick to

lines which steer clear of the heaviest theory; for example, 3...a6 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (the Exchange Variation), or 3... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4  $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

Versus the Sicilian Defence, which you will be seeing increasingly often, you might also consider playing a gambit. Specifically, 1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 (the Morra Gambit) offers a pawn for initiative. Following 3...dxc3 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ , White's most common attacking set-up is  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , 0-0 and  $\mathbb{W}e2$ , with the idea of bringing a bishop to e3, f4 or g5, and a rook to the open d-file. This sort of thing can be fun, and has no simple solution that negates your chances. See Chapter 5 on gambits.

Assuming that you don't want to play a gambit (or want to have options), you could explore your first fianchetto system with 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , 3 g3 and 4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  (the Closed Sicilian). Alternatively, you can construct a repertoire around 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , picking and choosing which main lines, if any, are worth embarking upon. Some strong grandmasters, for example, have made a lifelong living off moves such as 1 e4 c5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 3  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  and 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , which are relatively safe systems. For the most part, however, 1 e4 players eventually seem to settle upon the lines involving 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 3 d4 (the Open Sicilian). If that's your inclination, you still needn't commit yourself to heavy theoretical study. For example, versus the move 2...d6 (most common at this level, because your opponents will want to get to the Dragon Variation or the Najdorf Variation), 3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  is a perfectly respectable line (the idea is 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , when White maintains a lead in development). Or, after 3 d4 cxd4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , you can play slightly less critical variations. For instance, versus 5...a6, the ever-popular Najdorf Variation, you can begin by playing classically with 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and 0-0, when understanding will be more important than memorization; see Volume 1. There are also a number of sound but slightly offbeat lines such as 6 h3, 6 g3 and 6  $\mathbb{W}f3$ . The same classical approach can be employed against the Dragon Sicilian: 5...g6 6  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ . Then, slowly but surely, you can build a repertoire which includes more critical, tactically-oriented variations.

At this stage, you will begin to see openings such as the French Defence and Caro-Kann Defence more often. It's still reasonable to play

the Exchange Variations mentioned above, but at some point you'll probably want to try to create more problems for your opponent. With some study, 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 can be a nice weapon, and has the additional benefit of introducing you to the theory of pawn-chains. Versus the Caro-Kann, you can begin to build a classical repertoire with 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (or 3  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) 3...dxe4 4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ , but it's even easier to learn some basic lines after 3 e5; for example, 3... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and 0-0, with the pawn-chain move c3 in most cases.

As Black, 1...e5 is still a good answer to 1 e4, of course, but this time you should seriously consider other defences such as 1...c6 and 1...e6, which allow for both open and closed positions. They also involve some recurring structures which will serve the student throughout his playing days. I'm still not excited about my students playing the Sicilian Defence at this stage, because it almost always means playing with less space and development, and in some cases with exotic and not particularly instructive pawn-structures. The Pirc (1...d6), Modern (1...g6) and Alekhine (1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) Defences are perfectly logical and sound openings, but I think they have practical drawbacks for the player below 1600, in that they concede space and don't generally yield as free piece-play. But if you have a strong affinity for any of them, that could outweigh other factors. Personal enjoyment should definitely be a consideration when you're deciding what to play.

Versus 1 d4, you can always stick with 1...d5, as above. If you haven't already committed to too many gambit lines, the Albin Counter-Gambit, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 (with the idea of 3 dxe5 d4) has a decent reputation, and is a good alternative to the more conservative play with 2...e6 above. Another respectable gambit is the Budapest, which goes 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e5 3 dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (or the more speculative 3... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ); you'll usually recover the pawn on e5. For those who follow grandmaster fashion, I should add that the currently popular Slav Defence, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6, is sound and effective. However, it can lead to rather slow development, and my feeling is that it's better suited at the higher levels. Finally, you can try a quick-developing 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  system; for example, the Nimzo-Indian, which goes 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  often

followed by ...0-0, gets your pieces out rapidly, and the Bogo-Indian, 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ , does the same.

## Category B Openings

At this point you should be ready to tackle positions of most types, so the number of appropriate opening choices increases dramatically. Still, players with limited time for competition and study have to consider the practical drawbacks of using too many variations which entail a large initial time investment, and then require continual updating of theory to avoid unpleasant surprises. It's valuable to play a couple of theoretical 'main lines', even if you need to use your understanding and instincts as well as your memory to tackle them; you might even essay upon one highly tactical variation that is at the height of fashion. However, you will want to mix any such complex lines with systems that require less study and offer reasonably clear strategies versus normal play. The latter will often be positional or slightly slower openings, but can also include attacking and gambit lines, particularly if the main attacking methods are thematic, and a new discovery by your opponent won't be of fatal consequence. This is also a good point to include some 'irregular'/experimental variations into your play. They can be great fun, and you may find that several such lines are just as sound as the conventional ones. See Chapter 8.

At this level, you will be advanced enough to play any logical first move, especially since, by virtue of moving first, White runs less risk of falling into trouble. This is also the time to introduce some specialization, regardless of the lines you choose.

Most serious 1 e4 players tend to gravitate towards 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  at some point or other, but remember that you can make a lifetime system out of 3  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  if you like. Alternatives for the slightly eccentric player include the King's Gambit with 2 f4 (be careful not to get your king in trouble), and the Bishop's Opening with 1 e4 e5 2  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , followed in most cases by d3 (rather than trying to force through the move d4). Versus the Sicilian Defence, as mentioned, most players will be using the 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and 3 d4 main lines at least some of the

time, although it's easy to get in positional trouble doing so against top players. I'd still try to mix in some of the systems without d4 that I listed for the Category C player. Versus the French Defence, you're on solid ground with any of 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , 3  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  or 3 e5; unfortunately, there's no escaping some theory if you want to use pawn-chain lines involving the move e5 (which you should, if you want both to learn about the opening and to maximize your chances). The main thing about all of your choices at this stage is that you would like to keep them in your repertoire for at least a few years. With luck, you will have them for the rest of your life, at least as a second or third weapon if you find something more attractive later on. Against the Pirc and Modern Defences, I would still recommend staying with a simple  $\mathbb{Q}c3/\mathbb{Q}f3$  system, but you can also start to play aggressive lines with f4 if you're willing to study theory, and early moves of the queen's bishop to e3 and g5 (normally followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) are not that hard to learn.

This is a great point for White to incorporate 1 d4 or 1 c4, excellent lifetime weapons which have the further advantage that most of your peers will have spent less time preparing to play against them than versus 1 e4. Without going into detail, I'd recommend that after 1 d4, you go into lines involving 2 c4, and pick variations with clear-cut themes. For example, 1...d5 2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  followed by cxd5 is one of the more instructive openings in all of classical chess, and 1...d5 2 c4 c6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  can be followed by any of several systems with e3 and  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  in one or another order. Those are safe and yet have plenty of impact. Against the King's Indian Defence (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 with ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and ...d6), players of a positional bent might want to head for a Fianchetto Variation (3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 g3), and attackers will prefer 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4 e4. But systems like 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (or 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) are good compromises. Similarly, versus the Grünfeld Defence, 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5, you may want to bypass the volumes of theory on 4 cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  5 e4 for a while and try 4  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  or 4  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (or 4  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  followed by those moves), provided that you study them enough to avoid tricks and violent counterattacks. The point is that you're not obliged to take up main lines and may very well want to wait with those

until you become a little more experienced. Similarly, versus 1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6, 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  is positionally less committal than 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , and a good choice. Nevertheless, you can learn a great deal by allowing 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  and then accepting doubled pawns in return for potentially strong bishops by 4 a3, or by 4 e3 and, depending upon Black's response, 5  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  or 5 a3. At this stage such decisions become a matter of taste, and you can hardly go wrong in investigating all of these types of positions.

1 c4, the English Opening, is a first move that you can use for any occasion and indeed, some grandmasters play nothing else. A simple way to get started is to play 2 g3 against all of Black's normal moves 1...e5, 1...c5 and 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . Later you'll almost certainly want to add in variations beginning with 2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (or 2  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ), and be able to switch into some 1 d4 openings (for example, 1 c4 e6 2 d4 d5, 1 c4 c6 2 d4 d5 or 1 c4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 3 d4). Just don't think that you can go on autopilot after 1 c4. You need to have a specific answer to every major black set-up (and there are quite a few of these, because 1 c4 doesn't limit Black's structural options as much as 1 e4 and 1 d4 do). On the other hand, playing 1 c4 will expose you to a range of positions and structures that you can use in other openings.

As Black in Category B, you should definitely incorporate one or more major defences into your stock of weapons; hopefully you'll stick with these and learn them in considerable detail through practice and study. Within the major openings, some variations are clearly more manageable than others, so keep your eye out for those. Obviously I can't set forth a repertoire for each major opening, but you should try to work with basic structures. If you're going to play the Sicilian Defence at this stage, for example, you can consistently aim for ...d6 and ...e5 in most variations, or choose lines with ...d6 and ...e6 in every variation, or play ...g6 and ...d6 whenever you can. Keep in mind that, because the Sicilian is the most popular opening in chess, no opening has less surprise value. You'll be running into opponents who have been playing sharp lines against it for 20 years. So if you're taking the Sicilian up at this stage, you should put in a lot of serious study time, as well as commit to playing it for a few years.

One way of doing this relatively painlessly would be to start with irregular variations of the Sicilian, some of which I mentioned in Chapter 8, and move to mainstream lines later.

