



**Victor Bologan**

# The Powerful Catalan

**A Complete Repertoire for White**

NEW IN CHESS



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**New In Chess 2012**

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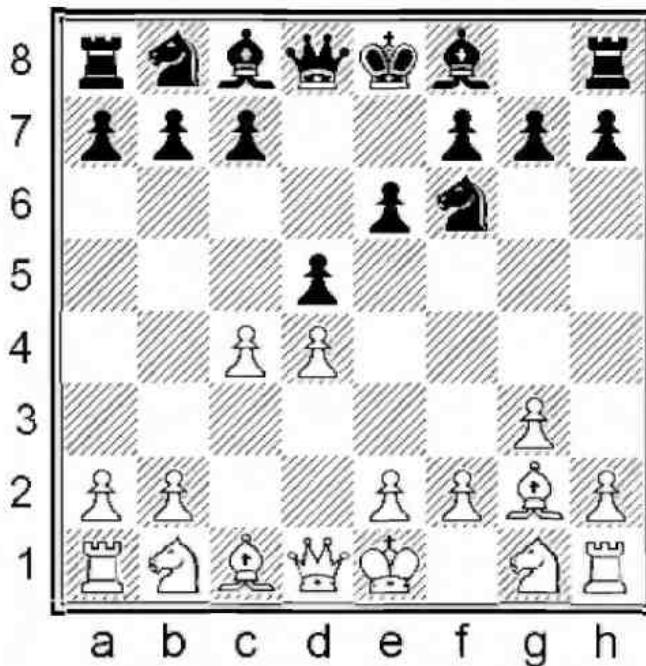
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Swipe left for next chapter

## From the author

To start my story, I will jump to that contemporary, all-knowing oracle that is Wikipedia:

‘The Catalan Opening – a chess opening, beginning with the moves 1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



It is one of the closed openings, and obtained its name thanks to the 1929 tournament in Barcelona, Spain (Catalonia), when it was used by Tartakower’.

This is pretty much a unique thing in chess history – we know not only the date of birth of a new opening system, but also its place of birth and its father! The tournament organisers wished to engrave the name of their home state of Catalonia on the minds and hearts of chess players, and they suggested the players have a competition to invent a new, original opening. The winner was the inventive Savielly Tartakower (he was also the originator of the Orang-Utan Opening 1.b4): three times he used the system with d2-d4 in combination with g2-g3, which obtained a special prize and was awarded the name Catalan Opening.

The solid new opening quickly became popular. One need only point out that was soon included in their repertoires by Capablanca and Alekhine, Botvinnik and Keres, Reshevsky and Flohr. Later, it was used by almost all the chess elite, including the majority of world champions. A great deal was done for the development of the opening by Karpov, Kasparov, Kramnik, Kortchnoi, Gelfand, Razuvayev, Sosonko, Tkachiev...

We should say a few words about my relationship with the opening. I can say that, before starting to play the opening myself and teaching it to my pupils, I played for five years for the Catalan club UGA in Barcelona. This was a very pleasant, positive experience, and I even learned a few words of the Catalan language! This shows that Catalonia is very dear to me, and its language is quite similar to Rumanian, which is my mother tongue.

When we speak of the Catalan in chess, we have in mind a strong concept for White, in which he fianchettoes the light-squared bishop and this bishop becomes a very powerful piece. Let us compare this set-up with the King’s Indian Defence. There Black also fianchettoes his king’s bishop, but White occupies the centre with his pawns, placing them on c4, d4 and e4; but even so, Black obtains full-fledged play.

I would advise you not to think of the Catalan as an independent opening, unconnected with any other. If you wish to

build a general repertoire, based on the fianchetto of the king's bishop, then you need to study a whole range of variations with the bishop on g2. This includes g2-g3 against the Benko Gambit, the King's Indian, the Benoni and the Grünfeld. I do not claim that this is the only good way to fight against these openings, but if you have this general conception to meet these systems with a kingside fianchetto, then you will develop a better feel for the positions, the more ideas you are familiar with. This improves your understanding of chess in general, because ideas from one opening can be used in others, and such interconnectedness is very useful.

The material in this book is arranged in the classical way – starting with the rarest variations and moving towards the most popular. But it should be noted that ‘rare variations’ does not necessarily mean ‘bad variations’. For example, in the opening chapters, we look at some variations which arise via other openings, such as the Queen’s Indian and Tarrasch Defence. I have included these in the book because they can arise via the Catalan move-order. Black can play ...b7-b6 or ...c7-c5, and the reader will immediately be able to obtain all the information he needs. It would be cheating if we simply referred him to another book. Thus, with this book, you can prepare for the whole spectrum of positions of the Catalan type.

Of course, the most concrete and tactical lines arise after 4...dxc4. Black takes a pawn, after which he has a mass of possible moves. White must remember the precise reply to all the main moves, because a pawn is a pawn – if you do not manage either to regain it, or to obtain sufficient compensation, then Black will simply have an extra pawn.

One interesting idea for Black is to check on b4 with the bishop, and, in reply to ♘d2, to transfer his bishop to e7 or d6, and place his pawns on c6 and b6 and his other bishop on b7. This is possibly the most solid set-up for Black against the Catalan, but at the same time, it is quite passive. White seizes the centre, after which it is not so easy for Black to obtain full equality.

Black’s main idea is to play ...♝e7, ...0-0, and then take on c4. After ♕c2 a6 White can play a2-a4, but there we have a great many variations. In my opinion, from a positional viewpoint, the immediate recapture on c4 is more correct, so as then to try to establish piece control over the centre. An important subtlety in this line is the multi-purpose move ♘d2. First of all, White wants to see how his opponent will reply, and how he will arrange his pieces. If Black brings his knight to c6, then he cannot play ...c7-c5; if he puts it on d7, then White has the possibility of ♘a5; and if he plays ...♝e4, then later on this bishop will come under attack.

In my opinion, the structure of this book is quite precise; I do not believe I have overlooked any important set-ups. For further study of this wonderful opening I would recommend, of course, that you study the games of strong players. For example, you can start with the games of Karpov in this opening. In our day, the best exponent of the Catalan is probably Vladimir Kramnik, who has achieved fantastic results in this opening. I very much like the way he handles the line in games against very strong opponents, who are excellently prepared for the Catalan. Even so, Vladimir manages to find small nuances and outplay his opponents all the same!

Vladislav Tkachiev understands the Catalan wonderfully well, and I love analysing his games with my pupils. I also recommend you study the games of such strong GMs as Alexander Grischuk and Boris Gelfand.

There is one piece of advice that I never tire of repeating: if you use the computer in your preparations, never choose a move solely because the computer recommends it. You must try to understand and explain the move to yourself, understand why this move should be played just now, and why not something else? What are the ideas behind the move, what plan is it following? It is always useful to hold a conversation with yourself, and explain in words what the move intends. In this way, you will master the material better, and in addition, independent analytical work is very important for the development of your chess understanding.

I hope that this book will come to lie at the heart of your opening repertoire, based on the opening move 1.d2-d4. For further study material I can recommend Boris Avrukh’s *Grandmaster Repertoire for White with 1.d2-d4*, where many Catalan variations are considered in great detail.

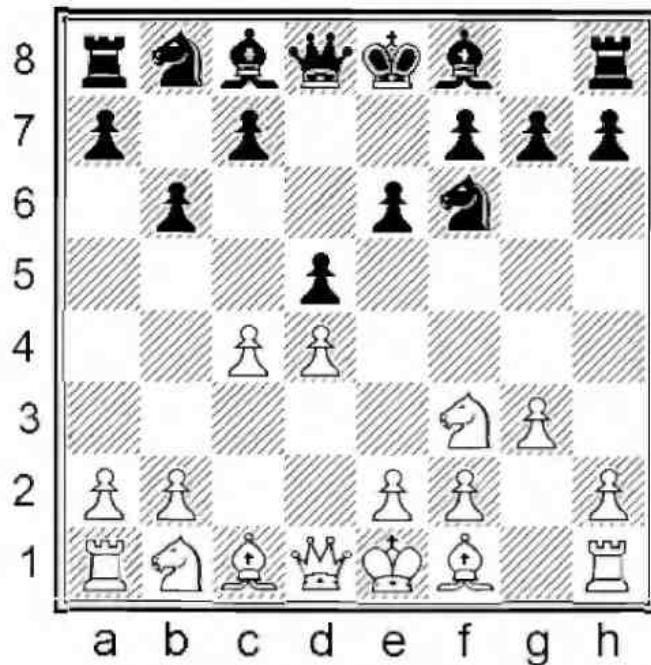
I wish you success in playing the Catalan. It is not essential to have a knowledge of the Catalan language, to play this opening! You only need to know the Catalan ‘chess language’.

*Victor Bologan*  
*Kishinev, June 2012*

# Chapter 1 – Queen’s Indian Style

We will begin with a variation which is normally reached via the Queen’s Indian Defence.

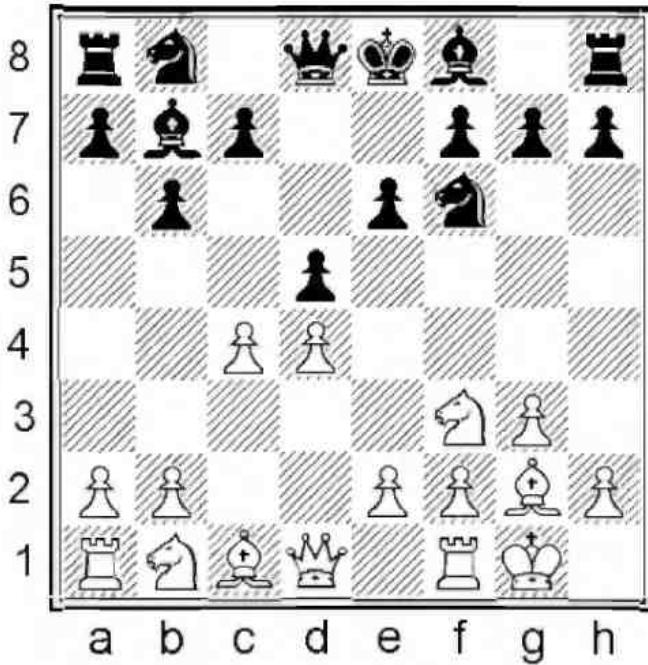
1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 b6



On the board we have a typical Queen’s Indian formation. Black’s only problem is that he has closed the diagonal of his queen’s bishop too early, and White can try to exploit this circumstance.

5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

6.0-0



**6...♝e7**

Black's main move in this position.

In reply to 6...dxc4 White continues 7.♗a4+ ♜bd7 8.♗e5 by analogy with the variation 6...♝e7 7.♗c3 dxc4 examined later, and tries to exploit the weakness of c6.

Sometimes the move 6...♝d6 is seen, but the bishop is not very well placed on this square, since it can be attacked with ♜b5 or after e2-e4. And White still gains control of the square e5, for example 7.♗c3 0-0 8.♗e5 ♜bd7 9.♗f4 ♜e4 10.♗xe4 dxe4 11.♗a4 ♜xe5 12.dxe5 ♜e7 13.♗ad1 ♜fd8 14.h4, Dannevig-Tjomsland, Oslo 1998.

Black can also start with 6...♜bd7, in reply to which White exchanges on d5: 7.cxd5 ♜xd5 (after the plain 7...exd5 the bishop on b7 is blocked by its own pawn and White can count on the standard Queen's Indian advantage) 8.♕e1 (White wants to seize the centre with his pawns, which promises him an advantage) 8...♝b4?! 9.♗g5! (an important intermediate move: the white bishop provokes its opposite number into returning to e7) 9...♝e7 10.e4 (the tactical idea, on which White's entire play hangs) 10...♝xg5 11.exd5 ♜xd5 12.♗xg5 ♜xg2 (if 12...♛xg5 13.h4 ♜f5 14.g4 ♛f4 15.♗xd5 Black remains a piece down) 13.♗xe6±, and White obtained a significant positional advantage in Ribli-Pomar Salamanca, Buenos Aires 1978.

**7.♗c3**

White quietly continues to develop, not worrying about the fate of the pawn on c4.

**7...0-0**

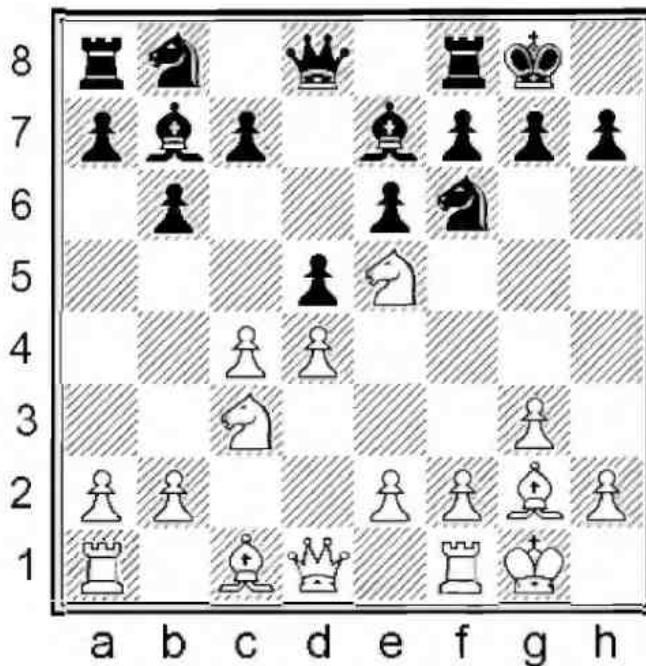
After 7...dxc4?! 8.♗a4+ ♜bd7 9.♗e5! White not only regains the sacrificed pawn, but also obtains control over his opponent's weakened light squares: 9...♝xg2 10.♗xg2 0-0 11.♗c6 ♜e8 12.♗xc4. White is clearly better.

The 'general strengthening move' 7...c6 discloses Black's plans too early, and White now has a large choice of promising continuations. For example, his knight can jump not only forwards, but backwards: 8.♘d2!? (also good is 8.♗e5, after which 8...0-0 transposes to the main variation, whilst after 8...♞fd7 White can simply exchange knights and continue playing in the centre, gradually preparing the thematic advance e2-e4: 9.♘xd7 ♜xd7 10.b3 0-0 11.♗f4 ♜f6 12.♗d3 ♜d7 13.♗ad1 ♜ad8 14.♗c2 h6 15.e4 dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♜c8 17.♗e5± Burmakin-Tompa, Zalakaros 1992)

8...0-0 9.e4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (9...dxc4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  – see the later variation 7...0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  c6 9.e4 dxc4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ) 10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.cxd5 cxd5 12.a3!? (a useful prophylactic move, limiting the opponent's possibilities on the queenside) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a5 14.h4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$  Bhat-Tiviakov, Montreal 2009. White has good chances of a kingside attack, whilst it is not easy for Black to create real counterplay.

### 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Exploiting the fact that Black has played ...d7-d5 too early, White pins this pawn and begins a battle for central preponderance.



Now Black can choose from:

- A) 8...c5**
- B) 8...c6**
- C) 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$**
- D) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c8$**
- E) 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (the main continuation)**

A) Premature is 8...c5?!, because White is clearly the better prepared for the battle in the centre. For example: 9.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (9...bxc5 10.cxd5 exd5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! – the black pawn centre is hanging by a thread – 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  – Black has no compensation for the pawn, Ugalde Ezcurra-Garcia Martinez, Mislata 2004) 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  14.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 (Sanchez Criado- Blanco Fernandez, Spain 2001) 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ ?) 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  bxc5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  20.e3 with clearly the better chances for White;

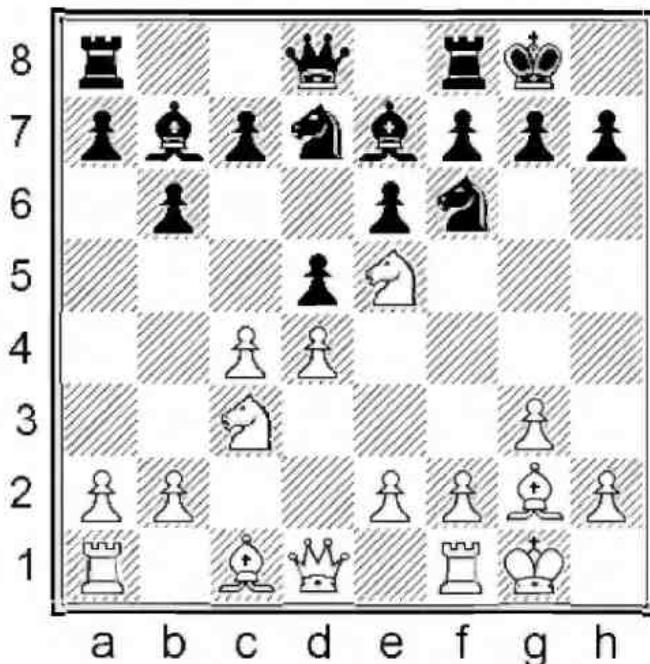
B) In reply to 8...c6 White carries out his main idea in this set-up – to put a third pawn in the centre: 9.e4 dxc4 (White is also better after 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.b3. White has firm control of the centre, his king's bishop can become a powerful force in the future, and he controls two exceptionally important squares, e4 and d5. Black can win a pawn after 11...b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ , but I would not recommend this, as White has colossal compensation after 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$ . The big question is: how can Black complete his development?

The extra pawn brings him no joy at all;

C) Also possible is 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ . Then White continues in standard Queen's Indian style, exchanging on d5 and bringing his bishop to f4: 9.cxd5 exd5 10. $\mathbb{B}f4$  c5 (the only way for Black to obtain counterplay. But now he must be prepared to accept either hanging pawns or an isolani. In both cases, the black centre becomes a convenient target for attack by the enemy pieces, and here we clearly see the strength of the bishop on g2) 11. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}axc5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 (after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  there is the very unpleasant 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  16. $\mathbb{E}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17.h4 and Black is tied hand and foot) 14. $\mathbb{E}c2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  15. $\mathbb{W}b1\pm$ . We have another typical Queen's Indian situation: the e4-pawn is weak, and after the opening of the d-file, the black queen feels uncomfortable, as it has few good squares;

D) In reply to 8... $\mathbb{W}c8$ , with the idea of defending the bishop and preparing to take on c4, White's simplest plan is to exchange twice on d5: 9.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (after 9...exd5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  the new idea 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12.e4!?) deserves attention, for example 12...dxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  16. $\mathbb{W}d3$  g6 17.dxe5 and the holes on the kingside force Black to exert great caution) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 11. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6 14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$  Lundin-Botvinnik, Groningen 1946. Black's position is quite solid, but passive.

#### E) 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



The main continuation, but here White has a pleasant choice.

#### E1) 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$

#### E2) 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$

E1) The simple developing move 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  poses problems for Black, for example 9...c5 (after the preparatory move 9... $\mathbb{E}c8$  there follows 10. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ , with the threat of  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and attacking the pawn a7. After 10...c5 11.cxd5 exd5 12. $\mathbb{W}xa7$  Black has no compensation for the pawn, Dzagnidze-Capata, Bucharest 2008) 10.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (on 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  there is the unexpected and very strong *zwischenzug* 11.d6!, thanks to which White obtains an obvious advantage) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 (again, Black has the central pawn pair, which we have already said can become a convenient target for the white pieces) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  (exploiting the pin on the long diagonal, White transfers his knight to e3, so as to attack the d5-pawn) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . The white minor pieces exert unpleasant pressure against the enemy pawn centre. There can be no doubt about White's positional advantage. Play can continue: 14... $\mathbb{E}fd8$  15. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  16. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17.dxc5 bxc5 18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$  (creating the threat of taking on e4) 18... $\mathbb{W}e6$  19. $\mathbb{W}b3!$  (by attacking the bishop, White renews the threat)

19... $\mathbb{Q}a8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$  21. $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $fxe6$  22. $h4$ , Nyzhnyk-Simonian, Kiev 2008.

## E2) 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$

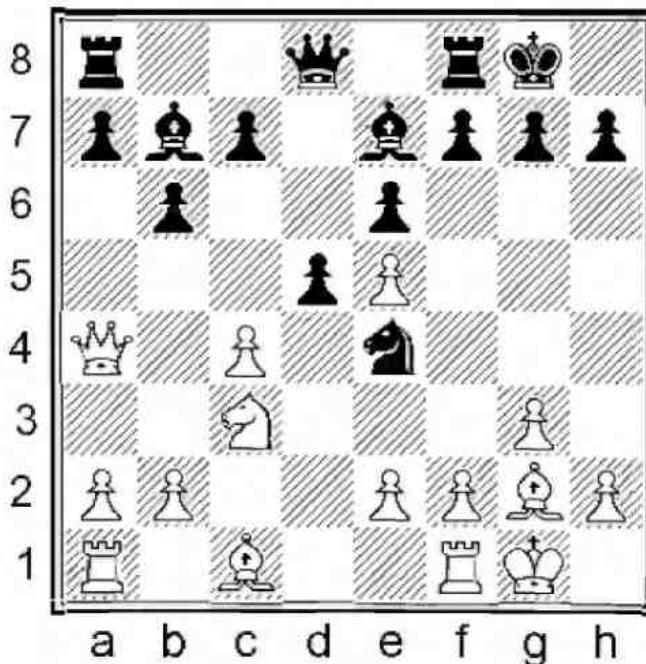
From this square, the queen exerts unpleasant pressure against the opponent's queenside.

### 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Also possible is 9...c6. This does not blunder a pawn, although Black still fails to solve all his problems: 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12. $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13. $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14.b3±. Despite the material equality, White's chances are still clearly preferable: he has two bishops, and the enemy rook cannot return to its own camp easily, and will therefore be a target for the enemy pieces.

### 10. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}e4$

It looks too passive to play 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ . Then there could follow: 11.cxd5 exd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c6 14.e4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and White has a large, possibly even decisive, advantage: he has two bishops and the d5-pawn is very weak.



### 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

On 11.cxd5 Black can reply 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (bad is 12... $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  13.c4) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  14. $\mathbb{W}g4$  (White can win a pawn, but Black obtains sufficient compensation: 14. $\mathbb{W}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  f6 (18...g5!? 19. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ) 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  (19.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ ) 19...g5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ = Papaioannou-Managadze, Ikaria 1998) 14...f5! 15.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (nor does White get anything from 16.e4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$ ) 16... $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8\infty$ . In this still complicated position, chances are about equal.

### 11... $dxe4$

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e8$

### 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$

The pawn on e4 is very weak, and Black will not be able to defend it.

**13...♝c6**

**14.♝d4 ♜c5**

The move 14...f5 does not solve the problems, because of 15.exf6 ♜xf6 16.♝xe4 ♜ad8 17.♝e3 ♜d6 18.♝g4 ♜xg2 19.♔xg2.

**15.♝d7 ♜fd8**

**16.♝e3 ♜xe5**

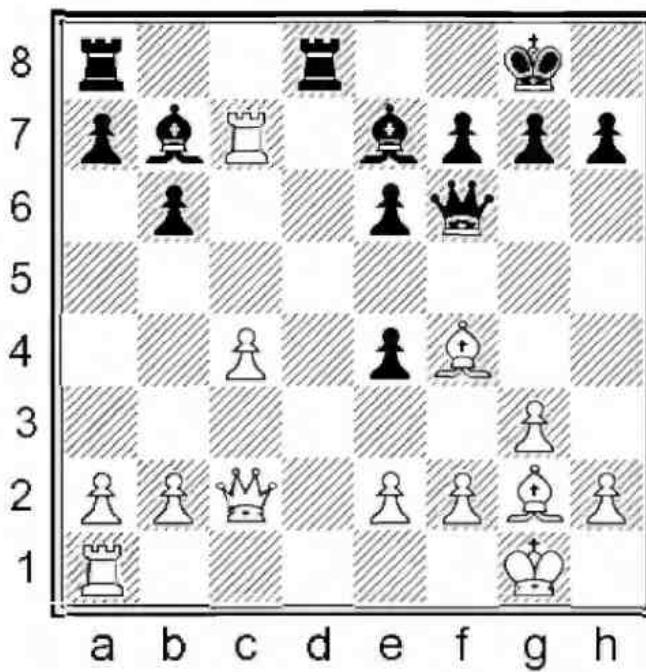
**17.♝f4**

But not 17.♝xe7 because of 17...♜d6 and White has to give up the rook.

**17...♜f6**

**18.♝xc7**

And White has a large advantage, Miton-Brownscombe, Philadelphia 2002.



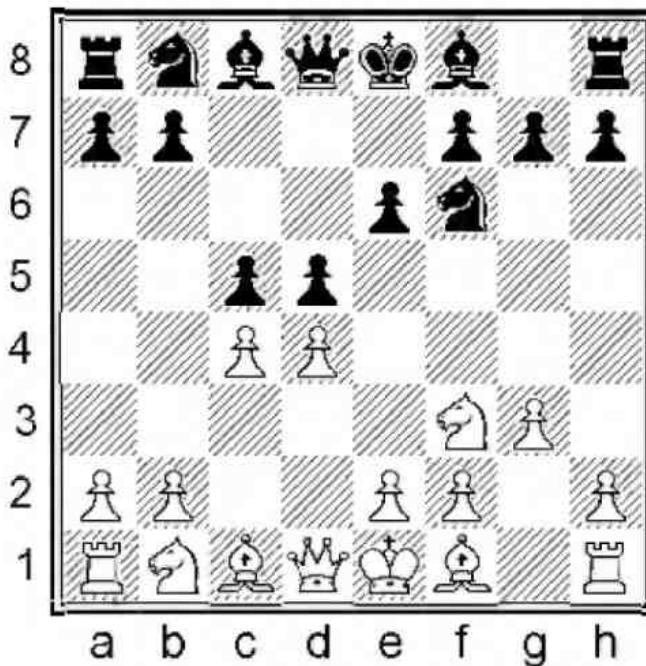
## Conclusion

So, what can we say about the 4...b6 variation overall? Black tries to avoid the main lines of the Catalan and takes play into positions characteristic of the Queen's Indian Defence, in the hope that White will not be so well prepared for these lines. But in reality, no great preparation is needed here, and it is sufficient to know the main ideas. White puts his bishop on g2, his knight on e5, and then either plays e2-e4 (in reply to ...c7-c6), or exchanges pawns on d5 and brings his bishop to f4, beginning to exert pressure on the opponent's pawn centre. In many cases, White is prepared to exchange various pieces, but in the process, he retains those that attack the pawn on d5. Black has

definite problems here: in the main, because of the passive position of the bishop on b7 and the pin on the pawn d5.

## Chapter 2 – Tarrasch Style

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 c5



After this move, play goes into the realms of the Tarrasch Defence. I have decided to give a short summary of how White should react, because Catalan players must always be ready for such opening transformations.

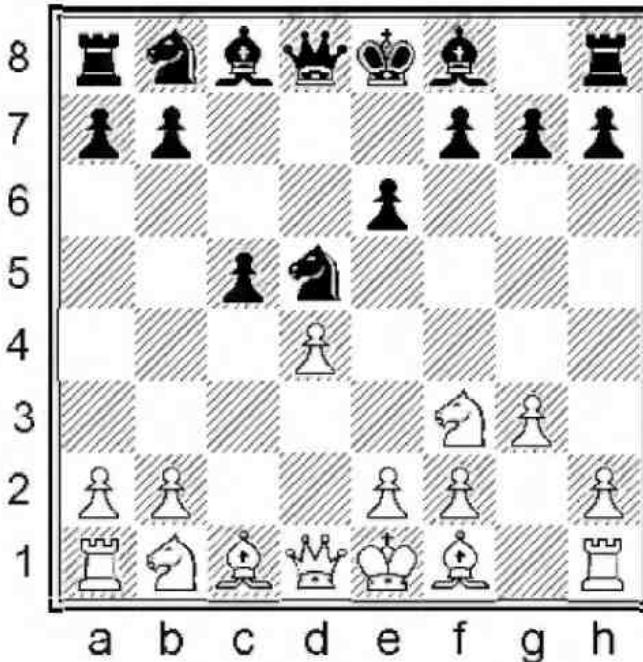
5.cxd5

Black can take back in two different ways:

A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

B) 5...exd5

A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

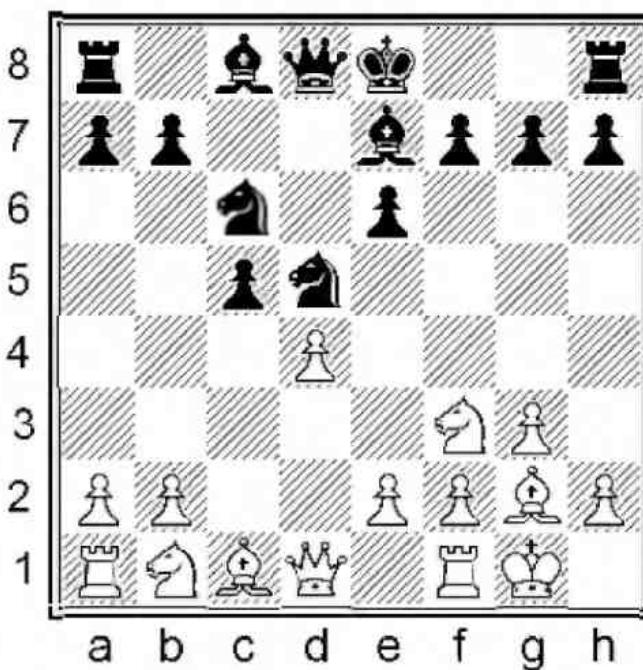


**6.♗g2 ♜c6**

White obtains a relatively small, but stable advantage after 6...cxd4 7.0-0 ♜e7 8.♗xd4 0-0 9.e4 ♜b4 10.♗c3 ♜8c6 11.♗xc6 ♜xc6 12.♗e3±. He has an edge in space and development, and better control of the centre.

**7.0-0 ♜e7**

The immediate central clarification by 7...cxd4 does not give Black full equality, because he is noticeably behind in development: 8.♗xd4 ♜d7 9.e4 (White can also count on a minimal advantage after 9.♗c3 ♜xc3 10.bxc3 ♜e7 11.♗b1 ♜c8 12.♗b5 0-0 13.♗d6 ♜xd6 14.♗xd6 ♜d8 (Neckar-Plesec, Bern 1990) 15.♗e3±) 9...♜f6 10.♗c3 ♜c5 11.♗b3 ♜e7 12.♗e3 0-0 13.♗c5± Felber-Stenzel, Mineola 2008. White has a lasting initiative.



## **8.dxc5**

A typical small subtlety: White has waited for the enemy bishop to come out to e7, and only then he takes on c5, thus winning a tempo.

### **8...gxc5**

#### **9.a3**

This move is played not so much to prepare b2-b4 (although such a plan cannot be ruled out), but mainly in order to take control of b4 and thus ensure the queen a secure base on c2.

#### **9...0-0**

If Black spends a tempo on the move 9...a5, then White easily develops the initiative: 10.♘c2 ♘e7 11.e4 ♙f6 12.e5 ♙d5 13.♗g5! f6 (forced, since the retreat of the queen to f8 looks even worse) 14.exf6 gxf6 15.♗h6 ♙d7 16.♗bd2± Schebler-Lahaye, Almelo 2004. The black king is caught in the centre, and with a board full of pieces, its position is a cause for serious concern.

#### **10.♘c2 ♘e7**

Retreating the bishop on the other diagonal does not change the principal character of the position: 10...♗b6 11.♗d1 ♙d7 12.e4 ♙de7 13.♗c3 e5 14.♗e3!? (not allowing the opponent to establish an outpost on d4, even at the cost of doubled pawns) 14...♗xe3 15.fxe3± Borges-Schlosser, Havana 1997.

#### **11.♗d1 ♘c7**

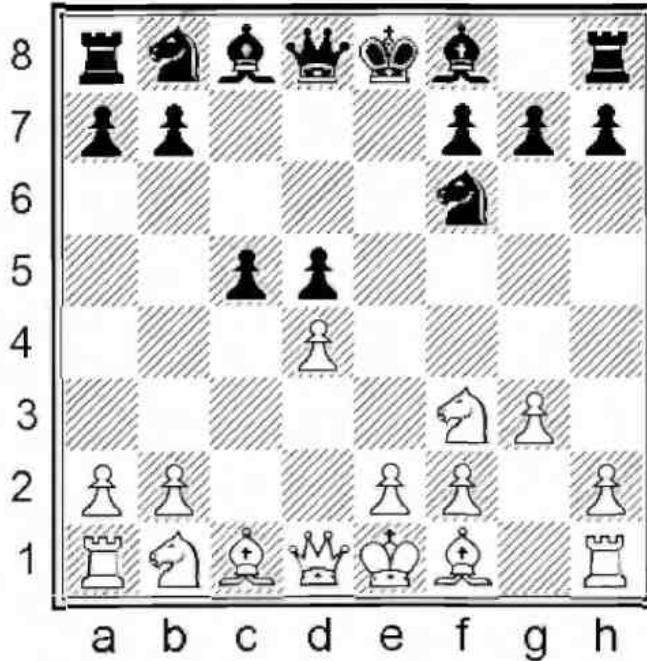
#### **12.e4 ♙f6**

#### **13.♗f4 ♘b6**

#### **14.♗c3±**

Tkachiev-Vachier-Lagrave, Cergy-Pontoise 2003. White's chances are clearly superior: he has already completed his development and seized the initiative in the centre, whilst Black still has to solve the problem of how to develop his bishop on c8 and his entire queenside.

## **B) 5...exd5**



**6.♗g2 ♜c6**

After 6...c4 7.0-0 ♜e7 8.♗c3 0-0 9.♗e5 ♜c6 (if 9...♗f5, then White can break up the enemy pawn chain: 10.b3 ♜b4 11.♗d2 ♜xc3 12.♗xc3, and now 12...b5? 13.bxc4 bxc4, Hubka-Tlapa, Klatovy 1998, fails to 14.♗xc4±) 10.♗g5 leads to a position, examined via a different move-order: 6...♜c6 7.0-0 ♜e7 8.♗c3 0-0 9.♗g5 c4 10.♗e5.

**7.0-0 ♜e7**

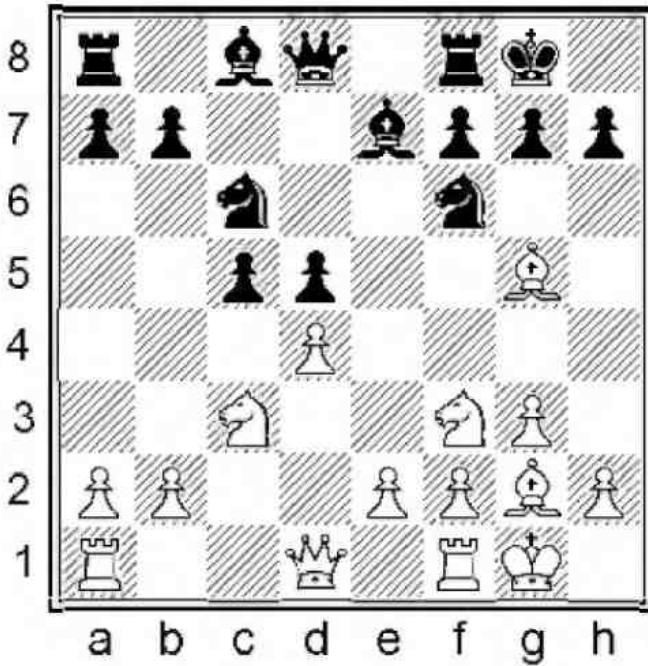
**8.♗c3 0-0**

White is better after 8...♜e6 9.dxc5 ♜xc5 10.♗g5 0-0 (10...d4 11.♗xf6 ♜xf6 12.♗e4 ♜e7 13.♗xc5 ♜xc5 14.b4 ♜xb4 15.♗b1 ♜d6 16.♗xb7 0-0 (Schleifer-Polacek, Ontario 1992) 17.♗g5 ♜d5 18.♗d3 g6 19.e4!± with an obvious advantage to White) 11.♗c1 ♜e7 12.♗d4.

Now we have reached the basic position of the Tarrasch. Here, White has various possibilities. I recommend the most popular continuation:

**9.♗g5**

In my opinion, this allows White to fight for an opening advantage with good chances of success.



In this position, Black has three main continuations:

**B1) 9...h6**

**B2) 9...c4**

**B3) 9...cxd4**

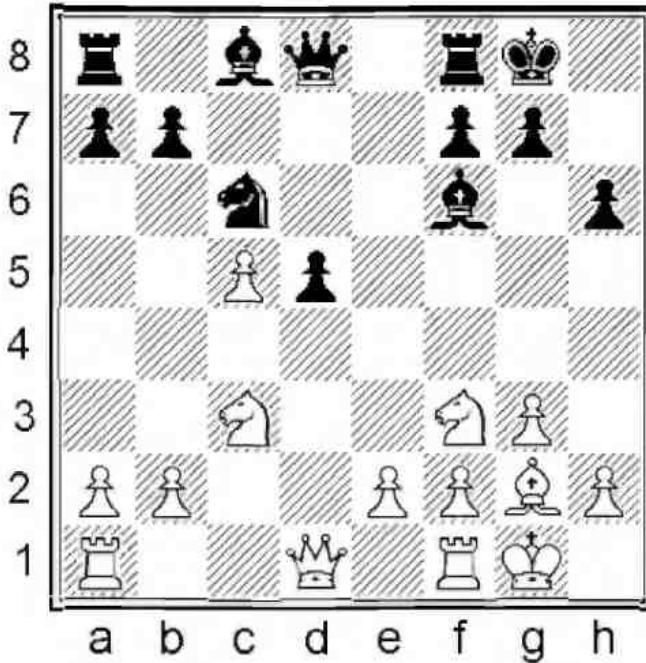
**B1)** In reply to

**9...h6**

White simply takes the pawn:

**10.♕xf6 ♕xf6**

**11.dxc5**



Probably, Black has sufficient resources to eventually regain the pawn, but White can always transform the material advantage into a positional one. In general, this is a very important idea to understand in the Catalan, and in this particular case of the Tarrasch: a positional advantage frequently plays a greater role here than a material one.

### **11...Qxc3**

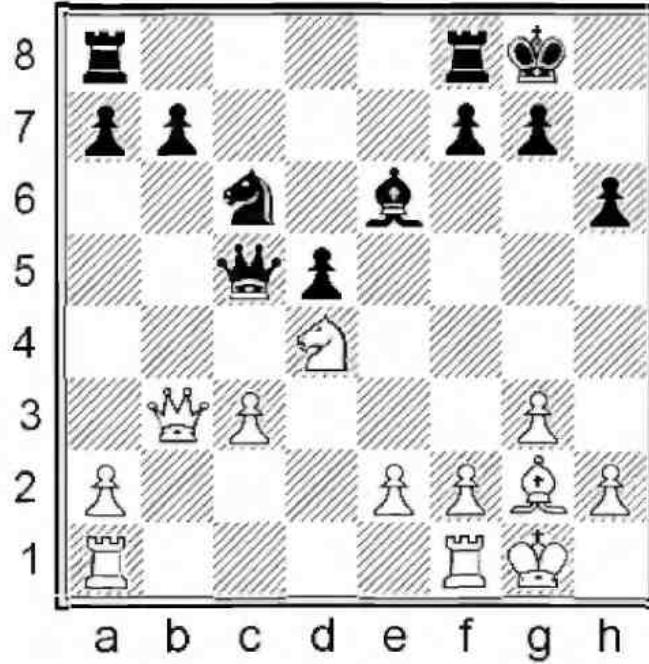
Black gets nothing from 11...d4 12.Qe4 Qe7 13.Bc1 Qf5 (Benito-Flores, Calvia 2004) 14.Qfd2±.

Or 11...Qe6 12.Wd2 Wd7 13.Bac1 d4 14.Qb5 (White does not cling on to the extra material, but improves the position of his pieces, allowing his opponent to take back the pawn on a2) 14...a6 15.Qd6 Qxa2 16.Qe1! (an important move, often seen in positions with a fianchettoed bishop on g2 and an enemy pawn on d4. The knight transfers to the excellent blockading square d3, and at the same time opens the diagonal of the light-squared bishop) 16...Qe6 17.Qd3. White has a very pleasant position.

### **12.bxc3 Qe6**

### **13.Qd4 Wa5**

### **14.Wb3 Wxc5**



**15.e4!**

An important subtlety: White exploits the fact that the bishop at e6 is attacked by the knight on d4.

**15...Qa5**

If 15...dxe4 16.Qxe6 fxe6 17.Qxe6+ Qh8 18.Qxe4 Black has an insecure king, whilst the bishop is clearly stronger than the knight in this position.

**16.Qb4 Qac8**

**17.Qxe6 fxe6**

**18.Qh3!**

A battle starts to exploit the light-square weaknesses in the enemy position.

**18...Rfe8**

**19.exd5 Qxd5**

**20.Rad1 Qh5**

**21.Qg4 Qc5**

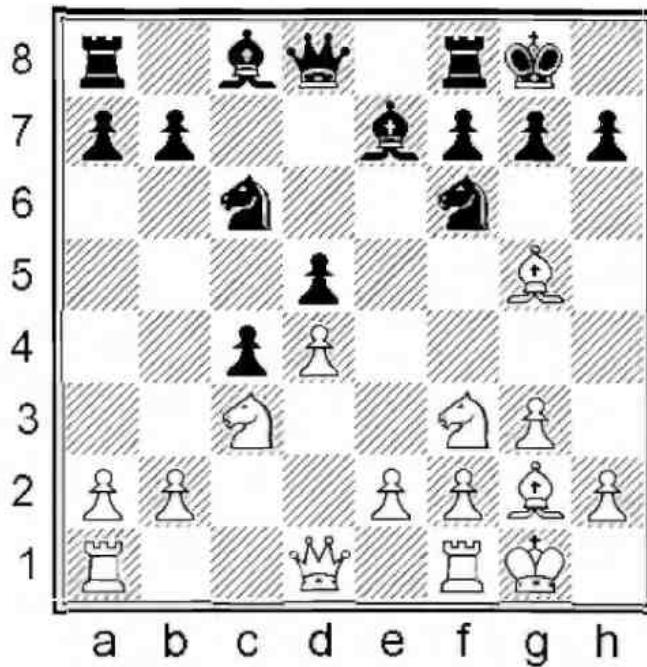
**22.Rfe1±**

Panno-Ingolotti, Tucuman 1971.

**B2) 9...c4**

A very ambitious move. As we can see, Black establishes a queenside pawn majority, and he hopes later to exploit this,

by advancing his other pawns on that flank.



But the drawback of the move is that Black removes the pressure from the pawn on d4, so now White's hands are freed to attack the d5-pawn. Now the whole battle will revolve around this crucial pawn – White will attack it with pieces, and, if the circumstances permit, with the e-pawn (e2-e4!).

#### 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

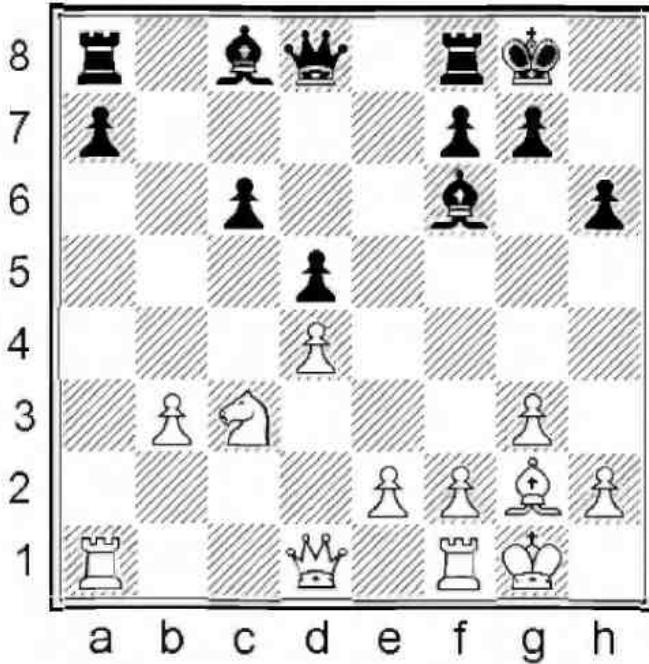
Immediately threatening to exchange on f6, after which the d5-pawn will be hanging.

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

The move 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  looks unconvincing because of 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  13.  $e4!$   $dxe4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$  Henriksson-Rylander, Linköping 1996. Black has both badly-coordinated pieces and weak pawns.

Or 10...  $h6?$ ! 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6!?$  (White prefers a positional method of conducting the game. Of course, it was possible to take the pawn: 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ . White's chances are certainly preferable, but even so, the two bishops in an open position promise Black reasonable compensation for the pawn) 12...  $bxc6$  13.  $b3!$ . The key move for understanding this structure. After 13...  $cxb3$  14.  $axb3$  White opens the a- and c-files, along which he can exert pressure against the opponent's weak pawns. In addition, the pawn on c6 would become immobile, because it must defend its neighbour at d5. Another typical problem for this variation is where to redeploy the bishop on c8.

Let us see how our conclusions are reflected in practice:



14... $\mathbb{W}b6$  15.e3  $\mathbb{E}b8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ ! (White happily parts with the b3-pawn, because he is convinced he will regain the sacrificed material with interest) 16... $\mathbb{W}xb3$  17. $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{E}xb3$  18. $\mathbb{R}fc1$  (the pawn on c6 cannot be saved, since after 18... $\mathbb{R}b7$  or 18... $\mathbb{R}d7$  there follows 19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , and after its fall, Black remains with two weak pawns on d5 and a7) 18... $\mathbb{R}e6$  19. $\mathbb{R}xc6\pm$  Greenfeld-Poppner, Berlin 1995.

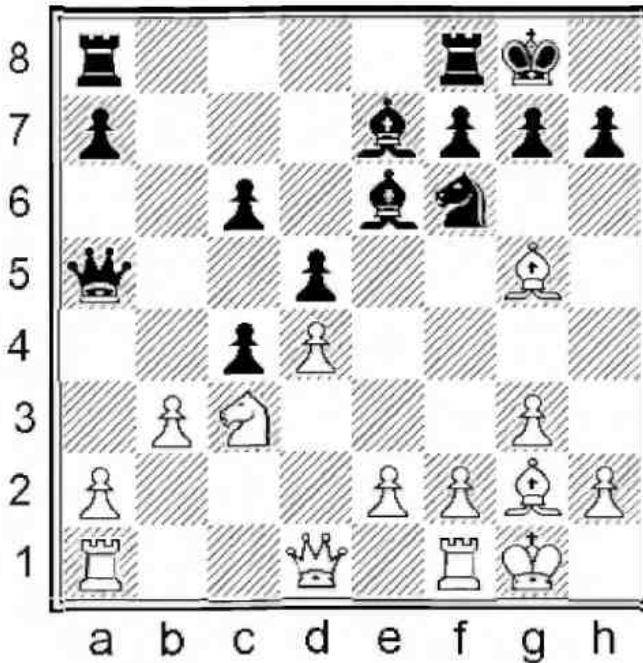
**11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $bxe6$**

**12.b3**

White strives for the same structure we saw above – a pawn on b3 against pawns on a7 and c6. But here, Black has saved a tempo on the move ...h7-h6, and, in addition, his dark-squared bishop remains on the a3-f8 diagonal, so now he has greater chances of obtaining counterplay on the queenside.

**12... $\mathbb{W}a5$**

12... $cxb3$  13. $axb3$  h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{E}fb8$  18. $\mathbb{E}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  19.b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  20. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  21.e3± P.H. Nielsen-Rogers, Turin 2006. Black can gradually strengthen his pressure on the queenside, whilst Black is deprived of counterplay.



**B21) 13.♕d2**

**B22) 13.♕c2**

The theoretically approved move 13.♕c2 allows White to count on a small advantage, but the other, somewhat provocative continuation

**B21) 13.♕d2!?**

also deserves attention, setting up the tactical threat 14.♗xd5!.

**B211) 13...♝b4**

**B212) 13...♝ad8**

**B211) The aggressive move**

**13...♝b4**

must be studied first. Then there follows

**14.♗xf6**

An important intermediate move, thanks to which White spoils his opponent's kingside pawn structure.

**14...gxf6**

Not 14...♝xc3?? 15.♕g5, and mate.

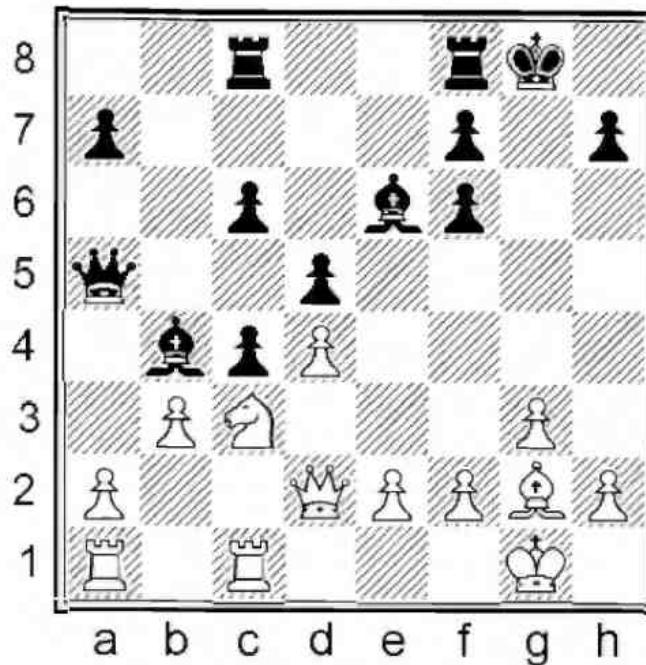
**15.♝fc1**

Of course, the pin on the knight is unpleasant, but White can gradually escape from it, when the weakness of the pawns

on f6 and c6 should gradually tell.

**15... $\mathbb{E}ac8$**

Chasing the rook brings Black nothing: 15... $\mathbb{Q}a3$  16. $\mathbb{E}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17.e4 dxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  19.bxc4 with a superior position for White, Van der Stricht-Cousigne, Creon 2004.



**16.a3!**

A nice little trick, forcing Black to take on c3.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$**

16... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$ ? 17. $\mathbb{W}a2$  – the bishop itself comes under a deadly pin.

**17. $\mathbb{E}xc3$**

There is no sense in White exchanging queens, because of the weakness of the enemy king.

**17... $cxb3$**

**18. $\mathbb{W}b2$**

White regains the pawn with no trouble.

**18... $c5$**

**19. $\mathbb{E}xb3$   $c4$**

**20. $\mathbb{E}b5!$**

From the positional point of view, the move 20. $\mathbb{E}c3$ ! looks very good. White blockades the enemy pawns on light squares, whilst the bishop on e6, defending d5, looks like a big pawn. However, in that case, Black seizes control of the

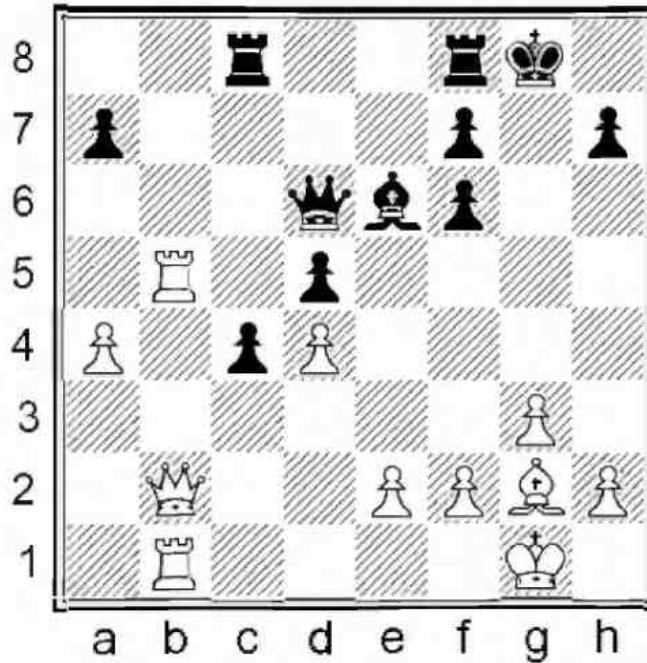
open b-file and develops the initiative on the queenside. I think the energetic move in the game is stronger.

**20...♛a6**

Likavsky-Velchev, Belgrade 2006.

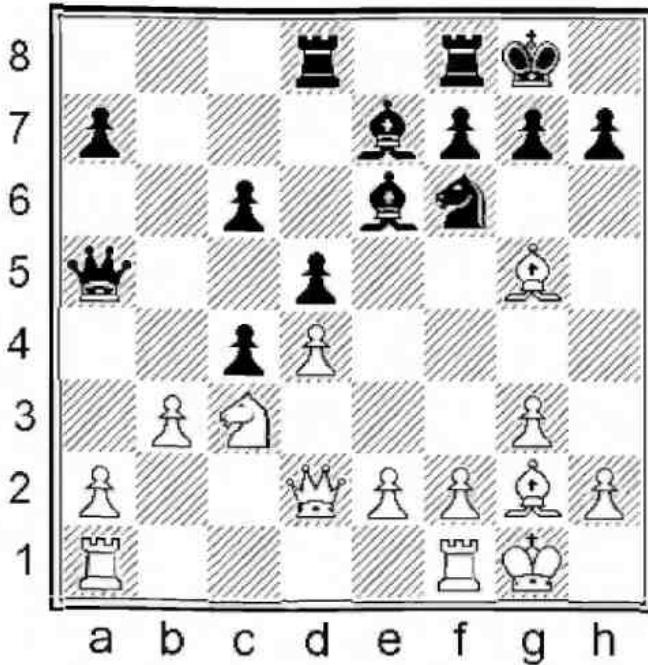
**21.♝b1 ♛d6**

**22.a4±**



White controls the only open file, is fastened onto the pawn on d5, and has weakened the enemy king. Black's only trump is the protected passed pawn on c4, but it is unclear how he can exploit this in the foreseeable future.

**B212) 13...♝ad8**



**14.  $\mathbb{R}fd1$**

It is obvious that White cannot take on d5 with the knight, because of the rook recapture, so he continues to develop his pieces.

**14...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

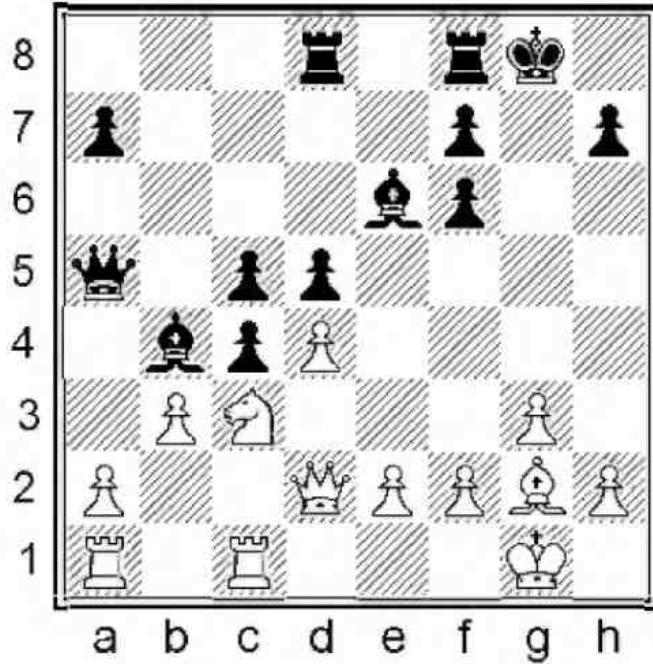
Maybe it is better to refrain entirely from this tempting move, although after, for example, 14...  $\mathbb{W}a6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  White has a stable initiative.

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6**

**16.  $\mathbb{R}dc1$**

By comparison with the variation 13...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , Black has won a tempo – his queen's rook already stands on d8. Therefore, he can immediately begin counterplay in the centre, although he still does not obtain full equality from this.

**16...  $c5!?$**



**17.bxc4 dxc4**

**18.d5 ♜xd5**

An unpleasant rook ending awaits Black after 18...♜xc3 19.♝xc3 ♜xc3 20.♜xc3 ♜xd5 21.♜xd5 ♜xd5 22.♜xc4±.

**19.♜xd5 ♜xe3**

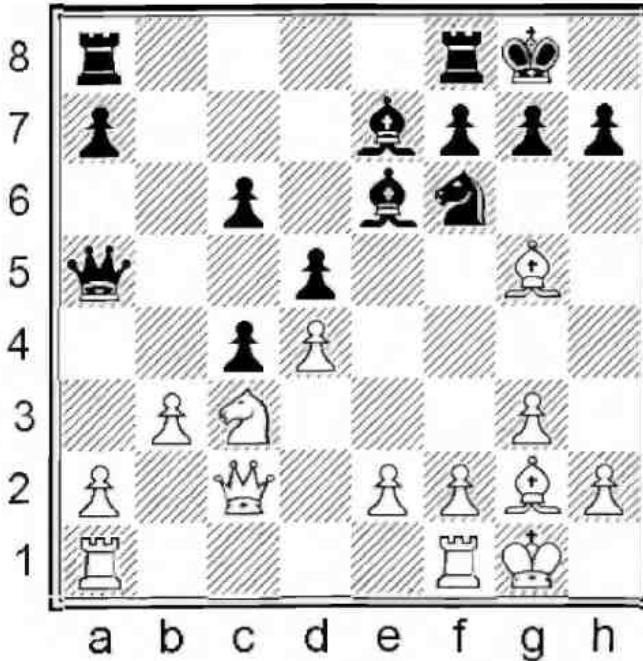
**20.♜xc3 ♜xd5**

**21.♝c2 ♜fd8**

**22.♜xe4±**

Zhu Chen-Kovalevskaya, Nalchik 2011. Black has a weak king, which is a very important factor in a heavy-piece ending.

**B22) 13.♝c2**



In the diagram position, Black has tried a number of continuations, but has not managed to demonstrate a precise path to equality.

**B221) 13...♝fd8**

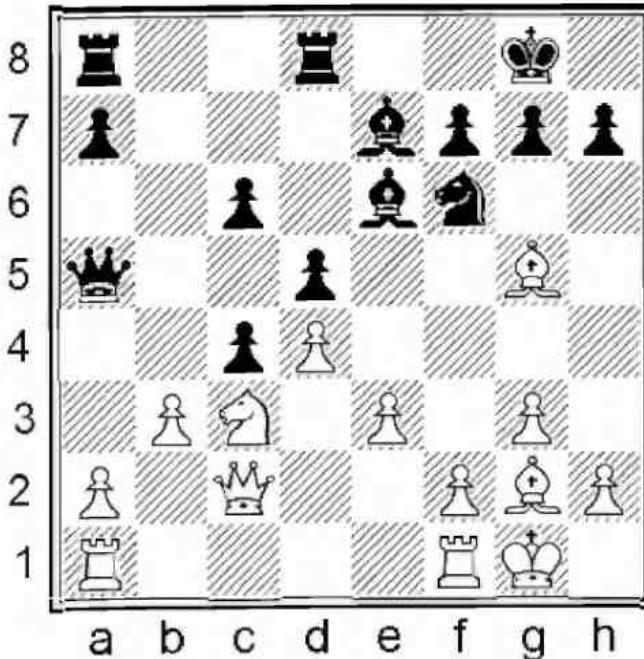
**B222) 13...♝ad8!?**

Practice has also seen 13...♝ac8 (Black wants to advance ...c6-c5 and somehow exploit the opposition of rook and queen on the c-file, but White anticipates this) 14.bxc4 dxc4 (now the c-file remains closed in any event) 15.♛e4 ♛d8 16.♜xf6 ♜xf6 17.e3± Palac-Drmic, Sibenik 2008.

13...♝b4!? 14.♝fc1 c5 (Black immediately provokes a crisis in the centre, but it turns out clearly in White's favour) 15.♜xf6 ♜xc3 16.♛xc3 ♛xc3 17.♝xc3 gxf6 18.bxc4 cxd4 19.♝a3!± Alterman-Zagema, Leeuwarden 1994.

**B221) 13...♝fd8**

**14.e3**



A useful general strengthening move. White's plans include a timely exchange on c4, when the d4-pawn will need defending, whilst if Black advances ...c6-c5, this move will again be useful.

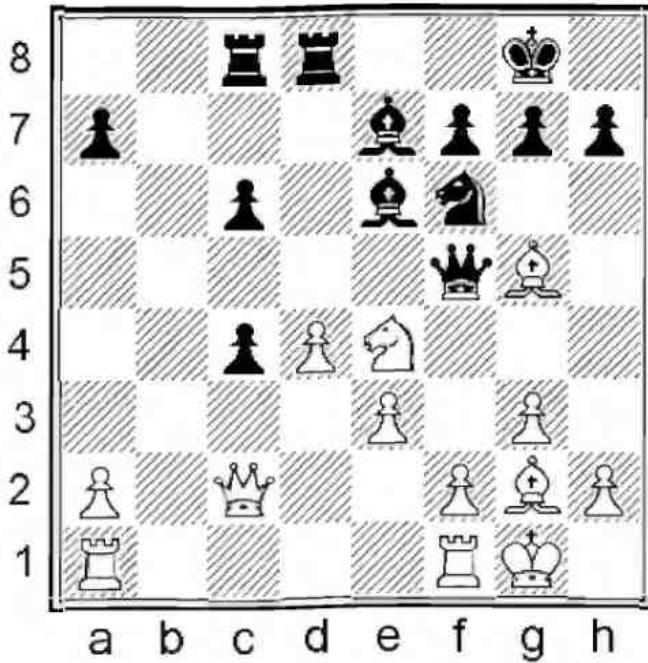
**14...♝ac8**

The immediate 14...c5 is clearly bad, because of 15.bxc4 cxd4 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.cxd5± Yakovich-Bach, Bergen 2002.

**15.bxc4 dxc4**

**16.♗e4 ♛f5**

A timely transfer to bring the queen closer to her own king. After 16...c5 White has a convincing rejoinder: 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 (17...gxf6 (Conrad-Bach, Germany 2002/03) 18.d5! – an important pawn sacrifice, as a consequence of which the black queen is cut off from the kingside: 18...♗xd5 19.♗ad1 ♛e6 20.♗c3 with compensation . The threat of ♗d5 is very unpleasant. It seems that Black will have to exchange on d5, producing opposite-coloured bishops, thanks to which White can create dangerous threats on the kingside) 18.d5! ♗xd5 19.♗xf6+ gxf6 20.♗xd5 ♛xd5 21.♕xc4 ♜cd8 22.♗ab1±. Black faces a difficult defence.



**17.Bfd1**

On 17.Bab1 Black obtains good counterplay after 17...c5!?, 18.Bb5 a6, for instance: 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Ba5Bg6 21.dxc5 Bxc5 22.Bxc5 Bxc5 23.Ba4 Be7 24.Bxa6 Bf5 25.Ba7 Bd7. The strong passed pawn on c4 allows Black to face the future with optimism.

**17...Bd7**

**18.Bxf6 Bxf6**

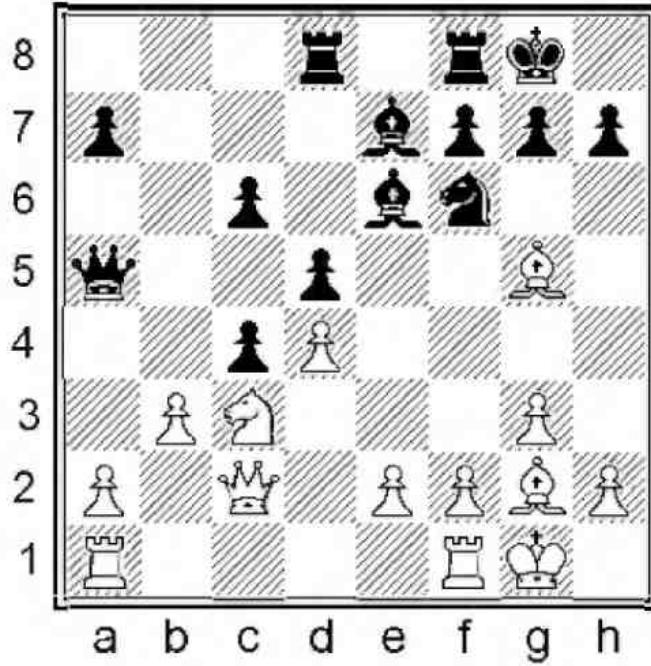
**19.Ba4 Be7**

**20.Qc3±**

All of Black's pawns on the left flank are weak, and White wants to advance his powerful centre in the near future.

**B222) 13...Bd8!?**

The advantage of this move, compared with 13...Bfd8, consists in the fact that now the black rook at a8 will not come under attack from the enemy's fianchettoed bishop. But this is still not enough to justify the breakout in the centre.



**14.♗fd1 c5?!**

Obviously, the modest 14...h6 is more promising, after which White does best to move the bishop away – 15.♔f4.

**15.bxc4 cxd4**

**16.♕xd5 ♕xd5**

**17.cxd5 ♘xg5**

**18.dxe6 fxe6**

**19.♔e4**

Black has a weak pawn structure, which is a long-term weakness in both middlegame and endgame.

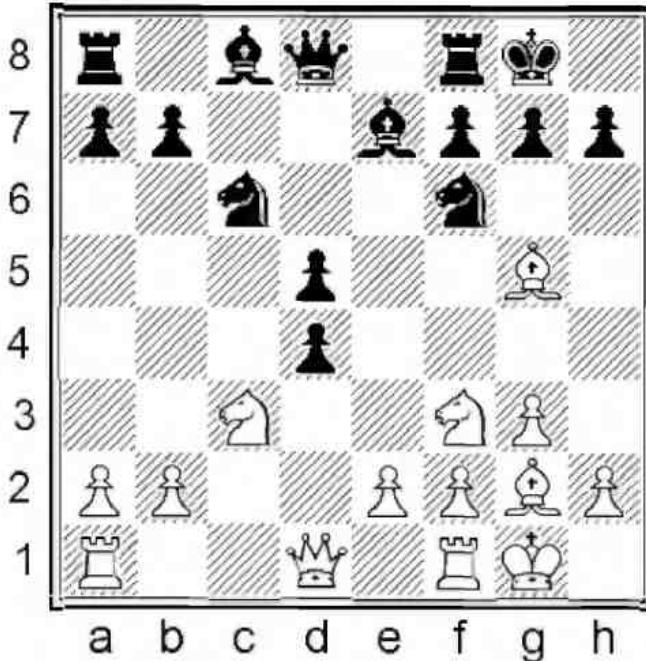
**19...h6**

**20.♗ab1 ♗c3**

**21.♗b7±**

Engqvist-Lie, Stockholm 2005.

**B3) 9...cxd4**



The most popular continuation. Black himself takes on an isolated pawn on d5, but in return, obtains rich piece play.

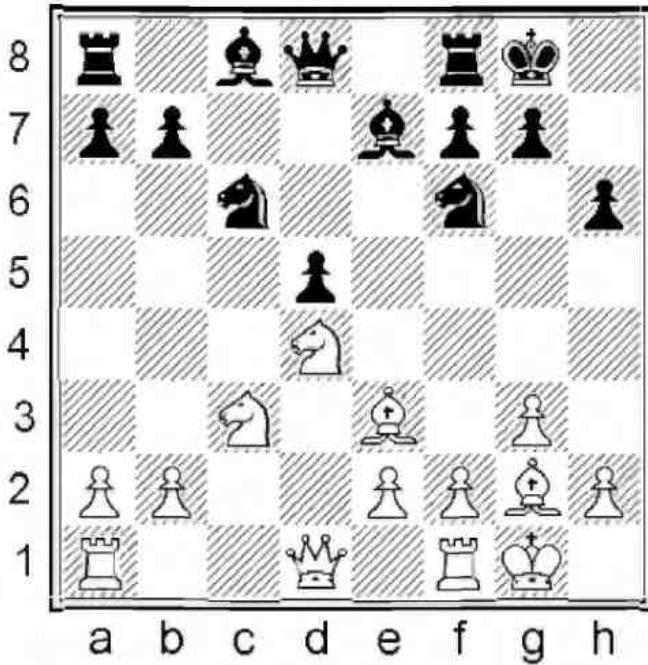
#### **10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ h6**

A transposition arises after 10...  $\mathbb{E}e8$  11.  $\mathbb{E}c1$  h6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ .

If 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$ , then 11. h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{E}c1$ , and it is not clear what Black has achieved with his various bishop jumps to and fro. Play could continue: 12... h6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}h2\pm$ .

The move 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  only looks active; in reality, the queen is not very well-placed here, and can easily come under attack from the enemy pieces. For example: 11.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (grabbing the centre pawn is wrong: 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  16.  $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  17.  $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  and Black is close to full equality, Kasparov-Computer ‘Fritz4-Pentium’, London 1995) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13. a3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14.  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ . The black queen is out of play and White can develop strong pressure on the queenside.

#### **11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**



### 11...Qe8

In reply to 11...Qe6 White carries out the plan with which we are already familiar: first he brings the queen to a4, and then places the king's rook on d1: 12.Qa4 Qd7 13.Qfd1 Qfd8 14.Qxe6 fxe6 15.Qac1 (an important point to note about this position is that Black can never play ...d5-d4, because White takes on c6 and d4. White has two bishops and the better structure) 15...Qf8 16.Qe4 (White could probably not resist this nice move, but it was also possible to play more simply – 16.Qb5!?, after which it is also not easy for Black to defend) 16...Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qe5 18.Qxd7 Qxd7 19.Qg2± Sjöberg-Henriksson, Stockholm 1992.

Or 11...Qg4 12.Qa4 Qa5 (after the exchange on d4, Black cannot defend the d5-pawn) 13.Qfd1 (a typical situation in the Tarrasch Defence: White removes his queen from d1 and immediately places his rook there, at the same time increasing the pressure on the weak pawn at d5) 13...Qc4 14.Qc1 (it may look as though White has lost several tempi with this bishop, but in reality, Black has serious problems with the defence of the pawn on d5) 14...Qb6 15.Qb3 a5 (Naes-Berelovich, Hoogeveen 2001) 16.Qf4±.

### 12.Qc1

White makes a useful and not especially committal move, bringing the rook to the centre. He wishes to see how Black will deploy his forces, in particular where he intends to place his light-squared bishop.

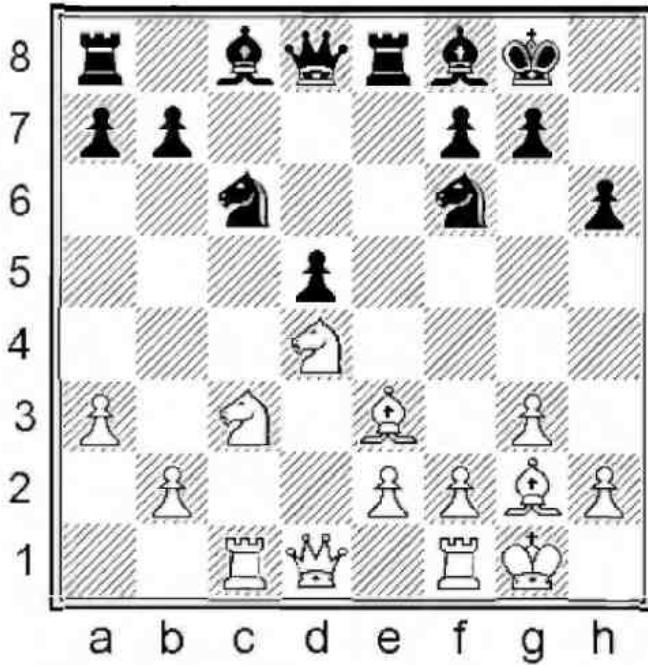
### 12...Qf8

On 12...Qg4 there follows the standard reaction: 13.h3 Qh5 14.Qa4.

The move 12...Qe6 can hardly be good here, because of 13.Qxe6 fxe6 14.Qb5.

The pseudo-active manoeuvre 12...Qe5 13.Qb3 Qc4 leaves Black minus a pawn after 14.Qxd5 Qxd5 (14...Qxe3 15.fxe3±) 15.Qxc4 Qxe3 16.Qxe3.

### 13.a3!?



Another waiting move: White still wishes to await the development of the bishop from c8, before deciding on his plans. The move is useful in itself: White takes control of the square b4, which the opponent often uses as a transfer point for his forces.

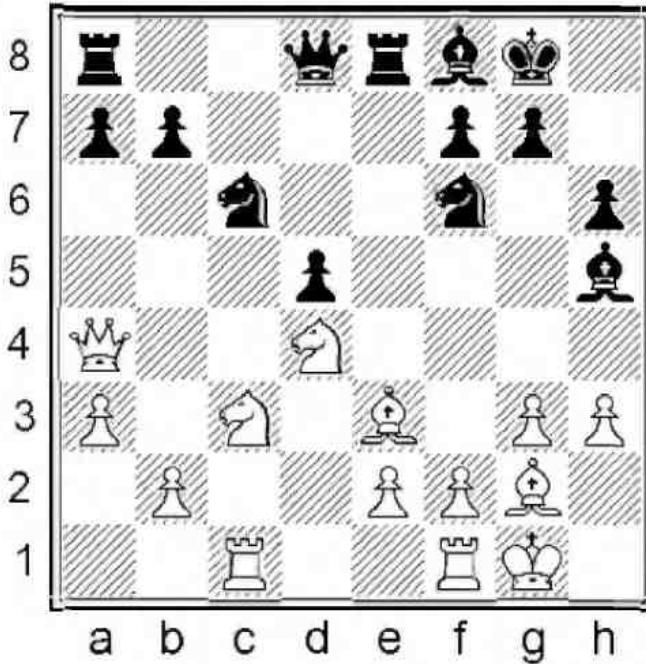
### 13...Bg4

On 13...Qe5 White simply replies 14.Qb3 and then brings his king's rook to d1. We already know that Black cannot play 14...Qc4 because of the loss of a pawn after 15.Qxd5.

On 13...Qe6 there is the unpleasant 14.Qa4 Qd7 15.Qfd1 Qh3 16.Qf3. White has already moved his rook from f1 and so may avoid the unfavourable exchange of light-squared bishops. 16...a6 17.Qb3!. White wants to exploit the weakening of the dark squares on the queenside. It may look as though the white queen is almost trapped, but she cannot be won: 17...b5 18.Qf4 Qd6 19.Qh4. The queen escapes and the d5-pawn is now in serious danger.

### 14.h3 Qe6

After 14...Qh5 15.Qa4 White, as we already know, develops unpleasant pressure on the squares c6 and d5.



Admittedly, now he must reckon with the exchange sacrifice on e3: 15... $\mathbb{E}xe3$ , but I do not think Black obtains enough compensation in this case, for example: 16.fxe3  $\mathbb{W}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}xe3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f5!$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  with the simple, but unpleasant threat of 20. $\mathbb{Q}xh6+$ . Here, it is not easy for Black to defend.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6**

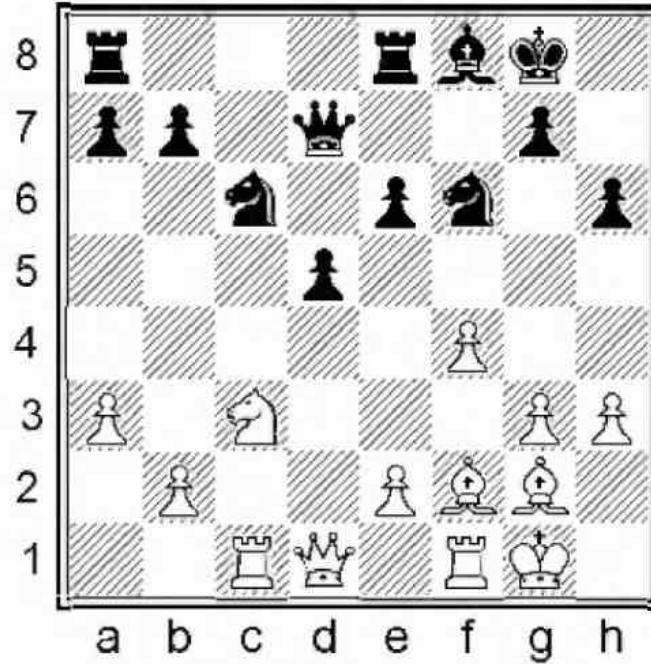
**16.f4**

I very much like this pawn structure for White. He wants to bring his bishop to f2 and advance e2-e4, opening the centre, after which his bishops will assume great strength.

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

As I have already pointed out, after 16...d4 White has 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ .

**17. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$**

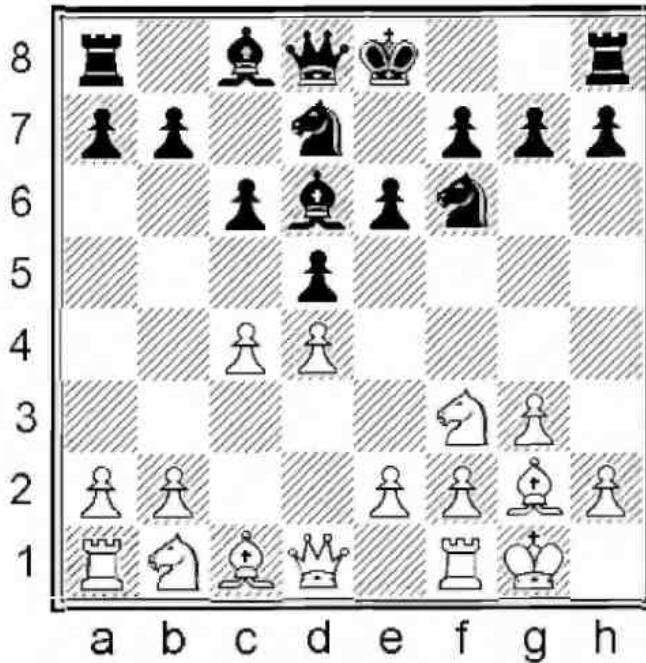


### Conclusion

At this moment, in the Tarrasch Defence, White can count on an opening advantage without too much trouble, choosing whichever line he likes best. One of those lines is what I recommend here. White's strategy is very simple: develop his pieces and tie the enemy forces down, for example with the bishop coming to g5, creating pressure on the enemy central pawns. All the remaining white moves pursue this same goal. White focuses his play on the centre.

## Chapter 3 – The Triangle Set-Up

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 c6 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  6.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$



I have adopted this set-up a number of times as Black and achieved good practical results. Black's idea is very simple: first of all, he wants to strengthen the d5-square as far as possible, and later to advance ...e6-e5.

This plan would be all good, were it not for one 'but': White can play a fantastic move, which I personally found out about from Vadim Zviagintsev, a strong grandmaster from Moscow (winner of the Russian Cup 2011) and my friend.

7. $\mathbb{Q}fd2!$

Against all the rules, White makes a second move in the opening with the same piece, but this is the best continuation in the present position. It is precisely because of this possibility that I stopped playing the set-up with the black bishop on d6.

Here, Black has played various moves, but nowhere can he obtain equality.

A) 7...b5

B) 7...e5

C) 7...0-0

A) 7...b5

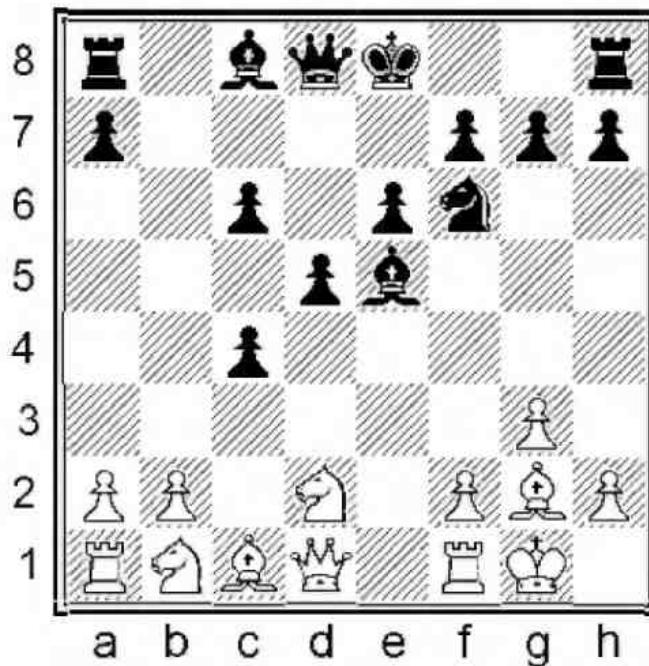
A1) 8.e4

A2) 8.c5

A1) 8.e4!? bxc4

9.e5 ♗xe5

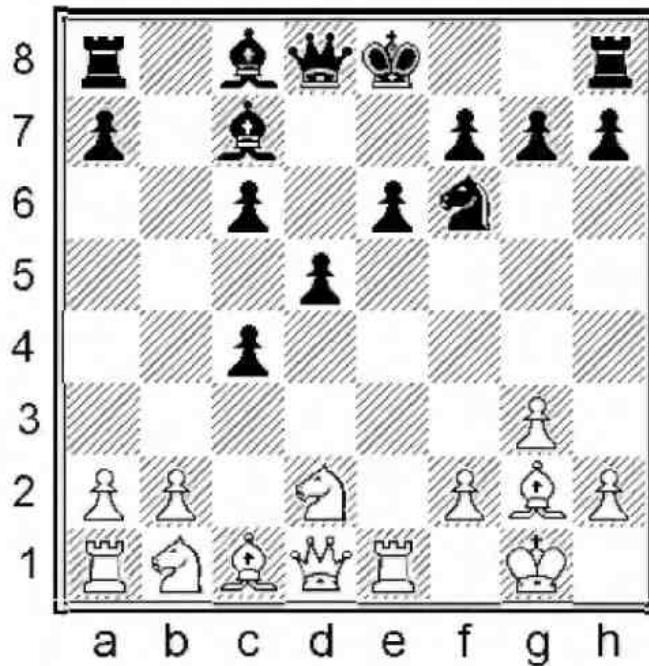
10.dxe5 ♘xe5



At first glance it may seem that the three central pawns give Black sufficient compensation for the pawn, but this is not so: the pawns are currently rather immobile, and the white pieces can develop strong pressure on the enemy centre.

Possible now is:

11.♗e1 ♘c7



12.b3!

with the better chances for White.

## A2) 8.c5

The simplest retort.

**8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$**

**9.e4**

There is no danger for Black in the continuation 9.a4 b4.

After 9.e4 we reach a position of the Slav type, in which White has a very strong fianchettoed bishop, while its opposite number on c8 has every chance of becoming a serious headache for Black until the end of the game.

**9...dxe4**

**10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

Also good is 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

**10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

**11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{Q}b7$**

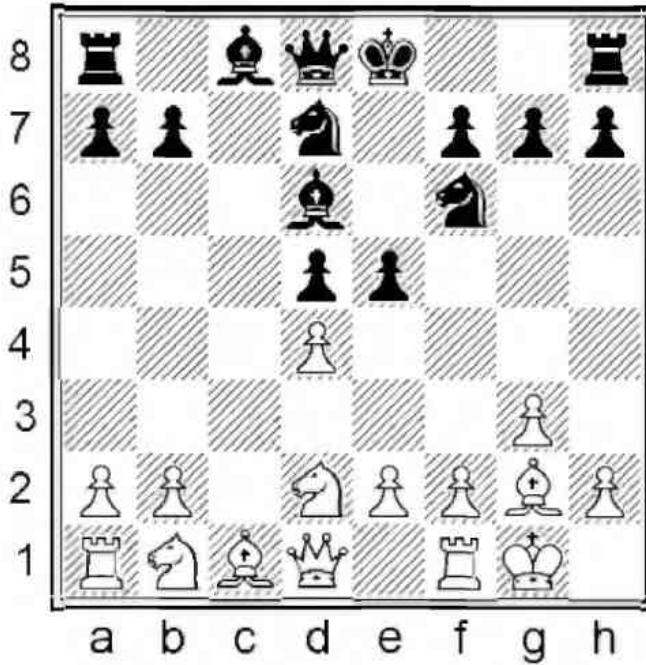
**12. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$**

**B)** Black can counterattack in the centre immediately:

**7...e5**

but then

**8.cxd5 cxd5**



### **9.dxe5**

There is also another interesting idea for White – 9.Qc3 e4 10.f3 exf3 11.Qxf3±!?, and later White brings his bishop out to g5, while the knight goes via h4 to f5, creating strong pressure on the kingside.

### **9...Qxe5**

### **10.Qc3**

We can say of this position that it is like a Tarrasch Defence, and a very favourable one for White, at that.

After 10...Rxe6 11.Qb3 0-0 (11...d4 12.Qa4+) 12.Qxd5 Black loses a pawn, without obtaining in return any compensation at all.

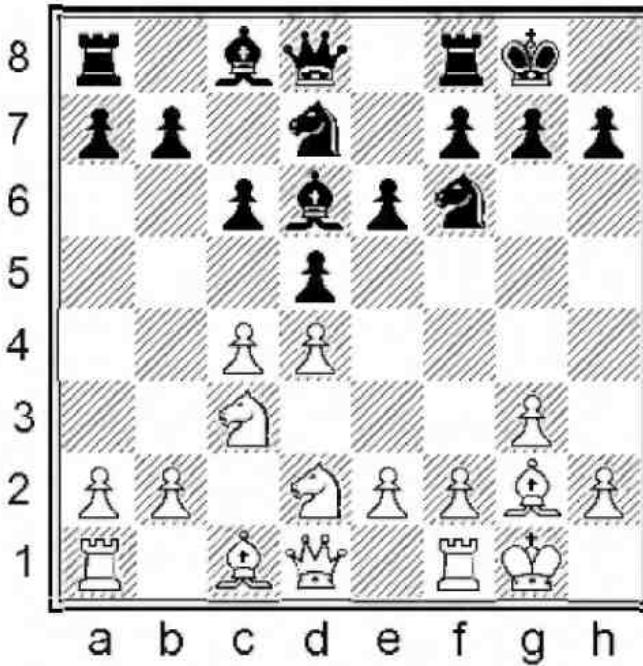
### **C) 7...0-0**

The main continuation for Black.

### **8.Qc3**

White's idea is very simple: he advances e2-e4 and after one or two exchanges will take on e4 with the knight, attacking the bishop on d6. Black gets a cramped position, and will also be required to lose a tempo retreating the bishop.

I have analysed many different set-ups for Black here, but nowhere did I find equality.



C1) 8...h6

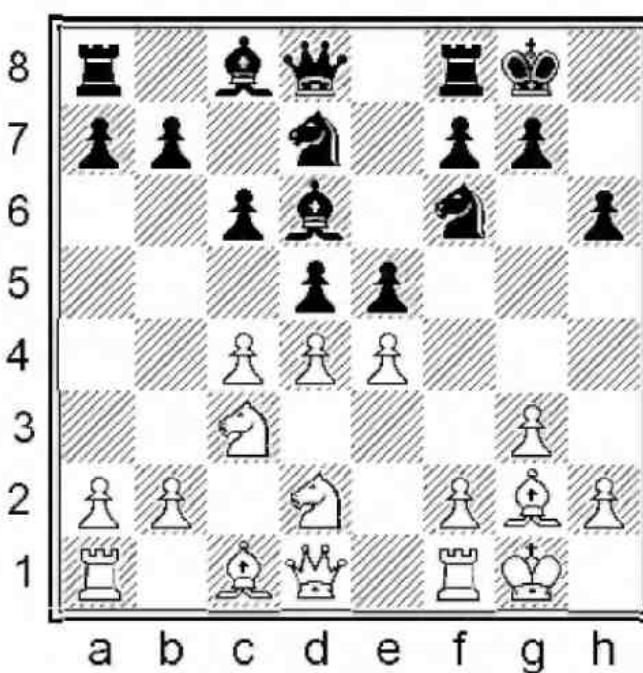
C2) 8...g7c7

C3) 8...g7b4

C4) 8...e8

C1) 8...h6

9.e4 e5!?



A typical counterblow in the centre. In the case of the straightforward exchange on e4, White has an obvious advantage. But now he can simply win a pawn.

**10.dxe5 ♜xe5**

**11.cxd5 cxd5**

**12.exd5 ♜e8**

**13.♘c2**

Having given up the pawn, Black can place his pieces conveniently in the centre, but even so, this is insufficient compensation for the material deficit.

**C2) In reply to**

**8...♝c7**

White carries out his main plan:

**9.e4 dxe4**

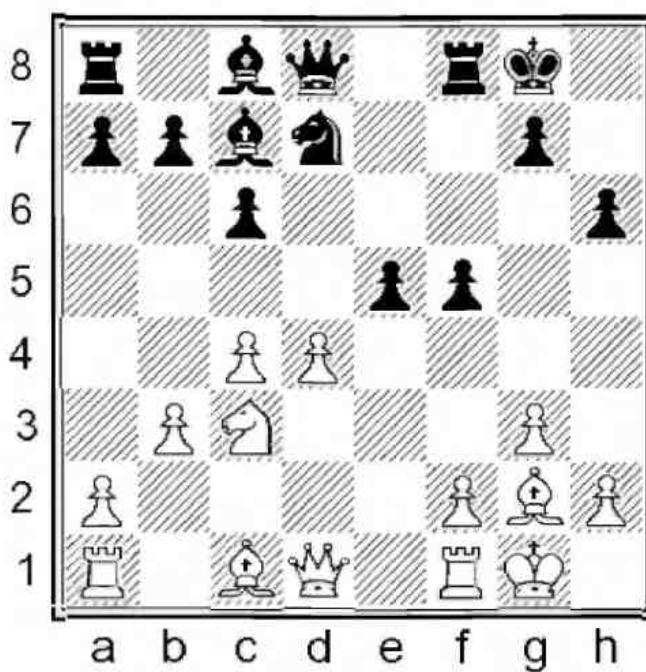
**10.♞dxe4 h6**

Black wants to exchange on e4 and play ..f7-f5 and ...e6-e5, but for this he must cover the e5-square, otherwise the jump ♜g5 will be very unpleasant.

**11.b3 ♜xe4**

**12.♞xe4 f5**

**13.♞c3 e5**



So, Black has carried out his plan, but he is still a long way from equality, as his queenside is completely undeveloped.

**14.d5 e4**

Black has managed for the moment to shut the  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  out of play, but White also has other pieces, and they develop great activity.

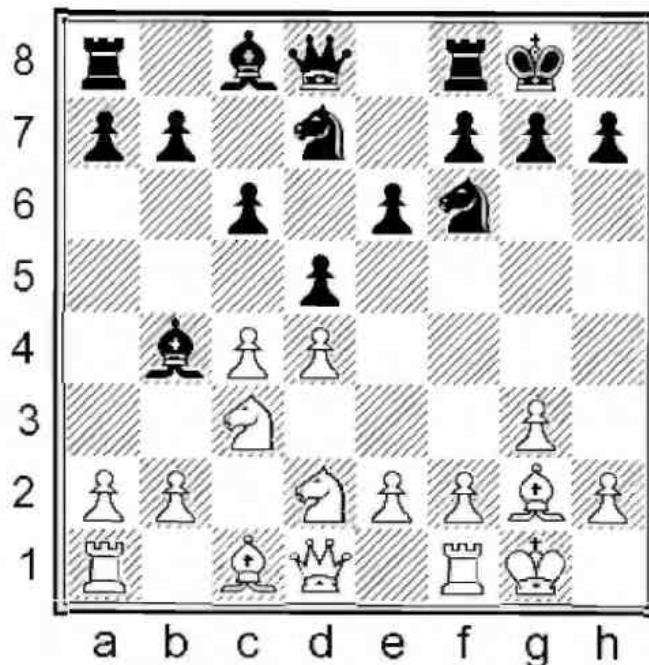
**15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$**

**16.d6**

Now Black has problems not only with the bishop on c8, but also with that on c7. After 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17.b4 a5 18.b5± with the idea of  $\mathbb{B}b1$  and  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ , White's advantage is not in doubt.

**C3)** At one time I considered

**8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**



a good reply, trying to prevent the advance e2-e4. But this does not help.

**9.e4!?**

The simple 9.a3  $\mathbb{Q}e7\pm$  (even worse is 9... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  10.e3±) is also good.

**9...c5**

**10.a3!?**

White plays for the maximum. He is also promised somewhat better chances after 10.e5 cxd4 11.exf6 dxc3 12.fxg7  $\mathbb{E}e8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  cxb2 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  dxc4 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$  e5 16. $\mathbb{W}xc4\pm$ .

**10... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

**11.b4!**

This pawn sacrifice allows White to develop strong pressure on the queenside and in the centre.

**11...cxb4**

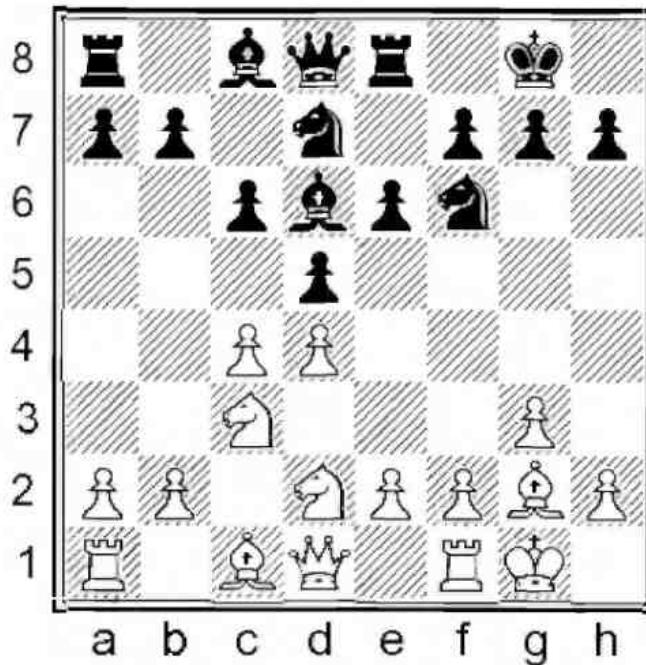
**12.axb4 ♜xb4**

**13.♗b3 a5**

**14.cxd5**

White regains a pawn and keeps a clearly better position.