In the French Defence, Black can steer the major variations into similar structures involving d4 and e5 by White, unless White chooses to concede equality (i.e., by choosing exd5). The French is a good lifetime opening, either as a main defence or a back-up, because Black has so many sound ways to play and can shift from system to system when necessary. That is certainly true of the Sicilian Defence, but perhaps less so with other major defences to 1 e4. The Caro-Kann Defence isn't as flexible; however, it is so inherently solid that it's hard to imagine any of the basic main lines proving unplayable, or even unpleasant enough to reduce the opening to an outsider status. It also requires less concrete study than most major openings. The Pirc Defence is an excellent choice for players who want to be able to switch between positional play and dynamically-charged lines. I think that it is underrated as a defence and appropriate for any strength level. However, some players will get discouraged because they often end up having to play with less territory under their command than with many other openings. All of these choices include an element of personal taste.

Against 1 d4, this is a good point to pick up an Indian Defence. Like so many teachers, I would recommend the 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , 2...e6 complex, because it's both solid and instructive. Versus the conventional 2 c4 lines, you would use the Nimzo-Indian (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ), and either the Queen's Indian (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b6) or the easier-to-learn Bogo-Indian (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 e6 3  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$ ). Those inclined to sharper and somewhat riskier struggles might choose the King's Indian Defence (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 g6 followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and ...d6) or the Benoni (1 d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2 c4 c5). Of course, any other major defence is also playable. The one thing you want to be careful about versus 1 d4 is conceding too much space without knowing exactly why you're doing so.

It would be nice to have something simple to play against 1 c4 and 1  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ; unfortunately, since White hasn't fully disclosed his intentions with these moves, Black has to be able to

respond to multiple set-ups. One way to approach 1 c4 is to limit the number of reasonable options for White. For example, you can begin with 1...e5, and then if 2 ♜c3, play 2...d6 or 2...♝b4, either of which limits White's choice of moves if he's genuinely trying for an advantage. For example, after 1 c4 e5 2 ♜c3 d6, White ordinarily chooses between 3 d4, leading to 3...exd4 4 ♞xd4 ♜c6, whereas against 3 ♜f3 or 3 g3, 3...f5 narrows White's options and keeps surprises to a minimum. After 2 g3, the variations 2...c6 and 2...♝f6 3 ♜g2 c6 are positionally forcing. You can see how these strategies play out by referring to Volume 3 of this series. Versus 1 ♜f3, someone who plays the Sicilian Defence might choose 1...c5 (allowing 2 e4), and then learn a system versus 2 c4, a Symmetrical English in which White has committed to 2 ♜f3; the latter task isn't so hard. A Queen's Gambit defender might be happy to play 1 ♜f3 d5, since 2 d4 will normally transpose to that opening. And so forth.

At the risk of boring the reader, I should emphasize again that the suggestions above are merely a small subset of reasonable variations, selected to give you a feel for how you might choose openings at various levels. They are mainly given so that you have concrete advice to go by, rather than some airy generalities. But any time that you are strongly attracted to a certain opening and have fun playing and studying it, that trumps other arguments. There is no substitute for enjoyment when you're trying to learn something.

## Category A Openings

Here we arrive at a point where overly-specific advice isn't very useful. At this level of strength, you can play any respectable opening without fear, and your repertoire can carry a theoretical load that would be unwieldy for a Category B player. In large part that's because a stronger player has a better understanding of and familiarity with chess positions, so he can absorb opening ideas and variations more quickly. Still, you won't want to beat your head against a wall by using what you thought were the latest discoveries in too many critical variations and then finding out that even your lower-rated opponents have played the same variations in

dozens of Internet games. My advice would be to play only a few fashionable main lines (three at most, fewer if you're so inclined), and fill in your repertoire with variations designed to make your opponent think on his own. You should also take into account whether you are good at retaining material that you have memorized; there's nothing worse than studying a line for days and then mixing up the moves when you finally get it over the board!

At this level, a couple of irregular openings can be of value to counterbalance the detailed theoretical knowledge possessed by many advanced opponents. In fact, many strong grandmasters benefit by *judicious* use of openings that are out of the mainstream. You can even implement this on move one; for example, 1 b3, 1 f4 and 1 ♜c3 are candidates for White. As Black, you can save some time and play a 'universal' system against 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4 and 1 ♜f3; for example, 1...g6, 1...d6 or 1...♜c6. However, be sure to employ these as secondary weapons for now. Using such moves exclusively can limit your general chess understanding; I have seen players damage their chess skills, and their long-term results, by never varying from 'safe' openings such as 1...g6 or, as White, the King's Indian Attack, Colle System or 1 b3. Even a blind use of 1 c4 can be counterproductive (for example, using 2 g3 with studied avoidance of any central confrontation). You simply have to keep the play sharp in a reasonable percentage of your openings if you want to improve.

Unsound or merely 'tricky' openings are another problem. Since you will probably want to drop such openings from your repertoire later, they can represent a poor investment of study time now. In principle, you should never have to completely abandon the openings that you are playing at this stage, unless they are too demanding to keep up with. That is, you should be able to employ them again from time to time. A few solid, less volatile, variations will serve you well in this respect; even if you're bored with them now, you'll inevitably find new ways to interpret them later.

Many authors make the point that you should adjust your opening repertoire to your style of play. That's a tricky proposition, however, for several reasons. First, you may not have a

discernible style; most players don't have one until they become skilled at the game. Second, the openings that you use have already partially defined how you play, but that doesn't necessarily reveal a true 'style'. Furthermore, by studying openings of another character, you may find that you enjoy a different type of chess entirely, and that you play it well. At any rate, I don't think this advice would apply until you have reached at least master strength and have a true understanding of your strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, as indicated above, it would be presumptuous to give masters concrete suggestions about which openings to play; they have their own ideas and tastes. But in general, I believe that strong players should try to have a flexible repertoire, broad enough to adjust to different opponents and different tournament situations.

### ***2. Choose openings that will improve your play***

On the face of it, this piece of advice may seem silly. Of course you want to improve your play, but can one opening really teach you more than another? I think that the answer is yes, even up to a fairly high level of player. For example, openings which lead towards 'automatic' play can retard your progress in terms of understanding, and demand less in terms of creative thought. It's a bad sign when you find yourself going on autopilot.

If you want to investigate certain structures more deeply, you might use two or more openings that are related. For example, you can get standard isolated d-pawn positions as White in certain lines of the Queen's Gambit, Nimzo-Indian, c3 Sicilian, and Panov Caro-Kann; and as Black in the Tarrasch Variation of the Queen's Gambit, the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defence, and other defences. Alternatively, you might want to adopt what I call the 'restraint structure', that is, ...c6/...e6 structures without a d-pawn (see the introductory chapters of Volume 1). These can be found in a number of defences such as the Caro-Kann, the Slav and the Scandinavian. Many 1 e4 e5 openings feature Black upholding a 'strong point' on e5 with a ...d6/...e5 structure, and the King's Indian Defence often does the same, so it might provide a

complementary defence to 1 d4. Sometimes there's a general resemblance between openings; for example, the moves ...e6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  are common to the Nimzo-Indian Defence, the Ragozin Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, the Winawer and McCutcheon Variations of the French Defence, and a couple of variations of the English Opening (including the English Defence). You probably won't want to play all of these lines at once, but it doesn't hurt to consider similar piece placements when trying to find openings to your taste.

Naturally, you should be careful not to over-indulge in this practice. After all, as I'm constantly saying, it's also important to learn as many structures as you can and expand your chess knowledge in the process. So, while you will do well to learn a few structures deeply, don't limit yourself by trying to force your repertoire down a single path.

### ***3. Be daring and play new openings***

The legendary Viktor Korchnoi has said, bluntly, that if you want to improve your chess, you should play a new opening. I guess this is a variation on a theme that I'm starting to bore everyone with. But it's a controversial point of view, and one that not all coaches agree with. One traditional philosophy has it that you should specialize in your openings in order to understand them on a deep level. For one thing, by doing so, you can reasonably expect to avoid serious trouble early on. The more modern view, however, tends to be that it's important to learn about the game as a whole, and since different openings lead to distinct kinds of play, you will become a more complete player by exposing yourself to a wide range of positions. Moreover, the freshness and creativity that you bring to the board will often compensate for lesser familiarity, even to the extent of avoiding or setting early traps.

Not surprisingly, a combination of these two approaches will probably serve you best, and in fact most strong players have a wide repertoire, but also a few favourite openings that they play more than the others. In any case, you shouldn't abandon any well-established opening based upon one loss. At the very least, you should research the opening to find out where you went

wrong (or where theory can be improved upon). And if you take up a new opening as your main weapon, play the old one from time to time, especially if you can limit yourself to variations in which one new move by the opponent won't be likely to lead you into a bad position. After all, you've invested time into the first opening and it's foolish to waste it.

In practice, I think that the tendency to cling to your habitual openings and be afraid to experiment is a greater danger than the disadvantages of superficially jumping around from opening to opening. Many of you will recognize that the more you play an opening, the more stale your thinking can become, leading to dogmatic moves and a tendency to miss unusual ideas. Also, with the advent of databases and an explosion of resources for opening research, it doesn't take anywhere near as long as it did two decades ago to become quite familiar with the variations and ideas of a new opening. Granted, a panicky switch to a something new may not be a good idea against high-level opponents. You should have a safe fallback opening in case of emergency. Similarly, if you know that your opponent, however strong, plays a certain variation against your favourite opening and you want to avoid it, be careful about concocting something too rapidly (for example, in the 10 minutes between the posting of the pairings and the beginning of the game!). The odds are that he is at least as familiar as you are with something that you've never played before. Furthermore, playing an opening for which you know all the themes and ideas is probably safer than trying to wing it. Naturally, if you think that your chosen variation will give you a significant disadvantage, see if you can play another variation within the same overall opening complex, or something as safe as you can find. Given time, adjusting to your opponent isn't a bad idea; maybe you know that you're playing him tomorrow, for example, or in a weekly tournament. Just be careful of precipitously abandoning what you're familiar with.