**C4) 8...♝e8**



The main move. But here White has a pleasant choice.

**C41) 9.♗c2**

**C42) 9.e4**

**C41) The preparatory move**

**9.♗c2**

has definite sense, for example:

**9...h6**

If 9...♝c7 10.♗d1 White can in many variations exploit the opposition of rook and queen, for example: 10...h6 11.♗b1 e5 12.dxe5 ♛xe5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.♗de4!± and Black has great difficulties with the defence of the pawn on d5.

10.e4

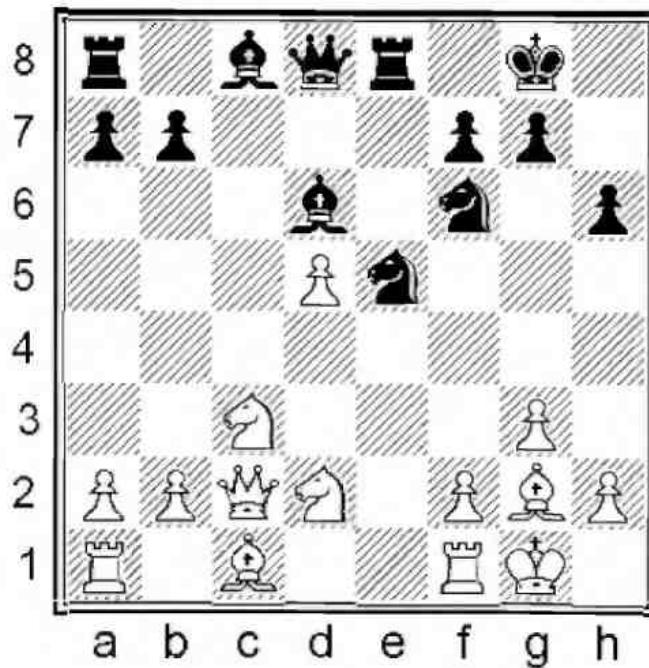
10.♗d1!? ♜e7 11.b3 a5 12.♗b2±. Having brought both bishops to the long diagonals, White will then play e2-e4 and obtain a clear preponderance in the centre.

10...e5

11.dxe5 ♜xe5

12.exd5 cxd5

13.cxd5



As in one of the variations examined above, White has won a pawn, and Black does not have full compensation.

13...b6

The attempt to hinder White's development with 13...♝g4 fails to 14.h3 ♜h5 15.♝de4 ♜xe4 16.♝xe4 ♜f8 17.♝f4 ♜f3+ 18.♜xf3 ♜xf3 19.♝c3 ♜b4 20.♛d3± Black is a pawn down, and the excellently posted bishop on f3 will have to retreat.

14.♝f3 ♜xf3+

15.♜xf3 ♜h3

16.♝d1 ♜c5

17.♝f4 ♜g4

18.♝xg4 ♜xg4

19.♝f1 g5

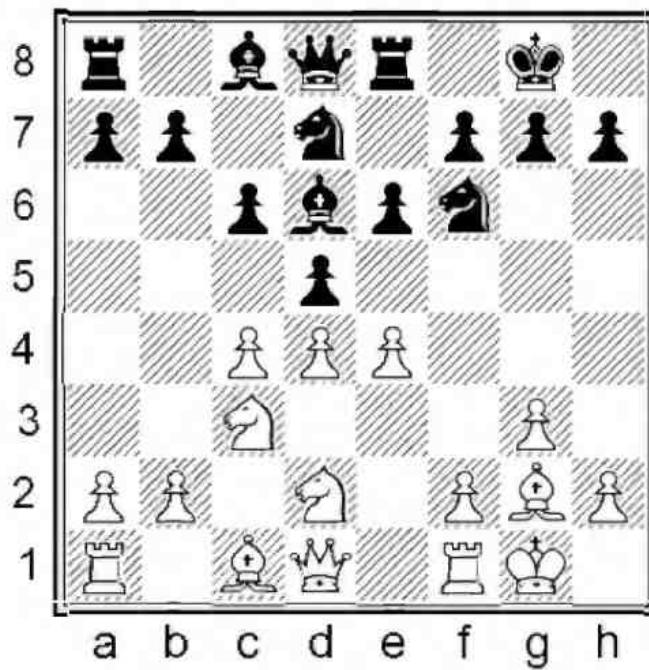
20.♝d2 ♜d7

21.♕g2 ♜ad8

22.♗ad1±

C42) In my view, it is simplest of all to play

9.e4



9...dxe4

In the variation 9...e5 10.exd5 cxd5 11.♘xd5 exd4 12.♗f3 ♘xd5 (Sundararajan-Prakash, Calcutta 2008) White has the subtle move 13.♗xd4!±, after which he regains the piece and keeps an extra pawn.

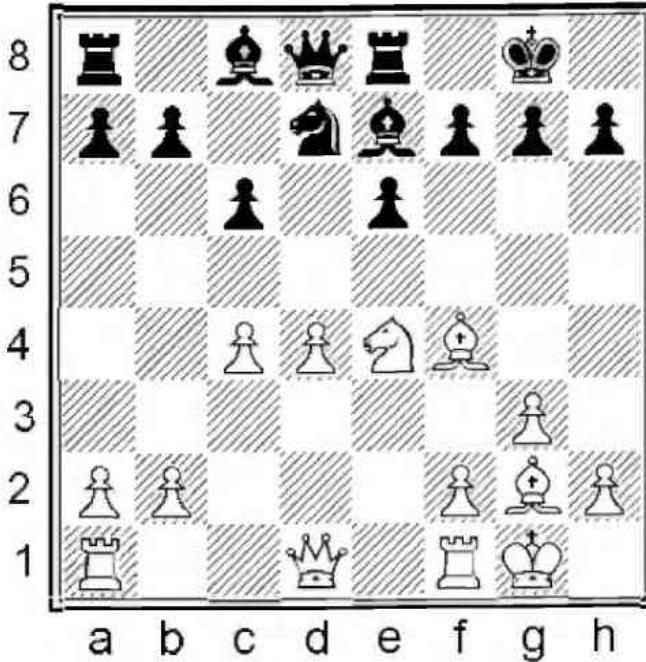
10.♘dxe4 ♜e7

After 10...♘xe4 11.♘xe4 ♜e7 12.♗f4± White has practically finished his development, his pieces cooperate with each other excellently and control the central squares, whilst Black finds it hard to unravel his clump of pieces on the queenside.

Retreating the bishop to the other diagonal does not greatly ease Black's position: 10...♝c7 11.♝e1 h6 12.f4!? (preventing the break ...e6-e5; now Black's position remains cramped) 12...♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♜b8 14.♗e3 a5 15.♗c2 b6 16.♗ad1± Papaioannou-Lajthajm, Budva 2009.

11.♗f4 ♘xe4

12.♘xe4



We have reached the same position as after the exchange at move 10. Let us continue the variation a little.

**12...♝f6**

**13.♞c3**

The black pieces are pressed into their own camp, so it makes sense for White to avoid new exchanges. However, even after 13.c5± his advantage is not in doubt.

**13...♛a5**

**14.a3**

A useful move, with the help of which White limits Black's bishop and queen.

**14...♝d7**

**15.♜e1 ♜ac8**

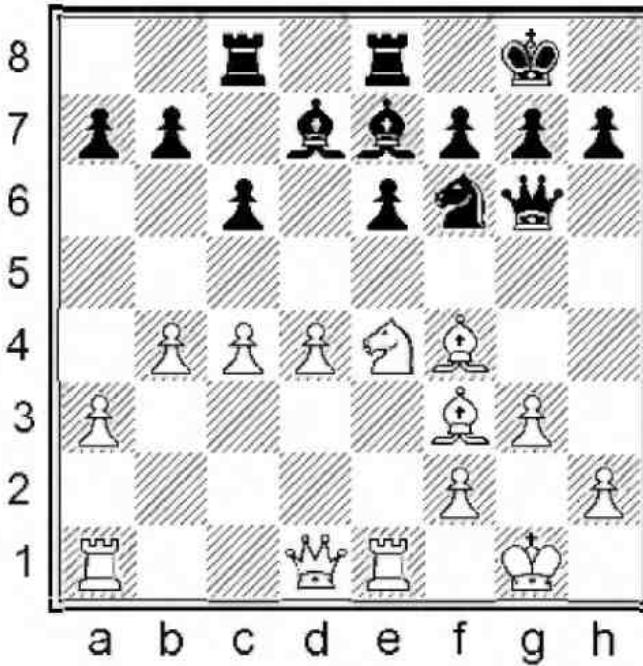
**16.b4 ♛h5**

**17.♝f3 ♛g6**

The queen is not actually lost here, but, of course, she is uncomfortably placed.

**18.♝e4±**

Miron-Chrzaszcz, Cracow 2010.

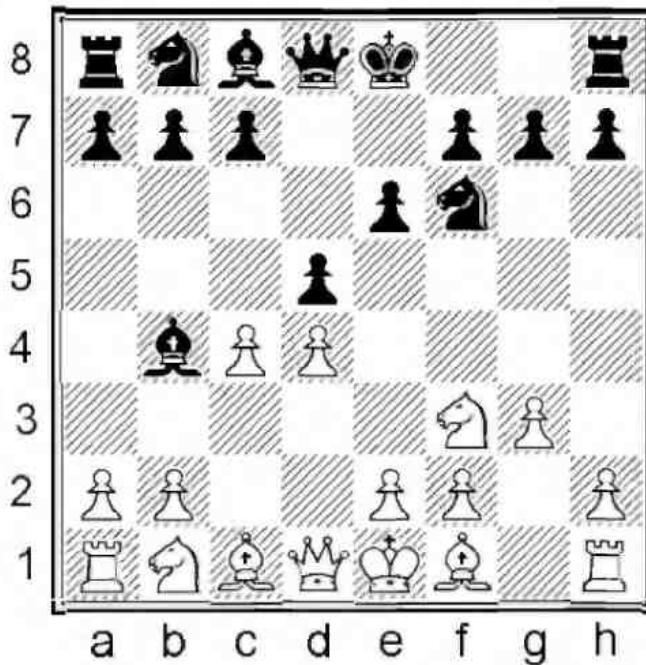


### Conclusion

By way of a conclusion we can say the following. In reply to the black set-up with c6, e6, d5, and  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , White has only one, but a more than adequate route to an advantage, but he must play the paradoxical move 7.  $\mathbb{Q}f3-d2!$ . After this, the bishop on g2 is included in the battle for the centre. In addition, White prepares the break e2-e4, and after the exchange he will take on e4 with the knight (first one, then the other), attacking the bishop on d6 and so winning an important tempo. Black's main problem in the Catalan is always the development of his bishop at c8, and in this variation, that problem is far from easy to solve. In my opinion, White obtains a clear advantage.

## Chapter 4 – The Bishop Check

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$



One of the typical reactions to the Catalan: Black lures the enemy bishop to d2 and then retreats his own bishop to e7. What is the point of this manoeuvre? In many variations, the white dark-squared bishop is best placed on the long diagonal, but from d2, its only direct route to the diagonal is via c3, but this square is needed for the knight (whereas from c1, the bishop can quickly come to b2).

In this chapter we will first investigate three minor black reactions to White's 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ . The main line, 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , will be dealt with in Chapter 5.

5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

A) 5... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$

B) 5...a5

C) 5... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

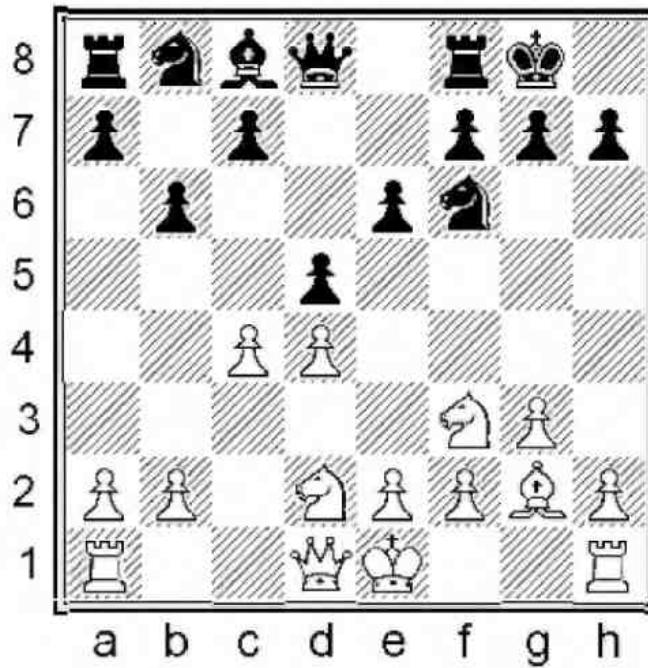
A) The exchange of bishops

5... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$

is strategically unfavourable for Black. In reply, White quietly completes his development and prepares the planned advance e2-e4; it is hard for Black to oppose this plan in any way. For example:

6. $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$  0-0

7. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  b6



**8.Qe5!?**

Also good is 8.0-0 ♜b7 9.♖c1.

**8...♜b7**

**9.0-0 ♜bd7**

**10.♘xd7 ♜xd7**

**11.♗c2 ♜ab8**

**12.♕fd1 ♜fc8**

**13.cxd5 ♜xd5**

After 13...exd5 14.b4 the black position is quite passive.

**14.e4 ♜a8**

**15.♘c4 c5**

**16.d5! exd5**

**17.exd5 ♜e8**

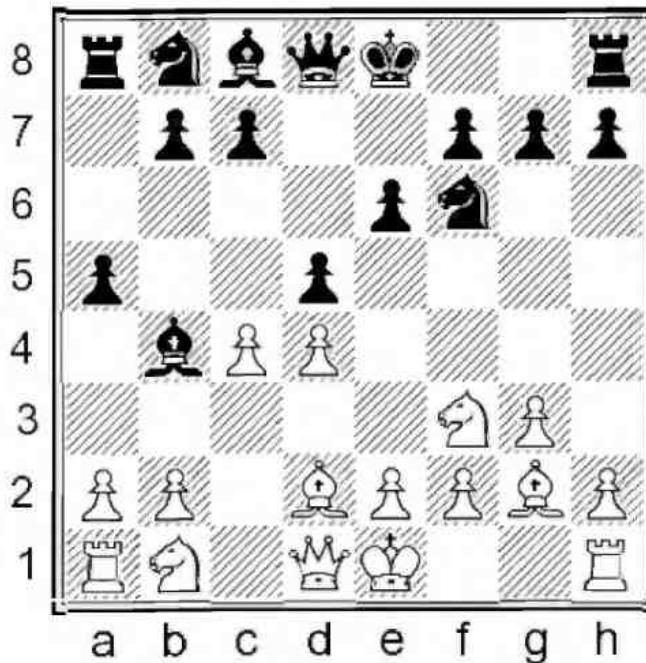
**18.♕d2±**

M. Gurevich-Teske, Germany 2002/03. The strong passed pawn on d5 assures White a stable initiative.

**B) 5...a5**

Here White has two equally valid replies – 6.  $\mathbb{B}c2$  and 6.  $\mathbb{B}g2$ . We will concentrate on the second, although  $\mathbb{B}c2$  is also a perfectly solid move, with similar ideas.

### 6. $\mathbb{B}g2$



If you are afraid of the capture on c4, then in general, you are better off not playing the Catalan!

#### B1) 6...dxc4

#### B2) 6...0-0

After 6...c5 7. cxd5 exd5 8. 0-0 0-0 9.  $\mathbb{B}g5$ ! White reaches a very favourable version of the Tarrasch Defence. It is not clear what the bishop is doing on b4 (a2-a3 is already a threat), nor the pawn on a5. After 9...cxd4 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$  White has a stable advantage, El Debs-Santiago, Campinas 2011.

#### B1) 6...dxc4

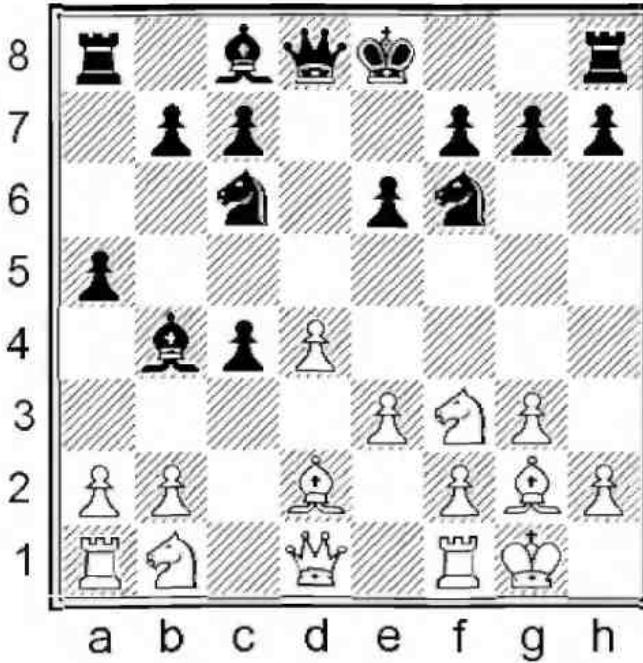
Taking up the gauntlet! Of course, Black does not really hope to keep the gambit pawn, but he has another idea: he hopes to exploit his lead in development by quickly opening the centre.

#### 7.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Less favourable is 7...0-0 8.  $\mathbb{B}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. e3, and White has managed to develop his dark-squared bishop outside the pawn chain. He is not frightened of exchanging on f6, whilst Black is still a long way from solving his main problem in the Catalan – the development of his bishop on c8.

The optimistic 7...b5 is met by 8. a4  $\mathbb{B}xd2$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}fxd2$ !  $\mathbb{B}a7$  (Krallmann-Rombaldoni, Vienna 2011) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$ . White regains the pawn and in so doing, breaks up the black pawn structure on the queenside.

#### 8.e3



**8...0-0**

The transfer of the knight to the queenside by 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  takes up too much time, whilst the pawn on c4 still cannot be held: 10.a3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2\pm$ .

Nor can we recommend to Black 8... $\mathbb{E}b8$  9. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 because of 10.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11. $\mathbb{E}d1!$  (a subtle move: White sets up the opposition of rook and bishop on the open d-file) 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (Black cannot exchange on e5, because in that case, the x-ray of the rook from d1 would have its say) 13.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ . The consequences of the opening are again the same: the pawn has been regained and the black structure disrupted.

**9. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

Black plays in the spirit of the Ragozin: he prepares the break ...e6-e5, after which the bishop on c8 can find freedom.

**10. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$**

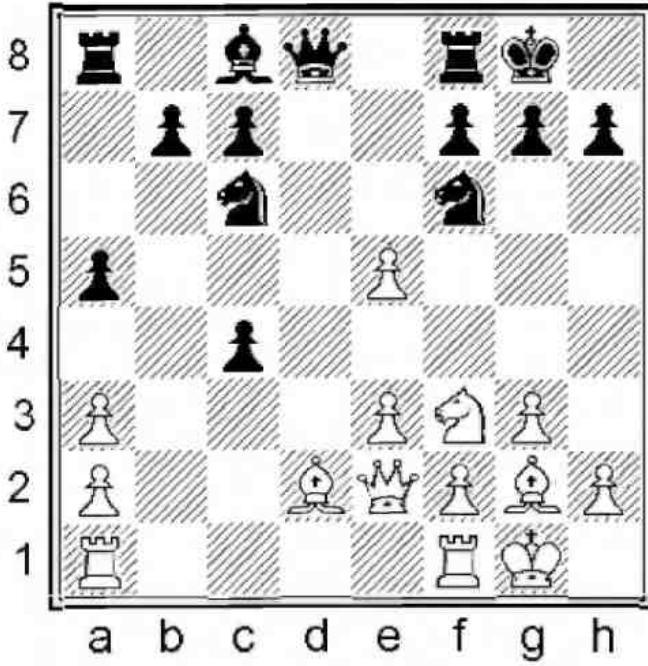
An important nuance: White takes advantage of the fact that he has not yet played his knight to the standard square c3, and finds a rather better use for it.

**10...e5**

**11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$**

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$  Black still does not preserve the dark-squared bishop from exchange. Now at least he doubles the opponent's pawns.

**12.bxa3**



**12...Qe4**

Otherwise White puts the bishop on c3 and establishes a superior position.

**13.Qfd1 Qxd2**

**14.Qxd2 We7**

**15.Qxc4 Qxe5**

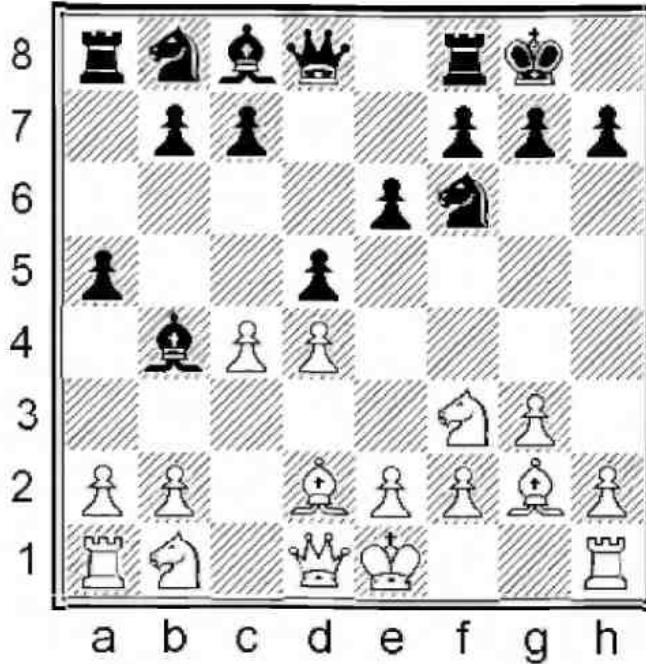
**16.Qxe5 Wxe5**

**17.Qad1 We7**

**18.Qf3±**

We have material equality, but White's position is clearly preferable: he controls the only open file and exerts unpleasant pressure on the opponent's queenside. Meanwhile, the weakness of the pawn on a3 is hardly felt at all.

**B2) 6...0-0**



Black declines the Greek gift and quietly continues developing.

#### 7.0-0 c6

A modest move, but not one devoid of ideas. Black wants to take on c4 if the opportunity offers, and then defend the pawn with ...b7-b5. He also has another plan: to play ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-e4$ , then ...f7-f5, going into Dutch-type positions.

Let us also examine some alternatives.

- A) If Black begins to fianchetto his light-squared bishop with 7...b6, then White can develop pressure in the centre: 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 9. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11.cxd5 exd5 12.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (the pawn d5 now needs defending, and White is also threatening the move  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5 16.e3±. White has stabilised the situation in the centre and the opponent must also reckon with various ‘inconveniences’, such as f5-f6 or  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . Even the simple placement of the rooks in the centre, on c1 and d1, is already unpleasant for Black;
- B) With 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  Black tries to take the game into positions of the Ragozin type: 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  dx $c4$  (it looks quite passive to play 8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9.e3 a4 10. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ±) 9.e3 h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11.a3 (11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  e5) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$  e5 13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ± Filip-Spassov, Sunny Beach 2010. Black has realised his idea, but is still a long way from equalising. Most of all, his knight is still very badly placed, whilst his bishops are not exactly brilliant at the moment, either;
- C) The accurate move 7...h6 prevents the bishop coming to g5. However, White has other logical set-ups, for example: 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (Maslik-Stocek, Czech Republic 2011/12) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ± with a space advantage and the initiative.

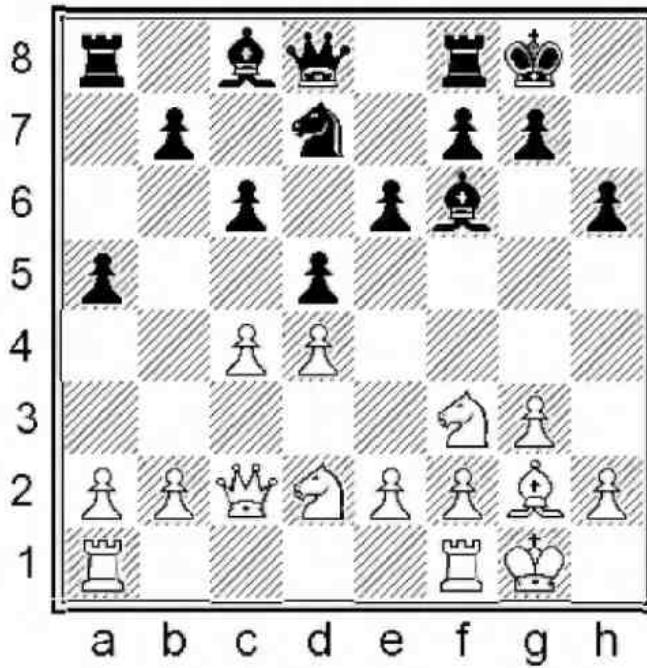
#### 8. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}e7$

The following variation should convince Black once and for all not to play to hang on to the c4-pawn, at the expense of development and the fight for the centre: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  dx $c4$  11.e3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12.bxc3 b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}fb1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  14.a4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ ±.

#### 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ h6

#### 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

**11.♗bd2 ♜d7**



Black has chosen a solid, but passive set-up. He has obtained the advantage of two bishops, but the bishop on c8 will lack prospects for a long time to come.

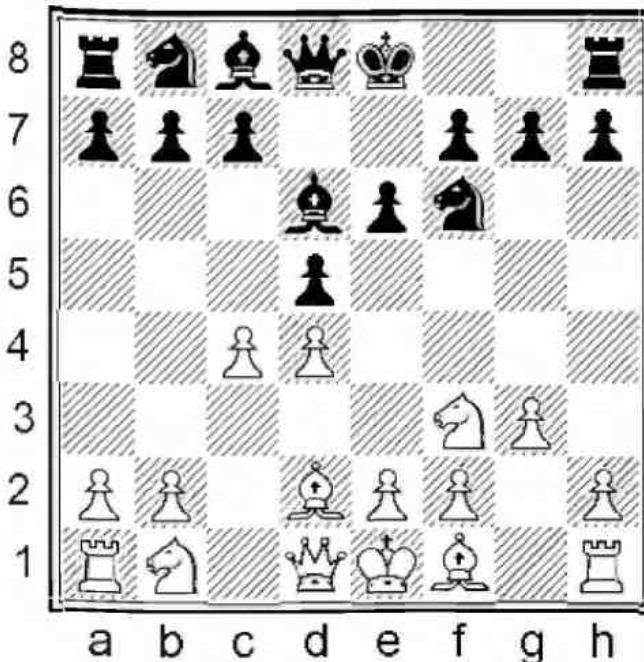
**12.e4 dxe4**

**13.♗xe4 ♜e7**

**14.♖ad1±**

Thus far the game Cmilyte-Demina, Antakya 2010.

C) 5...♝d6

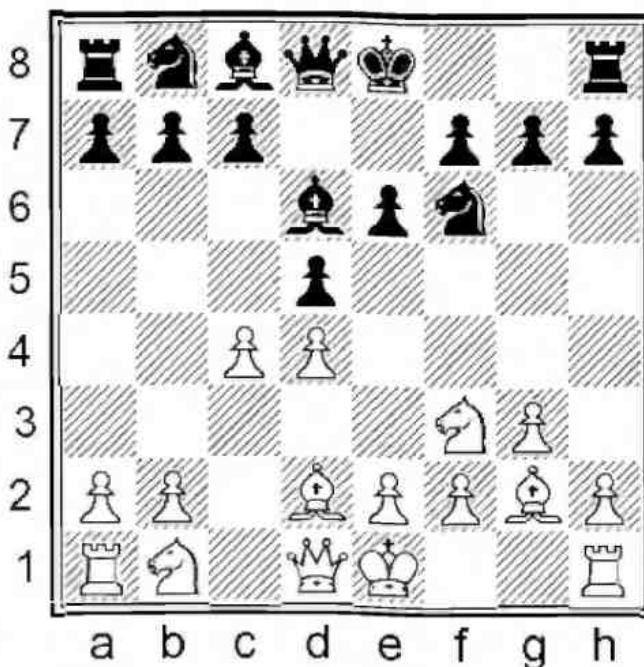


What is the idea of the manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{B}b4-d6$ ? Black wants to arrange his pieces according to the scheme we have already seen, with ... $c7-c6$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , ... $\mathbb{B}d6$ . But with the aid of the preliminary check on b4, he avoids Zviagintsev's fantastic move  $\mathbb{Q}fd2$ .

But White also has his trumps – his bishop on d2 is already developed, and he can follow other plans, not just the central advance e2-e4.

#### 6. $\mathbb{B}g2$

The move 6.c5 is not dangerous for Black, because after 6... $\mathbb{A}e7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (Biriukov-Zontakh, St Petersburg 2008) 7... $b6$  8.b4 a5 9.a3  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  he has comfortable play.



**C1) 6...0-0**

## C2) 6...c6

### C1) 6...0-0

#### 7.0-0 c6

7...dxc4 8.♗g5!? (a typical idea in this system: at a certain moment, the bishop comes from d2 to f4 (which in this case makes no sense) or g5. It does not usually remain too long on d2. Little is promised by 8.♕c2 a6, for example 9.♗e5 c5 10.♗a3 c3 11.bxc3 cxd4 12.♗ac4 ♜xe5 13.♗xe5 ♜c7 (draw, Nybäck-Turov, Jyväskylä 2010) 14.♗d3 e5) 8...c5 (8...h6 9.♗xf6 ♜xf6 10.♗bd2± White will regain the pawn and control the centre; his chances are superior) 9.♗c3 ♜bd7 10.♗e1 (note that neither side wishes to exchange pawns, which would develop the other's pieces) 10...h6 (10...♗e7 11.dxc5 ♜xc5 12.♗d2±; it is not so easy for Black to complete the development of his queenside) 11.♗e4! (*zwischenzugs* play an important role in chess. The more often we use them, the better we are playing!) 11...♗e7 12.♗xf6 ♜xf6 13.♗xc5±. White regains the pawn and stands better.

#### 8.♕b3

Here the queen defends the c4-pawn and also eyes up the pawn on b7.

#### 8...♗bd7

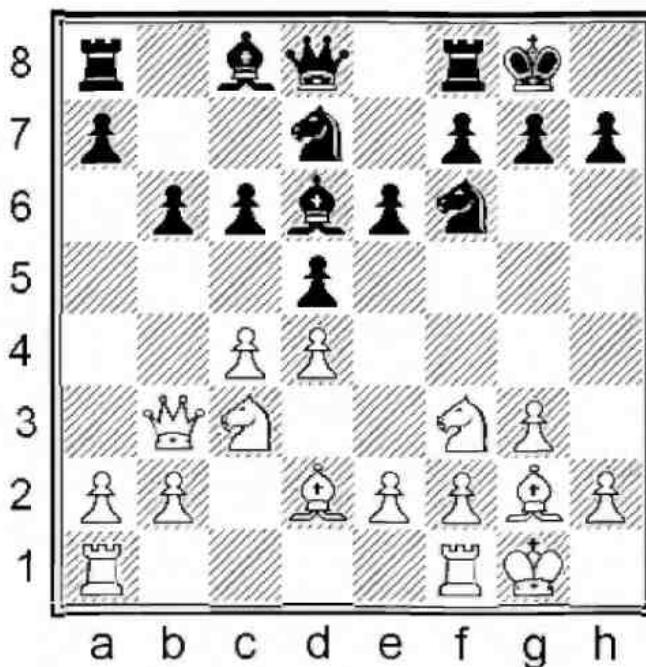
#### 9.♗c3

9.♗b4 ♜xb4 10.♕xb4 a5 11.♗b3 b5 12.cxb5 cxb5 13.♗e1 ♜a6 14.e3 ♜e4 15.♗c3 ♜d6 16.♗d1 ♜b6 17.♗e2 b4 18.♗f4 ♜fc8, draw, Slugin-Turov, Sochi 2010.

#### 9...b6

The contours of this system are reminiscent of the previous system with ...♗bd7, ...b7-b6 and ...c7-c6, but there is a significant difference: White has already virtually completed his development and is ready to break in the centre.

White is better after 9...dxc4 10.♕xc4 e5 11.♗fd1 exd4 12.♗xd4±.



## **10.e4!**

The pawn sacrifice is temporary, of course – White will regain it without problems.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

**11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$**

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

**14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

A classical situation: the c6-pawn is pinned, and Black cannot play the freeing move ...c6-c5. Of course, White will do his utmost to ensure that the bishop on b7 stays in its prison.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$**

**17. $\mathbb{Q}b4!±$**

This is a cunning move, with the help of which White prevents ...c6-c5 and, thanks to this, secures his positional advantage.

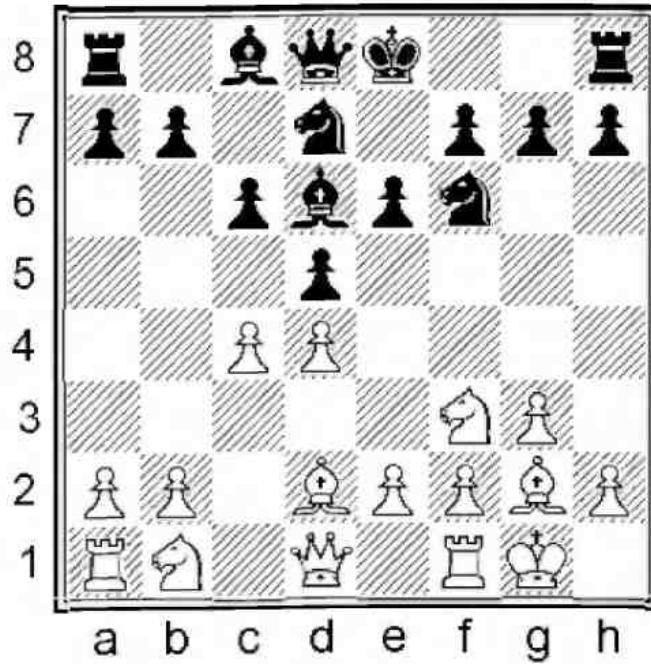
## **C2) 6...c6**

**7.0-0**

As an alternative, I can suggest 7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , for instance: 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8.b3  $dxc4$  (8...0-0 9.0-0) 9.bxc4 e5 10.e3 exd4 11.exd4  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}hb1$  b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  17.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4+$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  22.a5± Onischuk-Meier, Lubbock 2010.

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

An important moment: after Black has played ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , the capture on c4 becomes a serious threat.



### **8.b3!**

Black wanted to take on c4 and play ...e6-e5. In reply, White intends to recapture with the pawn and retain control over the centre.

### **8...0-0**

Or 8... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.f3±. A typical device, which we have already seen in the game Petrosian-Botvinnik: White attacks the e4-square and seizes the initiative.

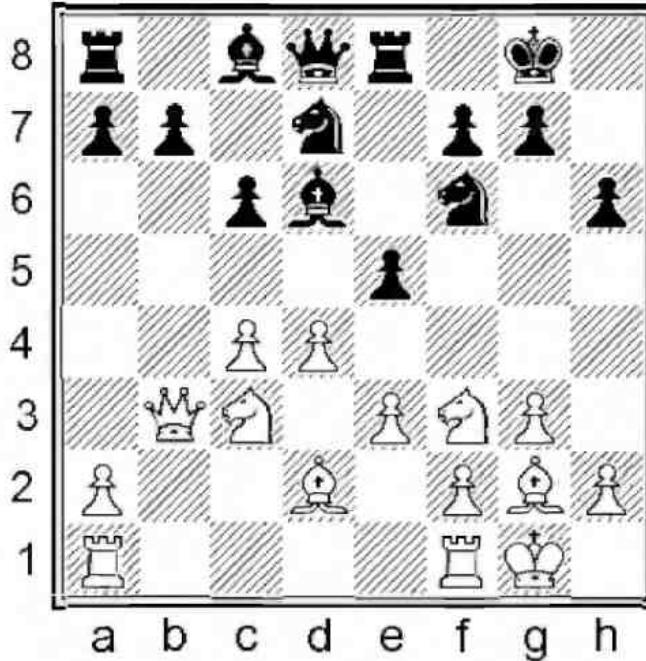
After the immediate 8...dxc4 9.bxc4 e5 White will reply 10.e3 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , transposing into a position we will see below.

### **9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{E}e8$**

A) If 9...b6 the typical blow 10.e4! simply kills all Black's ideas. For example, 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ±. We have already discussed a similar position, and this is an even better version for White;

B) 9...dxc4 10.bxc4 e5 11.e3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (after the exchange on c4 the square b3 is freed up, and White places his queen there with pleasure) 12...h6.

Here we have to stop and ask ourselves: what does Black want, in playing such an unlikely-looking move?



It is not hard to guess: he takes the g5-square from the knight, and so now threatens ...e5-e4.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}c1!$  (an excellent positional move: White frees the square d2 for the knight and at the same time, transfers his bishop to the long diagonal. It may also go to a3, offering a trade of bishops) 13...  $\mathbb{B}b8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  exd4 15. exd4 b5!? 16. c5 (White cannot win a pawn, since his knight will be pinned) 16...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$  (Black has still not completed his development, and in addition, he has a weak pawn on c6) 17...  $\mathbb{B}xe1+$  18.  $\mathbb{B}xe1$  b4 19.  $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$  Wojtaszek-Vera Gonzalez, Burguillos 2010;

C) 9... h6 10.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (preparing the move e2-e4) 10...  $\mathbb{E}e8$  (if 10... c5 11. cxd5 exd5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  the minuses of the bishop's position on d6 have their say and after 12...  $\mathbb{E}e7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  White achieves a clear advantage) 11.  $\mathbb{E}ad1$  a5 (Jianu-Radulski, Belgrade 2010) 12. e4 dxе4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  e5 15. dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}xe5$  17.  $\mathbb{W}d4$  with the better chances;

D) 9...  $\mathbb{W}e7$  10.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (10.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$  b6 11. e4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxе4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14.  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$  17.  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{E}e7$  18.  $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , draw, Solomon-Vorobiov, Cappelle la Grande 2011) 10...  $\mathbb{E}e8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ .

White has everything ready for e2-e4. Black can anticipate this by 11... dxе4 12. bxc4 e5, but after the simple strengthening move 13. e3 he is still a long way from equality, for example 13... h6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ , etcetera.

**10.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  dxе4**

**11. bxc4 e5**

**12. e3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

Black opens a path for his light-squared bishop, but now he has to give up his other bishop, so I do not think this is such a great idea.

**13. dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

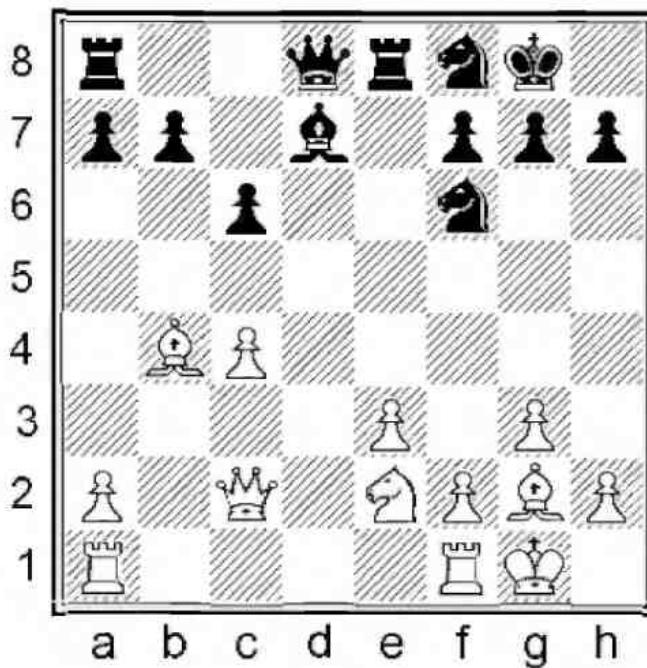
**14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{E}xe5$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$**

A strong positional idea: White improves the position not only of his knight, but most of all of his dark-squared bishop.

15... $\mathbb{E}e8$

16. $\mathbb{A}b4 \mathbb{A}d7$



Here in the game Meier-Ponomariov, Sestao 2010, the players agreed a draw, but there is no doubt that after the simple

17. $\mathbb{E}fd1 \mathbb{Q}g6$

18. $\mathbb{B}d6\pm$

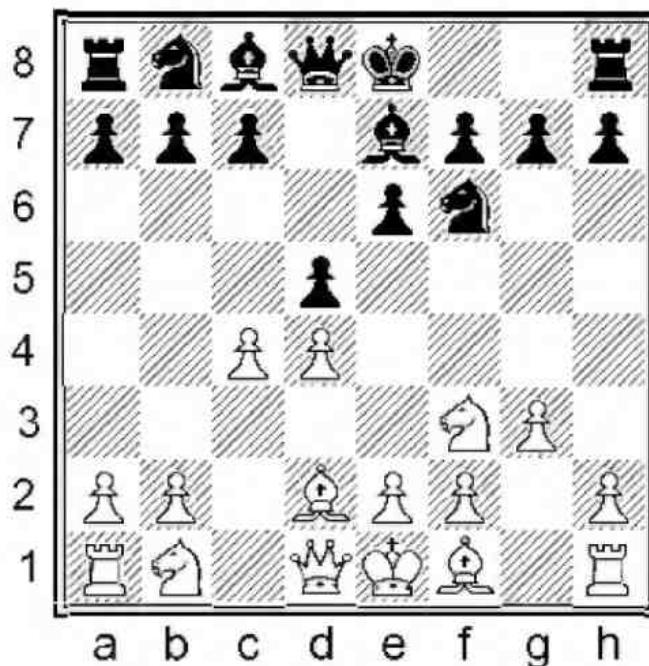
Black would have had a very unpleasant position.

### Conclusion

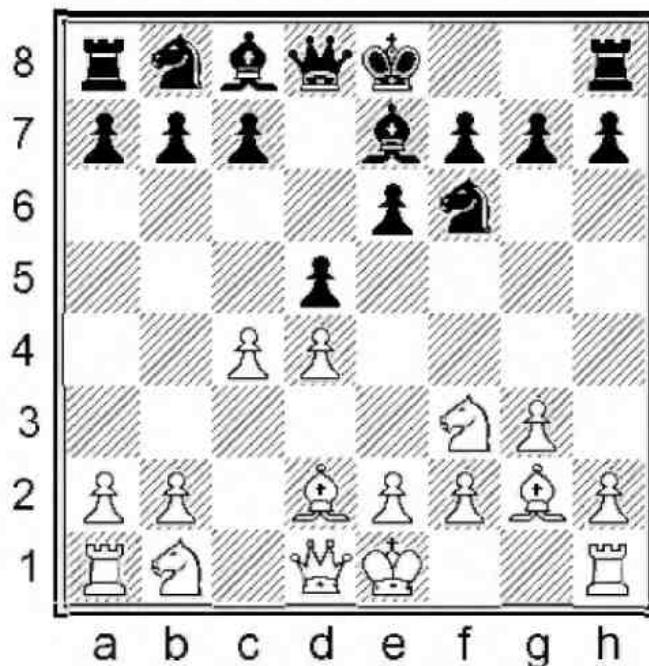
What should the conclusion be? The cunning manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{A}b4$ - $\mathbb{A}d6$  creates definite problems for White, right at the start of the game. But if he knows the typical plans and basic ideas (for example, the somewhat unusual but very strong idea of retreating the bishop from d2 to c1 in certain situations, or the typical temporary pawn sacrifice on e4); in short, if White knows all the little positional tricks, then it is very difficult for Black to equalise. It is very important that White maintain pawns on c4 and d4, since they assure him an advantage in space and control of the centre.

## Chapter 5 – The Bishop Check with 5... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$



6. $\mathbb{Q}g2$



A) 6...dxc4

B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

**C) 6...d6**

**D) 6...0-0**

The main move here is 6...0-0. But first we will look at various alternatives.

**A) 6...dxe4**

7.♘a4+

It is simplest to re-establish material equality at once. After 7.0-0 c6 8.♗c2 b5 Black can play to keep the extra pawn, for instance: 9.a4 ♜b7 10.♕c3 a6 11.e4 0-0 12.♗fe1 ♔bd7 13.♔ad1 ♜e8 14.h4 with compensation Nguyen-Klekowski, Rewal 2011. White can hardly be worse here, but it is clear that all three results are possible.

7...♝d7

8.♗xc4 ♜c6

Black brings out his light-squared bishop to the long diagonal, so as to oppose the enemy fianchettoed bishop. However, this manoeuvre takes a good deal of time, and White succeeds in completing his development, and establishing control over the centre.

9.♕c3

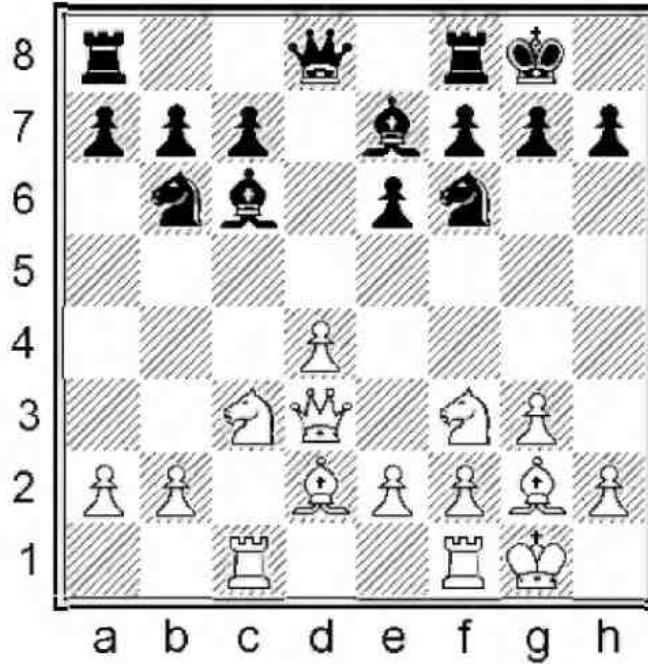
Here is a fairly recent example of how White can secure a stable advantage, with natural moves: 9.0-0 ♜d5 10.♗c2 ♜e4 11.♗c1 c6 12.♕c3 ♜g6 13.♗e1 ♜e4 14.♗f4 ♜d7 15.♗d2± Hamitevici-Soltanici, Kiev 2011.

9...♝bd7

10.0-0 0-0

11.♗ac1 ♜b6

12.♗d3



**12...Bxa4?!**

A dubious decision; after expending so much effort getting his bishop to the long diagonal, it will now leave it, after the exchange on a4.