Regardless of your circumstances, playing and studying even a limited number of games with a particular opening will probably teach you about kinds of positions that you hadn't previously encountered. That includes various

positional ideas and tactics which will apply to other openings and middlegames. Furthermore, new positions are very helpful in improving your sense of timing, that is, how much you can sacrifice in one domain (for example, development) to gain in another (for example, structure). Finally, there's the obvious point that if you become disillusioned with a particular opening, you may have an opportunity to play it from the other side of the board.

#### *4. Don't feel constrained by the latest fashion*

Just because leading grandmasters are playing something, that doesn't mean that it is 'best'; often their choice of openings is based upon practical considerations. For example, they may be intent upon causing specialized types of problems for their elite opponents, or even protecting their ratings by finding drawish variations for Black. It's amazing how many players tell me that they don't play some opening because it's 'inferior' or 'unsound', when that opinion is based solely upon the fact that the top grandmasters aren't currently playing it, or that there was a single high-profile game in which one side got the better game and won. Keep in mind that all major openings are playable. To me, in addition, there is something slightly depressing about playing the same openings as elite grandmasters. Inevitably, those professionals will be coming up with new ideas and working out the details faster than you could ever dream of doing yourself, so you're always in the role of a follower instead of a creator.

## Improving Your Opening Play

After all is said and done, you want to improve your opening play. There are no magic tricks for doing that, but I'll give some advice and point to a number of training techniques for getting opening ideas to work in practice. Preparation and practice are obviously crucial, but the best ways to do so are not self-evident. To what extent you use computers to study and prepare, for example, is a much-debated question among chess teachers.

The most common questions from students have to do with how to go about learning openings. Naturally, that relates to how to play them well. First, understand that there are no magic shortcuts. If you read through chess literature or go to instructional sites on the web, you'll soon realize that no one can possibly implement all of the various tips and strategies that are supposed to lead to improvement. Too much advice is probably worse than no advice at all unless you drastically narrow it down. I find it slightly irritating when authors and teachers come up with these lengthy lists of what to think about during a chess game; after their first 15 items to 'always keep in mind', they flood you with other 'common mental mistakes' and then start all over again in the next chapter or article! If you've read enough golf and tennis magazines, you'll recognize the problem: we can't play with more than a few tips in our minds at once. In fact, the most useful pieces of advice for the average chess-player to consciously refer to in the midst of battle are probably simple reminders such as 'Pay attention to captures and checks' or 'When you're just about to make your move, take one more look at the most obvious replies'! The rest should become part of an organic thinking process. In the case of openings and early middlegames, crowding your thought-process with maxims is particularly ridiculous; if you want to escape the concrete for a while, it's much better to step back from the position and consider what strategies go with the particular pawn-structure on the board, including the optimal spots for each piece. This can be done on your opponent's thinking time.

Something similar applies with respect to the ubiquitous advice about opening play and study techniques: there are too many considerations for anyone to handle, and too many hypothetical goals to achieve. What's more frustrating, I don't think that any such advice is universal; whether it works depends upon the individual and what chess skills they've acquired. Moreover, some questions have no correct answers. For example: should you memorize openings or learn their ideas? That varies according to circumstance, skill level, and inclination. In this section, I'll be setting forth a wide variety of methods for preparing and studying openings,

which taken together would overwhelm their purpose. So by all means look over this advice, but then pick and choose what seems useful for you, and don't try to do too much at once.

## 1. Committing to and recording a repertoire

Let's assume that you've chosen your major openings and top-level variations according to the guidelines described above (or not). You probably won't be sure about what to do against all or even most of the subvariations. It's even more likely that you won't know how to answer the wide variety of individual lines that your opponent can throw at you. Therefore, as you proceed, you'll need to arrive at a more detailed provisional repertoire, which will almost certainly be adjusted as time passes.

The process of filling out details in a repertoire is in itself a means of learning and improvement. To do this, you first need to see how the opening breaks down into variations and subvariations. Books are helpful in that regard; for example, an encyclopaedic openings compendium should make it clear what the main variations of an opening are. You might also skim through the Contents list of a book specializing in a particular opening or set of openings, and use the Index of Variations if it has one. Still another method is to use a database to find a large set of games with the opening to see how frequently various lines occur. In fact, most databases have an option of ordering games by opening, to any desired level of subvariations.

Then it's time to pick the lines you wish to play. For now, choose one line versus any variation that you need to have an answer for. Later you will be adding options, but at this point we'll take a linear approach. Take your time and find something compatible with your tastes, testing a few lines on the Internet or at the club. Speciality books and repertoire books will suggest certain variations and provide good references as you continue to play the opening. Alternatively, you may adopt a variation that a friend plays, or choose to try out some line that you saw in a game in a magazine. If you have a teacher, he can recommend openings and variations; just be wary of any teacher who tries to foist most of his own repertoire on you, in

particular if it means discarding what you currently play. In each case, ask if an opening is too complex or theoretical to use at your current playing strength. Some players like to look at what variations the specialists in certain openings are choosing, on the grounds that they know what they're doing. Copying a grandmaster's *entire* repertoire isn't good, in my opinion. You'll tend to end up with too 'professional' a repertoire, constructed for another player's purposes (for example, a top player may only want to draw with Black).

Having decided upon a set of opening variations to start out with, it is essential to document what you've chosen, including the main lines and however many provisional variations that you are willing to commit to. This absolutely requires that you chart out your new repertoire in some handy format. There are several ways of doing so, but whatever method you use, save copies of your older repertoires even when you move on to revised ones.

The first option is rather primitive, but may appeal to those who still prefer physical media such as paper over electrons. It consists of manually written charts, possibly in tree form, which list the chosen variations and subvariations. This corresponds with the famous 'notebooks' that the great masters of old used to carry around with them. Another common method is (was) to use index cards.

On a slightly higher level of sophistication, you can enter the same information into a word-processing program on a computer. Then it can be either printed out or read on the screen. One benefit of doing it this way is that the chart can be modified and edited with a few keystrokes.

The most sophisticated and best way to record a repertoire is to use a chess database program such as ChessBase or Chess Assistant. Using ChessBase, for example, you can create a single game with an overall tree of the main moves of each opening you use. Then you can create 'games' containing each variation (or subvariation), doing so to whatever degree of detail you desire. Here are just a few advantages of this approach:

1. You can play over every move of the repertoire on the screen, going back and forth through the variations.

2. You can change the moves whenever you want to without having to rewrite.

3. You can include verbal commentary, cross references, and printable diagrams wherever you choose.

4. You can take relevant games from other databases and merge in the ones that you think will be helpful.

5. You can turn on an analytical engine and have it assess positions in your repertoire, as well as suggesting alternate moves.

6. You can always look at and/or print out the repertoire in chart form, or game form if you prefer that.

7. You can catch transpositions more easily.

These days, not surprisingly, just about every serious player uses a database program to construct their repertoire. It doesn't take much computer literacy to learn how to get your moves entered, after which they are automatically ready to replay. The actual information that you use in your files needn't come solely from databases; in fact, opening books are still by far the best source for most players, and you will want to input analysis from them into the repertoire file in your chess program. In fact, the process of keying in moves from books is an excellent way to fix them in your mind. I recommend it for everyone from beginner on up.

Having recorded everything in orderly form, you can and should periodically review your repertoire to see which variations aren't working well, which need more study, and which you find unpleasant to play. These can be replaced, but only after a good-faith effort to solve the problem by making minor adjustments, picking different subvariations, and looking for different ways to play the same basic positions. Of course, you can always expand the repertoire at any juncture and have two options available.

## 2. Strategy, tactics and memorization

After some study of an opening, and perhaps experience with it, I strongly recommend explicitly writing down the typical strategies and themes that go with a variation. This includes basic goals, tactical motifs, opening traps, typical piece positions, standard manoeuvres, potential pawn-breaks, common pawn-structures

(perhaps with a few characteristic endings), and probable middlegame plans (including potential weaknesses to attack). You should make up an ordered list of these ideas; it's helpful if you yourself decide how you want to organize such a list, and what should be included in it. How complete or even accurate your list is doesn't matter as much as getting it down on paper to refer to. Also, don't forget to go through this process for both White and Black! That is, you need to be aware of your opponent's ideas as well as your own.

This task should be done early on in your repertoire-creation process, and not put off. Depending upon your outlook, such careful charting might be slightly boring, certainly more so than playing, but in that case you can make the list fairly quickly and then come back to it later in order to add to, modify or delete items, based upon the games that you play and books that you read. I'd be sure to keep an eye out for typical tricks and tactics in your openings; if you fall for one of these, everything else is irrelevant, at least for that particular game.

At the same time, don't undervalue straightforward memorization of opening moves. Most players will find that, as they memorize openings, they will absorb by osmosis most of the typical themes and structures. After all, memorization in chess is a method of acquiring real knowledge, just as it is in the sciences, crafts, and most fields. The more that you play over opening moves, even by rote, the better they will be absorbed and some of the wisdom behind them will inevitably sink into your consciousness. Naturally, memorization isn't sufficient to make you a strong player; indeed, there's a kind of overdependence on it that can lead to the common mistake of playing the same move in a completely inappropriate position. So you need perspective, and becoming aware of why you're making particular moves has to be combined with blunt memorization; fortunately, these are not exclusive processes.