**13.Bxa4 Qxa4**

**14.Be5 c6**

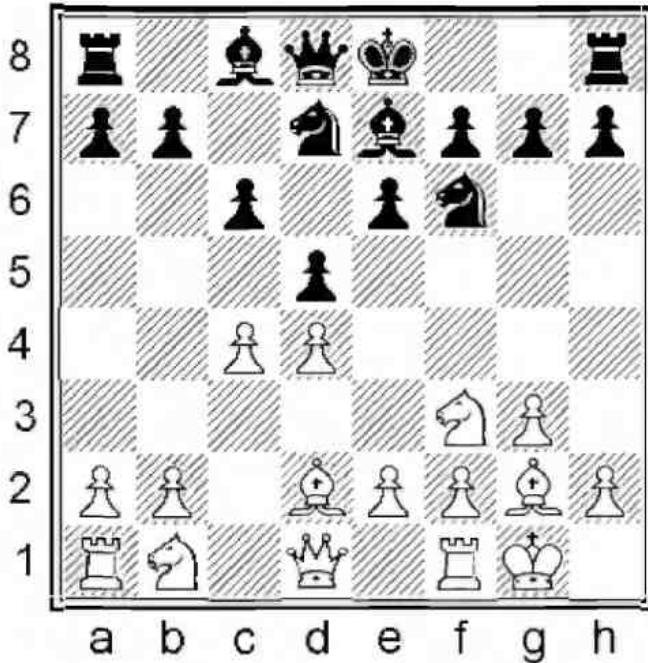
**15.Bc4±**

Foguelman-Espinosa, Buenos Aires 1958. White dominates the centre and the enemy light-squared bishop is out of play.

**B) Black can try to save a tempo on castling:**

**6...Bbd7**

**7.0-0 c6**



**B1) 8.♕b3**

**B2) 8.♕c2**

**B1)** The minuses of the move

**8.♕b3**

are underlined by the reply

**8...♞b6!**

It turns out that the queen is not terribly well-placed on b3, and this square would be better reserved for the b-pawn. Possible then is:

**9.cxd5**

Or 9.c5 ♜c4 10.♕c2 (if the d2-bishop retreats, then Black plays ...b7-b6) 10...♝xd2 11.♝bxd2 a5! (an important prophylactic move: Black does not allow the opponent to strengthen his pawn chain with the move b2-b4) 12.e4 0-0 13.♜ac1 ♜d7 14.♝fd1 ♛c7 15.♝f1 ♜fc8 16.♝d3 h6 17.e5 ♜e8 18.♛c3 b6 – by breaking up the enemy pawn chain, Black frees his bishops and gradually achieves equality, L.B. Hansen-Bischoff, Altensteig 1993.

**9...exd5**

**10.♝a5**

An artificial idea – White tries to exploit the pin on the knight at b6, but Black convincingly demonstrates that this is unrealistic.

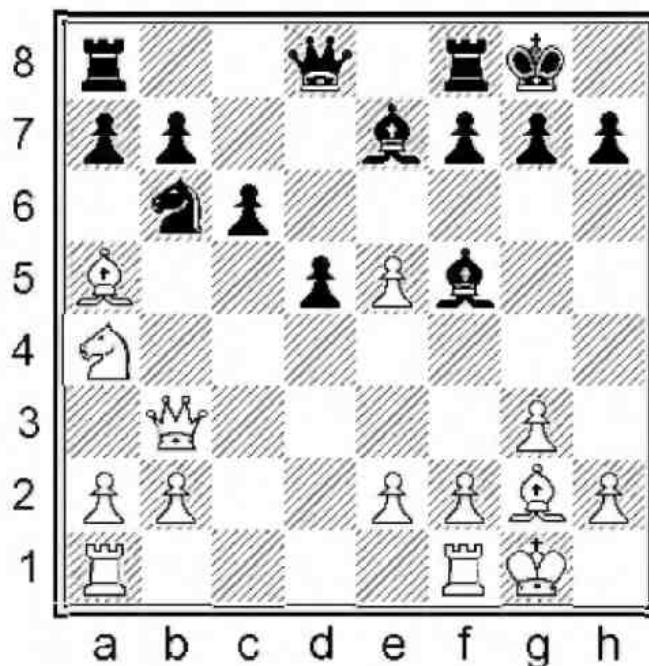
**10...♞f5**

11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0

12.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

14.  $dxe5$



14...  $\mathbb{W}b8!$

Escaping from the pin with tempo.

15.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

Direct play is out of place here: 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $axb6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{E}a6$  and White has to worry not about the pawn, but about how to save his knight, cut off from its own forces.

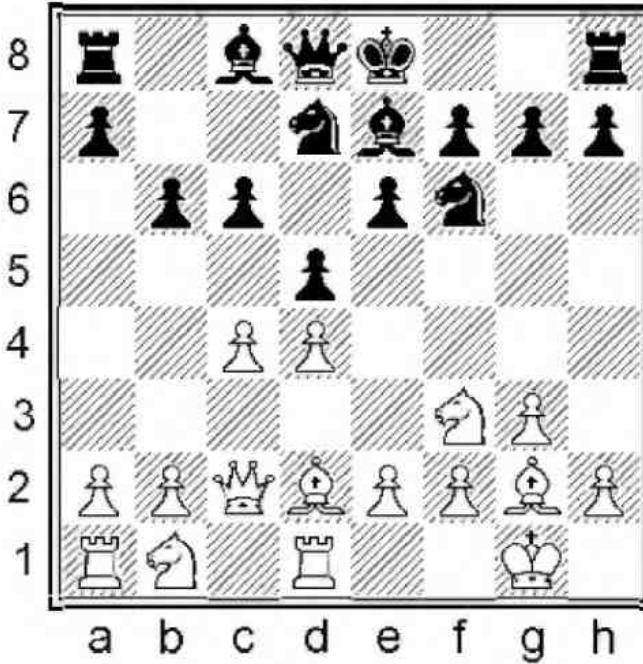
15...  $axb6$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $b5\#$

Batsiashvili-Pashikian, Jermuk 2011.

B2) 8.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $b6$

9.  $\mathbb{E}d1$



**9...Ba6**

White also retains some small pressure after 9...Bb7 10.Bf4 Bc8 11.Bc3!?, for example: 11...dxc4 12.Bd2 Bd5 13.Bxc4 Bxf4 14.gxf4 0-0 15.a3 Bf6 16.e3 Bc7 17.Bac1 Bfd8 18.b4 Bb8 19.Bb3 Ba8 20.Be5± Ortega-Almasi, Rijeka 2010.

**10.Be5 Bxe5**

**11.dxe5 Bd7**

**12.cxd5 cxd5**

**13.Bf4 Bc8**

**14.Bc3 Bc4**

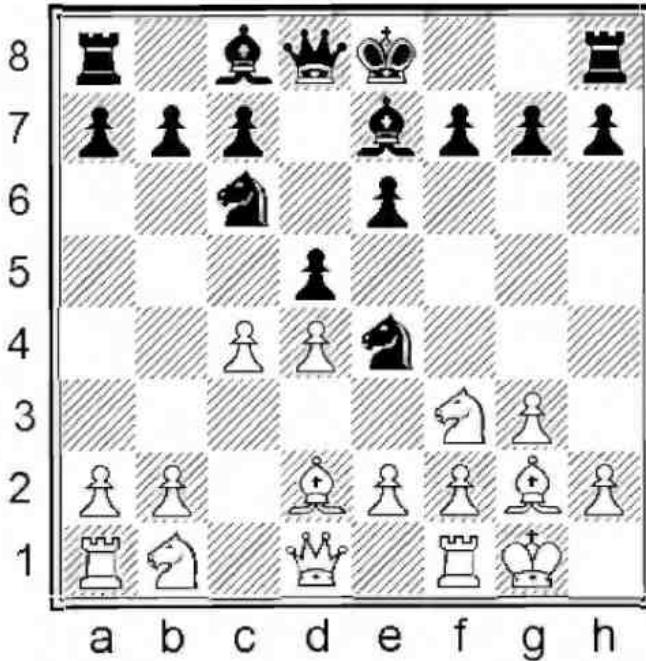
**15.e4!?**

And White seizes the initiative, Rozum-Schlosser, Pardubice 2011.

**C) The set-up**

**6...Bc6**

**7.0-0 Be4**



can hardly be good, because it contributes nothing to solving the problem of how to develop the c8-bishop. White simply completes his development and retains a significant advantage, for instance:

**8.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0**

**9.  $\mathbb{B}d1$  a5**

**10.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

**11.  $\mathbb{W}c1$  c5**

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$**

**14.  $dxc5!$**

If it were not for this *zwischenzug*, White could not start the exchanging operation in the centre, of course.

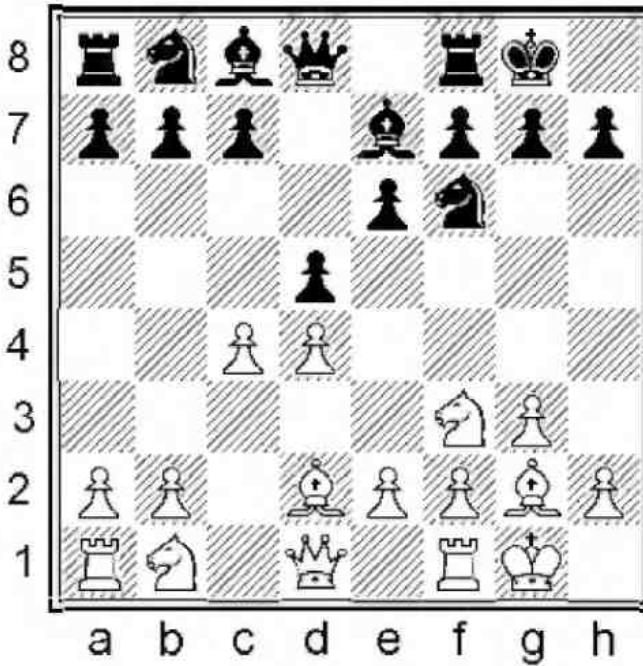
**14...  $\mathbb{W}c7$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$**

Ulibin-I. Sokolov, Alghero 2011.

**D) 6...0-0**

**7.0-0**



White is not frightened of the capture on c4, because he can easily regain this pawn.

**D1) 7...dxc4**

**D2) 7...c6**

If 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  8. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  c6 we reach a variation which will be discussed later.

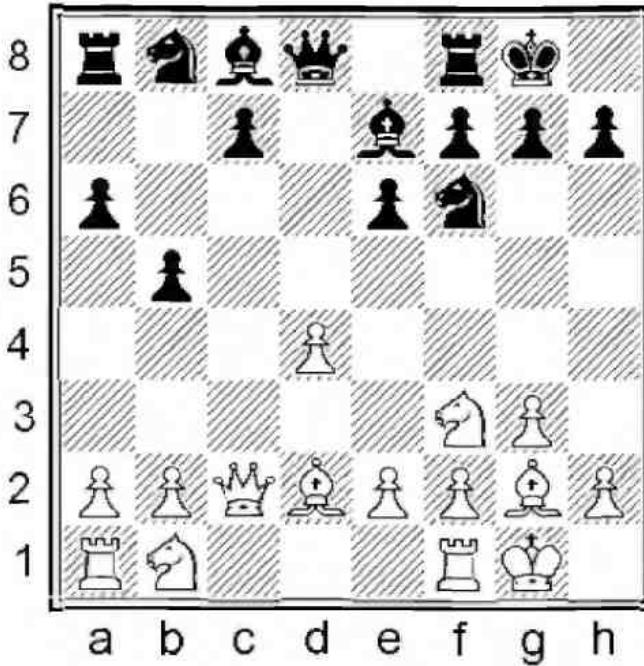
**D1) After**

7...dxc4

8. $\mathbb{W}c2$  a6

9. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5

10. $\mathbb{W}c2$



we reach a position of a type we will examine in great detail in subsequent chapters, but with the bishop on c1. For now, I would ask you to trust me, that having the bishop on d2 very much favours White.

**10...♝b7**

**11.♝c1**

Premature is 11.♝a5 because of 11...♞c6 12.♝d2 ♜c8 13.e3 ♜a8 14.♝e1 ♜d7 15.♝d3 ♜d5 16.♝c1 ♜fd8 17.♝d1 e5→ Shirokov-Sanzhaev, St Petersburg 2011.

**11...♝d6**

**12.a3**

The move 12.b4 is not good here, because Black can quickly bring his queen's knight via d7-b6 to the weakened c4-square.

**12...a5**

Black defends against the bishop's coming to b4, but in doing so, weakens his queenside.

**13.♝c3 b4**

**14.axb4 axb4**

**15.♜xa8 ♜xa8**

**16.♝b5!**

Now it is very hard for Black to maintain material equality.

**16...♝e4**

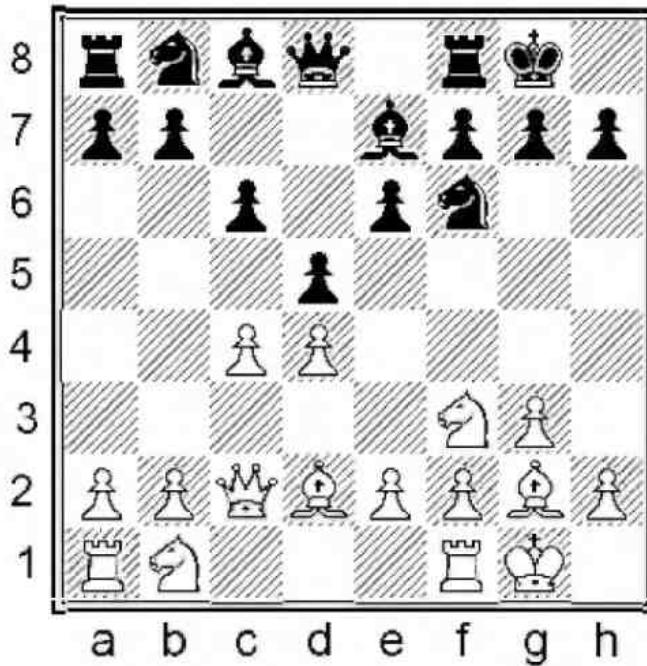
17.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm$

Maletin-Nemov, Samara 2011.

D2) 7...c6

8.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$



D21) 8...b6

D22) 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

D21) 8...b6

Immediately beginning to solve the problem of the light-squared bishop. The d7-square remains clear, and in some variations it can be occupied by the knight from f6.

9.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$

D211) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

D212) 9...a5

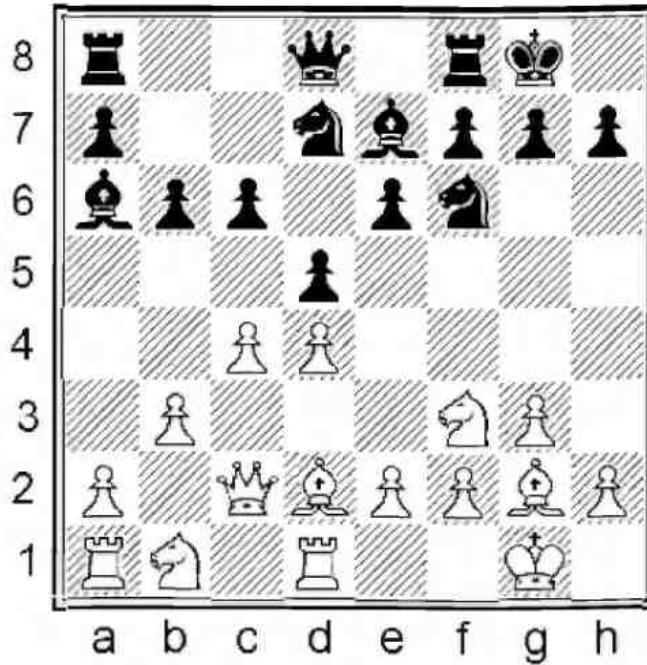
D213) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

For 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , see line D2241 below.

D211) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Statistically, the most common move.

**10.b3 ♜bd7**



**11.a4**

A very aggressive, interesting move, and, I think, the best one in this position. White exploits the fact that the black bishop has gone to a6, and he cannot meet this flank diversion with the move ...a7-a5.

**D2111) 11...c5**

**D2112) 11...♝e4**

**D2113) 11...♝c8**

The continuation 11...♝d6 is virtually unstudied; White can try the quite promising pawn sacrifice 12.♝c3 dxс4 13.bxc4 with compensation 13...♝xc4 14.e4 e5 15.dxe5 ♜xe5 16.♝g5 Zubarev-N. Maiorov, Paleohora 2011.

**D2111) 11...c5**

Now White continues his strategy:

**12.a5 ♜c8**

**13.cxd5 ♜xd5**

**14.♝c3 ♜b4**

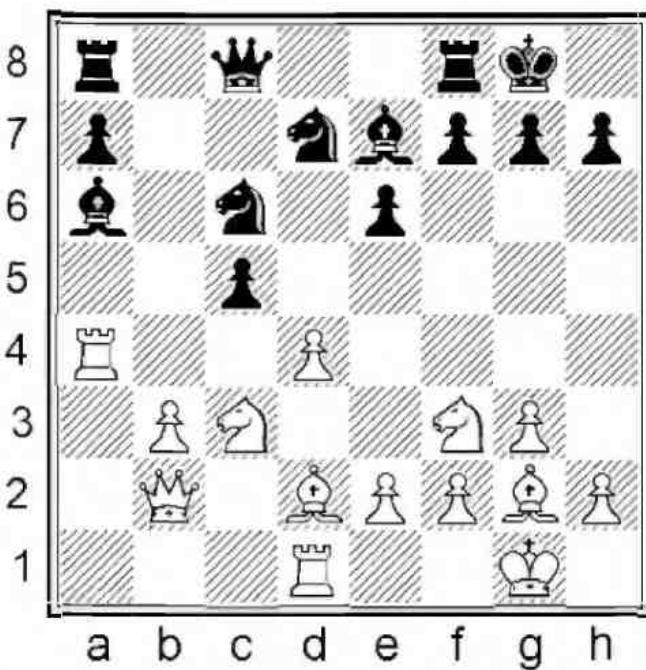
White is better after 14...♝7f6 15.dxc5 ♜xc5 16.♝b2±.

**15.♝b2 bxa5**

Gustafsson-Parligras, Rijeka 2010.

16.  $\mathbb{E}xa5$   $\mathfrak{Q}c6$

17.  $\mathbb{E}a4$



I think this position should be better for White – mainly because all of his pieces are already in play: the rook exerts pressure on the open a-file and the bishop on g2 is potentially very dangerous.

In reply to the natural move

17...  $\mathfrak{Q}b6$

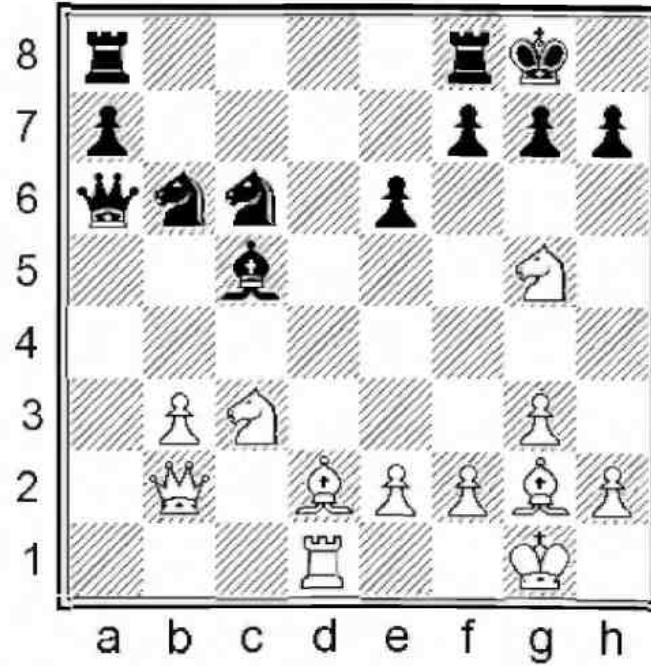
White has the interesting exchange sacrifice

18.  $\mathbb{E}xa6!$   $\mathbb{W}xa6$

19.  $dxc5$   $\mathfrak{Q}xc5$

In the resulting complications, the computer always considers White to be better; the point is that he has a great many objects of attack.

20.  $\mathfrak{Q}g5!$



White opens the diagonal of his powerful bishop, and takes aim at the pawn h7.

**20...♝d7**

**21.♜a1**

White also has a small advantage in the variation 21.b4 ♜xb4 22.♝ce4 ♜xe2 23.♞f3 ♜c4 24.♝xc5 ♜xc5 25.♜xb4 ♜xb4 26.♜xb4 ♜ac8, but even so, Black is very close to equality here.

**21...♛c8**

**22.♝a4 ♜d4**

**23.♛c2**

A double attack: the queen works with its bishop and knight. Admittedly, White still has a rook hanging on a1.

**23...♝f6**

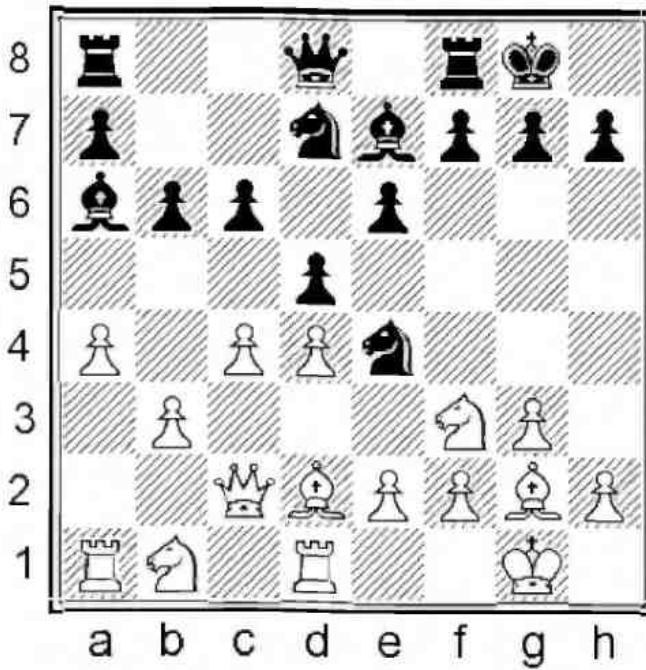
**24.♜e1 ♜e7**

**25.♛d3±**

White wins back material, and his position is somewhat better.

**D2112) 11...♝e4**

Black tries to take the game into a different pattern.



**12.Qf4**

Two recently-played games show that the passive retreat 12.Qe1 does not give White an advantage: 12...f5 13.a5 Qd6 14.e3 (14.Qbd2 Qe7 15.Qa2 c5 16.axb6 axb6 17.Qda1 Qb7 18.cxd5 Qxa2 19.Qxa2 Qxd5) – Markowski-A. Sokolov, Bad Wiessee 2011) 14...Qe7 15.Qc3 Qdf6 16.Qa2 Qxc3 17.Qxc3 c5 (Black has placed his pieces successfully and now starts a clarifying operation) 18.axb6 axb6 19.Qda1 Qb7 20.Qxa8, draw, P.H. Nielsen-Adams, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

**12...f5**

**13.Qc3 Qb4**

13...Qb7 is met by the immediate 14.a5.

**14.Qa2 Qe7**

And here White has a rather promising plan to strengthen his position:

**15.h4 Qb7**

**16.Qc1 c5**

**17.Qd3 Qc8**

**18.a5 bxa5**

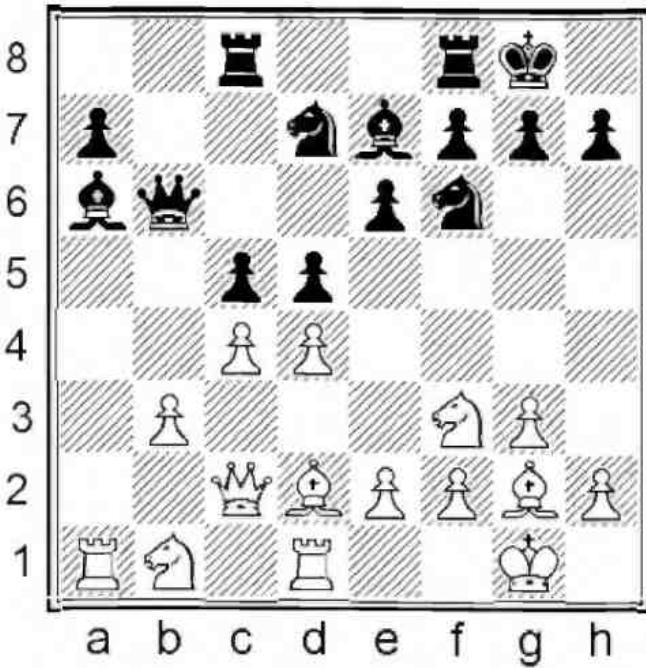
**19.e3**

It is clear that White will regain the pawn without any trouble, and Black still has to work to equalise fully.

**D1113) 11...Qc8**

**12.a5 c5**

**13.axb6 ♜xb6**



**14.♕a2**

If 14.dxc5 ♜xc5 White has to spend a tempo defending f2.

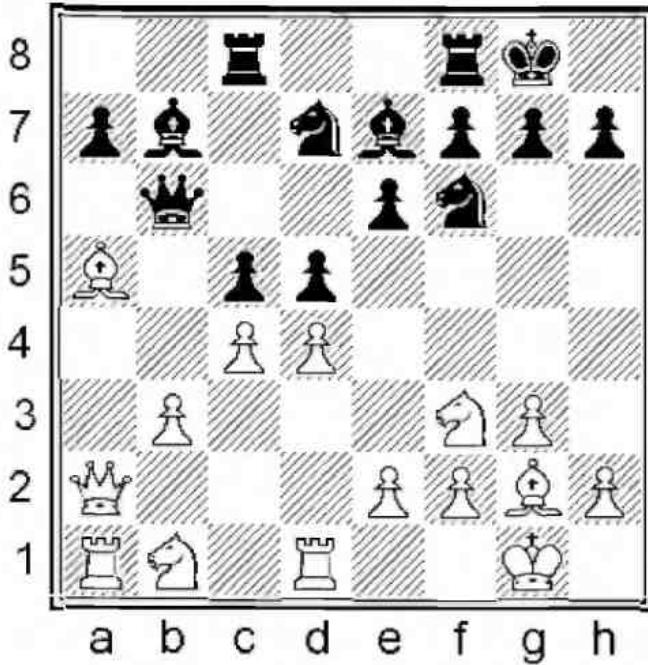
**14...♝b7**

**15.♗a5**

The most promising continuation: White immediately drives the enemy queen from her active position.

The move 15.b4!? is tempting, in order to obtain a protected passed pawn on c5. However, Black sacrifices a piece in reply, obtaining in return three pawns and active play: 15...cxb4 16.c5 ♜xc5! (were it not for this resource, Black would have an unpleasant position, of course) 17.dxc5 ♜xc5 18.♘e1 (the idea of this move is to defend the pawn on f2, at the same time freeing the square d2 for the knight. The move 18.e3 has also been seen, which also does not bring White great dividends: 18...♞a8 19.♕a5 – this is necessary to prevent the opponent getting connected passed pawns with the move ...a7-a5 – 19...♝d7 20.♝d4 ♛xa5 21.♝xa5 ♜b6 22.♝xb4 (evidently the best; otherwise Black goes over to an attack on the queenside) 22...♜xa5 23.♜xa5 ♜fc8 (Laznicka-Aronian, Plovdiv 2010) 18...♞a8 19.♛a5 ♛xa5 20.♛xa5 ♜b6 21.♜b5 (White seizes the chance to eliminate the pawn on b4, but he has to give the e2-pawn for it) 21...♞a6 22.♜xb4 ♜xe2 23.♜c1 ♜d7 (Franco Alonso- Ponomariov, San Sebastian 2011).

In reply to 15.e3 Black can significantly simplify the position, by exchanging queen for rook, knight and pawn: 15...dxc4 16.bxc4 ♜xf3!? 17.♝xf3 cxd4 18.exd4 ♛xd4 19.♗b4 ♛xd1+ 20.♔xd1 ♜xb4. White is unlikely to be able to keep the c4-pawn, and after its exchange (for example, for the a7-pawn), a clearly drawn position arises.



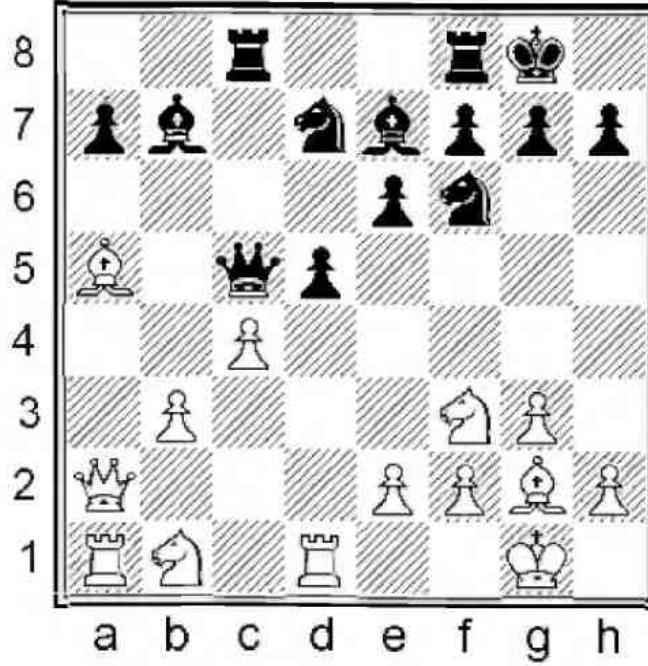
### **15... $\mathbb{W}d6$**

The alternative is 15... $\mathbb{W}a6$  16.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  dxc4 18.bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  (Black tries to get at the pawns on c4 or f2, but this can be prevented) 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  (Roiz-Gyimesi, Germany 2011/12) 20. $\mathbb{W}xd2!$  (threatening to move the bishop from a5, so Black must urgently attend to the position of his queen, cut off on the edge of the board) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}b7+$  22.f3  $\mathbb{W}b8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  24. $\mathbb{W}a2\pm$ . The powerful knight in the centre and the pressure against the a7-pawn assures White of an advantage.

### **16.dxc5**

Interesting complications arise after 16.e3 dxc4 17.bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  cxd4 19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}c5$ , but the further exchange of blows leads only to simplification and a roughly equal ending: 20.exd4  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  22. $\mathbb{E}xa2$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{E}xb6$ .

### **16... $\mathbb{W}xc5$**



**17.  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$**

A cunning manoeuvre: White pins the d5-pawn, defending against the exchange on c4, and at the same time prepares to transfer the knight to the excellent square d3.

**17...  $\mathbb{R}b8$**

**18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{W}c8$**

**19.  $\mathbb{Q}d2 dx\mathbb{C}4$**

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{R}xb7$**

**21.  $bxc4 \mathbb{Q}c5$**

**22.  $\mathbb{R}ab1$**

White has managed to obtain an advantage in forces on the queenside: all of his forces are taking part in the battle in one way or another, whilst the enemy rook on f8 as well as his knight on f6 are still only spectators. White has the initiative.

**22...  $\mathbb{R}xb1$**

**23.  $\mathbb{R}xb1 \mathbb{Q}xd3$**

Worthy of attention is 23...  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ , but after 24.  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  Black's pieces are tied up.

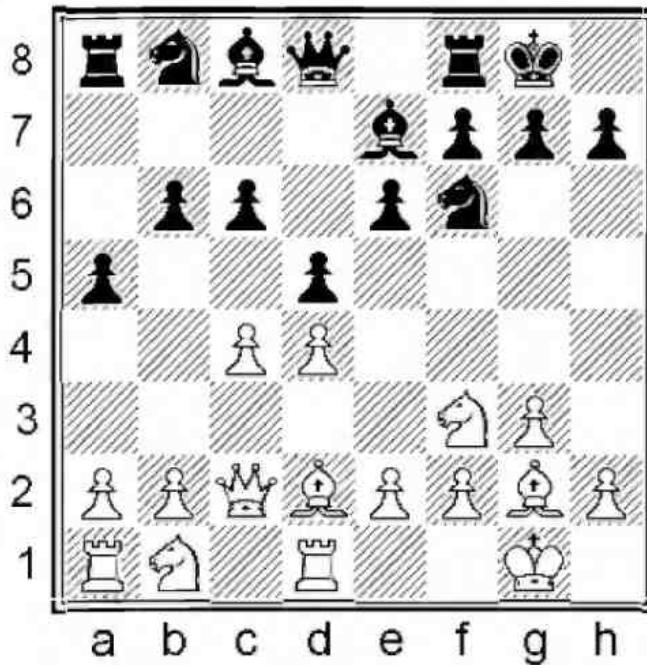
**24.  $exd3 \mathbb{W}d7$**

**25.  $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{W}c8$**

**26.  $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$**

Played for reasons we already know: White is preparing to bring the bishop to c3, put his knight on e5 and attack the pawn on a7.

### D212) 9...a5



Black prevents the opponent's plan, connected with the advance a2-a4-a5, and if he gets the chance, wants to become active himself on the left flank.

**10.♗g5**

The following game illustrates Black's idea perfectly: 10.b3 ♜a6 11.♗f4 b5 12.cxb5 cxb5 13.♘bd2 ♛b6 14.♕c7 ♛xc7 15.♘xc7 ♛c8! 16.♗xa5 b4† Markowski-Bakre, Dresden 2011.

**10...♝a6**

**11.♘bd2 ♘bd7**

**12.♖ac1 h6**

**13.♗xf6**

White is not bothered by this exchange, because now he seizes the initiative in the centre.

**13...♝xf6**

**14.e4 c5!?**

Not wishing to settle for passive play, Black makes serious positional concessions.

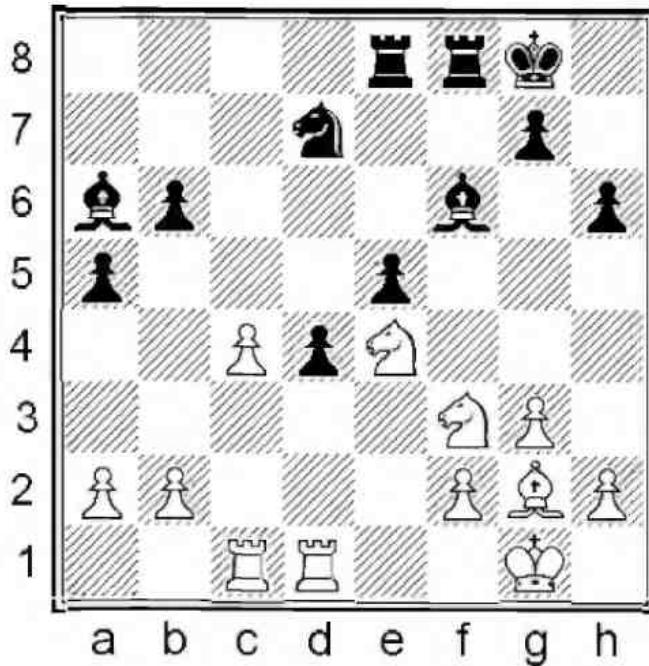
**15.exd5 cxd4**

**16.dxe6 fxe6**

17.  $\mathbb{W}g6$   $\mathbb{W}e8$

18.  $\mathbb{W}xe8$   $\mathbb{B}axe8$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  e5



20.  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$

In the classical manner – White organises a light-square blockade.

20...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$

Pelletier-Nguyen Chi Minh, Mulhouse 2011.

Notwithstanding his two bishops and protected passed pawn, Black has rather an unpleasant position: his pieces are passive, whilst his central pawns are vulnerable (he must constantly watch out for the break f2-f4).

D213) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

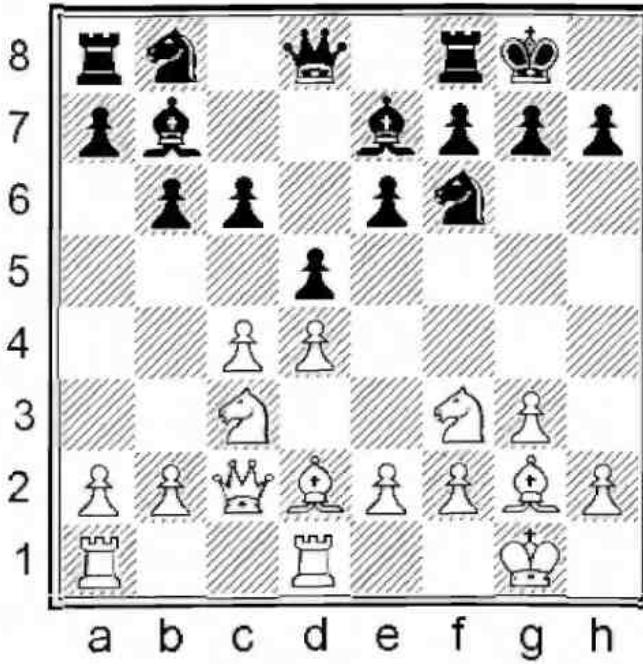
D2131) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

D2132) 10. b3

10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  – see 8...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ .

D2131) A creative, and (the main thing!) still relatively unexplored position arises after

10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$



**D21311) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**D21312) 10...dxc4**

On 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  there follows simply 11.a3, and the black pieces on the queenside are not very conveniently placed.

**D21311) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**11.b3**

A solid move; after 11.e4 dxc4 12.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  b5 14.b3!? White, of course, obtains good compensation for the pawn, but he can hardly count on an advantage: 14...cxb3 15.axb3 a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 18.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  with mutual chances.

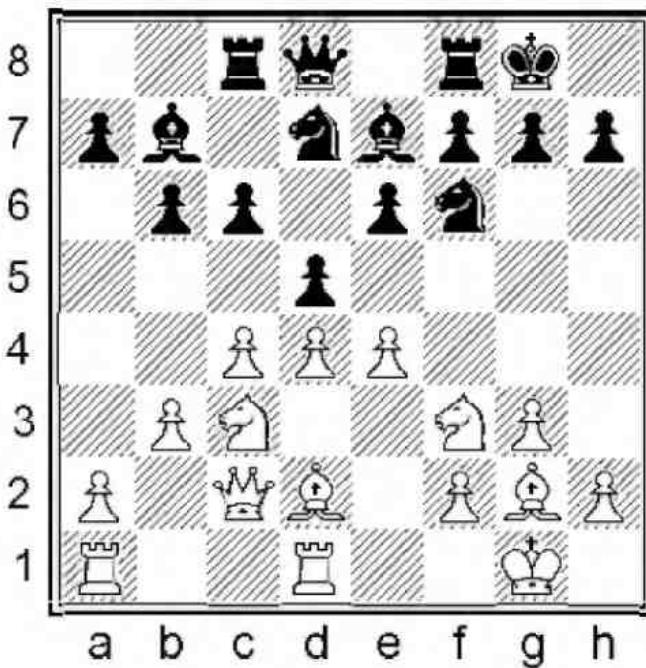
**11... $\mathbb{E}c8$**

Premature is 11...c5 on account of 12.cxd5 exd5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  (Burmakin-Shipov, Elista 1997) 15.dxc5 bxc5 16. $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ .

**12.e4**

After any other move, Black replies ...c6-c5 and achieves full-fledged play. For example:

- A) 12. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  c5 13.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (there is also nothing after 14.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.d5 exd5 16.exd5 (Topalov-Karpov, Monaco 2001) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , and Black equalises) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  – the exchanges continue and Black is fine;
- B) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 13.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  – and here White has nothing;
- C) Or 12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  dxc4 14.bxc4 cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  with equal play for Black.



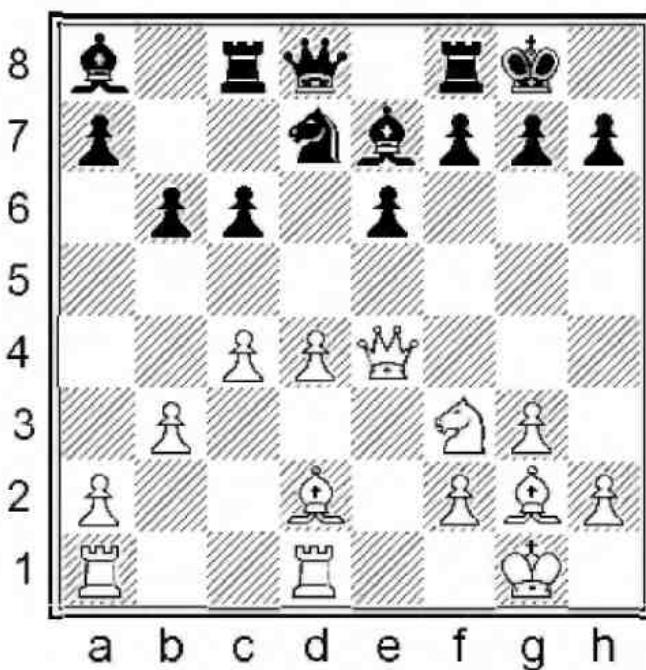
**12... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

12...dxe4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ ) 13...c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  cxd4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  – a nice trick, but after 19. $\mathbb{W}e4$  White is still a little better, thanks to his strong centralised knight and control over the d-file.

12...c5 13.exd5 exd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  (14...dxc4 15.d5!, threatening to trap the bishop with d5-d6) 15. $\mathbb{W}f5$  dxc4 16.d5! g6 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  18.bxc4± Schebler-Breder, Germany 2002/03.

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4**

**14. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$**



## 15. $\mathbb{W}e3$

The typical pawn sacrifice is premature here: 15.c5 bxc5 16.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (also after 17. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  Black succeeds in defending everything) 17... $\mathbb{W}e8$  (play turns in White's favour after 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ ? 18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , and on 19... $\mathbb{Q}xf2+?$  there is the accurate reply 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (a draw by perpetual check arises after 18. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  h6 21. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  gxh6 22. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ ) 18...h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  gxh6 20. $\mathbb{W}g4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  with a draw.

## 15...c5

If 15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ , White frees a path to f4 for his bishop: 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  18.d5!±.

## 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ cxd4

## 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$

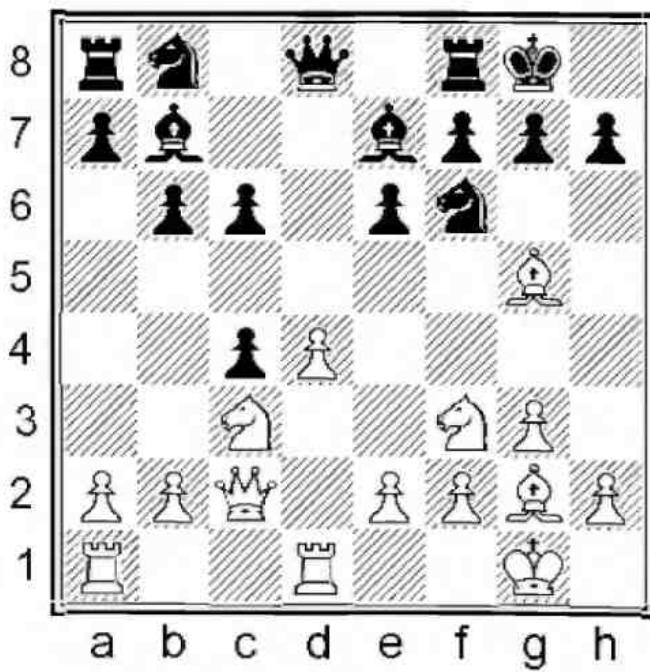
White has a queenside pawn majority, an important advantage in the endgame, whilst it is not simple for Black to activate his central pawn.

## D11312) 10...dxc4

The most principled reply – Black takes the gambit pawn.

## 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

Another plan, which we have already seen, is the ‘real’ sacrifice of the pawn, with the idea of creating pressure on the c-file: 11. $\mathbb{Q}ac1!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{W}c2$  b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16.b3 with compensation .



## 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

In reply to 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  White can choose the style in which to continue – combinative or positional.

Interesting complications begin after 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (Black certainly does not want to play ...b6-b5) 16. $\mathbb{Q}d6$  f6 17.e4 (17. $\mathbb{W}a4!$ ? fxe5 18. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  19. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  with compensation ) 17...fxe5 18.exd5

$\text{cxd5}$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$  (after 19.  $\mathbb{W}a4?!$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  20.  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  Black has three pawns for the piece, however, the central pawns are very strong) 19...  $\text{exd5}$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{E}ad8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $h6$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}1d2$   $e4!?$  (evidently the correct decision – it is difficult to defend the extra pawn, and he should therefore force simplifications) 23.  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $e3$  24.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}xe3$  25.  $fxe3$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  – Black has sufficient counterplay.

Quieter is 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $b5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $cxb5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  17.  $a4$   $a6$  18.  $axb5$   $AXB5$  19.  $\mathbb{E}a7\pm$ . White has managed to regain the pawn, with some pressure on the queenside.

## 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$

A less convincing alternative seems to be 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  because of 12...  $f5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}ed2$   $b5$  15.  $b3$  (15.  $a3$   $c5$ ) 15...  $c3$  16.  $e4$   $cxd2$  17.  $exd5$   $cxd5$  18.  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$ . Of course, Black has a bad bishop, and the pawn on e6 is weak, but at the end of the day, it is an extra pawn.

## 12... $\mathbb{W}xe7$

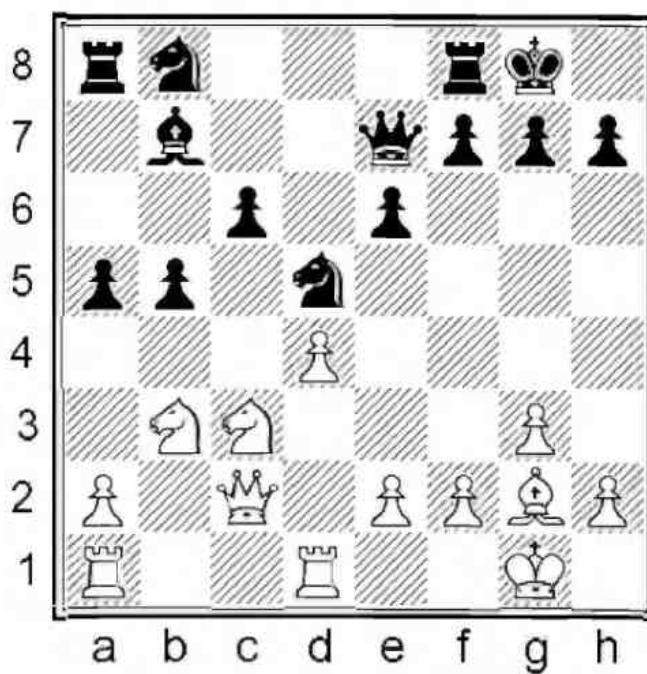
## 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

Here too, on 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  there follows 13...  $f5$ , driving the knight out of the centre.

## 13... $b5$

## 14. $b3$ $cxb3$

## 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$ $a5$



## 16. $e4$

Also good is 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$   $b4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}ec5$   $a4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}1d3$ .