You'll also want to start thinking about move-order issues, which I have strongly emphasized in this series. As you develop your openings, think about how you will concretely answer each order in which your opponent can play his moves, and how you might adjust your own move-order to your advantage. This can be

decided upon gradually, and may even take years to pin down completely.

### 3. Study model games interactively

The best teachers universally recommend studying master games to improve your play. In the case of opening study, an obvious method is to choose games directly from an opening book, ideally finding copies of them in your database and collecting them in one place. You can also collect a series of games from a database with the desired opening variation, and then sort them according to rating, so that you see how the best players handle the positions first. If you have narrowed down the variation to a particular line, you may even be able to play through every game with it.

Still another useful technique for gathering samples is to use the games of a specialist in each line. This is also easy to do with a database – by examining the openings key, you will soon recognize who has played the variation for the longest time (in certain contexts, there may be a function informing you directly about who the most frequent practitioners are). The same goes for reading opening books with an eye towards the opponents in relevant games. Often a particular player is closely associated with an opening variation, either as Black or White, although it makes for a more productive experience to pick at least two or more players, in order to compare treatments and find lines where you can implement your own ideas.

Having located games, the way in which you study them will depend upon your time and energy, but most teachers will recommend that you participate actively in the learning process. Rather than simply playing the moves over, try predicting (or guessing at) them yourself. Ideally you will take enough time thinking about them that you get a good grip on the relevant positions. The traditional way to do this is to set up a board and place a book in front of you, or use a paper copy of the game. You can generate a printed copy of games with any serious database program, and include diagrams if that works for you. Cover up the moves (with, e.g., a piece of paper, ruler or index card) while analysing the position. With the right physical set-up, you will be able to uncover one move at

a time. The truly dedicated student can try to predict both sides' moves, but it's probably more realistic to analyse continuations from 'your' side of the board, and you can get through more material if you do so. Not surprisingly, you can also go through this process with a database program. ChessBase, for example, has a 'Training mode' that reveals only one move at a time as you work out the next move. Some very strong players have emphasized that it helps to periodically use a physical board to play over games (rather than the computer monitor), because that's how you will be seeing things at a tournament.

You will always benefit most from analysing a position deeply, but realistically, studying opening theory involves a lot of material and you probably won't get to enough games or variations if you worry over each move in every game. As time progresses, you will be able to identify one or two positions from the opening of each game that require the most serious consideration. If you only have time to spend a minute or so on a move, at least this approximates the time you might actually get in a real game! Some teachers recommend using a clock to discipline your time management.

With respect to available study time, you have one more decision to make. For your general chess education, there's nothing better than analysing the whole game using the cover-up method. But if your goal is to study openings, you simply won't get through enough helpful material unless you cut the process short as the middlegame begins, and stop there or quickly play through the remaining moves, by hand or on a screen. Of course, it's hard to assess where the border between opening and middlegame is, so you'll have to get a feel for where to stop as you play over more games. In this respect, it's probably easier to use the games in an opening book (or DVD) than in a games collection, but you can do both. See the next section for further thoughts on how to improve this procedure.

I suggest using a mix of annotated and unannotated games. The former allow you to compare the thoughts of a strong player with your own. The latter force you to think more about a position, and accustom you to playing more creatively without an ever-present authority lurking in your mind.

#### 4. Creative learning: what if...?

As mentioned, you can apply the active method above to opening books and articles as well as games collections. But I didn't explicitly mention what is perhaps the most important part of the process: asking the question 'What if he [your opponent] plays move X? What happens then?'. If you do this consistently for most of the moves that you're looking at, and answer the questions as you go along, you will improve at an accelerated rate and greatly broaden your perspective on anything you study. Furthermore, you'll find that sometimes there's no clear answer to your question about a proposed move, or perhaps no good reply at all. That means that you've come up with a worthwhile new move. It turns out that there are plenty of them; every player, once he's learned the rules and played some games, can find moves that haven't been tried before (at least moves that aren't in the books or generally known). Sometimes, in fact, the less you know the better. When I began to play chess, the books available to me were mostly games collections, and I was already a passably competent player before I ran into opening pamphlets and the like. So I became my own main source of ideas for the opening, taking the first moves of a game from a collection and using the 'What if...?' method. After a while, it wasn't that difficult to put my own stamp on the variations I played.

That still holds true today. You should be able to personalize your repertoire with a small improvement here or there, a change of move-orders, or even a new strategy entirely. If you play very sharp lines, you may find a block-buster novelty in a tactical situation; of course, that is much more likely if you stay away from the most popular lines of the day.

Even if you don't introduce new moves, asking the 'What if...?' question can lead you to understand the subtleties of a variation, which might result in taking up some move that has previously been regarded as inferior, or abandoning a variation that is supposed to be good for you (and doing so before you lose a game with it!). Sometimes you may decide that you'd like to incorporate the line into your repertoire, but only when you're playing with the opposite colour!

Players everywhere will tell you that finding new opening moves or charting new territory in the opening is among the most rewarding experiences that comes from study. For some, it is their proudest achievement in chess.

## 5. Practice makes perfect

Not surprisingly, it is vital to play your openings as often as possible. This can be done in casual play and tournaments, against computers, or in online playing situations. These days, most serious players take advantage of the latter possibility, and there are numerous playing sites on which to do so. In general, inexperienced players can get by using a free or inexpensive site, and that may be the proper budgetary decision. But as you get more serious, the major pay sites such as Internet Chess Club or Playchess offer the strongest opposition and the chance to sit in on grandmaster games, along with many features that other sites don't offer. You should do your own investigation before deciding what fits your needs.

There are other ways to make your practice more efficient and rewarding. For example, if you're trying to learn an opening as Black, practice playing it from the white side, and vice-versa. You can even set up a series of games with a partner and agree to play the same variation again and again. Such practice is ideally suited for online play, and this is one situation in which I can recommend blitz games (in sensible, non-addictive, quantities). Otherwise, for the sake of opening practice, try to make your online games at a 10-minute or preferably 15-minute time-control (or longer, if it's possible to find an opponent). In that way, you get to reflect a little about the opening and early middlegame issues before descending into a time-scramble. It's even worth sacrificing some rating points by taking an impractical amount of time to emphasize opening accuracy instead of results; after all, it doesn't take too long to get your online rating back to its natural level.

Finally, many players test their openings by playing against a computer program. That's an excellent way to gain experience, and puts the learning process under your control; for example, you can pause the play and contemplate the position, look up the line in a book, jot down

what's happening, or take a break to eat something. One drawback to this kind of study is that it takes place in a less competitive atmosphere than online play, and might make your transition to over-the-board games more difficult. In addition, you might find that you miss the social element of the game; of course, that might be an improvement when you consider some online behaviour!

## 6. Over the board

This chapter isn't about psychological issues, but let me devote a few words to playing openings in real, over-the-board situations (for example, at tournaments). Right away, I believe that it's a mistake to blitz out opening moves at a rapid-fire pace. For one thing, it's rather obnoxious, and may unnecessarily provoke more determined play from your opponent. More importantly (for most players, anyway), you will probably play an unintended move from time to time. This can happen even if you're familiar with an opening and wide awake. For example, you might be prepared to make a certain standard move in any case, but then fail to adjust to your opponent's unexpected move. Or you play your moves in the wrong order, which is, incidentally, a common time-trouble slip. Probably the most frequent mistake when slammimg out the opening moves is to play a customary move automatically, and then suddenly remember that you had actually decided to play something different if you ever reached the position. All these possibilities are very unlikely to happen if you take more than five seconds per move. And pressing the clock with normal force goes a long way towards establishing your maturity.

Next, you have to realize and accept that you'll seldom get the exact subvariation that you're hoping for, that you'll often not get the exact variation, and sometimes, you won't even end up in the right opening! The bald fact is that there are two of you playing, and your opponent has his own preparation as well as limits on his theoretical knowledge. So he may deviate into a sideline, use a move-order that you hadn't anticipated, or play a new move, whether intentionally or not.

How should you react when you are surprised by an unexpected opening move, and are

unsure of whether you're facing something new? The obvious answer, one given by some books and teachers, is that you should avoid speculating about your opponent's knowledge and play the position objectively, at normal speed, just as you would any random middle-game position. After all, unexpected moves are commonplace throughout a game. But in fact, it's absolutely justified to hit the reset button and take an unusual amount of time to think. After all, your opponent hasn't studied that random middlegame position, but there's a good possibility that he *has* studied this particular opening and therefore a chance, although hardly a certainty, that his last move is a prepared novelty. If so, then there are more likely to be different kinds of issues in the position, and possibly tricks for you to negotiate. What's more, small mistakes are more likely to be punished when your opponent has had time to reflect about the possibilities away from the board. So additional caution is desirable. It's also possible that the surprise move is an inferior one, or an outright mistake (after all, there may be a good reason why you haven't seen it before). In that case, taking extra time to check for a possible flaw is also worthwhile. In either case, don't feel intimidated into making a quick response. While it may be more macho to throw down a 'You-don't-scare-me', 'Try-that-out-for-size' move, you really should expend some resources at this first critical juncture of the game.

Finally, a time-honoured question in chess is whether to 'play the board' or 'play the opponent'. My general inclination in the middle-game is to play the board, which means to make your moves without taking the tastes or foibles of your specific opponent into account. That doesn't eliminate speculation, or playing differently against different strength opponents, or even making objectively inferior moves in the hope of causing your opponents more problems. Rather, it means that you make most decisions independent of an assessment of the idiosyncrasies of opponents, or of their perceived tendencies to play weakly in certain types of positions and strongly in others.