## 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

**17.♕xc3 b4**

**18.♕c2 ♜d7**

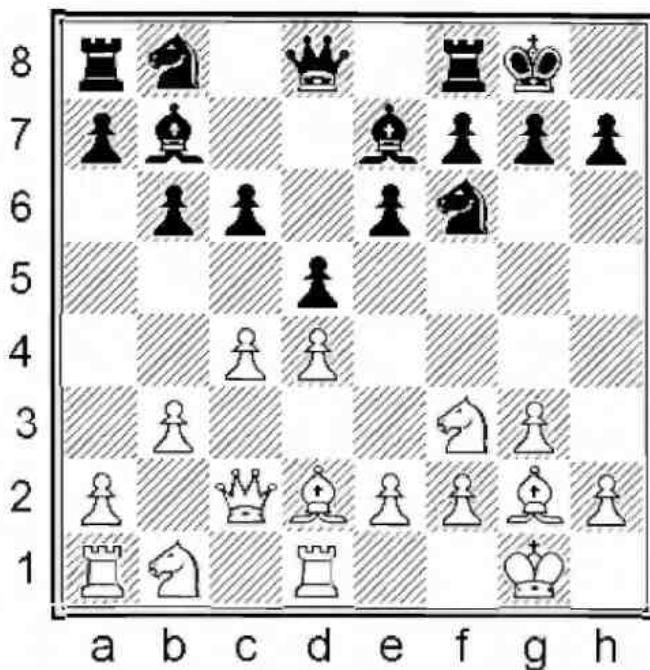
**19.e5 f6**

**20.♖ac1**

with good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

**D2132)** An interesting idea is to try to obtain the possibility of recapturing with the pawn on c4:

**10.b3**



**10...dxc4**

Practice has also seen 10...♝a6 11.♞c3 (White is also a little better after 11.a3 c5 12.♞c3 dxc4 13.bxc4 cxd4 14.♝f4, and White regains the pawn, at the same time establishing definite pressure in the centre; even so, playing with a long-term weakness on c4 is not to everyone's taste) 11...c5 12.cxd5 ♜b4 13.♝b2 exd5 14.♜ac1 h6 15.♝f4 ♜d7 16.a3 ♜a6 (P.H. Nielsen-Jussupow, Germany 2011/12) 17.♞e5 ♜e6 18.♞b5! (an excellent post for the knight: it stops the knight leaving a6 and the rook leaving a8) 18...♞e4 19.b4±.

10...♝bd7 takes play into the positions seen below after 8...♝bd7: 11.♝f4 ♜c8 (11...♞h5 12.♞c1 ♜hf6 13.♞c3) 12.♞c3 is an exact transposition.

**11.bxc4 c5**

**12.dxc5**

Nothing is given here by 12.d5, because Black can quietly take the pawn: 12...exd5 13.cxd5 ♜xd5.

**12...♞e4**

On 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  the reply 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  is unpleasant, and now if 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ , then 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ , immediately creating threats to both the black queen and king.

**13.  $\mathbb{W}c1 \mathbb{Q}xc5$**

**14.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

The threat is stronger than the execution – the immediate bishop jump brings White little, for example: 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{W}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h4 \mathbb{Q}bd7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d4 \mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{E}fc8$  Smith-Hammer, Oslo 2011.

**14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}h6 \mathbb{Q}fd7$**

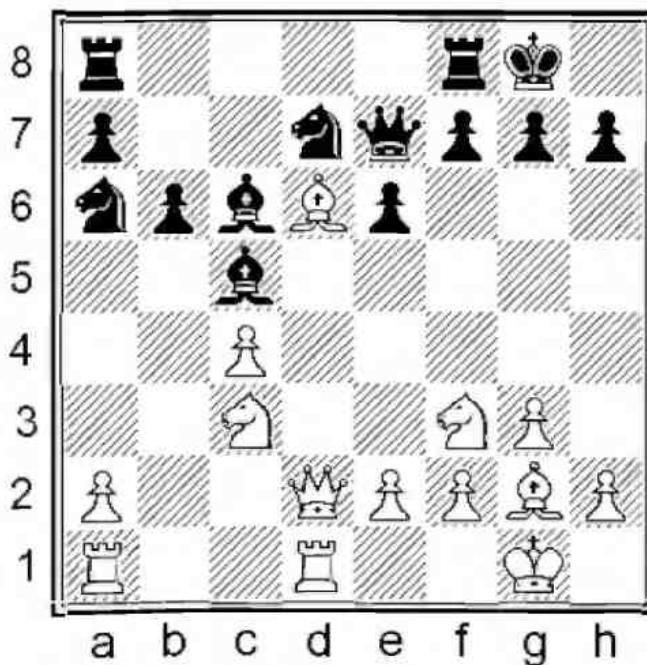
**16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

If 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , then Black solves his problems by means of 16...f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{W}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b5 \mathbb{Q}a6$ .

**16...  $\mathbb{W}e7$**

**17.  $\mathbb{W}d2 \mathbb{Q}a6$**

**18.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**



Thanks to his advantage in development, White has managed to create definite pressure in the centre and on the queenside.

**18...  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$**

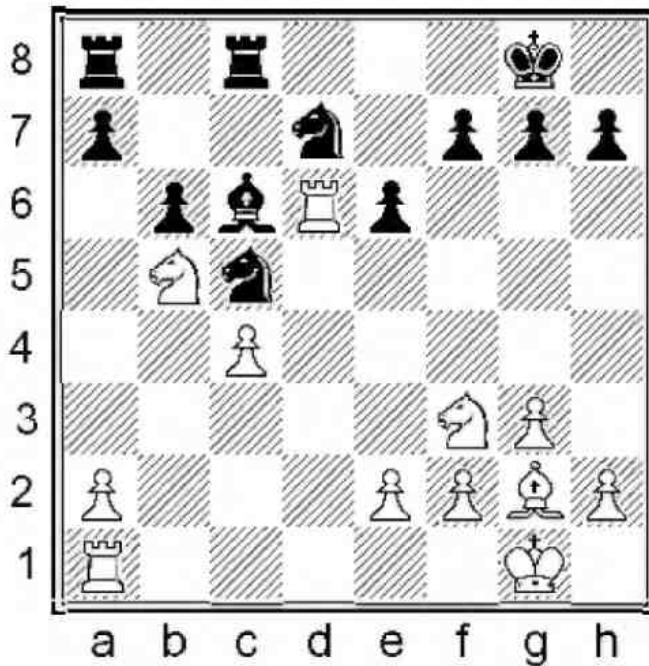
**19.  $\mathbb{W}xd6 \mathbb{W}xd6$**

**20.  $\mathbb{E}xd6 \mathbb{E}fc8$**

**21.♘b5**

A good post for the knight, if Black cannot drive it away with ...a7-a6.

**21...♝ac5**



**22.♜xe6!**

Starting a forcing variation.

**22...♜xc6**

**23.♞fd4 ♜cc8**

**24.♝xa8 ♜xa8**

**25.♞c6 a6**

**26.♞c7 ♜f8**

Black cannot play 26...♜c8? because of 27.♛e7+.

**27.♜d1 g6**

**28.♞xa6 ♜a8**

**29.♞ab4±**

As a result, White has won a pawn. Of course, it is not easy to realise this, but the remaining play will be for two results.

**D22) 8...♝bd7**

**9.♗f4**

**D221) 9...♝h5**

**D222) 9...a5**

**D223) 9...♝e4**

**D224) 9...b6**

**D221) 9...♝h5**

A typical reaction: Black drives the bishop away from its good post, from where it exerts unpleasant pressure on the centre.

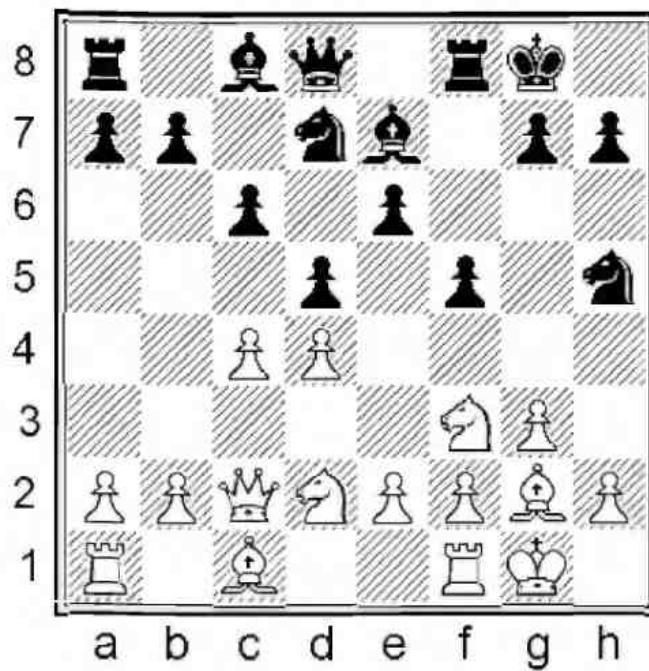
**10.♗c1**

Naturally, White avoids the exchange and tries to get the bishop onto the long diagonal after b2-b3.

**10...f5**

If the knight returns to f6, then we get a well-known position from the variation 4...♞e7 – 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 ♜bd7, which we will examine later.

**11.♗bd2**



**11...♝d6**

A typical Stonewall manoeuvre, which is the structure we now have on the board.

11...♛e8 12.♗e5 ♜d6 13.♗df3 ♛e7 14.a3 a5 15.b3± Shukh-Balashov, Taganrog 2011.

**12.♗e1**

White also proceeds in a standard way: one knight heads for d3, the other for f3, in order to establish the maximum control over the crucial central squares c5 and e5.

**12... $\mathbb{W}e7$**

**13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b6**

**14.b4!**

A very strong move, allowing White to seize space on the queenside.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

Taking the pawn is bad: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$  15.cxd5 cxd5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  17. $\mathbb{W}c6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  18. $\mathbb{W}xe6+$ , after which White wins a pawn, with a much superior position.

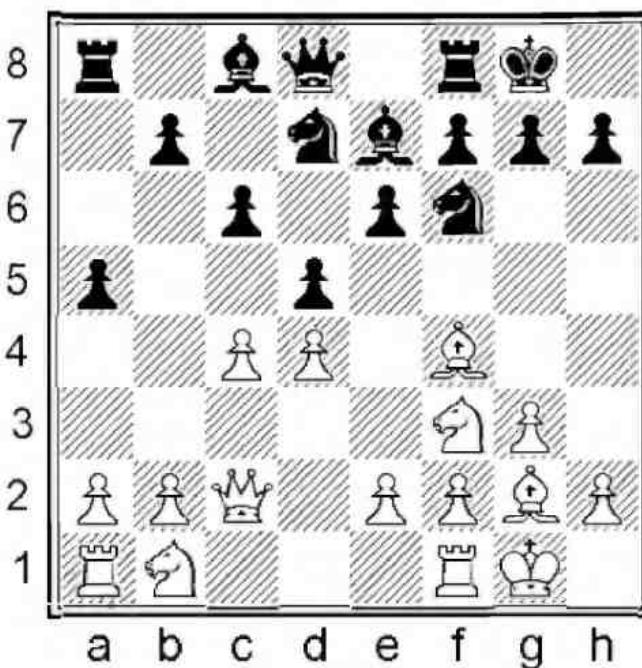
**15.a4  $\mathbb{Q}hf6$**

Stohl-Tkachiev, Manila 1992. Vlad Tkachiev is a great Catalan specialist as White, but here, he had to play Black against the excellent positional player, Igor Stohl. If White had now played

**16.a5±**

then Black's position would have been in serious danger.

**D222) 9...a5**



Black himself seizes space on the queenside, preventing his opponent from doing so.

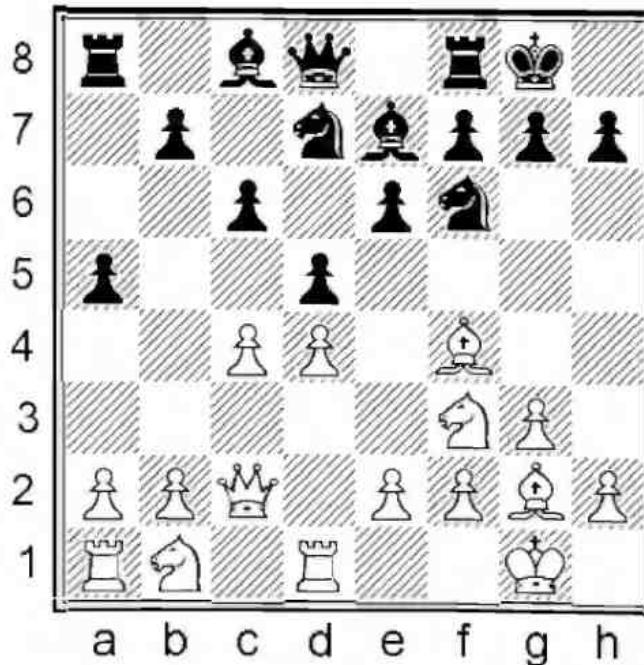
**D2221) 10. $\mathbb{R}d1$**

**D2222) 10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

For a long time, I could not find any advantage here for White, but then I came to the conclusion that he should play 10.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (**D2222**).

**D2221)** The alternative is the move recommended by Boris Avrukh:

**10.  $\mathbb{E}d1$**



**D22211) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**D22212) 10... a4**

**D22213) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

10... h6 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  b6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (Kozul-Topalov, Heraklion 2007) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ .

**D22211) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

11.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2!?$

**11... f5**

The flank aggression 11... g5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  f5 leads only to the weakening of the black king's position: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  fxe4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15. f3 exf3 16. exf3 $\pm$  Bareev-Renet, France 1995.

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**14. c5!?**

White wishes to exploit the weakness of the dark squares on the queenside and occupy b6 with his knight. He also has a good alternative, involving playing for space gain: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  15. e3  $\mathbb{B}b8$  16. c5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17. f4 (cutting off at the roots all thoughts of breaks with ...e6-e5 or ...g7-g5 and ...f5-f4) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. a3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19. b4 b5 (otherwise White himself, after preparation, will advance b4-b5, and Black will start to suffocate) 20. cxb6  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  axb4 22. axb4  $\mathbb{E}f7$  (Bacrot-Kamsky, Elista 2007) 23.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{B}fb7$  24.  $\mathbb{B}db1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$ . Black has a very bad bishop on e8 and faces an unpleasant defence.

**14...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

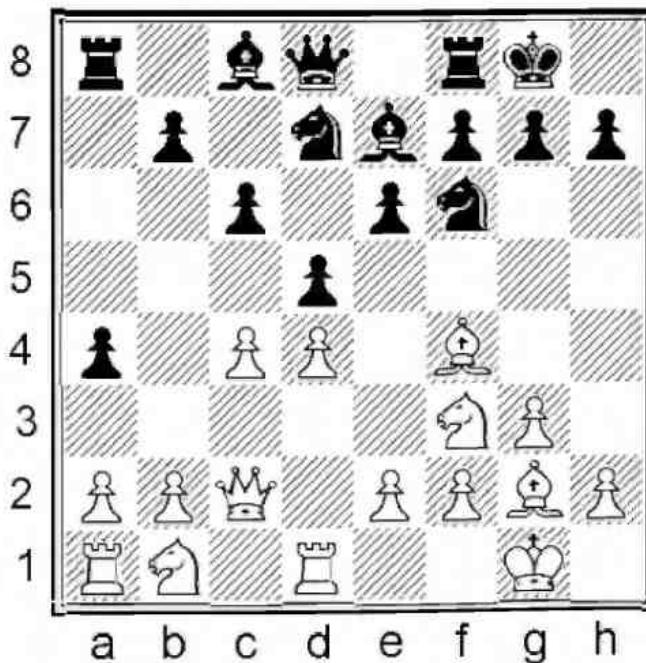
14...  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ .

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**16. dxe5±**

After  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ -b6 Black, in order not to lose the pawn on a5, has to keep his rook on the a-file, but then it is cut off from the rest of his forces. Black also lacks any obvious counterplay.

**D22212) 10...a4**



An interesting idea: Black prevents his opponent playing the useful move b2-b3 and opens a path for his queen to a5.

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

So as to force the opponent to clarify the position in the centre. In reply, White offers a temporary pawn sacrifice.

**13.  $\mathbb{R}ac1$  dx $c$ 4**

**14.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  a3**

14...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ .

15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $a xb2$

16.  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{W}a4$

Black strives for an endgame.

17.  $\mathbb{E}xb2$   $\mathbb{W}xc2$

18.  $\mathbb{E}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{E}a4$

22.  $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$

23.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{E}xb4$

24.  $\mathbb{E}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

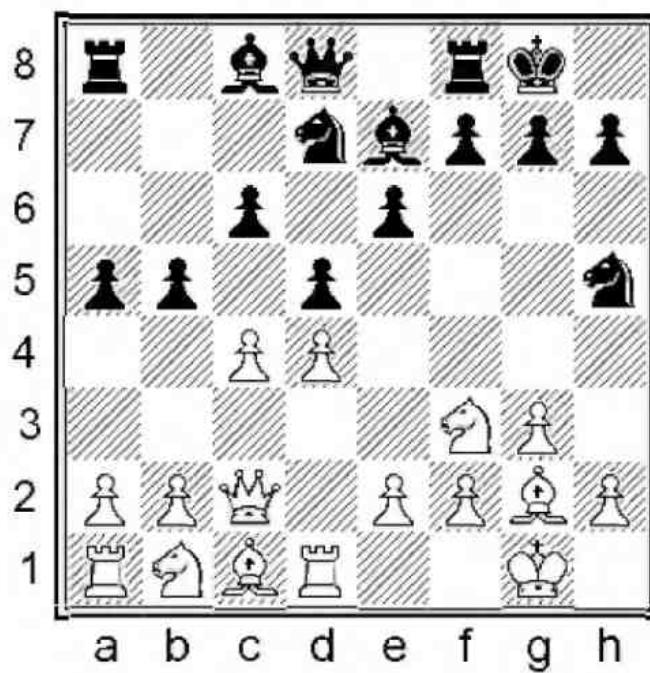
25.  $e3\pm$

Beliavsky-Eingorn, Leningrad 1990.

Black has still not solved the problem of the bishop at c8, and later, his pawn on b7 may become weak.

D22213) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$

11.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $b5$



**12.♕e5**

Things ended in a deadlock for White after 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.e4 dxe4 14.♗xe4 ♜b8 15.♗e2 ♜hf6 16.♔f4 ♜b6 17.♕e5 (it looks as though White's initiative is unpleasant, but by accurate moves, Black neutralises it and achieves a drawn position) 17...♝d5 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♗c3 ♜xe5! 20.dxe5 d4 21.♗e3 dxe3! (this is the whole point: Black obtains sufficient material and positional equivalent for the queen) 22.♗xe3 (after 22.♗xd8 exf2+ 23.♗xf2 ♜xd8 with compensation, play continues with all three results possible: the white king is weak, and the black bishops, when they come to b7 and b6, will develop great activity) 22...♝g5 23.♗c5 (23.f4 ♜xf4 24.♗xf4 ♜e8=) 23...♝e7, draw, Cheparinov-Ponomariov, Porto Carras 2011.

**12...♝b7**

**13.c5 f5**

**14.♗d2 ♜hf6**

**15.♗d3±**

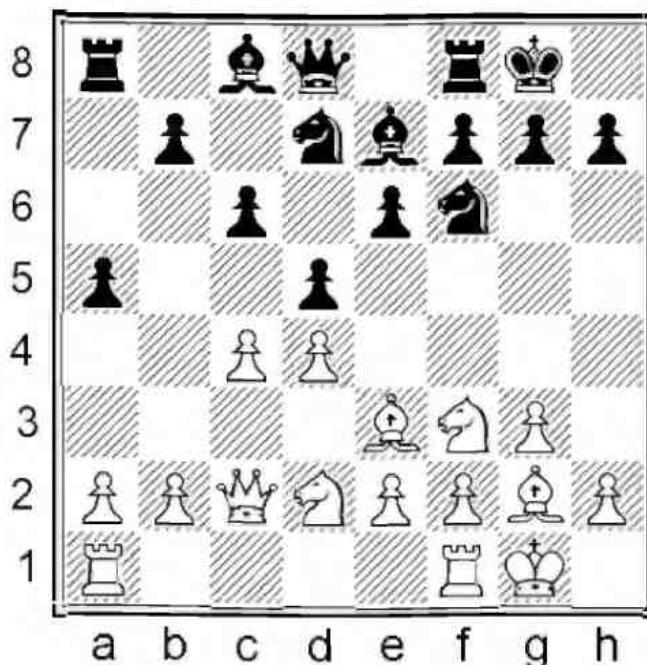
Miroshnichenko-Macieja, Kallithea 2008.

**D2222) 10.♗bd2 ♜h5**

**11.♗e3**

The bishop should be preserved, and, indeed, it makes sense to keep as many pieces as possible on the board, since Black's position is quite cramped. A game with mutual chances arises after 11.♗ac1 h6 12.♗h3 ♜xf4 13.gxf4 ♜a6 (Haslinger-Stocek, Port Erin 2006) 14.f5 exf5 15.♗xf5 ♜f6?.

**11...♜hf6**



**12.c5!**

It is not usually favourable for White to play this way, since with the move

**12...b6**

Black breaks up the pawn chain. But here, White has such a large lead in development, that he can permit himself this.

**13.cxb6 ♜xb6**

**14.♘e5**

Black cannot exchange knights because then he loses a piece.

**14...♝b7**

The freeing move 14...c5 deserves attention, but after 15.♘xd7 ♘xd7 16.dxc5 ♜xc5 17.♘xc5 ♜xc5 18.♗fc1 ♘d7 19.e4 d4 20.♗c7± White has some initiative. For example, 20...e5 21.♗h3 ♜xc7 22.♗xc7 ♘b6 23.♗f1 ♘e6 24.♗f3.

**15.♖ac1**

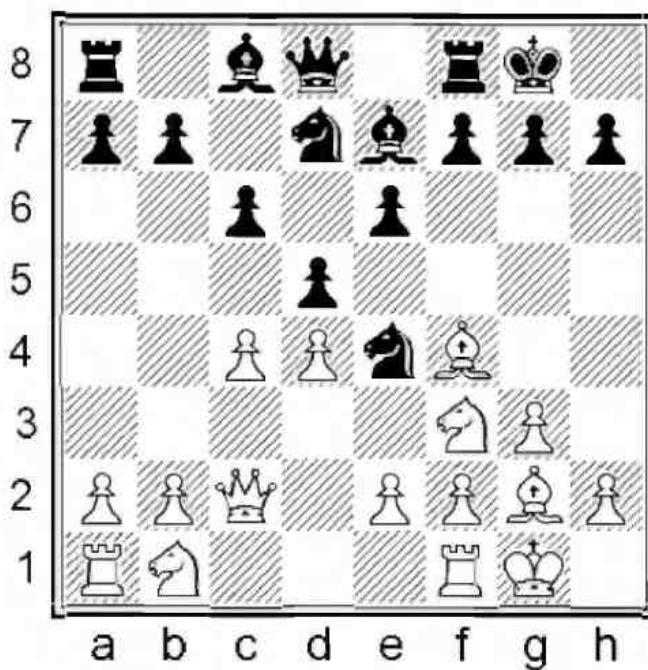
The eternal question: which rook? The move 15.♖fc1!! also has its points.

**15...♜fc8**

**16.♘b3±**

White has solid control of the important points e5 and c5. Black's main problem here is that he has to conduct a passive defence.

**D223) 9...♞e4**



Sensible tactics – Black wants to seize as much space as possible on the kingside, and in addition he prevents White's play associated with the advance e2-e4.

**10.♗c3**

10.♗fd2 f5 (10...♗xd2 11.♗xd2 g5 12.♗e3 f5 13.f3 with the idea of retreating the bishop to f2 and advancing e2-e4)  
11.♗xe4 fxe4 12.♗d2 followed by f2-f3 (Avrukh).

**10...g5**

In reply to 10..f5 White exchanges a pair of knights and entrenches his bishop on e5: 11.♗e5 ♗xe5 12.♗xe5±.

**11.♘c1**

The bishop retreats to c1, because the square d2, as we have already seen, is potentially needed by the knight.  
Admittedly, another set-up also makes sense: 11.♗e3 f5 12.♗ad1 ♘d6 13.b3 ♘f7 (Nogueiras-Jobava, Havana 2005)  
14.♗a4, intending to transfer this knight via b2 to d3, with the same idea – to strengthen control over the squares e5 and c5.

**11...f5**

**12.b3 ♘f6**

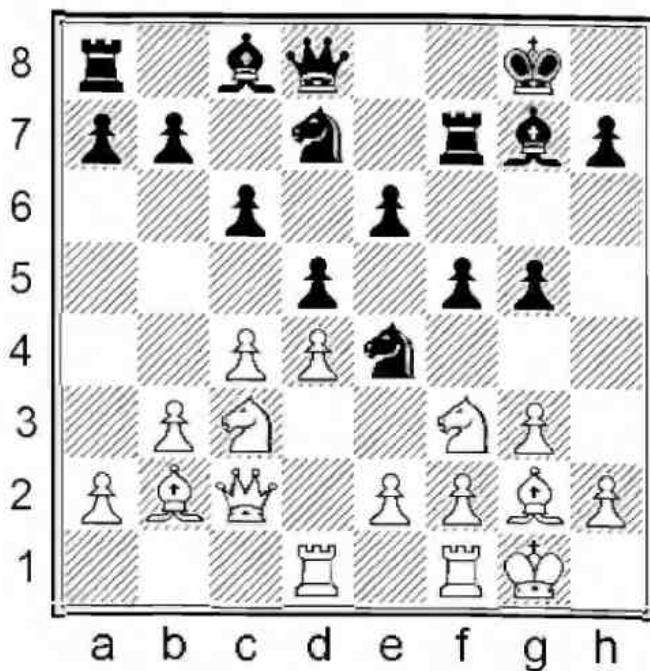
**13.♗b2**

The bishop has reached the long diagonal and again strengthens control over e5.

**13...♗g7**

13...♗e7 14.♗e5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe4 fxe4 16.dxe5 ♘g7 17.♗c1 ♘f7 (17...♘d7 18.♗a3±) 18.f3 exf3 19.exf3±.

**14.♗ad1 ♘f7**



**15.♗xe4 fxe4**

**16.♘e1**

A typical manoeuvre in this structure: White exchanges on e4 and prepares the break f2-f3.

**16...♞f8**

**17.f3 exf3**

**18.♗xf3**

He takes with the bishop, because the knight intends another route: to d3, to control both important squares; not only e5, but also c5.

**18...♝d7**

**19.♞d3 ♜e8**

**20.♛c1 ♜c8**

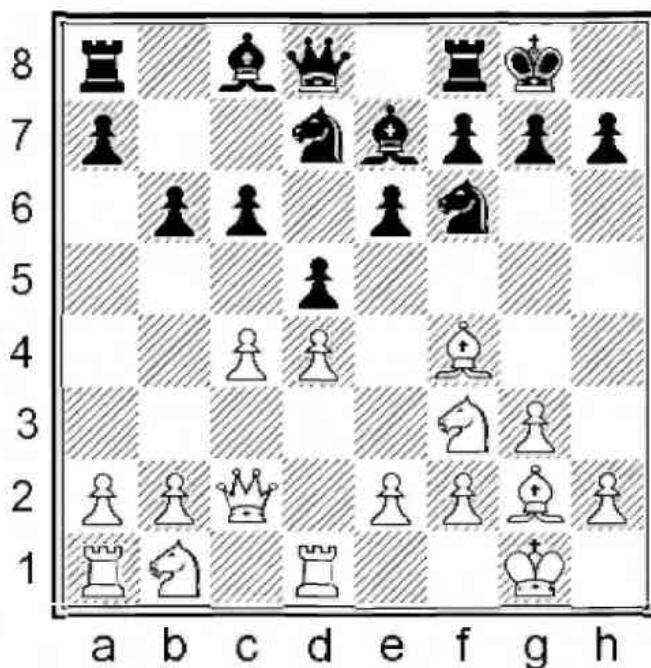
**21.♛e3 ♜c7**

**22.♞e5±**

This was the 9th game of the world championship match Petrosian-Botvinnik, Moscow 1963. White has achieved a large advantage, although Botvinnik managed to save half a point, by stubborn defence.

**D224) 9...b6 10.♝d1**

10.♝bd2 ♜h5 11.cxd5 ♜xf4 12.♛xc6 ♜xe2+ 13.♝h1 ♜a6 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.♛xe6+ ♜h8 16.♝f1 ♜f6 17.♝xe2 ♜xe2 18.♛xe2 ♜e8– Almasi-Parligras, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.



**D2241) 10...♝b7**

## D2242) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

### D2241) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

The most solid move: Black, without hurrying to commit himself, just completes his development, whilst at the same time strengthening the long light-squared diagonal.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

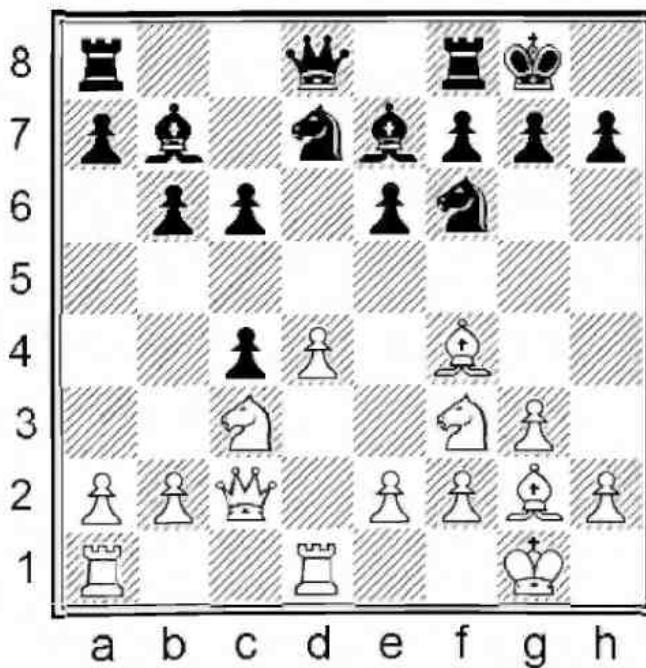
#### D22411) 11...dxc4

#### D22412) 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$

#### D22413) 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$

D22411) After the capture

11...dxc4



play is very much for two results.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

It is clear that 12...b5?! is bad because of 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ .

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

14.gxf4

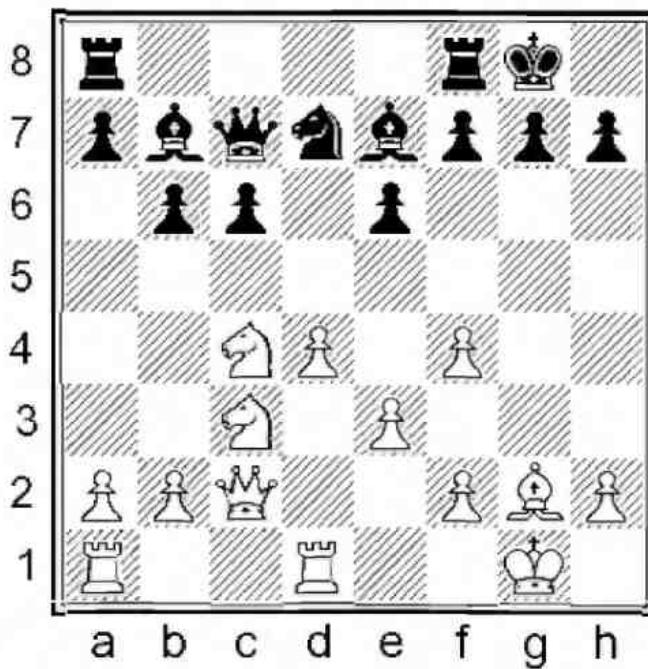
Black now has two bishops, but in return, White has strengthened his central control.

14... $\mathbb{W}c7$

14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16.f5!  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (it is worth considering 16...exf5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18.bxc3 g6) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  exf5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ ) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (P.H. Nielsen-A. Sokolov, Germany 2003/04) 20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  23.d5±. The black bishop is firing into the air, whilst the knight on c6 is aggressively posted and plays on Black's nerves.

14... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (Yevseev-Rozum, St Petersburg 2011) 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g3\pm$ . Thanks to the bishop on g2, White has pressure on the queenside. But he has not forgotten about the enemy king either – the plan f4-f5 can potentially be very unpleasant for the opponent.

## 15.e3



## 15... $\mathbb{Q}ad8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (after waiting tactics with 16... $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  White does best to do the same – 17.a3, gradually seizing space on the queenside: 17...c5 – 17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18.b4, transposing play into the game Ortega-Almarsi, 2010, see page 45 – 18.d5) 17.a3 (17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  c5 18.d5 exd5 Mahjoob-A. Sokolov, Turin 2006, and here it was necessary to force Black into exchanges on d5 – 19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  followed by 19... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g6 26.h4!, retaining slight pressure) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.fxe5 f6 22.f4  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  23.b4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  (Lautier-Tiviakov, Mondariz 2000) 24.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c2\pm$ .

## 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$ c5

## 17.d5 exd5

## 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

## 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$ $\mathbb{Q}xb7$

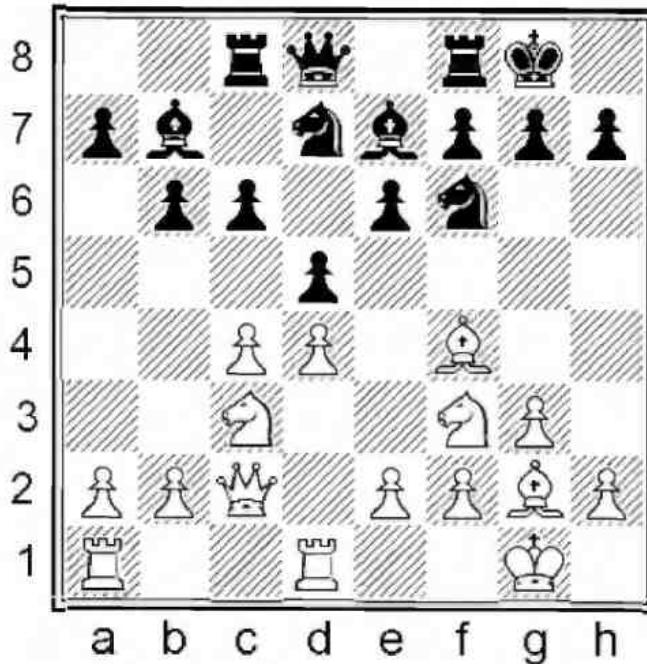
## 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

## 21. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ g6

**22.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$**

Ashwin-Anastasian, Dubai 2011. Objectively, the position is close to equality, but from the practical point of view, White has the promising piece combination of queen + knight against queen + bishop.

**D22412) 11...  $\mathbb{B}c8$**



**12.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

Also possible is 12.b3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (12...c5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  a6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  cxd4 17.  $\mathbb{B}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{B}xc5$  19.  $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{B}d6$  20. f4  $\mathbb{B}e7$  21. e4 dxc4 22. bxc4±) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}hf6$  – we will examine this position under 11...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$ .

**12...dxc4**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$**

13...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  c5 16.  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}7f6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$  Tkachiev-Kramnik, Moscow 2009.

**14.e4 b5**

**15.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  g5**

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$**

Hamitevici-Itkis, Kiev 2011.

**D22413) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$**

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$**

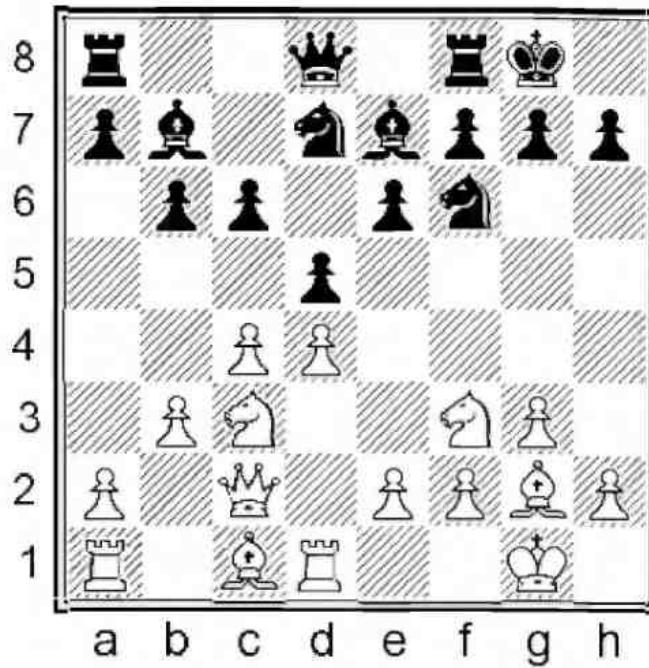
The bishop is better on c1 than d2, since it can then come to the long diagonal, and does not get under the feet of the

rook on d1.

Little is promised by 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  f6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14. gxf4 f5 15. e3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17. cxd5 cxd5= El Debs-Leitao, Guarulhos 2006.

12...  $\mathbb{Q}hf6$

13. b3



13...  $\mathbb{Q}c8$

Analysing 13...  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , I found a very interesting exchange sacrifice: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15. a3! dx $c$ 4 16. bx $c$ 4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. dx $e$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20. e4 c5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! ex $d$ 5 22. ex $d$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  24. f4  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  with compensation . In my opinion, White's position is a little easier to play.

14. e4 c5

14... dx $e$ 4 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  c5 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (Vorobiov-Airapetian, Taganrog 2011) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  cx $d$ 4 20.  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$ .

15. dx $c$ 5 dx $c$ 4

16. b4!

'By-passing' the pawn on c4 and leaving the c8-rook doing nothing in the process.

16... bx $c$ 5

17. b5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$

So far Avrukh-Neverov, Dresden 2007. Here it seems the simplest course was to regain the pawn by means of

18.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$

19.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$

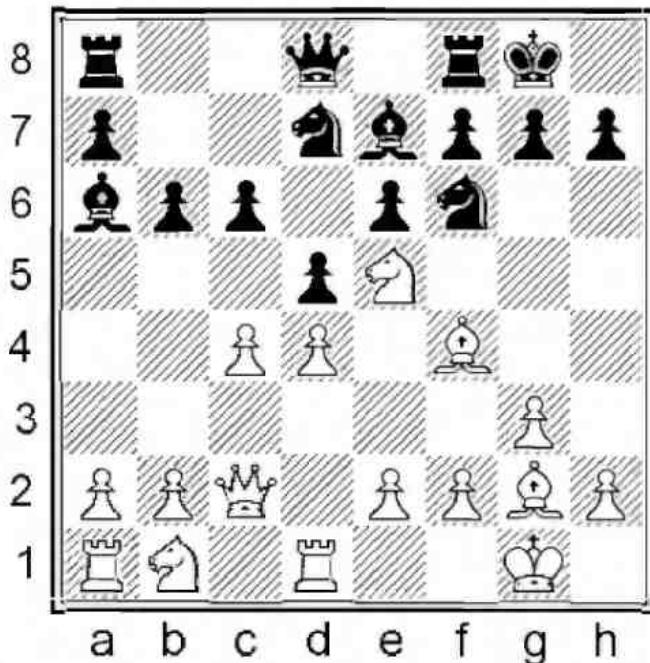
20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$

21. $\mathbb{E}axc1\pm$

D2242) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

The attempt to eliminate the bishop on e7 achieves little: 11.cxd5 cxd5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (Tomashevsky-Ponomariov, Saratov 2011) and here, instead of the game move, 19.f3, White could have maintained the tension: 19.b3 h6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  with slightly the better chances.



D22421) 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$

D22422) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

D22423) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

D22421) 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$

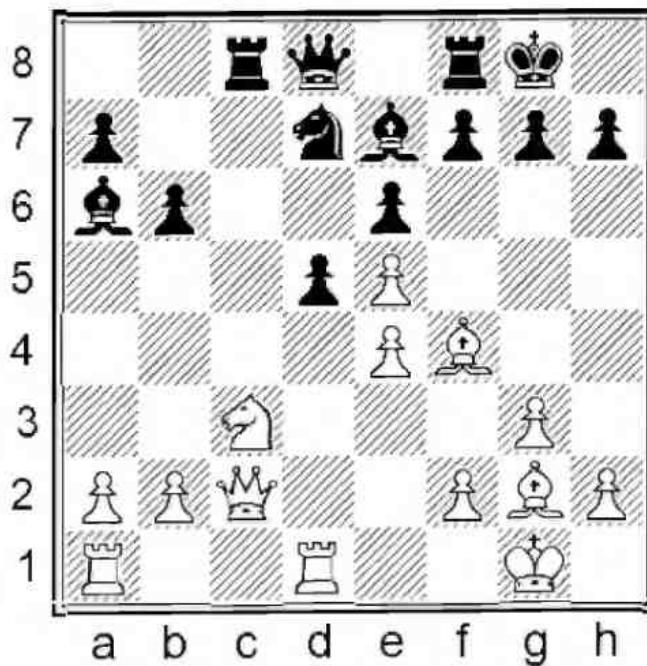
12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Winning the pawn does not bring Black any great pleasure: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ ?! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  dxc4 14.e4, and thanks to his two bishops and strong centre, White has wonderful compensation for the pawn, for example: 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  15.a4 (White prevents the move ...b6-b5, with the help of which Black could solidly defend the pawn on c4) 15...a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}a2$  b5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  axb4 18.b3! (a typical blow against the strong, but rather immobile black pawn phalanx on the queenside) 18...cxb3 (18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19.bxc4 e5 20.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.c5 b3 22. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1\pm$  Yevseev-Mokshanov, St Petersburg 2011) 19. $\mathbb{Q}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20.axb5 cxb5 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{E}c4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{E}fc8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb4\pm$  Damljanovic-Abramovic, Pancevo 2006.

**13.dxe5 ♜d7**

**14.cxd5 cxd5**

**15.e4**



Now if Black takes on e4, then White will have a large advantage, and maybe even simply a winning position. Therefore, Black must sacrifice a pawn:

**15...d4**

This resource is the key on which Black's chances hinge in such positions, but here, I think White can count on an advantage after

**16.♗xd4 ♚c7**

**17.♗ad1 ♗fd8**

**18.h4**

White prevents the move ...g7-g5, after which Black would win back the e5-pawn.

**18...h6**

**19.h5**

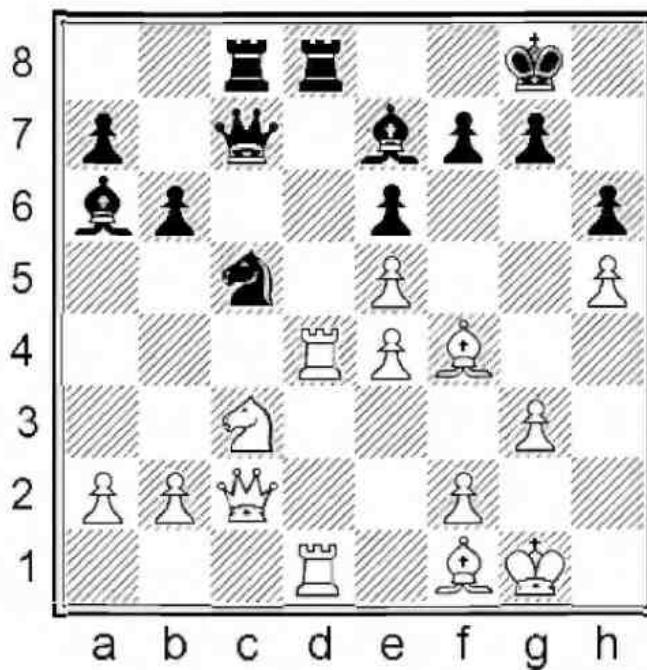
Black cannot just stand his ground, since White has a number of ways to strengthen his position (including the exchange of light-squared bishops by ♘f1, or the manoeuvre ♘f3-♘g2). Therefore, Black must take some sort of steps to regain the sacrificed pawn.

**19...♘e5**

19...♗f8 20.♗d2 (20.♘f1 ♘xf1 21.♗xf1 ♘xe5 22.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 23.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 24.♗a4 ♗f6 25.♗g2 ♗g8= Kovalenko-

Zhou Weiqi, Moscow 2011) 20... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$  Fedoseev-Bazeev, St Petersburg 2011.

20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$



White has secure control of the light squares on the kingside, and so can boldly offer the exchange of light-squared bishops. In addition, note that by pushing his pawn to h5, White fixes the h6-pawn on a dark square. If he manages to exchange light-squared bishops and retain dark-squared ones, this factor will tell in the endgame; such a structure favours White.

20... $\mathbb{Q}g5$

20... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  24. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  25. $\mathbb{W}d4\pm$ .

21. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

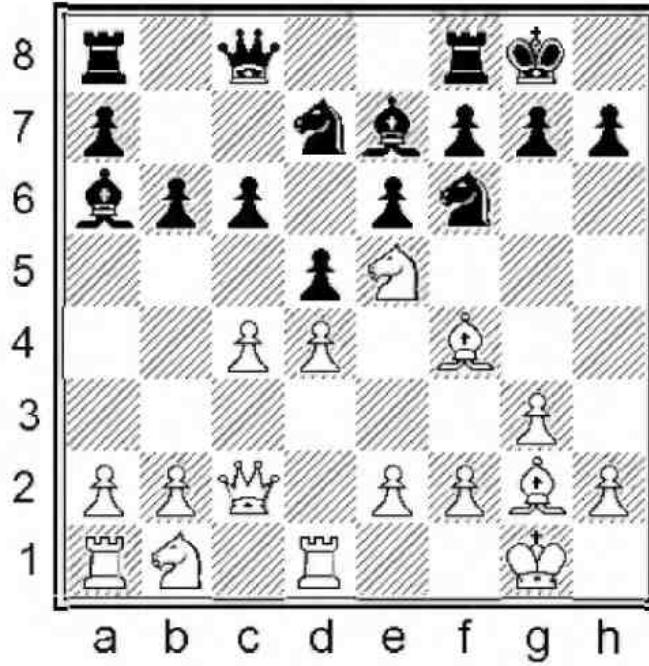
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$

23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$

24. $\mathbb{W}d1\pm$

Tkachiev-Yakovenko, Dresden 2007. White has a solid extra pawn and full control of the open d-file; his advantage is not in doubt.

D22422) 11... $\mathbb{W}c8$



This move is not very popular – not an accident, in my view.