In choosing your openings, however, both before and during the game, I think that you have your best opportunity to 'play the opponent',

that is, if you're quite sure that you're familiar with someone's style and preferences, it makes sense to guide the play away from those. For example, many wild attacking players don't like simplified positions, especially with the queens off. Other positionally-oriented players become uncomfortable in out-of-control tactical positions. I think that it's too risky and difficult to try to channel the direction of the play in the middlegame or endgame; for one thing, their assessments will be approximate and the final positions fuzzy. But in the opening, because of previous and fixed knowledge, you can be almost sure whether a certain kind of position can be forced, and what the evaluations of the resulting variations are. Therefore you'll know what, if anything, you are sacrificing in objective terms by forcing the play in a certain direction. Putting this together, I'd say that it's all right to play opening variations that take into account your opponent's style, but be careful not to lean too heavily upon the practice.

## 7. Chess information and the openings

In today's chess world, there are more sources of information and analysis about openings than can possibly be kept track of. Here's a brief guide to what's out there:

1. For starters, you can find multiple opening books about every conventional opening, as well as books about most of their variations, and even some about subvariations. If you include books written in various languages, literally hundreds of opening books by master-strength players appear each year. Some of these are appearing in e-book form as well. One enormous advantage of opening books is that you have a strong player (usually an expert in the line) sorting through hundreds of variations to show you the important and recommended ones. The author of an opening book also organizes the important material in an opening by filtering out the vast numbers of games with which the reader needn't be concerned in practical play. In addition, most books these days have a great many recommendations for how to improve upon current theory. Remarkably, these recommendations sometimes go years before they seep into top-level play and become the main moves.

2. The most significant longstanding periodic publications with an emphasis on openings are the Informator series, which has annotations by strong and elite grandmasters, and the New in Chess Yearbooks, which consist of opening articles by leading experts. ChessBase Magazine, an electronic magazine on DVD, publishes numerous opening surveys in each issue.

3. In electronic form, DVDs about chess openings have expanded. Be warned that these are mostly of poor quality, but there are notable exceptions, primarily in the series of high-quality DVD videos from ChessBase.

4. Many websites are loaded with information about openings. Every year, the website ChessPublishing produces the equivalent of many books' worth of opening material, all annotated by grandmasters, along with e-books summarizing the information. Elsewhere on the Web, innumerable teaching sites, blogs, and players' home pages have opening analysis.

5. Chess magazines not only have many games annotated in detail by leading players, but they often contain separate opening articles. Almost every country has a national publication, and many other wonderful magazines are published around the world. It wouldn't be fair for me to recommend particular ones, but you can combine the recommendations of friends and use web searches to pick out some, perhaps on a trial basis.

6. Finally, we have the amazing world of database programs, which can organize millions of games according to opening, instantly pull up all games in a certain position, search for structures, and save these in an accessible format. Increasingly, players (especially already-knowledgeable professionals) use database programs to research the latest games and improve their

own repertoires. With their years of exposure to opening ideas and large blocks of available time, some grandmasters practically live off databases to satisfy their opening theory needs.

That isn't realistic or even desirable for the non-professional, however. For the majority of us, an opening book is still the best way to understand a variation's positional and tactical ideas, and to pick up intelligent suggestions. One reason for this is that it's difficult to assess the worth of the moves that you find from databases. When doing searches, I sometimes filter out all games below a certain rating level, and I also try to include all the annotated games that I can find; nevertheless, I'm continually surprised by how often this gives a wrong impression about what the best lines really are. In addition, with the arm's-length view that comes from a database search, it's not easy to decide which variations are practical or which move-order problems will prevent you from getting the positions that you're after. By contrast, when a titled author has reviewed, thought about, and (ideally) played an opening, he will have insights and explanations that the average player can't generate on his own.

In conclusion, there's a lot to consider when choosing and preparing your openings. In this chapter I've attempted to provide a basis for doing so, as well as address the issue of how best to study openings. You by no means need to apply everything or even most of what I've recommended; in fact, it's probably best to keep your mind focused and apply only one or two things at a time! But regardless of its immediate value, I hope that this chapter provides a reference when you're in doubt about how to proceed with your chess openings and your development as a player.

# 10 The Future of Openings

Having described the range of openings used in contemporary chess, I don't think there's much doubt about their vitality in the immediate future. These days, it's hard for us to imagine that in the 1920s, Capablanca and Lasker were fretting about how opening theory had progressed to such an extreme that chess had become fundamentally limited. At the time, it was suggested that no one could win against a skilled master if he chose certain openings (the Caro-Kann was a particular worry, leading Réti to reject 1 e4 altogether, and the Queen's Gambit Declined seemed an insurmountable barrier versus 1 d4). That being the case, the percentage of draws would increase dramatically until we reached a state called 'the death of chess'. Capablanca even proposed a change of rules to counteract this perceived problem.

We occasionally hear mutterings to this effect today, but I think that the current situation is similar to what it actually was in those times. Ever since this concern surfaced, the number of legitimate openings, variations, and subvariations used by grandmasters has exploded without pause, and 80 years later that process is accelerating. There are more unanswered questions in the entire set of practical openings today, and more difficulties in playing them, than could have been imagined by the grandmasters in the 1970s and 1980s, much less those from Capablanca's time.

When it comes to computers, another source of concern, you could argue that the death of chess by endgames is more likely than its death by openings! At least the complexity of endgames, as demonstrated by the development of comprehensive endgame tablebases, is limited enough to be handled with perfect play for up to 6 pieces (4, excluding the kings). By contrast, chess programs are at their worst in the opening, as long as they are 'out of book'; by definition, the opening is the most complicated part of the game in terms of the number of possible future continuations. Granted, it is often more

manageable for us as humans than a random middlegame since we have a body of accumulated knowledge and recognize recurring structures. But the number of opening permutations is so great, and the difficulties of assessment so far beyond the grasp of the most powerful computer ever contemplated, that we can be confident about the game's longevity in that respect.

When we get to specifics, the issues are more involved, and vary sharply from group to group. Even professional players use different approaches to their choice of openings based upon their strategies regarding both competition and rating. Let's begin at the very top, with World Champions and their top-ten peers. To the dismay of many fans, some elite players employ a 'win-as-White, hold-as-Black' strategy, a policy reflected in their opening choices. That is not a bad way to win closed tournaments; and equally importantly, to avoid rating disasters. Thus we see some of the top-ten players resorting to similar variations over many years. Ex-World Champion Vladimir Kramnik, for example, has used a number of solid openings as Black versus 1 e4, such as the Petroff Defence, Sveshnikov Sicilian (which has become notoriously drawish at the top levels, despite its aggressive and dynamic nature), and famously, the Berlin Defence to the Ruy Lopez. His drawing percentage as Black is a rather hefty 56%. Supergrandmaster Peter Leko plays some of the same openings, as well as the Marshall Attack, an aggressive gambit which produces very forcing play that often ends in a draw. His drawing percentage as Black is 60%. Anatoly Karpov, a World Champion famous for his conservative style, has used the Caro-Kann Defence and various 1 e4 e5 defences including the Petroff. He sports a 54% drawing ratio as Black. You will find that these same opening variations are used disproportionately by several other supergrandmasters (in comparison to the practice of professional players in general). A somewhat different situation arises versus 1 d4.

The leading players exhibit more variety, although almost everyone includes the super-solid 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and 2...e6 (the Nimzo-Indian/Queen's Indian complex) in their repertoires, sometimes exclusively, as well as a large number of games with 1...d5, the other most conservative first move. To the extent that 1 d4 play sometimes turns wild, it usually does so because White feels obliged to try to win against an inherently solid opening such as the Slav or Queen's Indian, and is even willing to sacrifice a pawn or two in that effort.

By contrast, it's worth noting how World Champions Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov, the two most prominent players of the modern era, made winning as Black an integral part of their approach. Fischer drew only 37% of his games as Black and won 51% (versus considerably lower average opposition, to be sure); whereas Kasparov drew only 48% of his games with Black and won 40%, far ahead of his contemporaries. They both specialized in the dynamic Sicilian Defence, and both initially used the double-edged King's Indian and Grünfeld Defences as Black, turning to more solid approaches later in their careers. Kasparov ultimately went through every major system versus 1 d4, and naturally played them all well.

We also find a contemporary set of top players who lean in the Fischer/Kasparov direction, and take many more forays in experimental directions. It will surprise no one who follows their games, for example, that Veselin Topalov and Alexei Shirov, who boast of wide repertoires filled with active openings, have had unusually low drawing percentages with both White and Black; nor that the eccentric Alexander Morozevich and aggressive Judit Polgar have Fischer-like drawing percentages. So even the accelerated growth of professionalism at the top hasn't taken the life out of the game. The up-and-coming younger stars have, as a rule, very wide repertoires, which is promising, and engage willingly in complicated fights. However, it's too early to say whether that will translate into low drawing percentages as they assume the ranks of the world's best. Perhaps faster time-controls will have their effect as well. I do think that courageous play will continue to be rewarded, as it has for most of chess history.