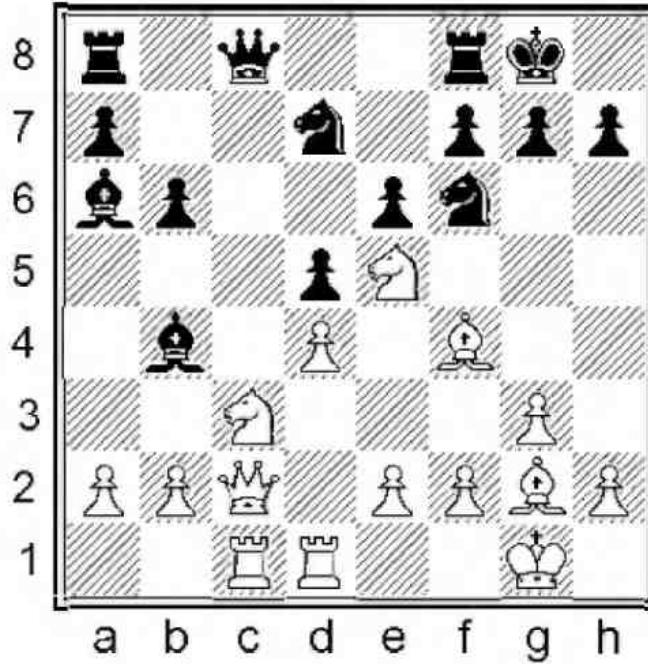
### **12.cxd5**

Also promising is 12.Qc3!? Qh5 (12...Bb7 13.b3 BAc8 14.e4 h6 15.Qxd7 Bxd7 16.e5 Qe8 17.Qf1 Qc7 18.a4 Qb7 (Burmakin-Graf, Ohrid 2001) 19.a5 b5 20.c5±) 13.Qe3 (13.Qd2!? Qhf6 14.e4 dxec4 15.Qg5 Be8 16.Qf3 h6 17.Qf4 with compensation ) 13...Qhf6 14.Bac1 Qxe5 15.dxe5 Qg4 16.Qf4 Qxc4 (16...g5 17.Qh3 gxf4 18.Qxg4 Qxc4 19.Qe4∞) 17.h3 Qh6, Sambuev-Smirnov, Krasnoyarsk 2003, 18.Qxh6 gxh6 19.Qe4 Bc7 20.b3 Ba6 21.Qf6+ Qxf6 22.exf6 Be5 23.Bxc6±.

### **12...cxd5**

**13.Qc3 Qb4**

**14.Bac1**



White sets up an opposition of the rook on c1 and queen on c8, and prepares to seize the c-file.

**14...♝xc3**

This exchange reduces the pressure on the open file, but strengthens the pawn on d4 and White is now able to organise the standard break e2-e4.

**15.bxc3 ♜h5**

**16.e4 ♜b7**

So far the game Rahman-Kunte, Edinburgh 2003.

**17.♝g5!? dxе4**

**18.♛xe4 ♜xe4**

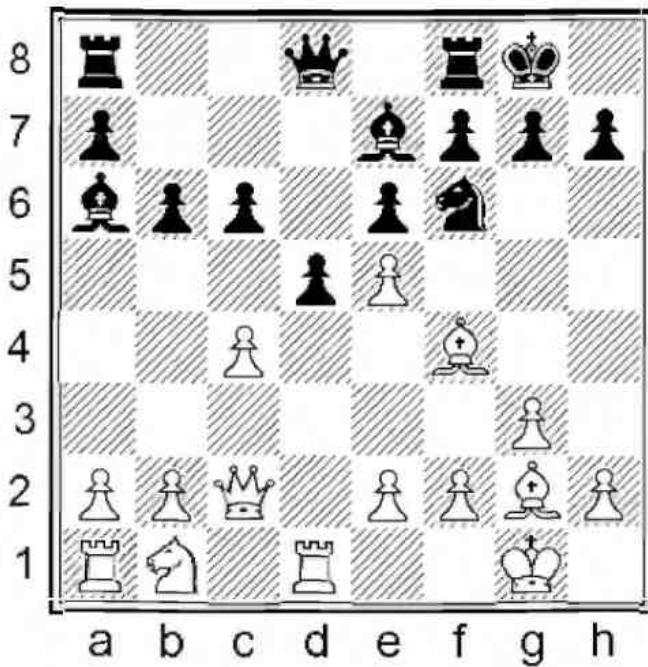
**19.♚xe4 f6**

**20.♝c6 ♜e8**

**21.♝e3±**

D22423) 11...♜xe5

**12.dxe5**



**12...Qd7**

After 12...Qh5 13.Qe3 f5 14.cxd5 cxd5 the knight on h5 is very badly placed. By the simplest means, White achieves a very comfortable position: 15.Qc3 Qe8 16.Qd4 Qc8 17.e3 g6 (Black tries to bring the knight back into play, but it has nothing to do on g7) 18.a4 Qc6 19.Qd1 Qb7 20.Qd1 Qg7 21.h4± Tkachiev-Tukmakov, Porec 1998. Yet another classic lesson from Tkachiev in how to play the white side of the Catalan! White completely controls the situation in the centre and has excellent prospects of play on both flanks.

**13.cxd5 cxd5**

**14.e4 d4**

The same typical reaction; after 14...Qc8 15.Qc3 d4 we would transpose into the favourable (for White) line examined above.

**15.Qxd4 Qc5**

**16.Qd1 g5**

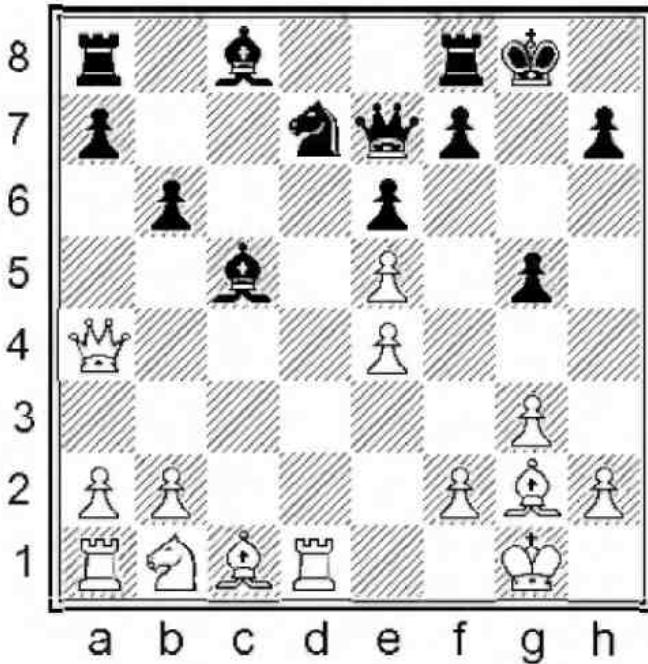
Certainly, this move enables Black to regain the pawn. But now his kingside will be weakened; the pawn on g5 is especially vulnerable.

**17.Qc1 Qe7**

**18.Qa4**

This double attack forces Black to move his bishop to the 8th rank and thus interfere with his rooks.

**18...Qc8**



**19.♘d2!**

Here the knight has more chances than on its usual square c3.

Also worth attention is the continuation 19.b4!? ♘xb4 20.♗xg5 ♗xg5 21.♗xb4 ♘xe5 22.♘d2 ♗h5 23.♗c3 ♗a6 24.♘f3 ♘xf3+ 25.♗xf3 and White is slightly better.

**19...♘xe5**

**20.♘b3 ♗d7**

**21.♗a6 ♜ad8**

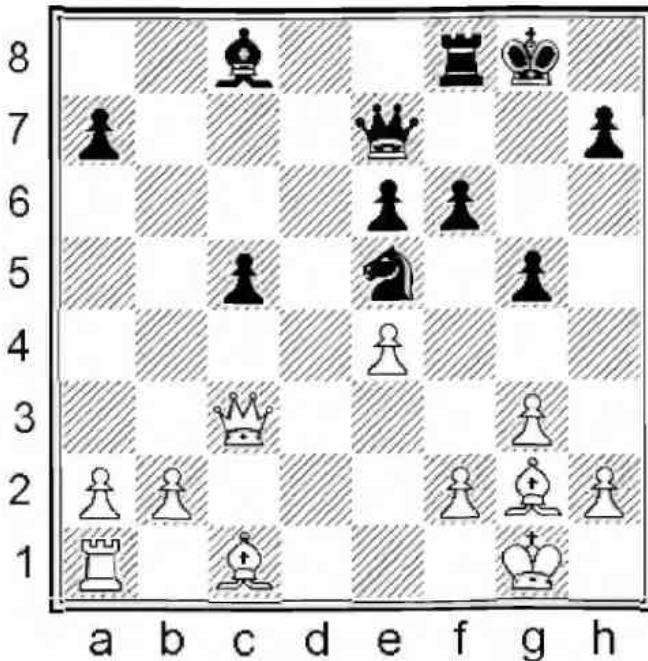
**22.♘xc5 ♗c8**

**23.♗e2 ♜xd1+**

**24.♗xd1 bxc5**

**25.♗d2 f6**

**26.♗c3**



White has two bishops and the better pawn structure. Black's next move is an oversight, after which his inferior position becomes a lost one.

**26...gxa6??**

**27.Qxg5+-**

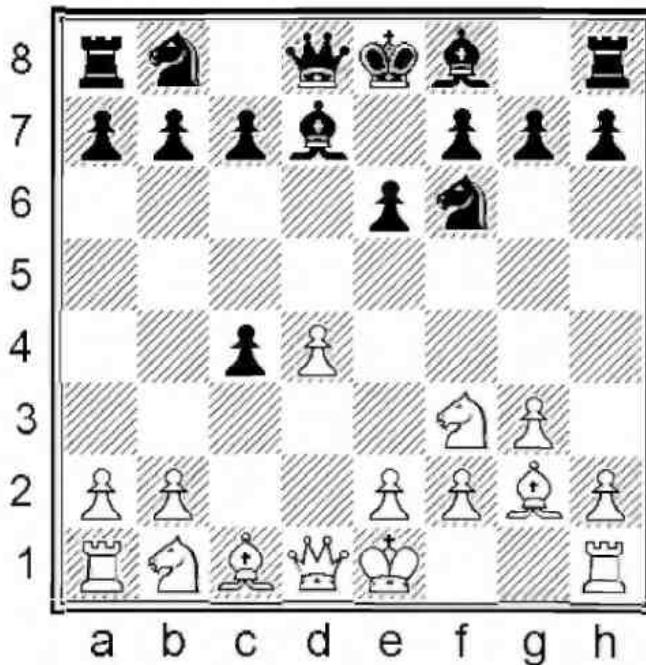
Tkachiev-Filippov, Fügen 2006.

### Conclusion

What can one say in conclusion? At one time, this variation was considered very solid for Black, but at present, it seems to me, White has found some simple and effective routes to an advantage. His idea is easy to understand: place the bishop on f4, and the knight on e5. It is very important to begin with 8.Qc2, immediately defending the pawn on c4 and not allowing Black to equalise the position after ...d5xc4. This is the one moment when move-order is very important. Then White carries out the aforementioned plan with the occupation of e5 with his knight. In some cases (for example, after the queen goes to c8), it favours White to exchange on d5, so as to seize the c-file. If Black exchanges the knight on e5, then White advances e2-e4, opening the d-file. Black has to sacrifice a pawn with ...d5-d4, but in order to regain it, he needs to play ...g7-g5, after which his kingside is appreciably weakened.

## Chapter 6 – Opposing the Catalan Bishop

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$



As we already know, Black's main problem, his 'problem child' if you like, in the Catalan, is his light-squared bishop. If Black manages to develop it normally, without making any serious positional concessions in the process, then he is usually doing fine. The idea of the text is to bring the bishop to the long diagonal as rapidly as possible, and to use it to oppose the mighty 'Catalan bishop' on g2. The concrete form of Black's plan depends to a considerable extent on White's next move, and the variations can differ: for example, ...c7-c5 and only then ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , or even ... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ . At the end of the 1980s, this continuation was regularly tested at the highest level, but in our day, it is considered inadequate to achieve a satisfactory game.

6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

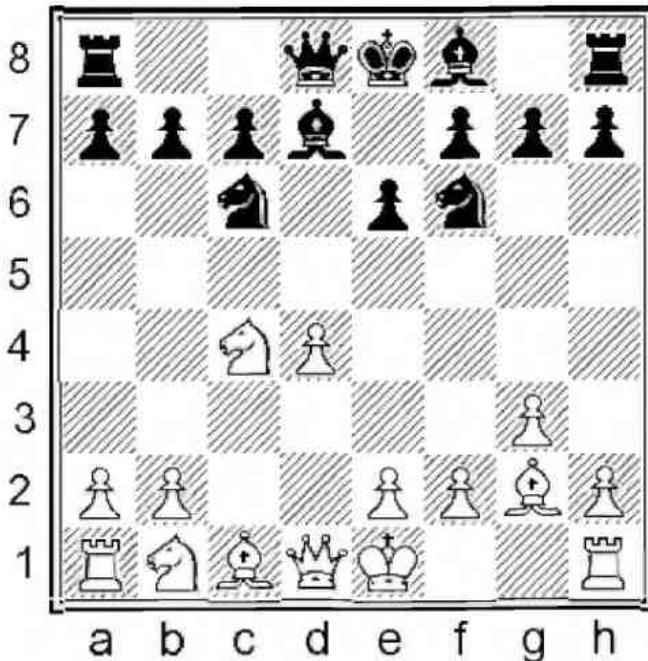
I think this is the strongest reply, and it is precisely because of this move that the variation with 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  has gone out of fashion. At first, White's searches for the advantage went in other directions, for example 6. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  or 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ , but then Black managed to achieve reasonable play.

A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

7. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

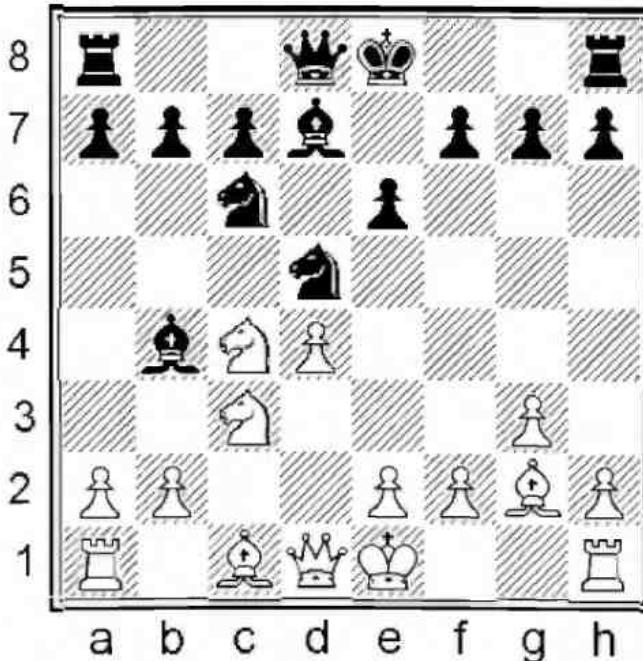


White regains the pawn, leaving the opponent with a passive bishop on d7. If he can quietly complete his development, then thanks to his superiority in the centre, and pressure on the long white diagonal, he will obtain a lasting Catalan advantage. But for the moment, Black is slightly ahead in development, and he should try to exploit this fact to change the character of the battle.

**7...Bb4+**

Unconvincing is 7...Qd5 8.0-0 Qb6 – Black uses two tempi to exchange off the white knight, which is hardly occupying the most threatening position. Possible then is 9.Qxb6 (Avrukh's recommendation is also good: 9.Qba3 Qe7 10.e3 0-0 11.Qd2, and it is hard for Black to free his game) 9...axb6 10.Qc3 Qd6 (BabikHusson, Stockerau 1991) 11.Qb5 0-0 12.a3±. It is very hard for Black to relieve the pressure on his queenside.

**8.Qc3 Qd5**



Exploiting his small advantage in development, Black immediately tries to create concrete play, and force his opponent onto the defensive.

**A1) 9.0-0**

**A2) 9.Qd3**

Also good is the straightforward 9.Qd2, since it is unfavourable for Black to take the central pawn: 9...Qxd4 10.Qxd5 exd5 11.Qxb4 Qc6 12.Qa5 Qxb4 13.a3±.

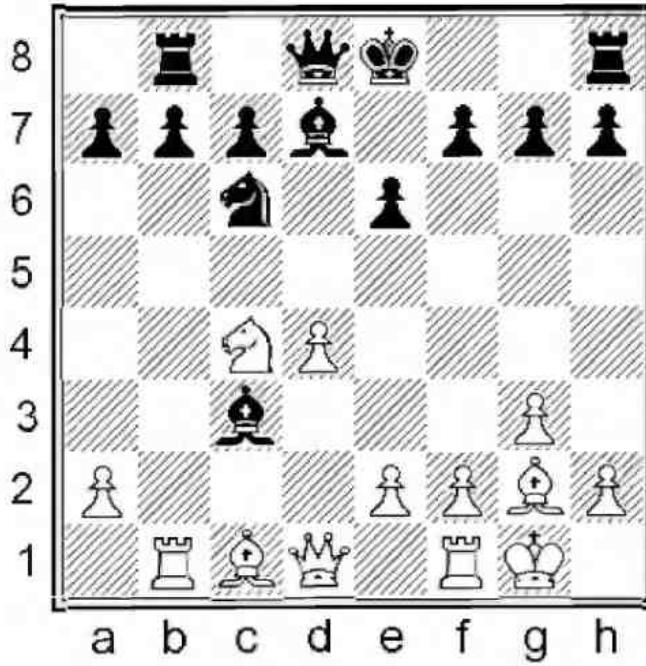
**A1)** An interesting pawn sacrifice, in the style of the famous Greco Attack, is:

**9.0-0!? Qxc3**

The combinational try 9...Qxc3 10.bxc3 Qxc3 11.Qd3 Qxd4 is refuted by means of 12.Qe1! Qdxe2+ (12...Qcb5 13.a4+) 13.Qxe2 Qxe2+ 14.Qxe2 0-0 15.Qa3±. White will then take the b7-pawn, and with material equality, he has a substantial positional advantage.

**10.bxc3 Qxc3**

**11.Qb1 Qb8**



Black certainly does not want to give up the b7-pawn.

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3!$ ?**  $\mathbb{Q}b4$

12...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13.  $\mathbb{R}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}b2!$ ±, and Black is tied hand and foot.

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$**

**14.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{R}b6$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$**

White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

**A2) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$**

**10.  $e3$**

Bad is 10.  $a3$ ?! because of 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11.  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  12.  $\mathbb{W}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}bc2+$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xal$   $\mathbb{Q}b3\infty$ , and Black's chances are, at the very least, not worse.

**10...  $\mathbb{W}g6$**

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

It seems that even stronger is 11.  $e4$   $h5$  12.  $h4$   $b5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ .

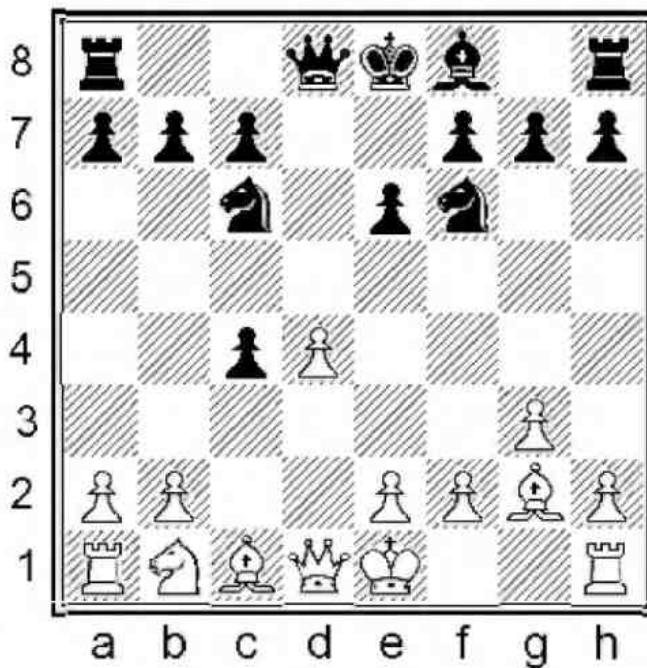
**11...  $\mathbb{W}h5$**

Razuvayev-Klovans, Bern 1993, and here 12.  $0-0$  0-0 13.  $f4$ !? assures White a stable advantage.

**B) 6...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

As the saying goes, ‘in for a penny, in for a pound!’. This is in fact Black’s main idea.

7.♕xc6 ♕xc6



**B1) 8.♘a4**

**B2) 8.0-0**

**B1) After**

8.♘a4 ♘d7

Black achieves satisfactory play, for example:

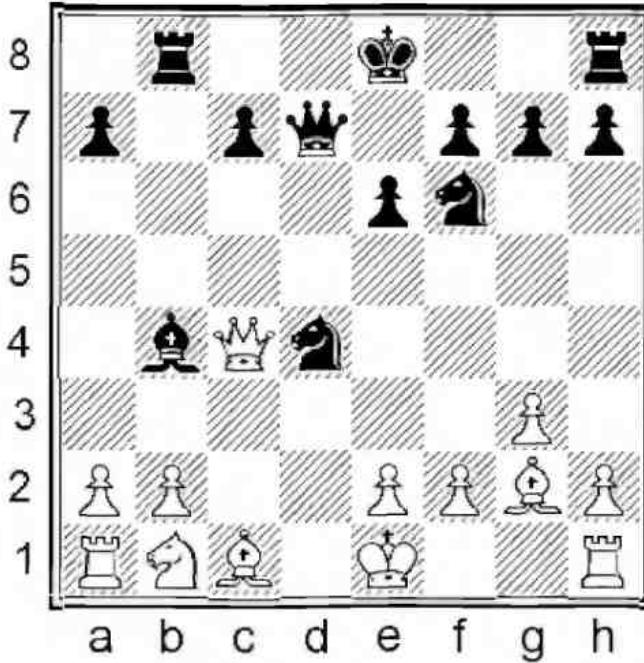
9.♘xc4

Black is also fine after 9.♕xc6 ♘xc6 10.♗xc6+ bxc6 11.0-0 0-0-0 12.♖e3 c5 13.dxc5 ♘g4 14.c6 ♘xe3 15.fxe3 ♖c5  $\overline{c}$  Hübner-Greenfeld, Biel 1986.

9...♘xd4

10.♗xb7 ♘b8

11.♗g2 ♘b4+



The same unpleasant check we have spoken of before. White cannot bring his knight to its best square on c3, because of the fork on c2, so he has to choose a not entirely natural move. As we will now see, Black's lead in development fully compensates for the defects in his pawn structure on the queenside. It is not easy for White to complete his development.

**12.Qd2 0-0**

**13.e3**

Castling is bad: 13.0-0? Qxd2 14.Qxd2 Bxb2.

**13...Qf5**

**14.Qe2**

Again, castling is not possible, whilst after 14.Qc6 Qd6 15.a3 there is the very strong 15...Qg4! 16.Qc2 (Wojtkiewicz-Timoshenko, Fredericksburg 1999; better is 16.axb4 Qe5 17.Qe4! Qxc6 18.Qxc6 Qxc6 19.Qd2 with roughly equal play) 16...Qxf2! 17.Qxf2 Qc5, and White's position quickly becomes very rickety, for instance: 18.Qe4 Qxe3 19.Qxh7+ Qh8 20.Qd3 Qc2+ 21.Qg2 Qxa1 with a decisive advantage to Black.

**14...Qfd8**

If he wishes, Black can force a repetition here with 14...Qxd2+ 15.Qxd2 Qb5 16.Qe2 Qb4+ 17.Qd2 Qb5 etc.

**15.0-0!**

Thanks to this tactical trick, White emerges unscathed.

**15...Qxd2**

**16.Qd1 Qd3**

**17.Qxd2 Qxd2**

**18.♗xd2 ♕xb2**

Thus far Akopian-Palac, Belgrade 1988.

**19.♗c3! ♘bb8**

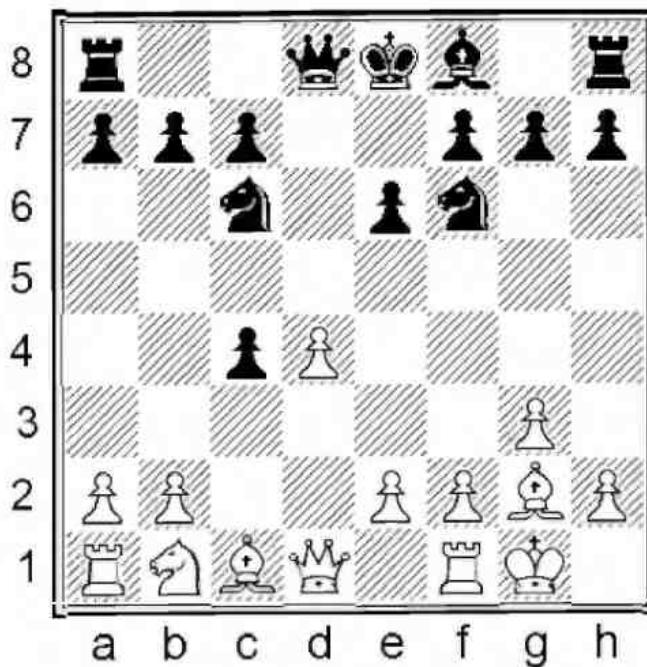
**20.e4 ♖e7**

**21.♗xd8+ ♘xd8**

**22.♘c1**

With his two bishops in an open position, White has fully adequate compensation for the sacrificed pawn; now it is Black who should be careful not to end up worse.

**B2) 8.0-0**



The best continuation – now White does not have to worry the whole time about the unpleasant check on b4.

In this position, Black has tried several possibilities:

**B21) 8...♝xd4**

**B22) 8...♝e7**

**B23) 8...♝d5**

**B24) 8...♛d7**

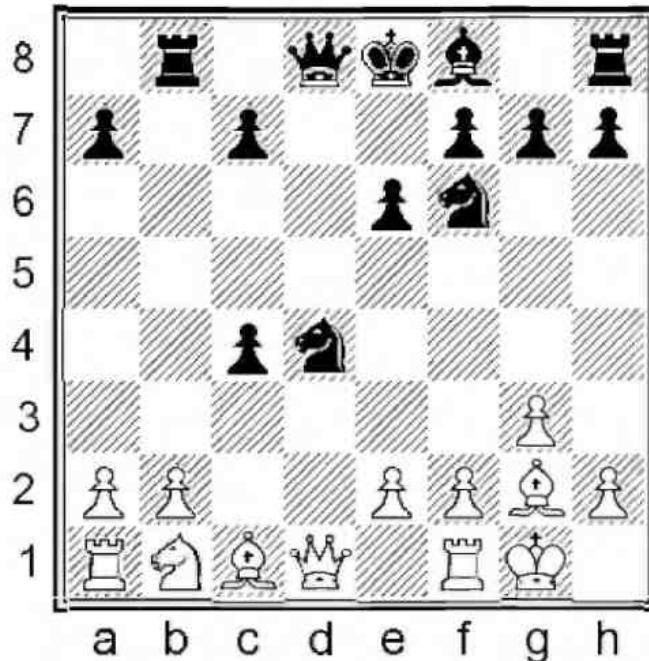
**B21) Bad is**

**8...♝xd4?!**

because of

**9.♗xb7 ♕b8**

**10.♗g2**



And Black's position looks very suspicious. Play might continue:

**10...♝d7**

10...♝c5 11.♗d2 (11.e3!?) 11...c3 (after 11...0-0 12.♗xc4 White has long-term pressure, thanks to the bishop pair and better pawn structure) 12.bxc3 ♐b5 13.♗c2±. In the game Gulko-Kortchnoi, Amsterdam 1989, Black faced serious problems.

**11.e3 ♐f5**

11...♝b5 12.♗a4 – White will regain the pawn with the advantage.

**12.♗c2 ♐b5**

**13.♗d2 ♐d6**

**14.b3 exb3?**

This was the game Tratar-Plesec, Slovenia 1994. Here, White could have achieved a decisive advantage with 15.♗c6+ ♐d8 16.axb3.

More stubborn is 14...♝e7, although here too, White is clearly better: 15.bxc4 ♐a6 16.c5 ♐f5 17.♗b3 0-0 18.♗d1±.

**B22) After**

**8...♝e7**

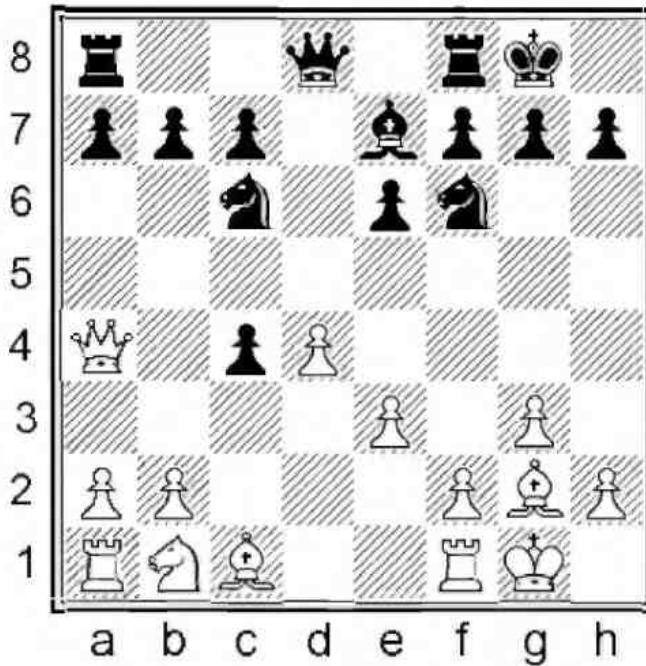
White does best to start with ♐a4, and then delay castling further, in favour of e2-e3.

## 9. $\mathbb{W}a4$ 0-0

Black tries to exploit the fact that the pawn on d4 is undefended.

Insufficient for equality is 9...  $\mathbb{W}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{E}d1$  0-0 (10...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$ ; White will regain the pawn, achieving a lasting advantage in the ending) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. e3 with the two bishops for White.

## 10. e3



## 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

The only possibility to defend the pawn on c4.

We should also look at Avrukh's suggestion 10... e5!?. Here the main thing is not to lose our nerve, and simply to defend the pawn with the rook: 11.  $\mathbb{E}d1!$  exd4 (on 11...  $\mathbb{W}c8$  White simply continues 12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  exd4 13. exd4±) 12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. exd4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14.  $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  18.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$  with a healthy extra pawn for White) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ .

10... a6 11.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  12. b3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  c5 16.  $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  with dominance in the centre; Black has a very unpleasant position.

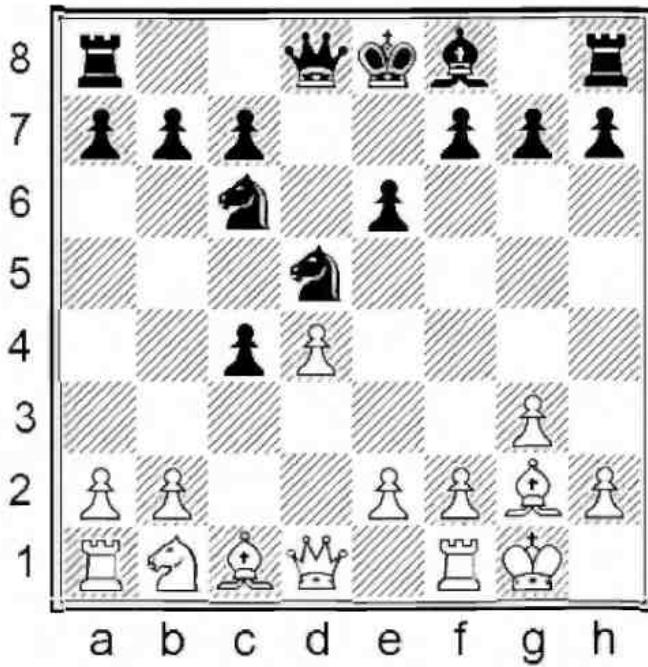
## 11. a3 $\mathbb{Q}bd5$

On 11...  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  White has the nice tactical riposte 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ , and Black cannot take on b2, because after 13.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  he loses a knight.

## 12. $\mathbb{W}xc4\pm$

On the board we have a typical Catalan position, in which White has the two bishops, control of the centre and a lasting initiative.

B23) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$



A perfectly feasible continuation, although it has barely been seen in practice.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$  b5

10.a4

A typical reaction from White: he attacks the pawns on b5 and c4, and prepares to open the a-file at his convenience.

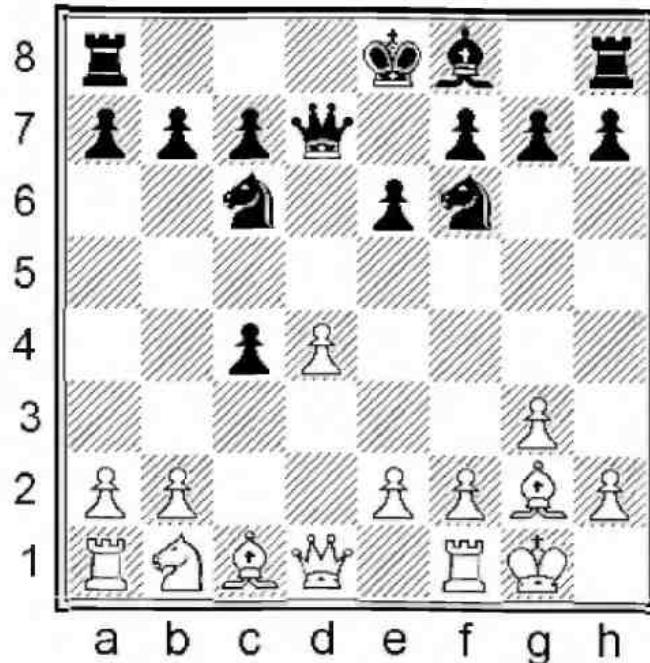
10...a6

11.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

12.d5

Obviously, Black is behind in development, so this is the ideal moment to open the centre. Here we will stop – White has a strong initiative for the pawn. Note that White did right to include the moves a2-a4, a7-a6, so that the enemy rook on a8 is partially ‘hanging’; without this, White cannot play d4-d5.

B24) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$



### 9.e3

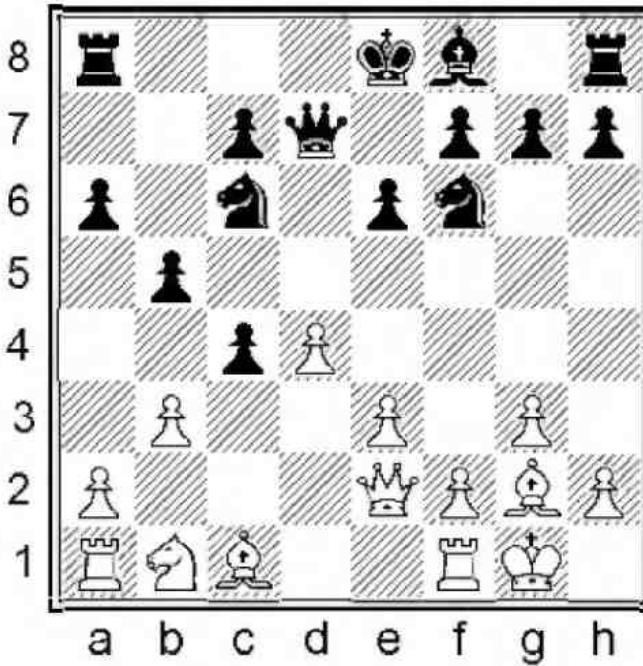
A position with chances for both sides arises after 9.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. e3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  (13.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{W}a4$  15. e4 e5  $\Rightarrow$  M. Umansky-Safyanovsky, Germany 2008) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}b5!$  15. b3 0-0 16.  $bxc4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$   $\Rightarrow$  Jussupow-Karpov, Belfort 1988.

### 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$

A) In reply to 9...e5 White obtains the advantage by means of 10.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}xd1$  (12...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 14.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}d3$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $cxd3$  16.  $b3\pm$ ) 13.  $\mathbb{B}xd1$ . In an open position, the advantage of the two bishops should tell, for example: 13...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (13...  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14. f4 (14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2?$ ) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}ed7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  – taking the square g4 from the enemy knight and threatening the manoeuvre e4-e5 – 15...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , and White wins a pawn) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{B}xb2$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{B}c2$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $cxd6$  19.  $\mathbb{B}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20.  $\mathbb{B}a6$  and White's position is technically winning) 14. f4!  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{B}xd2$  16.  $\mathbb{B}xd2$  0-0 17.  $\mathbb{B}c2$  c5 18.  $\mathbb{B}b1\pm$ ;

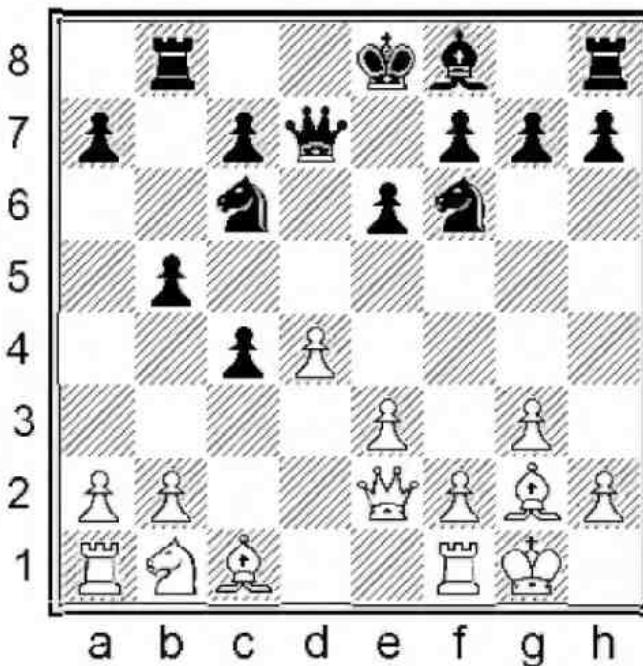
B) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  10.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (10...  $b5$  11. a4!, and White regains the pawn with interest) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (Slipak-Adla, Buenos Aires 1990) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (the pawn on c4 is not going anywhere; for the time being, White should prevent ...c7-c5) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.  $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}d2-c4$ ;

C) 9... a6 10. a4 (the standard Catalan pawn sacrifice is also worth considering: 10.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5 11. b3!?).



It looks as though it may be even more favourable here than in the main line 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 11.b3) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  c6 (Cvitan-Dizdarevic, Mendrisio 1989) 16.a5±.

**10. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5**



**11.b3!**

By forcing the opponent to exchange on b3, White opens the a- and c-files, after which the black queenside starts to feel the draught.

**11...cxb3**

11... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ?! is no help, because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b4 13.bxc4, and White's advantage is indisputable.

12.axb3

B241) 12... $\mathbb{E}b6$

B242) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

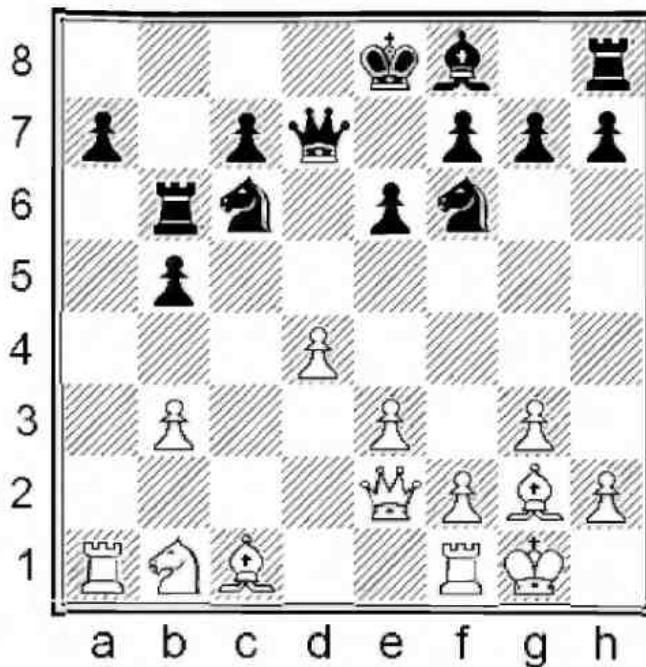
12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  a5

Moutousis-Rozentalis, Athens 2007. 15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{E}b6$  16. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{E}fb8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ .

B241) 12... $\mathbb{E}b6$



Preventing the move  $\mathbb{E}a6$ .

13. $\mathbb{E}d1$

This is good, in the sense that now Black must reckon with the central breakthroughs d4-d5 and e3-e4.

Also good is 13. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  a6 and only now 14. $\mathbb{E}d1$ , for example: 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (also interesting is 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ! with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 16... $\mathbb{E}d8$  17.e4 (the white knight is heading to e3, to support the pawn offensive in the centre) 17... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (18... $c6$  19.f4  $\mathbb{E}bb8$  20.f5 with compensation Wojtkiewicz-Hawelko, Leba 1989), and now all is ready for 19.d5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  (Davies-Motwani, London 1989; 19... $exd5$  20.e5) 20. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ .

13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

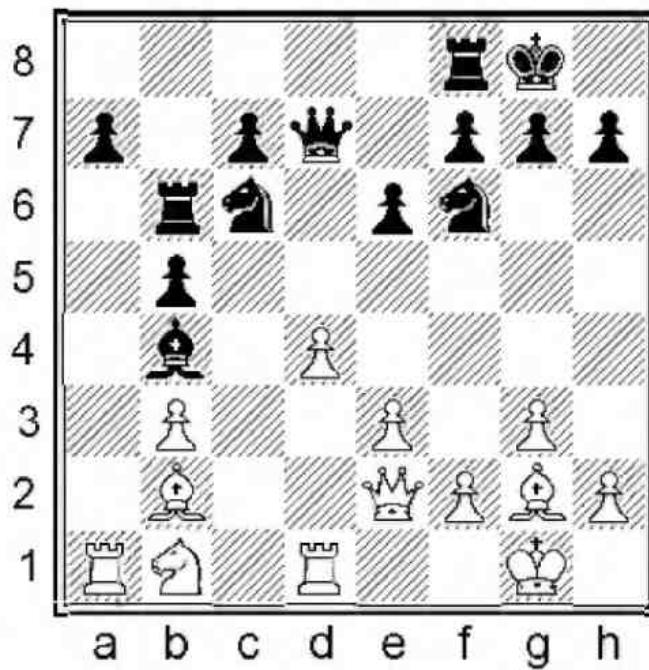
Or 13...a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  16.e4 0-0 17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ . White does not rush, and just strengthens the pressure in the centre. It is always hard to defend such positions: 17... $\mathbb{W}e8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  20. $\mathbb{E}xa2$  c5 21.d5± Petursson-

Sofia Polgar, Aarhus 1993.

**14.♗b2 0-0**

Or 14...a6 15.d5 exd5 16.♘xf6 gxf6 17.♗xd5 ♖e6 18.♗a3 0-0 19.♗c2.

Black currently has an extra pawn, but his king is very weak, his pawns are doubled and his rook is misplaced. White therefore has a clear advantage.



**15.d5!**

A standard idea, with which Black must always reckon; here this breakthrough proves very effective.

**15...exd5**

15...♗xd5? 16.e4, and Black loses a piece.

**16.♘xf6 gxf6**

**17.♗xd5 ♖e6**

**18.♗h5**

Creating the unpleasant threat ♗h3-f5.

**18...f5**

**19.♗xf5 ♘e7**

**20.♗g4+ ♘g6**

**21.♗d5±**

Gleizerov-Cs. Horvath, Budapest 1989. White has regained the pawn, retaining a very strong initiative.

**B242) 12...♝b4**

Black completes his development, at the same time taking the c3-square from the knight.

**13.♜a6 ♞d5**

The only reply. On 13...♝b6 there follows simply 14.♜xb6 cxb6 15.♛xb5 – White has regained the pawn, retaining a positional advantage.

**14.♝b2**

White brings his bishop to the long diagonal and frees the c1-square for his other rook.

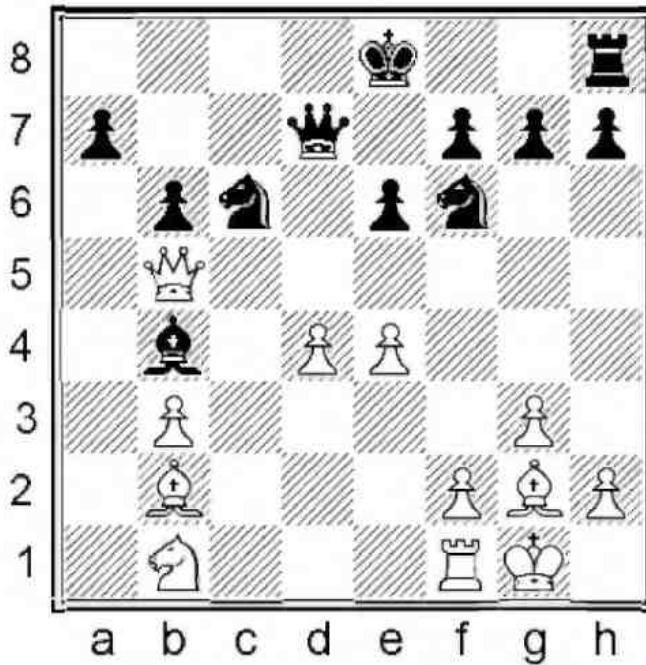
**14...♝b6**

**15.♜xb6 cxb6**

**16.e4 ♞f6**

**17.♛xb5±**

Hofland-Westerman, corr. 1991. White has achieved what he wanted: the bishop pair and a strong pawn centre.

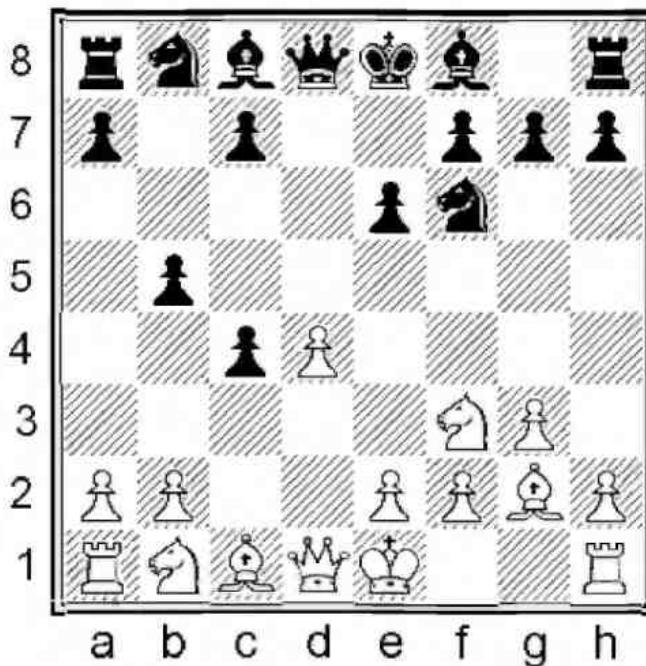


### Conclusion

On 5...♞d7 with the idea ...♝c6 White should reply 6.♞e5, and temporarily sacrificing the c4-pawn should not worry him. After 6...♝c6 7.♞xc6 ♞xc6 it is best simply to castle – 8.0-0. It is important to remember the idea b2-b3 – the temporary pawn sacrifice becomes permanent, but White opens lines for his rooks and creates strong pressure on the queenside. Black tries to bail out by returning the extra pawn, but this does not usually suffice for equality.

## Chapter 7 – Playing for the Pawn

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  b5



I was recently shown this line by one of my friends, aiming to demonstrate that Black can defend the Catalan not merely to draw, but to play for a win. However, we each scored 0/2 with it (I will show one of my games below). I have not played the variation as Black again, because I have come to the conclusion that White has very good positional compensation for the pawn and can count on a strong initiative.

**6.a4**

A very strong move.

**6...c6**

**A) 7.0-0**

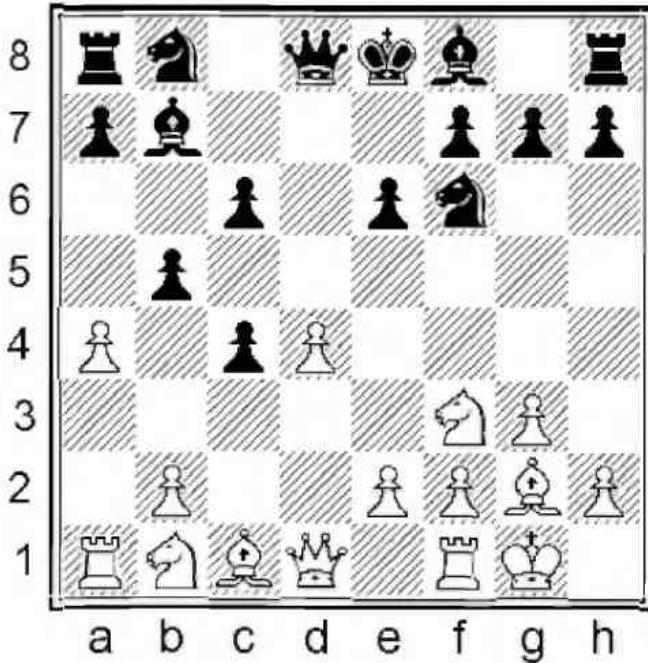
**B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

In his book, Borya Avrukh only considers 7.axb5, which in itself is very interesting and strong, but it seems to me that White should not rush to clarify the situation on the queenside (7...cx $b$ 5 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  etc.). If you prefer this position for White, I recommend Avrukh's books.

**A) 7.0-0**

is not very convincing, because of

7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$



### 8.b3

By opening lines, White tries to create pressure on the queenside, but his compensation for the sacrificed pawn will at best be sufficient only for equality.

The moves 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  can also be interpolated, and only now 9.b3 (nothing results from 9. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ) 9... $\mathbb{W}xb3$  10. $\mathbb{W}xb3$  b4 11.a5 (otherwise Black himself plays ...a7-a5, and the pawn b4 is transformed from a potential weakness into a great strength) 11... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  14.dxc5 (Krogius-Furman, USSR 1967) 14... $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$  and White has some work to do to regain the pawn, and must still fight for equality.

### 8... $\mathbb{W}xb3$

### 9. $\mathbb{W}xb3$ b4

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

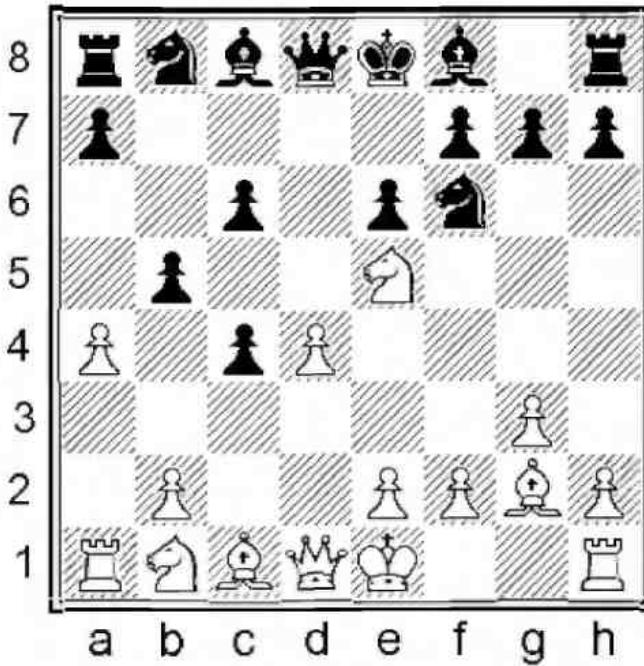
10.a5 c5 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  14. $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  0-0# Flumbort-Iordachescu, Baile Herculane 2010.

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

We have transposed into the game Krogius-Furman seen above.

Practice has also seen 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (or 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  a5 17. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6\#$ ) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14.e4 0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with mutual chances, Powell-Kurajica, Krsko 1998.

### B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



7...Qd5

In order to meet the threat of Qxc6 and a4xb5, Black must close the long diagonal.

It hardly makes sense to flick in the check 7...Qb4+, because from a positional viewpoint, the exchange of dark-squared bishops favours White: 8.Qd2 Qxd2+ 9.Qxd2 Qd5 (this move cannot be avoided) 10.axb5 cxb5 11.Qc3 f6, Randlov-Poulsen, Helsingør 2011. Here White has at his disposal the very interesting piece sacrifice 12.Qxb5! fxe5 (more cautious is 12...Qa6, but then White achieves a stable advantage after 13.Qc6! Qxc6 14.Qxa6±) 13.dxe5 0-0 14.Qd6 (Black has not managed to complete his development and ensure the cooperation of his pieces; now he has to survive with only moves) 14...Qh8 15.Qxd5 c3! (so as to create a basis for counterplay) 16.bxc3 exd5 17.Qxd5 Qc7 18.0-0 (White has to spend a tempo evacuating his king, and Black manages to save his rook) 18...Qc6 19.Qfd1±. We have rough material equality, but White's chances are preferable: he can start advancing his central pawns, under cover of the powerful knight on d6.

## 8.0-0

Premature is 8.b3 because of 8...Qb4+ 9.Qf1 0-0, and Black is OK.

8...Qb7

After 8...a6 (Black wants to hang on to his extra pawn, but this is not so easy) 9.e4 White has a very strong initiative, for instance:

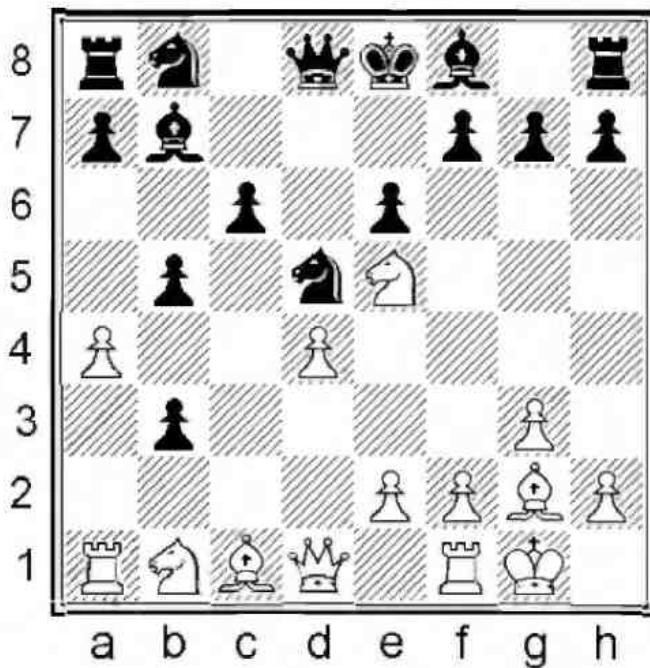
A) 9...Qf6 10.d5! Qc7 (10...cxd5 11.exd5 exd5 12.axb5±, and then White takes the c4-pawn, Zaichik-I. Ivanov, Beltsy 1979) 11.Qf4 Qd6 12.axb5 Qxe5 13.b6! (a pretty and strong intermediate move) 13...Qd6 14.Qxe5 Qxe5 15.Qa3 Qh5 16.Qxh5 Qxh5 17.Qxc4 Qd7 (of course, Black cannot take twice on d5, because he would lose the rook on a8) 18.Qfc1 a5 19.Qxa5+- White will regain the sacrificed material, with a decisive advantage;

B) 9...Qb4 10.Qc3 (White completes his development and sets up a threat to take on b5) 10...Qd7 11.axb5 Qxe5 12.dxe5 Qb7 (12...cxb5 13.Qxb5±) 13.Qxd8+ (13.bxa6 Qxa6 14.Qe3 (Antic-Ninov, Sunny Beach 2009) 14...Qe7 15.Qxd8+ Qxd8 16.Qxa6 Qxa6 17.Qa1 Qc7) 13...Qxd8 14.bxa6 Qxa6 15.Qd1 Qe7 16.Qxd8+ Qxd8 17.Qf1 (taking aim at the pawn on c4, which Black will sooner or later lose) 17...Qd7 18.Qb1±.

## 9.b3!

A typical device, which we have seen before. White opens lines on the queenside, so as to attack the weakened enemy pawns. At the same time, the noticeably backward pawn on c6 will make it hard for Black to complete his development.

### 9...cxb3



Here White has a choice: to take on b3 at once, or first to exchange on b5.

#### B1) 10.axb5

#### B2) 10.♗xb3

#### B1) 10.axb5 cxb5

#### 11.♗xb3

#### B11) 11...a6

#### B12) 11...♘c6

Bad is 11...b4 because of 12.♘c3! – the knight bravely puts itself under a double attack, but it cannot be taken by either attacker. Possible then is 12...f6 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♕a4+ (an important check, disrupting the coordination of the black pieces) 14...♔d7 15.e4 ♔b7 16.♘d3 a5 17.♘f4±. White has found the weak spot in his opponent's position – the square e6, and the knight is inevitably heading there (for example, after the preliminary ♘h3 or d4-d5).

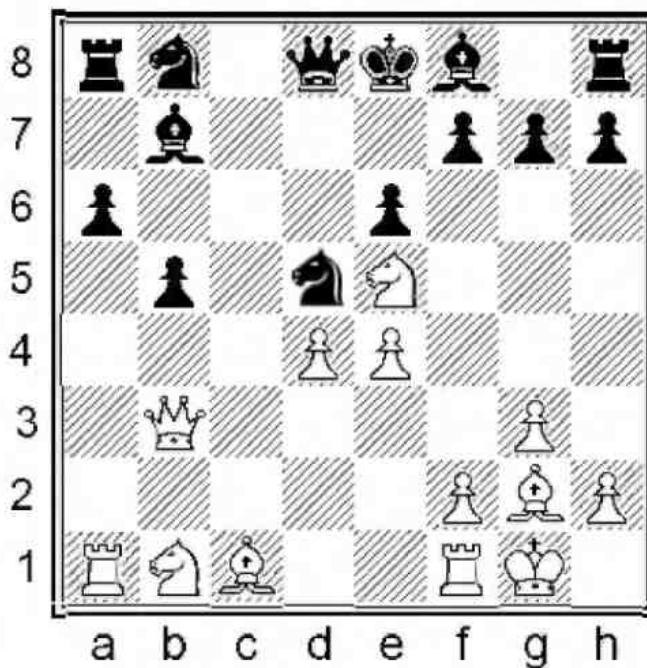
There is also no equality after 11...♗b6 12.e4 ♘f6 13.♗e3 (setting up an x-ray against the queen on b6) 13...♗bd7 14.♗c1 ♗c8 15.♗xc8+ ♗xc8 16.♗d2 (White is momentarily a pawn down, but he has strong pressure in the centre and on the queenside, whilst Black must also worry about his king) 16...♔b7 17.♗c3! (a clever move, the idea of which will become clear in a little while) 17...a6 18.♗xd7 ♘xd7 19.d5!± This is the point: with the queen on c3, Black cannot play ♘c5 because of the loss of the g7-pawn, and so White's initiative will become very serious.

### B11) 11...a6

Here the reply

#### 12.e4

is very strong:



#### B111) 12...♝f6

#### B112) 12...♝b4

B111) On

#### 12...♝f6

there follows the central break:

#### 13.d5

##### B1111) 13...♛b6

##### B1112) 13...♝c5

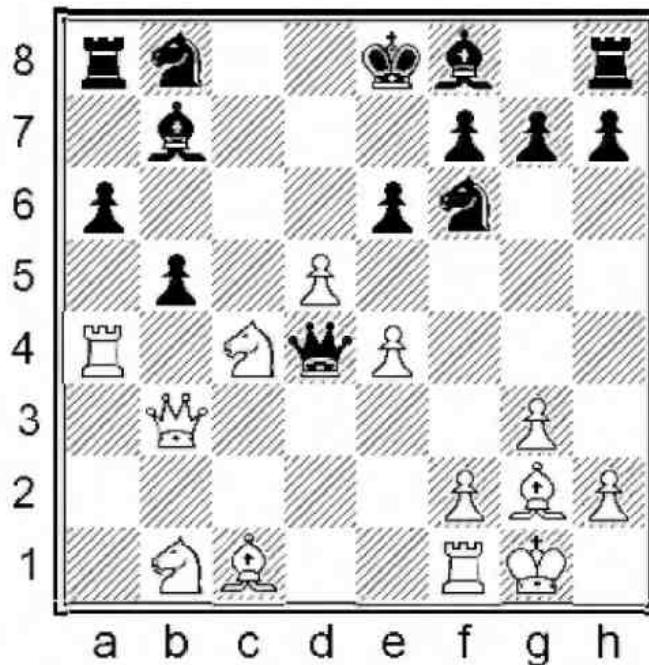
Black loses quickly after 13...♜d6 14.♝c4! 0-0 15.♝xd6 or 13...♝bd7 14.♝xf7! ♜c5 15.♝xd8 ♜xb3 16.♝xb7 ♜xa1 17.\_dx6.

Also unconvincing is 13...exd5 14.exd5, for example: 14...♜xd5 (14...♜d6 15.♝c6 ♛b6 16.♝e1+ ♜f8 17.♝a3+– Nesis-Zelinsky, corr. 1975) 15.♛e3! ♜e7 16.♝d1+–.

##### B1111) 13...♛b6

#### 14.♝c4! ♛c7

If 14... $\mathbb{W}d4$ , then 15. $\mathbb{E}a4!!$ . The position deserves a diagram:



White attacks two enemy pieces, king and queen, at once.

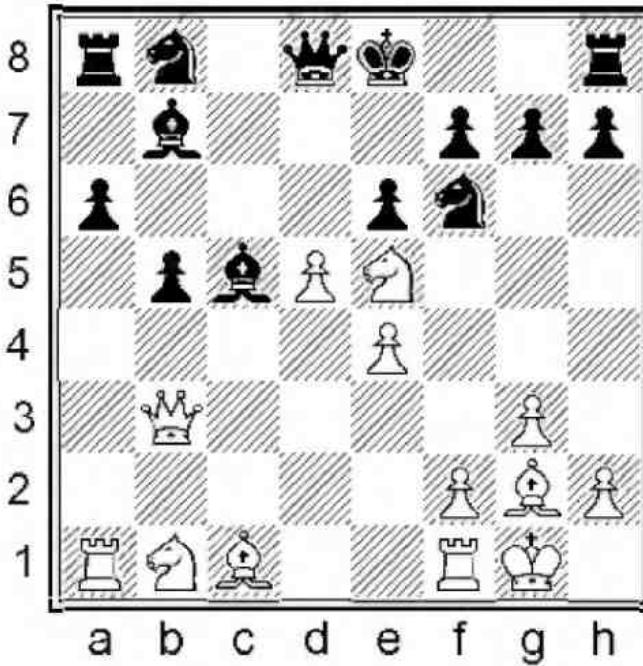
15... $\mathbb{W}a7$  (15... $\mathbb{W}c5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a5+-$ ; 15... $bxa4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xa4+$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd4+-$ ) 16. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+-$ .

**15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$  e5**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$**

Agzamov-Foisor, Sochi 1985.

**B1112) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**



**14.dxe6 fxe6**

**15.♕xe6+**

White forces transposition into an ending in which he will have the advantage, because he has a lead in development and dominance in the centre.

**15...♚e7**

**16.♕xe7+ ♔xe7**

Nothing significant changes after 16...♔xe7 17.♗c3 0-0 18.♗d5±.

**17.♗d3 ♗d4**

**18.♗a2 ♗f7**

**19.♗d2 ♗bd7**

**20.♗f3 ♗c3**

Naturally, both sides have various possibilities at each move. This variation is only an illustration of which plan White should follow.

**21.e5 ♗xf3**

**22.♗xf3 ♗xe5**

**23.♗xe5+ ♗xe5**

**24.♗xa8 ♕xa8**

**25.♗d2±**

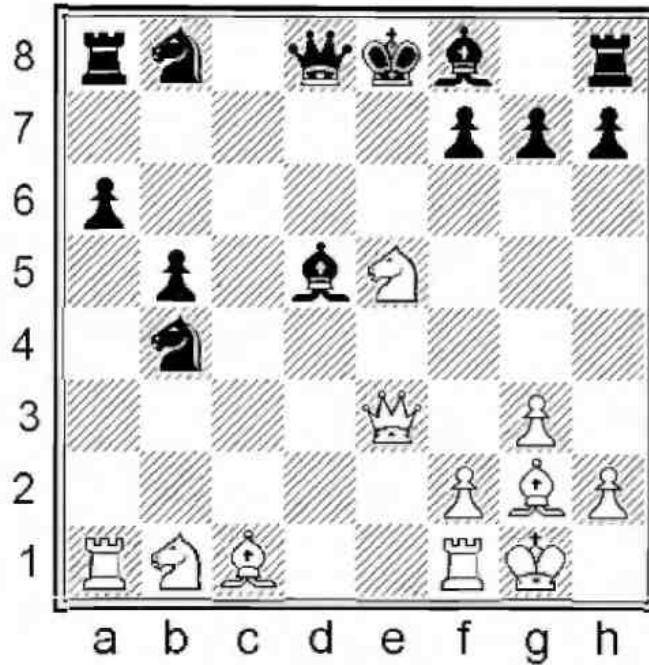
White has the exchange for a pawn, and the enemy passed pawns are not going anywhere.

**B112) 12...♝b4**

**13.d5 exd5**

**14.exd5 ♜xd5**

**15.♕e3**



Interesting complications now start. Black has two extra pawns, but his king is weak and his development a disaster.

**15...♝c2**

**15...♛e7 16.♜xd5 ♜xd5 17.♚e4!**, and Black suffers material losses: **17...♛e6 18.♞c3 ♜xc3 19.♜xa8 ♜e2+ 20.♚h1 ♜d6 21.♜e1 0-0 22.♜xe2 f6 23.♜b2.**

**16.♛e2 ♜d4**

**17.♛h5!**

The position is opening up, and Black has not completed his development, as a result of which he will come under a strong attack; White's threats, such as **♜e1** or **♞d1**, are simple but very strong.

**17...♜a7**

**18.♞e1**

Worse is **18.♜xd5 ♛xd5**.

**18...♝e6**

19.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6

20.  $\mathbb{W}d1$

Move by move, White increases the pressure. I think material losses for Black are already unavoidable.

20...  $\mathbb{Q}b3$

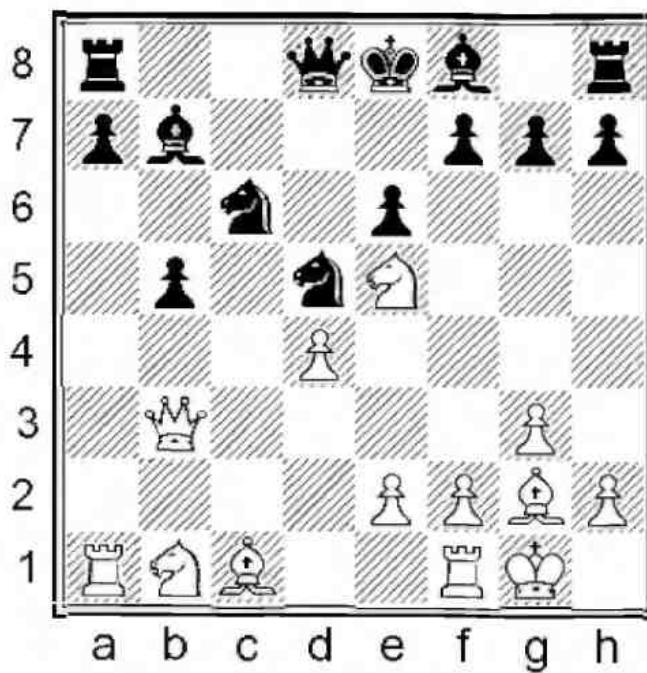
21.  $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{R}c7$

23.  $\mathbb{R}ad1+$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$

24.  $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$

B12) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$



12.  $\mathbb{W}xb5$

Lovers of sharp play might prefer 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13. e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. d5!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. dxе6 fxе6 16. e5 a5!!??.

12...  $\mathbb{W}b6$

Here I and my colleagues spent a long time exploring the ending arising after

13.  $\mathbb{W}xb6$

13.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  axb6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , and Black is only slightly worse.

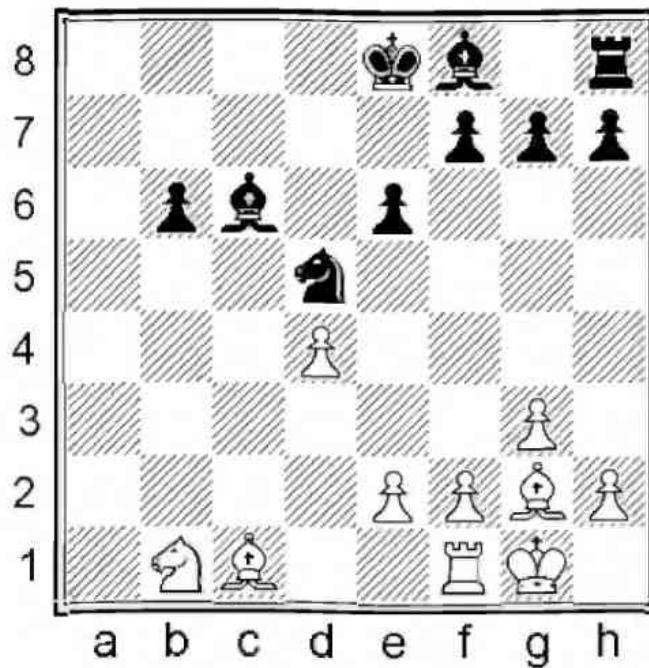
13... axb6

**14.  $\mathbb{B}xa8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**

15.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5.

**15...  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**



And we came to the conclusion that White retains a definite initiative:

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f5**

Allowing e2-e4 is not very desirable, for instance: 16...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17.  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. e4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ .

**17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

17...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18.  $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19.  $\mathbb{B}a7+$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20. d5! exd5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$ . White has the two bishops and pawn b6 is weak.

**18.  $\mathbb{B}b1$**

We also analysed the following line: 18.  $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 20.  $\mathbb{B}b1$  b5 21.  $\mathbb{B}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  22.  $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23.  $\mathbb{B}a6$ . Black's position is quite unpleasant, although we did not find a decisive continuation: 23...  $\mathbb{B}c8$  24.  $\mathbb{B}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{B}e6$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  29.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  g5 30. e3 g4 – Black should hold this opposite-coloured bishop ending.

**18...  $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

**19.  $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{B}f8$**

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22. e3  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  with approximate equality.

20... $\mathbb{E}f7$

21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $exd5$

23. $\mathbb{E}a8$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

24. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

25. $\mathbb{E}b8$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

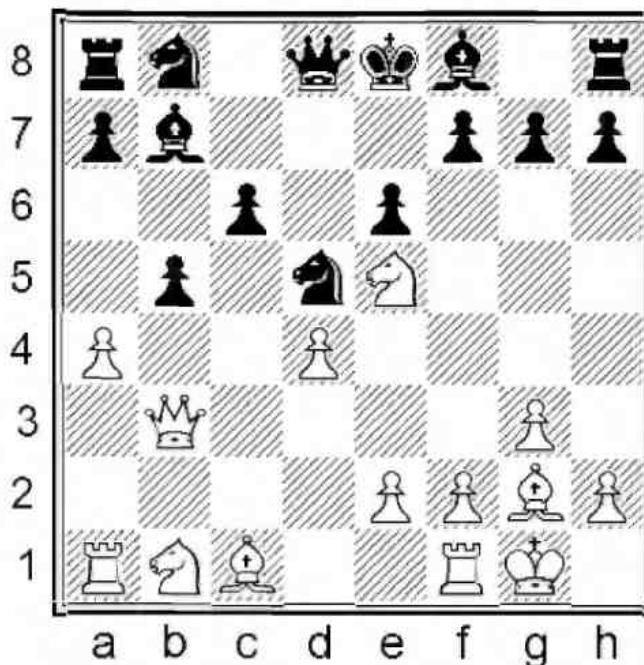
26. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$

27. $\mathbb{E}a8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

28. $dxe5\pm$

Black's pieces are passive and his pawns weak. Defending such a position is not easy, although it is probably possible.

B2) 10. $\mathbb{W}xb3$



B21) 10...a6

B22) 10...b4

B21) 10...a6

11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

White continues to bring his pieces out and at the same time poses his opponent an unpleasant question: what does he propose to do further? It is clear that Black does not want to exchange off the knight on d5, which cements his position

together, but now White can always exchange on d5 himself, and then either take on b5 or play e2-e4.

**11...♝d7**

**12.axb5!?**

12.♝xd5 exd5 (12...♝xe5 13.♝c3 ♘d7 14.♝f4 b4 15.a5±) 13.e4 ♘xe5 14.exd5! (a very strong *zwischenzug*) 14...cxsd5 15.dxe5± Alburt-Taylor, Reykjavik 1984. White is somewhat better, but Black can probably defend this position.

**12...axb5**

Black must take with this pawn, but then his light-squared bishop remains shut out of play.

**13.♞xa8 ♘xa8**

**14.♝xd5 ♘xe5**

A necessary exchange, as things are quite bad for Black after 14...exd5 15.e4 ♘xe5 16.exd5! ♘g6 17.dxc6 ♘d6 18.♝e1+ ♘e7 19.♛xb5 0-0 20.d5±, and the two white pawns are clearly stronger than the bishop, which is shut in the corner.

**15.♝c3!**

A lovely second pawn sacrifice, which, in fact, cannot be accepted.

**15...♝g6**

15...♛xd4? 16.♝xb5±.

**16.♝b2 ♘d6**

**17.♝a1 0-0**

**18.♝xb5**

White regains the pawn, retaining all the advantages of his position.

**18...♛b6**

**19.♛d3 ♛xb5**

**20.♛xb5 cxb5**

**21.♝xa8±**

White has the two bishops and a compact pawn structure, which allows him to control the centre. Meanwhile, Black's knight on g6 is not very well posted, and the pawn on b5 is a potential weakness.

**B22) 10...b4**



**11.a5!**

This move was an unpleasant surprise for me. However, it is an important advance – if Black himself manages to play ...a7-a5, he will have a perfectly acceptable position. I would also point out that the pawn on a5 takes the key square b6 from Black's pieces, whilst now the threat a5-a6 hangs permanently over Black's position. Finally, in many variations, White has the possibility of giving check with the queen from a4.

**11...g6**

**12.Bd1**

12.Bd2 Ba6 13.Be1 0-0 14.e4 Bf6 15.Bxb4 Bxd4 16.Bxe7 Bxa1 17.Bxf8 Bxe5= Er. Rodriguez-Rensch, Internet 2010.

**12...0-0**

**13.Bb2 Ba6**

I will be honest – I had been hoping to obtain a quite different position, more favourable for Black!

**14.e4 Bf6**

**15.Bd2 Bc7**

**16.Bdc4 Bad8**

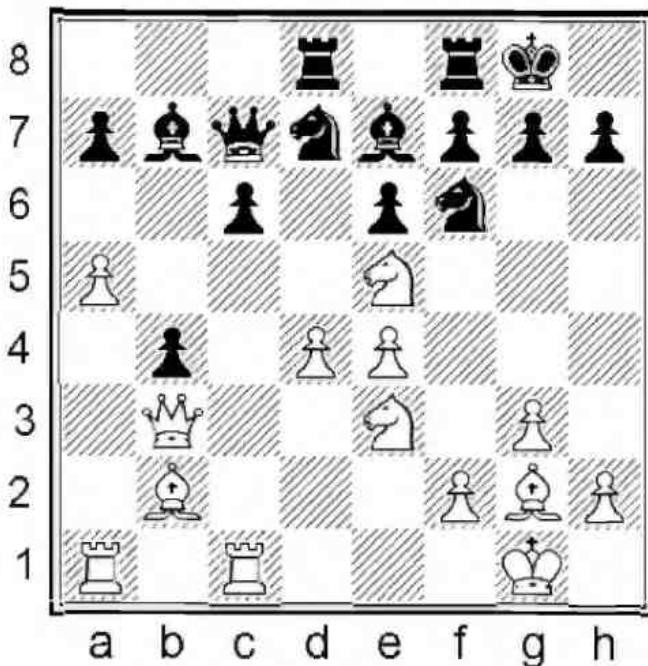
**17.Be3 Bb8**

The knight does nothing on a6; I decided to try exchanging a pair of knights.

**18.Bdc1 Bbd7**

Buhmann-Bologan, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

We have reached the critical position in the game.



Here White could simply have avoided the exchange of knights:

**19.♘d3**

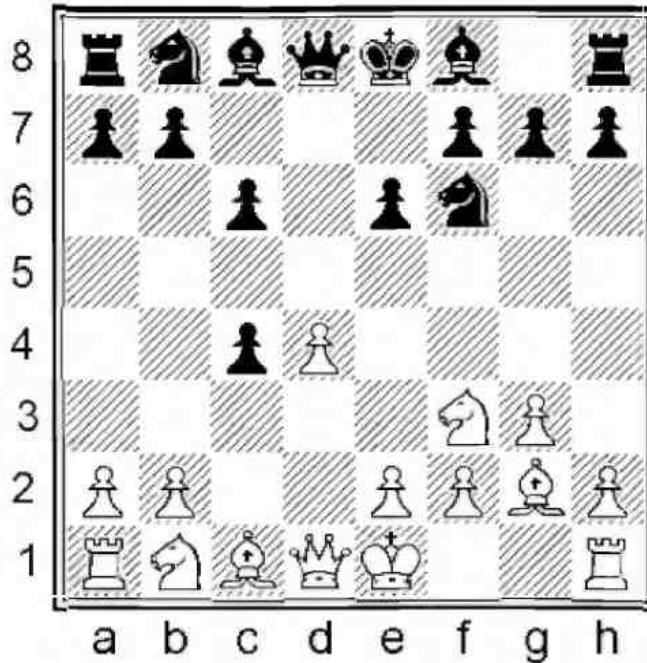
I had planned to play 19...c5, but after 20.d5 exd5 21.♘f5 ♕fe8 22.exd5 with compensation White would undoubtedly regain the pawn quickly. The question is only one of how long Black can hold this position. White has a great many threats. When I returned home and analysed the game with Buhmann, I decided not to play this variation any more as Black.

### Conclusion

If White knows how to react correctly to the variation with ...d5xc4 and ...b7-b5 (a2-a4, ♘e5, 0-0, b2-b3), then it is very easy for him to play. At some moment he can play, for example, d4-d5, breaking up his opponent's central bastions, whilst meanwhile, he can just torture his opponent, by strengthening the position of his pieces.

## Chapter 8 – Indirectly Defending the Pawn

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c6



At first sight, a very modest, unpretentious move, but later this line leads to insane complications.

6. $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$

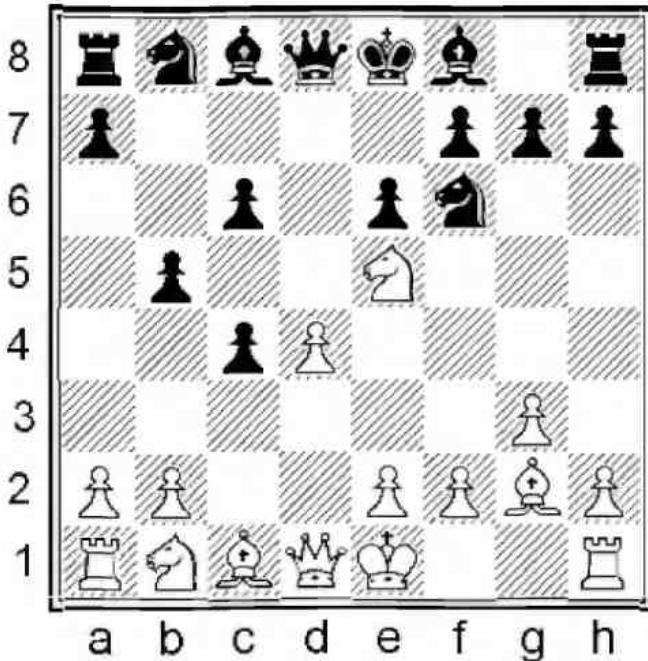
I think this is the best try for White. He wants to regain the sacrificed pawn immediately, and if he takes it, then he will definitely have the advantage – in this case, the move ...c7-c6 will lack any particular point, because Black will probably need to prepare the break ...c6-c5. Therefore, Black should immediately take some steps to ensure he does not give up the c4-pawn without a fight.

A) 6...b5

B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

Black can attack the centre immediately with 6...c5, but this is quite slow and it is not very logical to play ...c7-c6 and then ...c6-c5 on the very next move. Possible then is 7. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (White simply wants to recapture the sacrificed pawn) 7...cx $d$ 4 8. $\mathbb{Q}axc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  with very good compensation for the pawn, Rozum-Grigoriants, St Petersburg 2009.

A) 6...b5



With the idea of keeping the c4-pawn, not worrying about weakening the long diagonal. Now I recommend

**7.Qxc6!?**

Admittedly, as well as taking back the pawn, White can also transpose into the variation 5...b5, looked at above: 7.a4 Qd5 8.0-0 Qb7 etc.

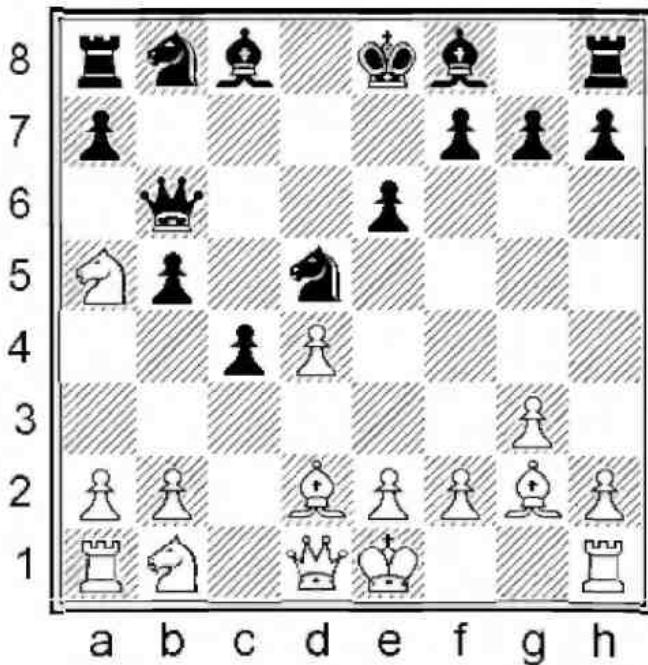
**7...Qb6**

Naturally, Black does not take on c6, but gets his queen away from the attack and prepares to close the long diagonal with ...Qc8-b7.

**8.Qa5 Qd5**

White is better after 8...Qxa5+?! 9.Qd2 c3 10.bxc3 Qd5 11.c4 b4 12.cxd5 exd5 13.0-0 Qd6 14.Qa3! (this nice move is given by Houdini, but Avrukh also points it out, via a different move-order) 14...Qe6 (14...Qxa3 15.Qxd5+-) 15.Qc2 Qb5 16.e4 0-0 17.a4 Qb7 18.Qf3±, 'leaning on' the d5-square.

**9.Qd2**



White has re-established material equality, and now simply defends the knight. It seems the knight is not so well-placed – it is cut off from its remaining forces and cannot return home, but at the same time, it controls the important squares c6 and b7 on the long diagonal and prevents the opponent completing his development normally. Meanwhile, it is hard for Black to get at the knight on a5.

#### **9...Qc6**

Or 9...a6 10.Qc3! (an important tactical moment; exploiting the fact that the Qa5 is invulnerable, White exchanges the strong enemy knight) 10...Qxc3 (the ending after 10...Ra7 11.Qxd5 exd5 12.Qxd5 Qxd4 13.Qc3 Qxd1+ 14.Qxd1± is also better for White: the enemy pawns on the queenside are quite vulnerable) 11.Qxc3 Ra7 12.a4 Re7 (12...b4? 13.Qxc4 Rc7 14.Qd2, and Black cannot take the knight with 14...Rxc4 because of 15.Qc1) 13.b3 (again we see this typical Catalan device: White dismantles the enemy queenside pawn chain) 13...0-0 14.0-0 (White should not rush with exchanges: 14.axb5 axb5 15.bxc4 b4 16.c5 Rb5 17.Qb3 Rb7! 18.Rxa7 Rxg2 19.Rg1 Rd5 20.Rb2 Qc6→ Schneider-Feygin, Germany 2010/11) 14...cxb3 15.Rxb3 Rc7 16.axb5 axb5 17.Rfb1±. White has the advantage in the centre, and in addition, the pawn on b5 may become a serious worry for Black. A classical Catalan situation; White's chances are clearly superior.

9...Qxd4?! is extremely risky, in view of 10.Qc3 a6 11.0-0 Qd7 12.a4±, and White's initiative grows of its own accord.

#### **10.Qxc6 Rxc6**

#### **11.e4 Qb4**

#### **12.0-0 Qb7**

Kortchnoi-Moskalenko, Barcelona 2004. Here Viktor Lvovich, in my view, should have preferred simply

#### **13.Qc3**

with the threat of d4-d5. For example:

#### **13...Qd3**

**14.d5 ♜b6**

**15.dxe6 ♜xe6**

15...fxe6 16.♗h5+ g6 17.♗xb5±.

**16.♗xb5**

Winning material.

**B) 6...♝b4+**

The main continuation.

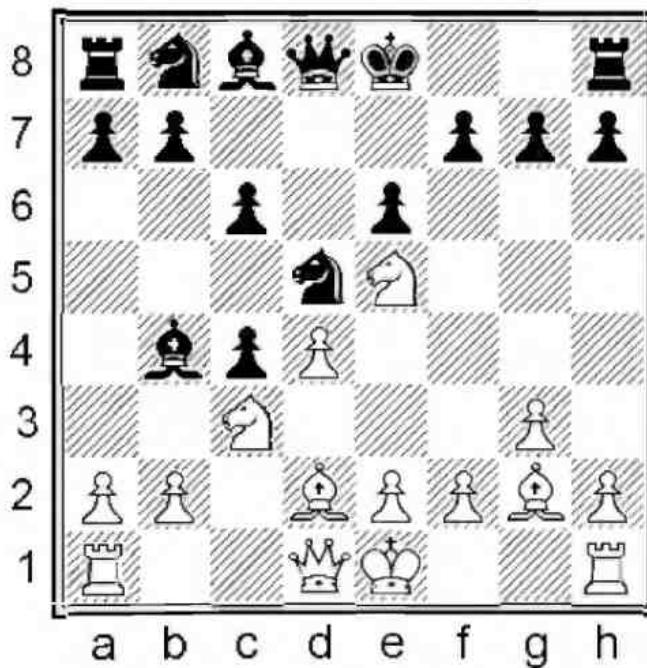
**B1) 7.♘c3**

**B2) 7.♘d2**

I personally prefer 7.♘d2, leading to great complications. Computer analysis shows that White can obtain a serious advantage here, if he can only remember the numerous forcing variations; a good memory is essential in this line. Maybe Black can find a defence, but at present, I do not see it.

**B1) 7.♘c3? ♘d5**

**8.♘d2**



**8...b5**

With 8...♝b6 Black defends the pawn c4 and at the same time attacks d4. The drawback of the move is that the c4-pawn is now only defended by pieces, not pawns, and White can regain it relatively easily. Possible then is 9.♘e4 (the exchange of dark-squared bishops favours White – he can control c5 and maybe also d6) 9...a5 10.e3 0-0 11.♗c2 ♘d7 12.♗xb4 axb4 13.♗xc4±. White has regained the pawn and controls the weakened dark squares in Black's camp.

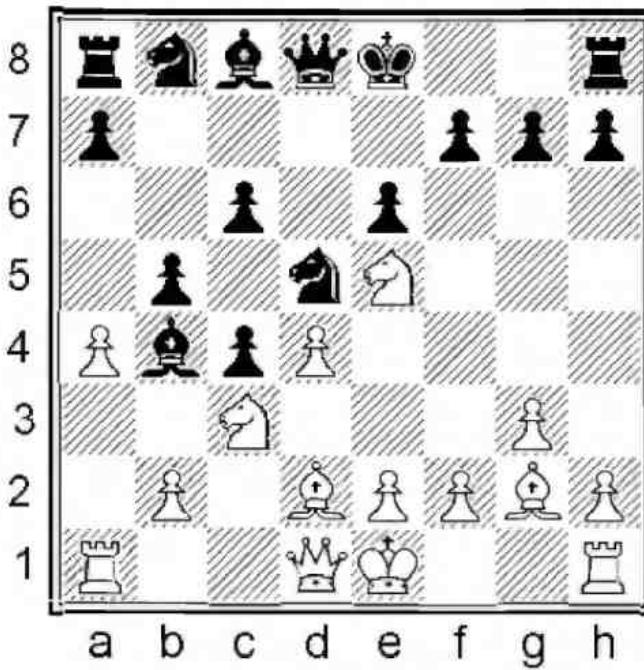
White also has the better chances after 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9.bxc3 b5 10.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  12. $\mathbb{W}xg4$  0-0 13.e5 f5 14.exf6  $\mathbb{W}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17.a4 a6 18. $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19.a5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20. $\mathbb{W}xe6+\pm$ .

After 8...b5 White has a pleasant choice.

### B11) 9.a4

### B12) 9.0-0

### B11) 9.a4



### 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

9...0-0 10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11.bxc3 f6 12. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  e5 (in driving the enemy knight from the centre, Black also weakens the long diagonal. But without this, it is hard to solve the problem of developing his light-squared bishop) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 15.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16.cxd4± Cua-Sharevich, Turin 2006.

9...f6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (Postny-Negi, Ermioni 2006) 11.0-0 (in the game, White wrongly brought the enemy bishop to life with 11.axb5, and after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12.bxc3 cxb5 13.0-0 0-0 14.e4  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16.h4  $\mathbb{W}e8$  17. $\mathbb{E}f1$  e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  19.h5 a5± Black obtained the better game: he has an extra pawn and it is difficult for White to create real threats in the centre or on the kingside) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (as soon as White castles, Black must concern himself with his dark-squared bishop – thus, bad now is 11...0-0? because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  – now this capture comes without check! – 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  14. $\mathbb{W}xd2\pm$ ) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 13.axb5±.

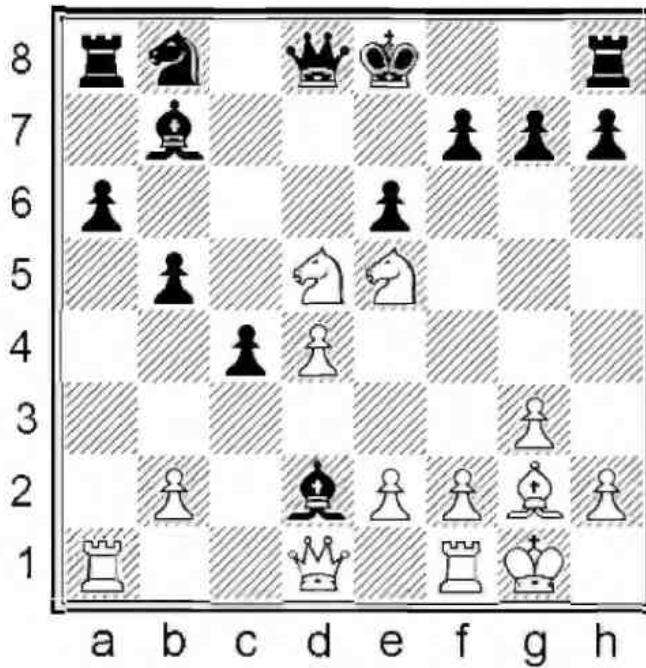
### 10.0-0 a6

Possibly it is somewhat better to play 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.axb5! (11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$  gxf6 14. $\mathbb{W}xd2$  a6, draw, Dizdar-Goloschapov, Austria 2001/02) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13.bxc6 (this *zwischenzug* allows White to re-establish material equality, whilst retaining positional pressure) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14.bxc3 0-0 15.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ .

### 11.axb5 cxb5

The other capture 11...axb5 is worse, since the light-squared bishop remains locked in, and White can start to bother it:  
 12.♗xa8 ♗xa8 13.♕a1 ♗b7 14.♕a7 ♗c8 15.♗xb5! cxb5 16.♗xb4±.

**12.♗xd5 ♗xd2**



**13.♗f6+! gxf6**

**14.♗xb7 fxe5**

14...♗a7 15.♗c6! ♗b6 16.♗xa7 ♗xb7 17.♗xb5 axb5 18.♗xd2 with a decisive advantage for White.

**15.♗xa8 ♗xd4**

**16.♗c2±**

In this position, the two pawns do not compensate Black for the loss of the exchange; his structure is weakened, his knight remains on its starting square and the a6-pawn is weak.

**B12) 9.0-0 ♗e7**

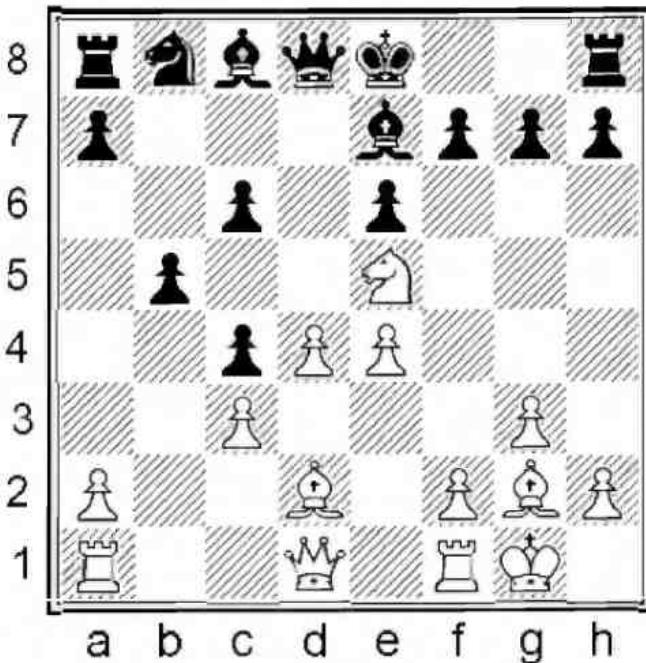
Beside the text move we should also consider 9...♗xc3. Black wants to retain his strong knight on d5 and therefore is prepared to part with his bishop.