At the current time, I find that the most interesting opening play (and games, for that matter) tends to come from the next couple of tiers of players. Most professionals below a certain world rank, perhaps 15-20, don't have enough invitations to support themselves, and so they play extensively in leagues, team events, and Swiss System tournaments. Under these circumstances, a higher proportion of wins is necessary for success, and the 'hold as Black' philosophy is much less prominent. Thus, every month, we see an amazing array of openings used by extremely strong players (including those on their way up or down in the rankings). To be more precise, every major opening discussed in this series gets tested in numerous subvariations, and even very minor openings are consistently represented at the level of masters, albeit somewhat less as the competition stiffens. You can explore this on your own by downloading games from a number of prominent websites. Is this set of players using a wider variety of openings since, at 50-100 points below supergrandmaster levels, they can count on their opponents' less precise play? That is extremely unlikely, especially since theory is spread and devoured at outrageous speed these days, and every grandmaster has his own prepared ideas versus every opening. Then what's the difference? For one thing, a very limited number of openings are being played consistently by the highest-rated players at any one time, because in exclusive tournaments they tend to dispute the latest fashionable openings. Nevertheless, those openings are changing on a regular basis, if sluggishly, as they have in every period of modern chess history, especially post-WWII. So the idea that openings are 'inferior' because they aren't consistently played at supertournaments is simply misguided. Right now the French Defence (the third most popular e-pawn defence by quite a margin) is only played on a frequent basis by two of the world's top ten players, but I'd be surprised if anyone, with plenty of time on their hands, could show me how to get a forced advantage versus the French. Openings such as the Pirc Defence, the Dutch Defence and the King's Indian Defence are in good theoretical shape at the moment, and who can say that, objectively, they give Black a greater disadvantage than, say, any of a

number of Closed Ruy Lopez lines? Yet right at the moment you won't see them played much until you drop below the top ten. Even the most maligned of openings may ultimately equalize; out of the blue, for example, Carlsen and others began to play the Alekhine Defence with success, and a variety of lesser 1 e4 e5 variations appear to be perfectly sound. If you look at the actual theory as well as practice, it seems as though, played accurately, almost any major e-pawn or d-pawn defence will achieve a *de facto* equality at a certain point of the game. This leads to two main questions: how early does that ultimate equality express itself and, on a related note, how hard is it to reach a level game in over-the-board play? These are practical matters. It would be great if we could evaluate openings these days by including a number or designation reflecting how difficult each opening is to handle! That degree of difficulty translates directly into how likely it is that you'll make a mistake or, if not, run into time-pressure. It's not always important in practice whether you stand equal, or slightly better, or slightly worse in theory, if on every move you're confronted with problems that are especially hard to solve. I could probably make a good theoretical case for the objective equality of the Modern Benoni after many accurate moves. But the difficulty of finding those moves is arguably much higher than finding the right moves in the Nimzo-Indian Defence or Queen's Gambit Declined. Clearly, that will be reflected on the players' clocks. From White's viewpoint, the same consideration applies: versus accurate play by Black, no opening is likely to give him a forced advantage in the long run. But the mainstream ones tend to retain some edge into the early middlegame, and continue to pose nontrivial problems for Black thereafter. I discussed this in Chapter 6, where I suggested that White's preference for 'mainstream' openings such as the Ruy Lopez and Queen's Gambit over the Scotch Game or London System has more to do with the first two's ability to pose lasting difficulties than to any abstract theoretical superiority.

But whether a certain opening tends to equalize more easily than another has limited relevance for the average player. In general, the words 'draw' and 'drawish' have become outrageously overused. In middlegames with two

vulnerable kings and a material imbalance, even grandmasters commentating live on websites will say 'The position is drawn now', or 'drawish', although a 2700+ player then manages to lose it after errors by both players have given them alternately winning positions! One difficulty here is the reliance on computer assessments: a '-0.10', even if accurate, doesn't distinguish between easily drawn king-and-pawn endings and complex positions with a high probability of a decisive result. The other problem is the egoism of annotators and commentators, who want to show how easy chess is for them, and act as though they're shocked when great players make minor errors (sometimes given '??' for dramatic effect) which result in one side being able to win a complex position with perfect play. In view of this, imagine how far away from a draw you must be in the opening! Barring cases of a particular variation or subvariation that leads to a draw by repetition, that should be your last worry. To be sure, aiming for complex and/or dynamic positions in at least some of your games is generally good for your chess, but not for the sake of avoiding draws. You can confirm that by examining the allegedly drawish symmetrical lines that I've written about in this series; they may seem dull, but they almost always afford realistic winning chances. So be sceptical when someone tells you that one opening or another is 'drawish'; arguably, none are.

Returning to high-level play, I think that the general positional character of the opening is a major determinant of its appeal. For example, throughout the history of chess, the best players have unquestionably preferred having positions with more space (that is, with control over more territory). Arguably, all of the World Champions have been partial to space, excepting possibly Steinitz and Petrosian at certain times during their careers. While modern masters have incorporated quite a few more restricted positions into their repertoires (for one thing, the Sicilian Defence is currently played in 20-25% of all games), I'd say that this preference persists, albeit in diminished form. Quite apart from the objective worth of openings in which Black controls less space, they tend to be more difficult to play, at least for the majority of players. Furthermore, in master play, there seems to

be a practical differentiation (if not a clear one) between defences involving fianchettoes and those without. The former, even when sound and objectively worthwhile, seem to require greater accuracy. The Modern Defence (1...g6) and 1...b6 are the most obvious examples, and some grandmasters would say the same about the Modern Benoni and the King's Indian Defence. Still, there are prominent exceptions; for example, the Queen's Indian Defence isn't usually looked upon in this fashion, nor is the Grünfeld; and the Sicilian Dragon rolls merrily along. So there are no hard-and-fast rules. And naturally, these considerations are much less meaningful at a lower level, where games are seldom decided upon the basis of territorial control. In fact, defending territory is often harder for the lower-level player than playing with less of it!

Nevertheless, along the same lines, most strong players seem to have found that, in response to 1 e4, 1...e5, the French Defence, and the Caro-Kann Defence are easier to handle in practice than most other systems. Both 1...e5 and the French Defence establish an actual stake in the centre, and the Caro-Kann, while surrendering the centre by ...dxe4 in the main lines, opens the d-file and creates room for central piece activity. The latter is missing in most variations of the Sicilian, Pirc and Alekhine Defences, and that can make them more difficult

to handle in practice. Perhaps as players become more proficient at managing positions with less space, variations involving spatial deficits will acquire a status of practical as well as theoretical equality. That is already the case with well-established variations of the Sicilian Defence which were looked upon unfavourably in earlier times. If this increased skilfulness proves to be the general case, a positive consequence would be the expansion of creative possibilities in the opening. That is certainly the current trend, considering how many new early moves are suddenly becoming respectable. One happy side-effect already is that Internet players and club players, who are experimenting constantly, have become important contributors to the discovery process. As an amateur, you can have an independent say about opening theory and more importantly, feel free of its constraints. I won't need to convince most active players of this, certainly not my students and friends, who are both extending established lines and trying out new ones.

How long will all this last? There's no way of telling. But I wouldn't argue with the continuation of the current direction of events, particularly since the scope of opening theory has expanded steadily for 150 years. In any case, you should take advantage of the opportunity to go in new directions with your own play.

# Index of Openings for Volume 4

Numbers refer to pages. Codes are from the *ECO* system.

## Misc. First Moves

A00 256, 259, 263, 271

## Larsen's Opening (1 b3)

A01 129, 131

## Bird Opening

A03 195, 205, 207

## Réti Opening

A04 287

A07 218

A08 212, 214, 216

A09 13, 20

## English Opening (including Réti-Slav and Closed Réti)

A10 123, 287

A11 35, 39, 42

A12 48, 51

A14 27, 29

A30 244, 245

A31 171

A36 161, 243

A37 243

## 1 d4 Misc. (including English Defence and Modern Defence with 3 c4)

A40 90, 108, 111, 114, 115, 117, 121

A41 276

A52 295

## Benko Gambit

A57 172

A58 176

## Dutch Defence

A80 161, 163

A81 185, 199

A87 189

A90 208

A96 201

A97 184

## 1 e4 Misc. (including Owen Defence and Nimzowitsch Defence)

B00 95, 99, 102, 103, 278, 286

## Scandinavian Defence

B01 161, 253, 264

## Alekhine Defence

B04 253

## Modern Defence

B06 61, 62, 63, 68, 73, 80, 83, 84

## Pirc Defence

B07 86

B09 253

## Caro-Kann Defence

B10 253

B11 157

B15 78

## Sicilian Defence

B20 161, 251

B21 150, 156

B33 209

B53 251

B83 184

## French Defence

C00 161, 252

C02 145, 148

## 1 e4 e5 Misc. (including Danish Gambit and Vienna Game)

C21 134

C26 224

C29 221

## Petroff Defence

C42 232

C43 230

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| <b>1 e4 e5 2 <math>\mathbb{Q}f3</math> <math>\mathbb{Q}c6</math> Misc. (including Göring Gambit, Ponziani and Four Knights)</b> | <b>Queen's Gambit</b>        |
| C44 138, 143  | D06 229                      |
| C46 236   | D15 249                      |
|   | D31 159                      |
|   | D32 160                      |
| <b>Ruy Lopez (Spanish Game)</b>   | <b>Nimzo-Indian Defence</b>  |
| C63 225   | E30 163                      |
| <b>Evans Gambit</b>   | E32 164                      |
| C51 166   | E46 163                      |
| C52 168   |                              |
| <b>Blackmar-Diemer Gambit</b>   | <b>King's Indian Defence</b> |
| D00 157   | E73 213                      |

# Index of Players

Numbers refer to pages. When a player's name appears in **bold**, that player had White. Otherwise the FIRST-NAMED PLAYER had White.

ADAMS – Bologan 73  
ALEKSANDROV – **Short** 163  
ALEXANDER – Golombek 157  
ANDERSSON – Kasparov 244  
BACKLUND – **Solodovnichenko** 232  
BAKRE – Popchev 99  
BAREEV – **Bruzon** 86  
BARSOV – **Golod** 148  
BASMAN – Kudrin 271  
BAUER, C. – **Dautov** 102  
BELIAVSKY – Malaniuk 185  
BELLON – **Ponferrada Luque** 171  
BENKO – Camara 172  
BERNARD – **Danailov** 20  
BOLOGAN – **Adams** 73; Todorčević 61  
BRONSTEIN – **Smyslov** 39  
BROWNE – Miles 108  
BRUZON – Bareev 86  
BUNZMANN – **Likavsky** 111  
CAMARA – Benko 172  
CAMPORA – Wockenfuss 278  
CARLSEN – **Van Wely** 176  
CHRISTIANSEN – **Mohr, S.** 164  
CIOCALTEA – Karaklajić 138; **Ljubojević** 221  
COENENBERG – **Hergert** 207  
DANAILOV – Bernard 20  
DANIELSEN, H. – Petrosian, A. 195  
DAUTOV – Bauer, C. 102; **Podzielny** 48  
DE BOER – Rotstein, A. 201  
DE FIRMIAN – **Hardarson** 150  
DORFMAN – Miles 95  
DREEV – Malaniuk 199  
EHLVEST – **Gorbatov** 117; Kraai 115  
FEDOROVSKY – Pel 63  
FILIPPOV – Potapov 189  
FLEAR – **Vicente Haro** 168  
FRANKE, R. – Löffler, A. 259  
FRANZEN – McAlpine 62  
GELFAND – **Pantsulaia** 245  
GELLER – Hort 80  
GLIGORIĆ – Tukmakov 208

GOLOD – Barsov 148  
GOLOMBEK – **Alexander** 157  
GOLUBEV – Schneider, B. 78  
GORBATOV – Ehlvest 117  
GUREVICH, M. – **Xie Jun** 84  
HARDARSON – de Firmian 150  
HÄSSLER – Pineault 129  
HECTOR – Høi 68  
HERGERT – Coenenberg 207  
HODGSON – **Mednis** 287  
HØI – **Hector** 68  
HORT – Geller 80  
IVANCHUK – **Polgar, J.** 224  
IVANISEVIĆ – **Marjanović** 123  
KACZMAREK, B. – Moyer, R. 145  
KAKAGELDIEV – **Sashikiran** 90  
KARAKLAJIĆ – **Ciocaltea** 138  
KASPAROV – Andersson 244  
KENGIS – **Shirov** 114  
KHALIFMAN – Popov, V. 83  
KHOLMOV – **Yuldashev** 236  
KHUZMAN – Mikhalevski, A. 13  
KOZLOV – **Volovik** 286  
KRAAI – Ehlvest 115  
KRAMNIK – **Morozevich** 218  
KUDRIN – **Basman** 271  
LARSEN – Ljubojević 212  
LASKER, EM. – **Réti** 51  
LEHMANN, H. – Müller, P. 166  
LEMPERT – **Sher** 121  
LIKAVSKY – Bunzmann 111  
LINDEN – Maczuski 134  
LIUBARSKY – **Van den Berg, A.** 263  
LJUBOJEVIĆ – Ciocaltea 221; Larsen 212; Portisch 131  
LÖFFLER, A. – **Franke, R.** 259  
MCALPINE – **Franzen** 62  
MCNAB – Norris, A. 27  
MACZUSKI – **Linden** 134  
MALANIUK – Beliavsky 185; Dreev 199  
MAMMADOV – Miroshnichenko 35

- MARJANOVIĆ – Ivanisević 123  
 MARTINEZ – Taylor, T. 205  
 MARZOLO – Piat 163  
 MEDNIS – Hodgson 287  
 MIKHALEVSKI, A. – Khuzman 13  
 MILES – Browne 108; Dorfman 95  
 MINASIAN – Nikolaidis, K. 103  
 MIROSHNICHENKO – Mammadov 35  
 MOHR, S. – Christiansen 164  
 MOROZEVICH – Kramnik 218  
 MOYER, R. – Kaczmarek, B. 145  
 MÜLLER, A. – Schmidt, H. 156  
 MÜLLER, P. – Lehmann, H. 166  
 NASIR ALI – Ravikumar 161  
 NIKOLAIDIS, K. – Minasian 103  
 NISIPEANU – Volokitin 216  
 NORRIS, A. – McNab 27  
 PANTSULAIA – Gelfand 245  
 PEL – Fedorovsky 63  
 PETROSIAN, A. – Danielsen, H. 195  
 PIAT – Marzolo 163  
 PIKET – Timman 214  
 PINEAULT – Hässler 129  
 PODZIELNY – Dautov 48  
 POLDAUF – Saltaev 42  
 POLGAR, J. – Ivanchuk 224  
 PONFERRADA LUQUE – Bellon 171  
 POPCHEV – Bakre 99  
 POPOV, V. – Khalifman 83  
 PORTISCH – Ljubojević 131  
 POTAPOV – Filippov 189  
 PRZYBYLA – Sapa 143  
 RAVIKUMAR – Nasir Ali 161  
 RÉTI – Lasker, Em. 51  
 ROTSTEIN, A. – De Boer 201  
 SALTAEV – Poldauf 42  
 SAPA – Przybyla 143  
 SASHIKIRAN – Kakageldiev 90  
 SCHERBAKOV – Vaganian 29  
 SCHIFFLER – Skirl 256  
 SCHMIDT, H. – Müller, A. 156  
 SCHNEIDER, B. – Golubev 78  
 SHER – Lempert 121  
 SHIROV – Kengis 114; Yusupov 230  
 SHORT – Aleksandrov 163  
 SKIRL – Schiffler 256  
 SMYSLOV – Bronstein 39  
 SOLODOVNICHENKO – Backlund 232  
 TAYLOR, T. – Martinez 205  
 TIMMAN – Piket 214  
 TODORČEVIĆ – Bologan 61  
 TUKMAKOV – Gligorić 208  
 VAGANIAN – Scherbakov 29  
 VAN DEN BERG, A. – Liubarsky 263  
 VAN WELY – Carlsen 176  
 VICENTE HARO – Flear 168  
 VOLOKITIN – Nisipeanu 216  
 VOLOVIK – Kozlov 286  
 WOCKENFUSS – Campora 278  
 XIE JUN – Gurevich, M. 84  
 YULDACHEV – Kholmov 236  
 YUSUPOV – Shirov 230

# Index of Openings for the Entire Series

*Italic numbers refer to pages. Bold numbers denote the volume within the *Mastering the Chess Openings* series. Codes are from the ECO system.*

## Misc. First Moves

A00 **4**: 256, 259, 263, 271  
A01 **4**: 129, 131  
A03 **4**: 195, 205, 207

252, 256, 258, 259, 262

A34 **1**: 65, 66; **3**: 270, 271, 275, 276, 287,  
288, 290  
A35 **3**: 219, 228  
A36 **1**: 60; **3**: 175, 177, 180, 183, 184, 185,  
187, 191, 193; **4**: 161, 243  
A37 **3**: 195, 203, 204, 205, 207, 210, 212,  
214; **4**: 243  
A39 **3**: 195, 198, 199

## Réti Opening

A04 **4**: 287  
A07 **4**: 218  
A08 **4**: 212, 214, 216  
A09 **4**: 13, 20

## 1 d4 Misc.

A40 **2**: 9; **4**: 90, 108, 111, 114, 115, 117, 121  
A41 **4**: 276  
A45 **2**: 13, 183  
A50 **2**: 114  
A52 **4**: 295  
A56 **1**: 55; **2**: 290

## Benko Gambit

A57 **4**: 172  
A58 **1**: 55; **3**: 189; **4**: 176

## Modern Benoni

A60 **2**: 310  
A62 **2**: 311, 314  
A63 **2**: 312  
A64 **2**: 315  
A65 **1**: 48; **2**: 291  
A66 **2**: 301, 302  
A67 **2**: 304, 306, 307, 308, 309  
A68 **2**: 196, 199, 200  
A69 **2**: 196, 197  
A70 **2**: 293, 296  
A77 **2**: 298  
A79 **2**: 300

## Dutch Defence

A80 **4**: 161, 163  
A81 **4**: 185, 199  
A87 **4**: 189

## English Opening

A10 **3**: 9; **4**: 123, 287  
A11 **4**: 35, 39, 42  
A12 **4**: 48, 51  
A14 **4**: 27, 29  
A15 **3**: 91, 313  
A16 **3**: 335  
A17 **3**: 324, 325, 328, 329, 330, 332, 334  
A18 **3**: 314, 319, 320  
A19 **3**: 321  
A20 **1**: 85; **3**: 14, 15, 19, 22, 23, 24, 26, 90,  
92, 93, 96, 98, 99, 101, 103  
A21 **3**: 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42,  
44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60, 61  
A22 **3**: 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77,  
79, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88  
A24 **3**: 335, 337  
A25 **3**: 144, 148, 152, 155, 157, 158, 160,  
161, 163, 164, 173  
A26 **1**: 16; **3**: 145, 149, 165, 168, 169, 171,  
335, 339, 341, 343  
A27 **3**: 139, 142  
A28 **3**: 106, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 117  
A29 **3**: 120, 123, 124, 126, 128, 129, 133,  
134, 136, 137, 140  
A30 **3**: 174, 218, 226, 233, 297, 301, 302,  
305, 306, 307, 309, 311; **4**: 244, 245

A31 **3**: 262, 264, 267; **4**: 171  
A33 **3**: 236, 239, 241, 243, 247, 249, 252,

- A90 **4:** 208  
 A96 **4:** 201  
 A97 **4:** 184
- 1 e4 Misc.**  
 B00 **4:** 95, 99, 102, 103, 278, 286
- Scandinavian Defence**  
 B01 **1:** 78; **4:** 161, 253, 264
- Alekhine Defence**  
 B03 **1:** 56  
 B04 **1:** 56, 80; **4:** 253
- Modern Defence**  
 B06 **4:** 61, 62, 63, 68, 73, 80, 83, 84
- Pirc Defence**  
 B07 **1:** 60, 83, 313; **4:** 86  
 B08 **1:** 37, 327, 328  
 B09 **1:** 36, 315, 316, 318, 319, 320, 321, 323, 324, 325; **4:** 253
- Caro-Kann Defence**  
 B10 **1:** 251; **4:** 253  
 B11 **4:** 157  
 B12 **1:** 53, 54, 251, 265, 266, 268  
 B13 **1:** 254, 255, 256  
 B14 **1:** 258, 260, 261  
 B15 **4:** 78  
 B17 **1:** 78  
 B19 **1:** 27, 81
- Sicilian Defence**  
 B20 **1:** 175; **4:** 161, 251  
 B21 **4:** 150, 156  
 B22 **1:** 46, 248, 250  
 B27 **1:** 178  
 B30 **1:** 46, 62; **3:** 214  
 B31 **3:** 73  
 B33 **4:** 209  
 B34 **1:** 67, 244, 246  
 B40 **1:** 216  
 B41 **1:** 221, 222  
 B42 **1:** 225, 226  
 B43 **1:** 223, 224  
 B44 **1:** 35, 227, 228, 230, 231, 233  
 B45 **1:** 219  
 B46 **1:** 234  
 B50 **1:** 84  
 B53 **4:** 251
- B54 **1:** 176  
 B56 **1:** 178, 236  
 B58 **1:** 237  
 B59 **1:** 72, 285  
 B70 **1:** 181, 182  
 B72 **1:** 185  
 B73 **1:** 37  
 B74 **1:** 28  
 B78 **1:** 12, 191, 192  
 B79 **1:** 188  
 B80 **1:** 28  
 B83 **4:** 184  
 B84 **1:** 176  
 B86 **1:** 203, 204  
 B87 **1:** 205, 206, 207  
 B88 **1:** 239, 241  
 B89 **1:** 238, 241  
 B90 **1:** 194, 202, 212, 215  
 B92 **1:** 46, 177, 208, 209  
 B96 **1:** 196, 198  
 B97 **1:** 200  
 B99 **1:** 196
- French Defence**  
 C00 **1:** 270; **4:** 161, 252  
 C02 **1:** 48, 50; **4:** 145, 148  
 C03 **1:** 271  
 C04 **1:** 50, 285  
 C05 **1:** 53, 283, 288, 291, 292, 293  
 C06 **1:** 50, 283, 286  
 C07 **1:** 272, 278, 279, 281, 282  
 C08 **1:** 273  
 C09 **1:** 45, 274, 275, 277  
 C10 **1:** 74  
 C11 **1:** 294, 295, 297  
 C15 **1:** 298  
 C18 **1:** 299, 300, 302, 305, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312  
 C19 **1:** 303
- 1 e4 e5 Misc.**  
 C21 **1:** 25; **4:** 134  
 C22 **1:** 174  
 C26 **4:** 224  
 C29 **4:** 221  
 C30 **1:** 166, 167, 169  
 C33 **1:** 23  
 C36 **1:** 169, 171  
 C41 **1:** 27, 114, 115, 116, 117, 120  
 C42 **1:** 63; **4:** 232  
 C43 **4:** 230

C44 4: 138, 143

C45 1: 63, 64

C46 4: 236

C51 4: 166

C52 4: 168

C54 1: 16, 91, 95, 97, 99

C55 1: 101, 111

C56 1: 26

C57 1: 104

C58 1: 109

C59 1: 105, 107, 108

### Ruy Lopez (Spanish Game)

C60 1: 122

C62 1: 123

C63 4: 225

C68 1: 26, 61, 151, 153, 156, 157

C77 1: 125

C78 1: 140, 142, 143

C80 1: 144, 146, 149

C81 1: 145

C82 1: 148, 314

C88 1: 158

C89 1: 162, 163, 164

C92 1: 137, 138, 139

C94 1: 133, 135

C96 1: 84, 130, 131, 132, 133

C97 1: 126, 127

C99 1: 129

### 1 d4 d5 Misc.

D00 2: 10; 4: 157

D01 1: 77

D02 1: 60

D05 2: 101

### Queen's Gambit Misc.

D06 2: 11, 12, 14; 4: 229

D07 2: 17, 18, 19

D08 2: 15

D09 2: 16

### Slav Defence

D10 2: 70, 95

D13 2: 97

D15 2: 74; 4: 249

D16 1: 47

D17 2: 86, 87, 89, 90, 92, 93

D18 1: 75; 2: 76, 78, 79, 80, 84

D19 2: 82, 83

### Queen's Gambit Accepted

D27 1: 43

D28 1: 41

### Queen's Gambit Declined

D30 2: 12, 21

D31 2: 20, 42, 44, 45, 66; 4: 159

D32 4: 160

D34 1: 45

D35 2: 21, 22, 46, 51, 54

D36 2: 49, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64, 65

D41 1: 27, 259; 3: 279, 282, 284

D42 1: 39

D43 1: 47; 2: 98

D45 2: 111

D47 2: 102, 103, 109

D48 2: 104, 105, 106

D50 2: 23

D53 1: 42

D55 2: 25

D56 1: 11; 2: 27, 28

D58 1: 69; 2: 35, 40, 41

D59 2: 36, 37

D63 1: 49; 2: 29

D66 1: 15

D67 2: 32, 33

D68 2: 34

### Grünfeld Defence

D80 2: 248

D85 2: 249, 250, 251, 268, 270, 272, 274,  
275, 279, 280

D86 2: 253

D87 2: 255, 257, 258, 259, 260, 262

D88 2: 264

D89 2: 265, 267

D91 1: 74

D97 2: 280, 283

D98 2: 286, 288

D99 2: 287

### 1 d4 $\triangleleft$ f6 2 c4 Misc.

E00 2: 67

E10 2: 164

### Queen's Indian Defence

E12 1: 68; 2: 173, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181,  
182

E15 2: 165, 167, 169, 171, 172

E19 2: 168

**Nimzo-Indian Defence**

- E20 **2:** 116  
E24 **1:** 32, 56; **2:** 120, 122, 123, 126  
E27 **2:** 120, 129  
E29 **2:** 132, 133, 134  
E30 **4:** 163  
E32 **1:** 44; **2:** 143, 155, 156, 158, 160, 161; **4:** 164  
E34 **1:** 72; **2:** 143, 147  
E35 **2:** 148, 150, 152, 153  
E41 **2:** 139, 140, 141, 142  
E43 **2:** 10  
E46 **2:** 135, 136; **4:** 163  
E49 **2:** 128, 130  
E50 **2:** 137  
E54 **1:** 32  
E57 **1:** 42; **2:** 135  
E59 **1:** 15

**King's Indian Defence**

- E61 **2:** 185; **3:** 181  
E69 **1:** 57  
E70 **1:** 24; **2:** 186  
E73 **2:** 240; **4:** 213  
E76 **1:** 19, 36; **2:** 188, 191, 201  
E80 **2:** 241  
E81 **2:** 245, 246  
E87 **2:** 242  
E90 **1:** 37; **2:** 184, 206  
E91 **1:** 65  
E92 **1:** 25; **2:** 207  
E94 **1:** 31; **2:** 208, 209, 211, 216  
E95 **2:** 212  
E97 **1:** 37, 51, 52; **2:** 216, 231, 232, 233, 234, 237  
E98 **2:** 218, 219  
E99 **1:** 19, 51; **2:** 221, 222, 224, 226, 228, 229

In this highly-acclaimed series, John Watson helps chess-players achieve a more holistic and insightful view of the openings. He explains not only the ideas and strategies behind specific openings, but also the interconnections of chess openings taken as a whole. By presenting the common threads that underlie opening play, Watson provides a permanent basis for playing openings of any type.

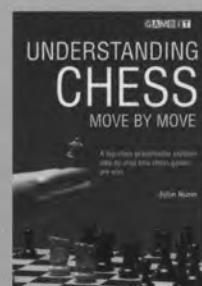
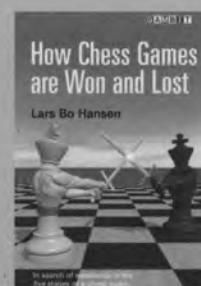
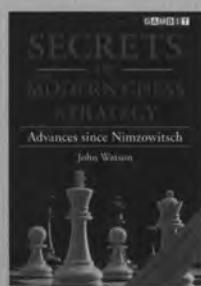
This final volume draws together many themes in a wide-ranging discussion of general opening topics. By looking at familiar situations from new angles, Watson helps us greatly increase our understanding of them. In the process, he covers a wide variety of opening structures and variations not seen in the earlier volumes and presents a great wealth of original analysis.

- Réti and Fianchetto Systems
- Reversed Openings
- Symmetry
- Irregular Openings
- Gambits: Primitive or Positional
- Universal Openings

In the final two chapters, Watson presents his views on the importance of opening study and explains how players should best prepare and choose their openings for the level at which they play. He looks at the future of chess openings and explains which skills will be most important as chess evolves in the forthcoming decades.

International Master **John Watson** is one of the world's most respected writers on chess. In 1999, his *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy* won 'Chess Book of the Year' awards in the USA and the UK. He reviews chess books for *The Week in Chess* and hosts a weekly radio show on the Internet Chess Club. As a trainer, he has worked with many talented pupils, including Tal Shaked and Hikaru Nakamura.

#### Other chess titles from Gambit include:



£17.99

\$29.95

ISBN-13: 978-1-906454-19-7  
ISBN-10: 1-906454-19-1



9 781906 454197