Possible then is:

10.bxc3 ♗b7 11.e4 ♗f6 12.♗b1 (the threat of ♗xc4 is obvious, but it still causes Black definite inconvenience) 12...♗c8 13.♗g5 ♗bd7 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7 15.♗g4 (White creates unpleasant pressure on the kingside: after kingside castling, there follows simply 16.♗h6, winning the exchange) 15...h5 16.♗e2 (the queen has to move to a more modest position, but now the black king is trapped in the centre) 16...♗c7 17.a4 a6 18.♗fd1 ♗b6 19.axb5 cxb5 20.d5± Döttling-Richter, Germany 2006/07. Despite the extra pawn, Black's position is worse: his king, caught in the centre, may come under attack.

**10.e4 ♗xc3**

11.bxc3



We have a typical position for this variation. Black has managed to retain his extra pawn, but White has excellent compensation and has a number of plans for the further play: the advance a2-a4, the break d4-d5, whilst if the black bishop comes to b7, White can put rook or queen on b1 and threaten  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ .

Play could continue:

11...0-0

12.a4 f6

13. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  e5

14.dxe5 fxe5

15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$  $\pm$

White agrees to the doubling of his pawns, because it is obvious that it will be hard for Black to complete the development of his queenside. But also good is 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}xd1$  17. $\mathbb{E}fxd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18.h4 $\pm$  Rodshtein-Negi, Yerevan 2007.

**B2) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$**

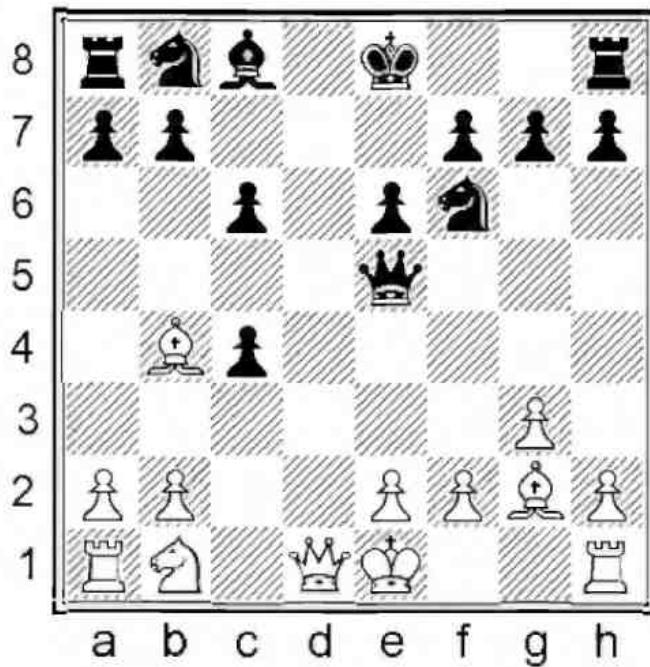
The main continuation, after which interesting tactical complications arise.

If 7... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  Black has at his disposal a rather promising exchange sacrifice: 8...b5!? (8...a5 9.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (Stefanova-Kurajica, Benasque 1997) 10.0-0 b5 11.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.axb5 cxb5 13.d5 with compensation) 10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (White does not want to move the knight from e5, and instead prefers to take on c4 with his other, as yet undeveloped knight) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  11.bxa3! (somewhat unexpected, but a very strong idea: White intends to set up pressure along the open b-file) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12. $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5 13. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14.0-0 0-0 15. $\mathbb{E}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16. $\mathbb{E}fb1$  f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  $\pm$  Ami-Negi, Malmö 2007) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  12.0-0 h5 13.f3 h4 14.g4

b4 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with compensation.

Therefore in reply to 7...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  preference should be given to the simple 8. e3 0-0 (8... c5 9.  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xc4\pm$ ) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  c5 10. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (Rausis-Goloschapov, Germany 2003/04) 11. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ .

8.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$



9.  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$

White is prepared to sacrifice the pawn on b2 as well, but in return, he will develop a really strong initiative.

9... b5

Otherwise White takes on c4 with the knight and then puts it on d6. The pawn cannot be taken because of the simple variation 9...  $\mathbb{W}xb2?$  10.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ .

10.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$

The bishop on d6 is extremely strong: it not only prevents Black castling, but practically paralyses both the enemy flanks.

10...  $\mathbb{W}xb2$

Now Black has no fewer than three extra pawns, but this is scant consolation for him. However, not taking on b2 is even worse: 10...  $\mathbb{W}f5?!$  11. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12.  $\mathbb{W}d4$  (12. g4?  $\mathbb{W}g6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  with attack) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xd6+-$ , and Black has no satisfactory defence against the numerous threats, in the first place  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$  and  $\mathbb{B}ad1$ .

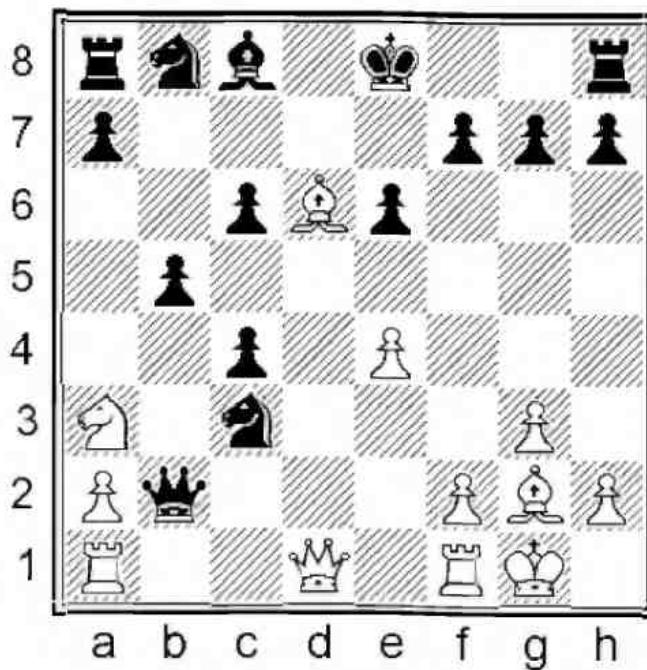
11. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

An attempt to plug the long diagonal and prepare the evacuation of the king from the centre by means of ...f7-f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}f7$ .

White is better after 11... a6 12.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c3$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{B}xb8$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d6$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$  Rodshtein-Novita, Khanty-Mansiysk

2010.

12.e4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$



13. $\mathbb{W}h5$

I recommend this move, although 13. $\mathbb{W}g4$  also deserves consideration, for instance: 13...h5 14. $\mathbb{W}g5$  (14. $\mathbb{W}xg7?$   $\mathbb{Q}e2+$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e2+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  16. $\mathbb{W}d2$  e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  (18. $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is unconvincing because of 18...h4! and Black goes over to the attack) 18... $\mathbb{W}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  20.f4  $\mathbb{W}c5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  h4 22.f5 with very confused play, Giri-Grandelius, Malmö 2010.

B21) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

B22) 13...h6

B21) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$

14.e5!

Including the light-squared bishop in the game and at the same time closing the diagonal, along which the queen could return home from b2. Play could continue:

14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

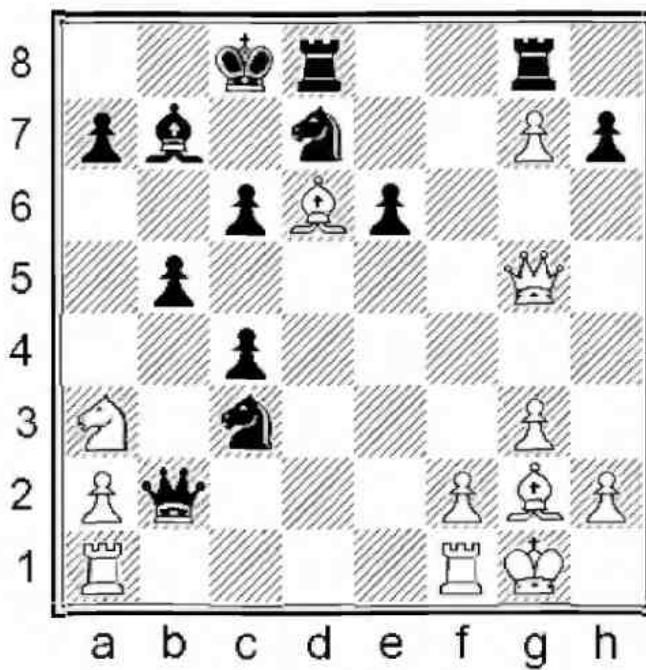
15. $\mathbb{W}g5$  f6

16.exf6!

A double-edged game results from 16. $\mathbb{W}xg7$  0-0-0 17.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}e2+$  (17... $\mathbb{E}dg8$  18. $\mathbb{W}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}e2+$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  20. $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ ; even worse is 18... $\mathbb{E}g6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20. $\mathbb{B}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb1$  21. $\mathbb{B}xb1$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xb5+-$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  19. $\mathbb{W}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8\infty$ .

16...0-0-0

17.fxg7 ♜hg8



18.♜ae1

The computer's recommendation – White simply brings the rook into the attack. Weaker is 18.♛e3? ♔e2+ 19.♚h1 ♛d4 20.♕xe6 (20.♖b4 ♛xe3 21.fxe3 ♔e5 22.♜ae1 ♔d3† Tkachiev-Goloschapov, Rethymnon 2003) 20...♜de8 21.♕h6 ♛xg7† Beliavsky-Pavasovic, Murska Sobota 2006.

18...♝d5

18...a6 19.♛e3!, and Black has no satisfactory defence against the queen's penetration to a7.

18...♜xg7 19.♛e3 (attacking the a7-pawn) 19...c5 20.♜xb7+ ♔xb7 21.♕f3+, and White's attack is very strong.

19.♝xd5! exd5

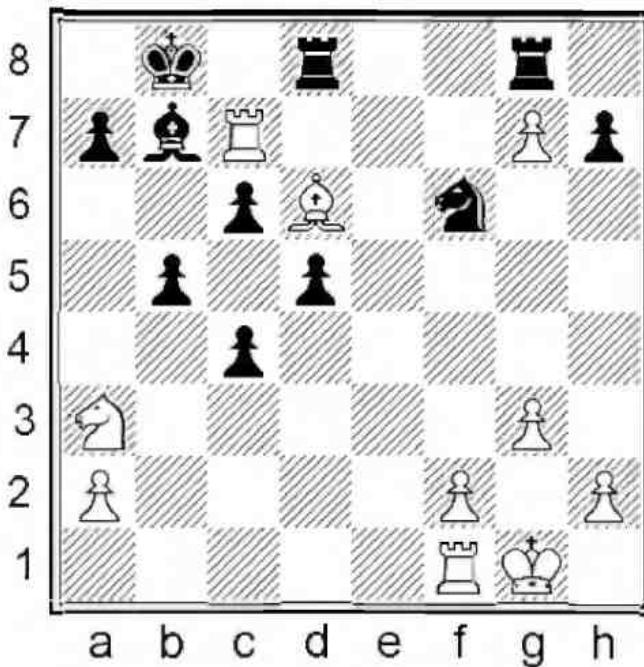
19...♜xg7 20.♝xb5+-.

19...cxsd5 20.♜b1, and White will take the b5-pawn, after which the defences around the black king will collapse.

20.♜e7 ♛f6

21.♛xf6 ♔xf6

22.♜c7+ ♔b8



**23.♖e5!**

An important intermediate move!

**23...♝g4**

**24.♗f4±**

Despite his extra pawn, Black has a very bad position: a discovered check is threatened, and the pawn on g7 cramps Black's game terribly.

**B22) 13...h6**

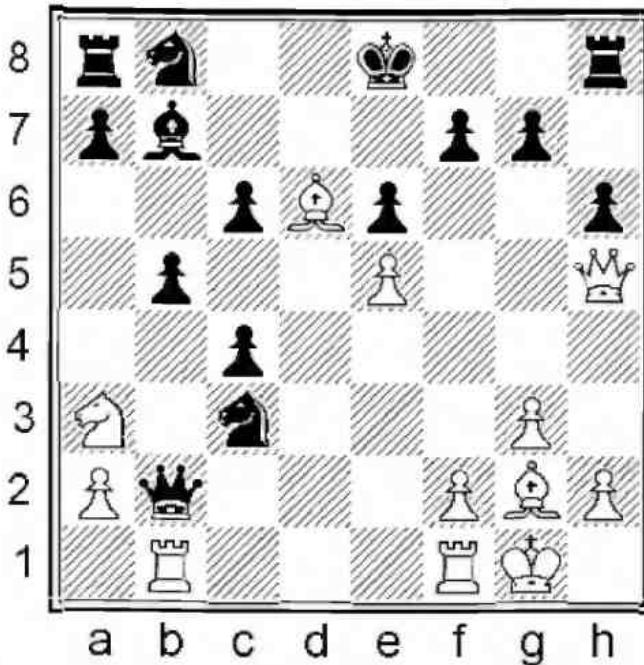
With this move, Black prevents the raid 14.♕g5, which would threaten mate on e7 and at the same time attack the pawn on g7.

**14.e5**

An idea we have already seen: White opens up the Catalan bishop and cuts the board in half.

**14...♝b7**

**15.♕ab1!**



A beautiful idea: White does not hesitate to sacrifice, to break down the enemy pawn barriers.

**15...♝e2**

This is the only move that allows Black to put up resistance. He would be in a bad way in the line 15...♞xb1 16.♜xb1 ♛xa2 17.♜xb5! cxb5 18.♜xb7 a6 19.♜xa8 ♛a1+ 20.♚g2±. As soon as White gets his knight into the attack, the game will be over.

**16.♝f3 ♜d3**

Iskusnykh-Yemelin, St Petersburg 2010.

**17.♜xb5!**

This beautiful tactical blow is also very strong here.

**17...♞xb5**

**18.♞xb5 ♞a6**

**19.♜d1 ♛f5**

**20.♝a3!**

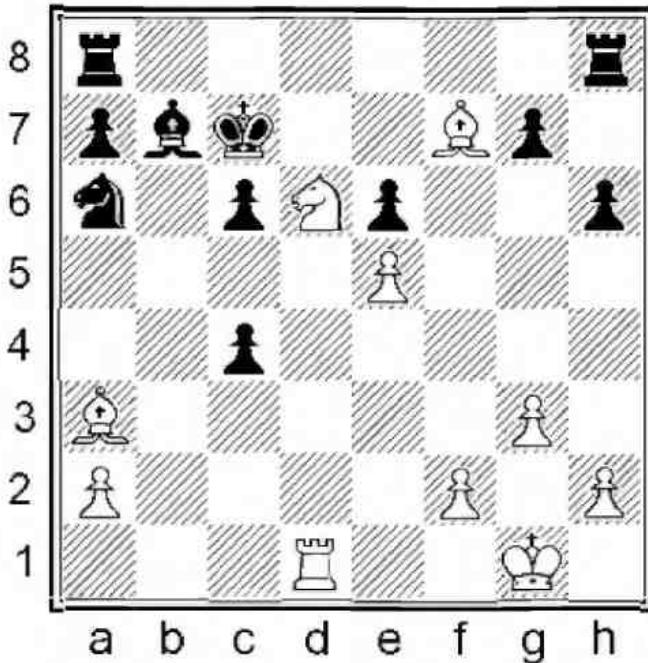
An excellent intermediate move: the bishop vacates its square in favour of the knight.

**20...♛xh5**

**21.♞d6+ ♔d7**

**22.♝xh5 ♔c7**

**23.♝xf7±**



White is an exchange and a pawn down, but it is clear that he will win the e6-pawn, then the c4-pawn, and with the powerful knight on d6, his position will be very strong. By pushing the e- and f-pawns, White should gradually be able to obtain a decisive advantage.

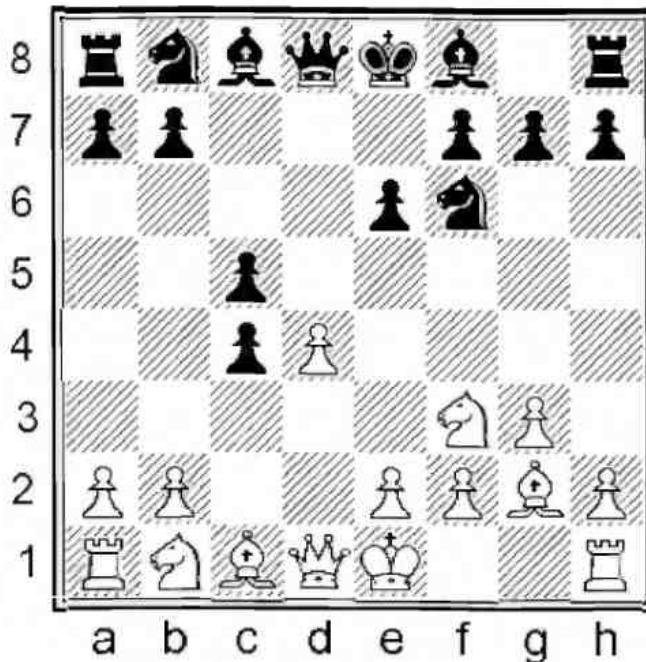
### Conclusion

In my opinion, the line with 5...c6 is one of the most pleasant for White to face. Black wins material, but completely cedes the initiative. It is very important to know, and use in practice, three important devices pointed out above: the break a2-a4, the pin on the b-file, with the potential threat  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  and the central break d4-d5. The pin of the c6-pawn along the long diagonal can also cause Black much unpleasantness.

Here, we have a very dynamic position, in which White must play energetically and inventively, not being afraid to sacrifice. We have seen what a powerful resource the simple e4-e5 can be, after which the  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  is opened up, and the black queen, on the contrary, loses its line of retreat. Control of the weakened dark squares is very important: White can give up two and even three pawns, but if he manages to get his bishop to d6, Black faces a difficult defence. It is also important to note that White has a choice at move 7: he can play the extremely aggressive 7...d2, which requires precise knowledge of complicated variations, or the more cautious 7...c3, which also ensures him the better position.

## Chapter 9 – Attacking White’s Centre

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c5



A very popular line, which has been played many times at the very highest level, and for a long while was even considered the main line. Black’s idea is typical for similar set-ups: he wants to clarify the central position, force exchanges and gradually equalise.

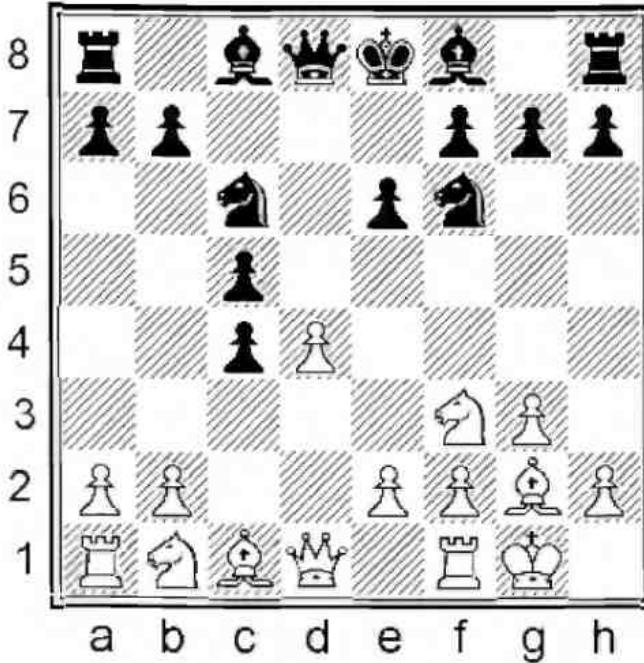
6.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

The simplest attempts do not equalise: in reply to 6...cx $d$ 4 7. $\mathbb{Q}xd$ 4  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  White has the important check 8. $\mathbb{Q}a4+$ , after which he regains the pawn, retaining some pressure in the centre: 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd$ 7 (or 8... $\mathbb{Q}d$ 7 9. $\mathbb{Q}b$ 5 – threatening 10. $\mathbb{Q}c$ 7+ – 9...0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc$ 4) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc$ 4 0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}c$ 3 a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}b$ 3  $\mathbb{Q}a$ 7 12. $\mathbb{Q}d$ 1± Veingold-Tuovinen, Vantaa 1999. It is hard for Black to complete the development of his queenside and find a convenient post for his queen.

In the position after 6... $\mathbb{Q}c$ 6 I suggest two promising plans for White, giving you a choice, whilst also making it harder for your opponent to prepare for you.

**A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e$ 5**

**B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}a$ 4**



### A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

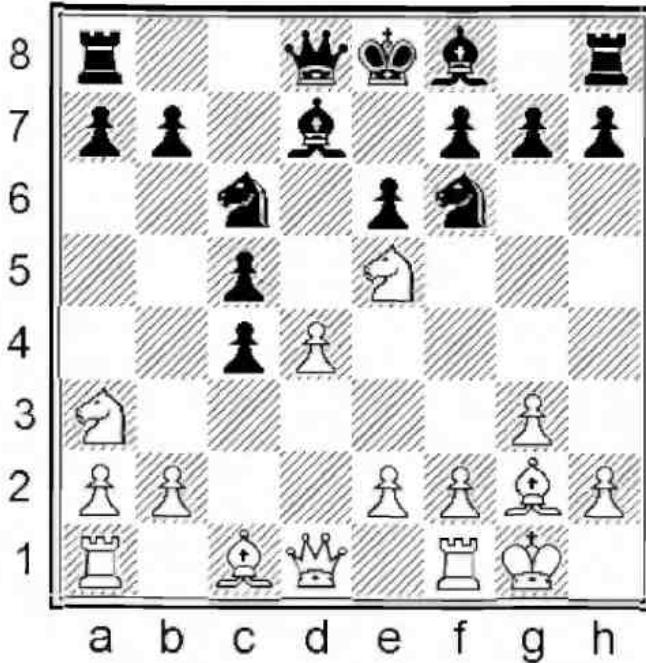
White wants to provoke a crisis at once, to exploit his lead in development.

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

Obviously, 7...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$  is bad, because of the simple 8.e3, and after the knight retreat 8...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  the line 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$  decides.

We will also consider 7...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  8.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$  (an important resource: White immediately sets up the very unpleasant threat 11.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ) 10...  $\mathbb{B}b8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  b6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . At first glance, it may seem that Black has practically equalised, since he has solved the problem of his light-squared bishop. But White has the open d-file, which allows him to create unpleasant threats: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$ . For the moment, Black has defended everything, but I do not see what his next move will be. White can make some sort of useful move, say 16.  $h3\pm$ , and now what does Black do? In my opinion, White has a clear advantage.

#### 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$



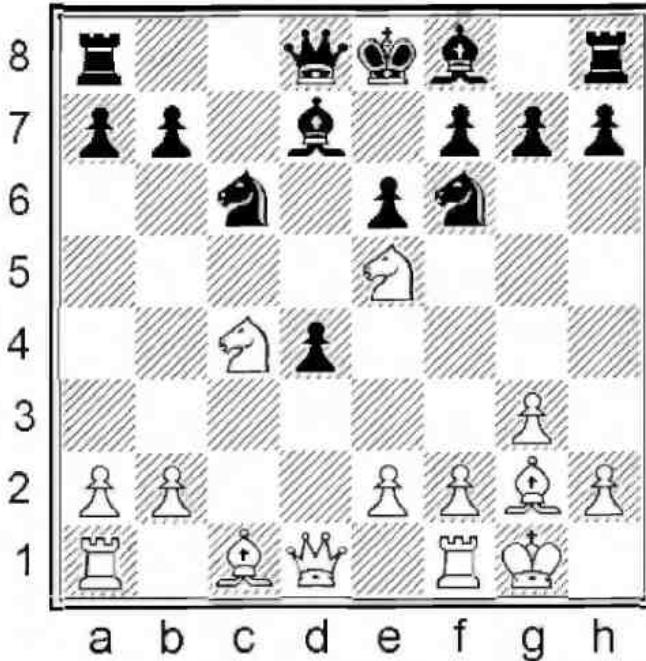
**8...cxd4**

An important line. Black understands that he is unlikely to be able to keep the extra material, but he hopes to develop behind the cover of the d-pawn, and force various exchanges, so as to neutralise the pressure.

In reply to 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  White simply takes on d7 – 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  (little is promised by 9. $\mathbb{Q}axc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (or 10.e3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7=$  Comas Fabregó-Kortchnoi, Barcelona 2004) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (10...c3 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (11.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5\rightarrow$ ) 11...0-0-0 12.bxc3!, and White's pressure on the now opened b-file and the long diagonal can become very dangerous) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$ . White has regained his pawn and has the bishop pair; he has a small, but lasting advantage. Play might continue: 11...0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (exchanging off his other bishop looks a very dubious decision: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ ) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c2!\pm$ . I particularly like this move, which simultaneously takes control of two important points, b4 and d4.

**9. $\mathbb{Q}axc4$**

The critical position of the variation.



**A1) 9...Qd5**

**A2) 9...Qc5**

**A3) 9...Qe7**

**A4) 9...Bc8**

**A5) 9...Qxe5**

**A1) 9...Qd5**

**10.Qxc6**

A simple and reliable path. White also has at his disposal a problematic pawn sacrifice: 10.e4 dxе3 11.Qxe3 (11.fxe3 Qf6) 11...Qe7 (11...Qxe5 12.Qxe5) 12.Wh5 0-0 13.Bfd1 with compensation. White certainly has full compensation, but it is a big question whether he can count on an advantage.

**10...Qxc6**

**11.Wxd4**

White regains the pawn and at the same time makes it hard for his opponent to develop his kingside – the bishop f8 must defend the g7-pawn.

**11...Qb4**

**12.Qxc6+**

12.Wxd8+ Bxd8 13.Qd2 Qxg2 14.Qxg2 Qc6 15.Qc3 f6 16.Bfd1 Qe7 17.e4 Qf7 18.a4 Bhe8= Papaioannou-Van der Stricht, Gothenburg 2005.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**

**13. $\mathbb{W}c3$**

Black still has the same problem with the g7-pawn, so he must close the long diagonal.

**13... $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

**13... $\mathbb{W}d4$  14. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  (Rausis-Van der Stricht, Charleroi 2007) 15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{exd}5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$**

**14. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**15. $\mathbb{W}b3$**

White switches the attack to the b7-pawn.

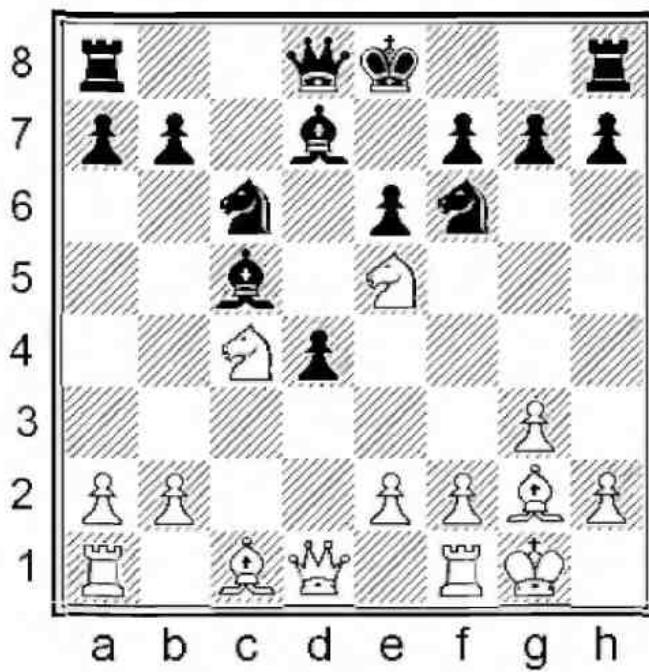
**15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$**

**16. $\mathbb{W}xb7\pm$**

Schulze-Janoschka, Baden 1999.

**A2) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

Overprotecting the pawn on d4 and preparing kingside castling.



**10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

If White goes after the b7-pawn with 10. $\mathbb{W}b3$  0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}xb7$  (better is 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ , transposing to a position seen below), then after 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  13. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  Black holds the d4-pawn and obtains adequate play: 14. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15. $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  16. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $h6$  17. $e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18. $\mathbb{exd}4$   $\mathbb{B}xd4$  19. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{B}fd8$  20. $b3$ , draw, Eianov-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

**10...0-0**

## 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

If 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , then 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$ . It turns out that the queen is very badly placed on c8, and the squares c5 and d6 are weak.

Or 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxc6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $c5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ . White has re-established material equality and thanks to the weakness of the c5-pawn, he has a clear advantage.

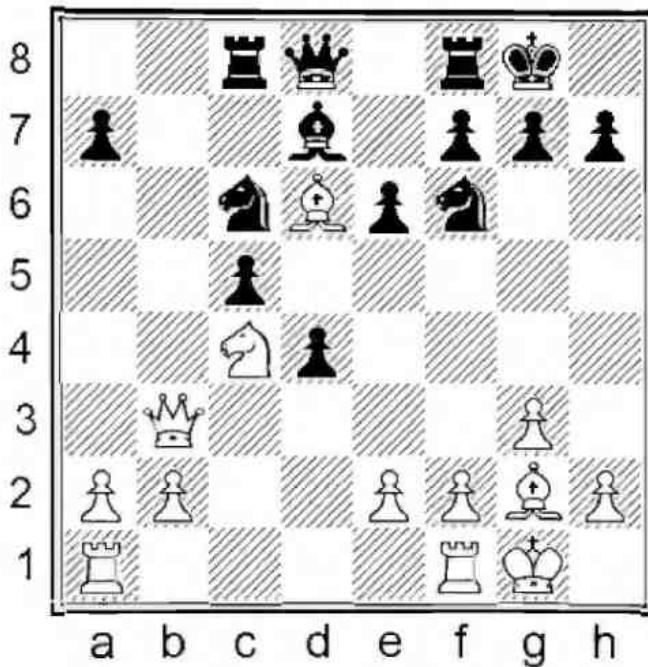
## 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This is a superb square for the knight; if 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  Black keeps the extra pawn, although objectively, it still requires further definite accuracy from him, to achieve full equality. Play could continue: 15.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $e5=$ .

## 12... $b6$

## 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $bxc5$

## 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$



White wins back the pawn and, thanks to his two bishops and control over the dark squares, he obtains the advantage.

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

The exchange sacrifice is interesting, but hardly 100% correct: 14...  $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  (Vidit-Adhiban, Mumbai 2009) 17.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1\pm$ .

## 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $\mathbb{Q}e5$

## 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$   $axb6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$ .

16... $\mathbb{B}xc5$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xd7 \mathbb{W}xd7$

18. $\mathbb{E}ad1 e5$

19.e3  $\mathbb{E}ec8$

20.exd4 exd4

21. $\mathbb{W}d3 \mathbb{E}c2$

22. $\mathbb{E}d2 \mathbb{W}xd2$

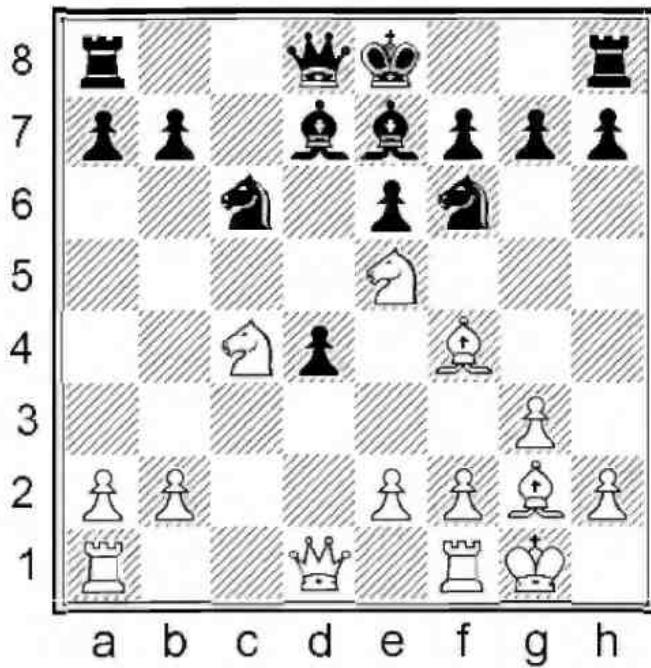
23. $\mathbb{W}xd2\pm$

A3) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

A quiet developing move. In response, White also continues to develop according to his well-known scheme.

10. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$

10. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{W}c7$  (10... $\mathbb{W}c8!?$ ) 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (11. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{Q}h5!$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe7 \mathbb{Q}xg2=$  Ramirez-Yang, Richardson 2010)  
11... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f4 \mathbb{W}d8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $bxc6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e5 c5$  15. $\mathbb{W}a4+ \mathbb{Q}f8$  16. $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{W}d5$  (16... $\mathbb{W}e8$  17. $\mathbb{W}b3 \mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{W}b7 f6$   
19. $\mathbb{Q}d7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{W}c8$  21. $\mathbb{W}b5 a6$  22. $\mathbb{W}a5 \mathbb{W}c6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , draw, Ponomariov-Kasimdzhanov, San Sebastian 2009)  
17.f3 h6 18.e4 dxe3 19. $\mathbb{E}fd1 \mathbb{W}b7\rightleftharpoons$  Kasimdzhanov-Drozdovskij, Konya 2010.



10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

The position will not ‘equalise itself’, in the event of straightforward play: 10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}b3!$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  and now things are not especially nice for Black after both 12. $\mathbb{E}fd1!?$  and 12. $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$  (the exchange on f4 does not bother White: he strengthens his control of the centre, whilst Black’s two bishops are still rather inactive, and it is not easy for him to get

at the pawn on f4 or the white king) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14. $gxf4$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  (14... $\mathbb{B}b8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\pm$  Franciskovic-Solic, Topusko 2011) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{E}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}axc6$  bxc6 18. $\mathbb{E}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb8+$   $\mathbb{B}xb8$  20.b3±.

## 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0 13. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  with an equal game.

## 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

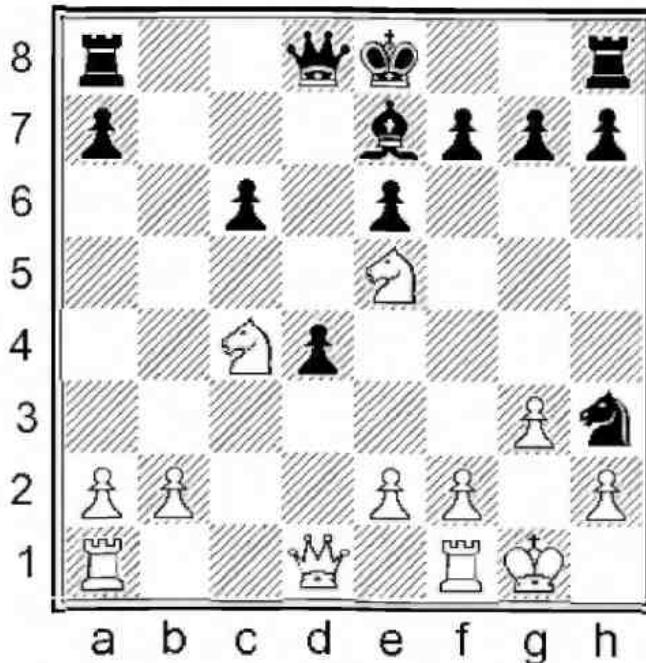
Black should go in for these complications, else White achieves an obvious advantage by simple means: 11... $\mathbb{W}xd7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}fd8$  15.e3±.

## 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6

## 13. $\mathbb{Q}de5$

Not 13. $\mathbb{Q}ce5?$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

## 13... $\mathbb{Q}h3+$



13... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  16. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{B}hd8$  17. $\mathbb{W}a3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18. $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{B}ac8$  19. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{W}a3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  22. $\mathbb{W}a3+$ , draw, Grischuk-Alexeev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

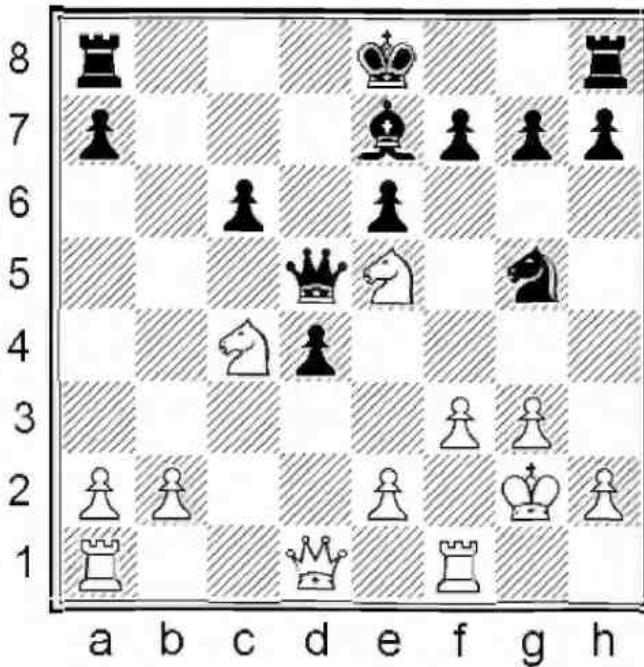
## 14. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The knight must retreat, because the line 14... $\mathbb{W}d5+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$  f6 does not work, due to 16.e4! dxе3 (16... $\mathbb{W}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ ) 17. $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  fxе5 18. $\mathbb{B}ad1$  e2 19. $\mathbb{W}xe2$   $\mathbb{W}b5$  20. $\mathbb{W}g4\pm$ .

## 15.f3!±

Avrukh-Grischuk, Calvia 2004.

15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



Black still retains his material advantage, but his pawn structure is weak and the knight is very poorly placed. White has at least two promising plans:

**A31) 16.e4**

**A32) 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$**

**A31) 16.e4 dx $e$ 3**

17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

Of course, White did not open lines in order to exchange queens: he wants to bring a rook to d1 and drive the black queen from her excellent post in the centre.

A weaker version of the same idea is 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ , since after 17...f6 18. $\mathbb{R}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  19.a4 Black has the move 19... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (with the white queen on e2, this retreat is impossible, because of the discovered check  $\mathbb{Q}d6+$ ). After 20. $\mathbb{Q}g4$  0-0 Black completes his development satisfactorily.

17...f6

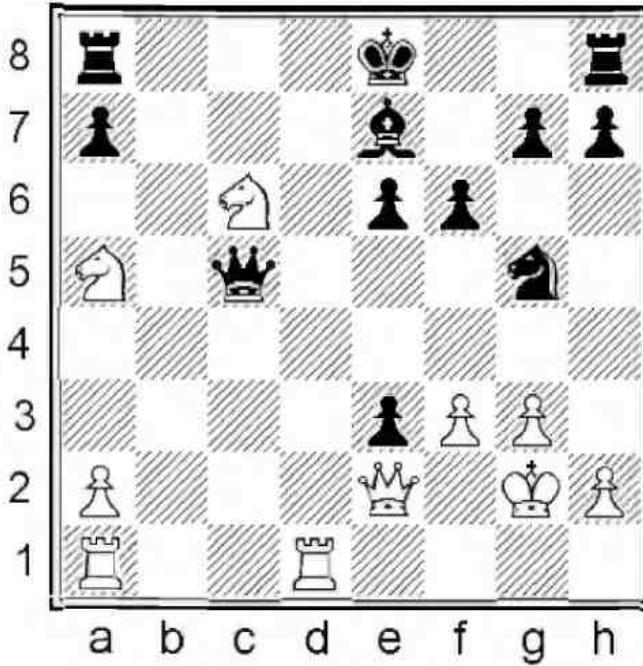
18. $\mathbb{R}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

On 18... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  there follows 19.a4, and, as we have already said, the queen cannot go to a6, whilst on other squares, she continues to come under attack.

19.b4!  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

21. $\mathbb{Q}4a5$



Now the threat is 22.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$ , continuing to hassle the black queen. For this reason, Black cannot castle, since he immediately loses the bishop on e7.

**21...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

**22.  $g4 \mathbb{Q}f4$**

**23.  $\mathbb{E}d4 \mathbb{Q}c7$**

**24.  $\mathbb{E}b1 e5$**

**25.  $\mathbb{E}c4$**

White's initiative is quite unpleasant, although the position is probably still within the bounds of equality. After all, two extra pawns is good odds.

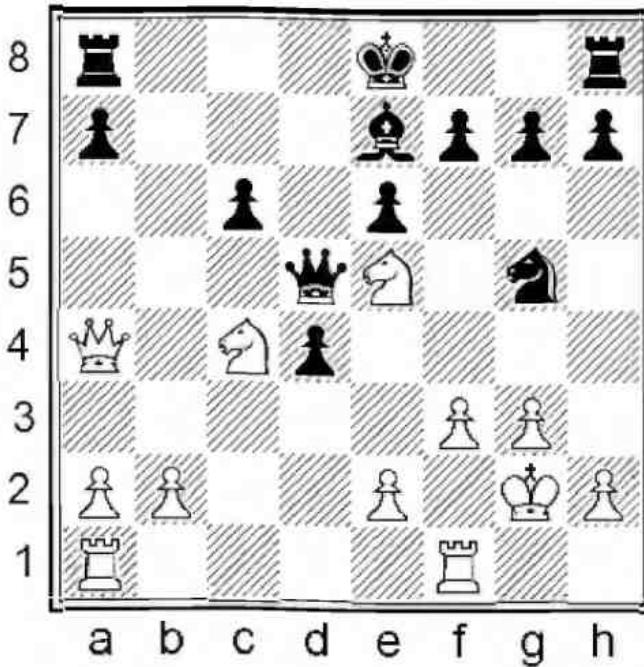
**25...  $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

**26.  $\mathbb{Q}b7 \mathbb{Q}e7$**

**27.  $\mathbb{Q}ca5 \mathbb{Q}b8$**

And here, in the opinion of the computer, White should force a draw by repetition after 28.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  etc.

**A32) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$**



**16...Bb5**

**17.b3!**

A positional device, which is worth remembering: the open lines often play a more significant role than weaknesses in the pawn structure.

**17...Bxa4**

The threat was 18.Qxc6.

**18.bxa4 Qc8**

**19.h4 f6**

**20.hxg5 fxе5**

**21.Qab1 0-0**

**22.Qxe5 Qxg5**

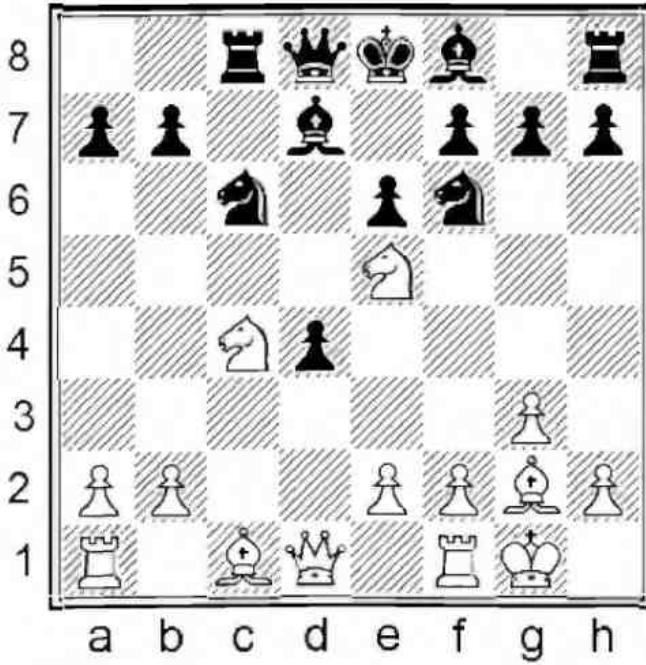
**23.Qb7 a5**

**24.Qfb1±**

Despite the pawn minus, White's chances in this ending are better, because all of his pieces are very active, and they dominate the board.

**A4) 9...Qc8**

The idea of this is to exchange a pair of knights on e5 and bring the bishop to b6, neutralising White's pressure on the long diagonal.



**10.  $\mathbb{W}b3$**

This typical reply shows that it is not so easy to escape from the queenside pressure.

**10...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \mathbb{Q}c6$**

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6 bxc6$**

**13.  $\mathbb{E}d1 c5$**

**14.  $e3$**

Exploiting his lead in development, White regains the sacrificed pawn.

**14...  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**15.  $exd4 c4$**

**16.  $\mathbb{W}c2 0-0$**

This was the game V. Georgiev-Ivanchuk, Heraklion 2007, which White eventually even won. Here, it was possible to pose Vasily an uncomfortable question: how was he going to defend the pawn on c4 after

**17.  $\mathbb{Q}b7! \mathbb{E}c7$**

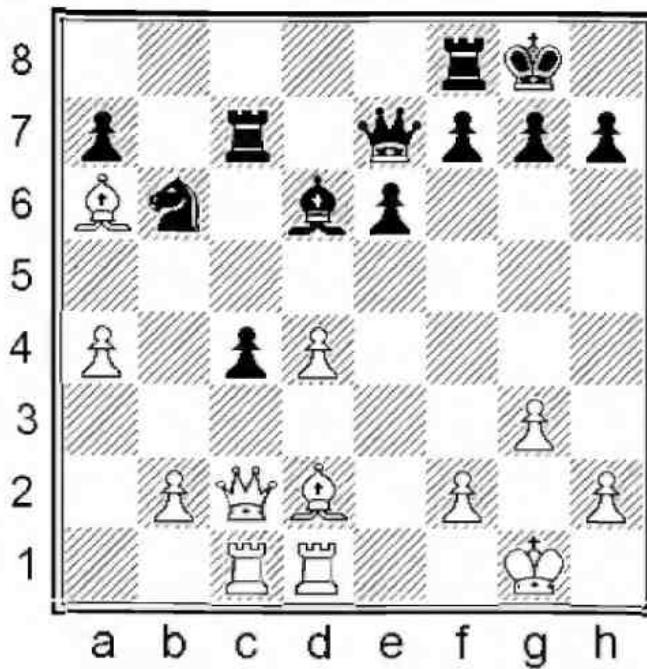
**18.  $\mathbb{Q}a6 \mathbb{Q}d5$**

White does not rush to take the pawn, but first completes his development. The weak pawn on c4 is not going anywhere.

**19.  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}b6$**

20.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

21. a4!



A typical and important move – the knight must be driven from b6.

21...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$

22. a5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

23.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{E}fc8$

24.  $b3\pm$

A5) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$

Black defends both weak pawns (b7 and d4) with his queen and wants to complete the development of his kingside, but after

11.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$

it turns out that it is not so easy to find a good square for his dark-squared bishop.

The direct attack on the enemy queen also deserves consideration: 11. a4  $\mathbb{E}d8$  12. a5, for example: 12...  $\mathbb{W}b5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  0-0 15.  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  16.  $\mathbb{E}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  17.  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  19.  $\mathbb{E}xe3$  a6 20.  $\mathbb{E}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21.  $\mathbb{E}xb5$  axb5 22. a6 f6 23.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{E}d7$  24.  $\mathbb{E}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  25. a7 g5 26.  $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$  Kir. Georgiev-Kengis, Bad Wörishofen 2002.

11...  $\mathbb{Q}b5$

Moving the light-squared bishop from exchange.

After the straightforward 11...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  there follows the unexpected and very strong reply 12. b4!. The opening of the b-file

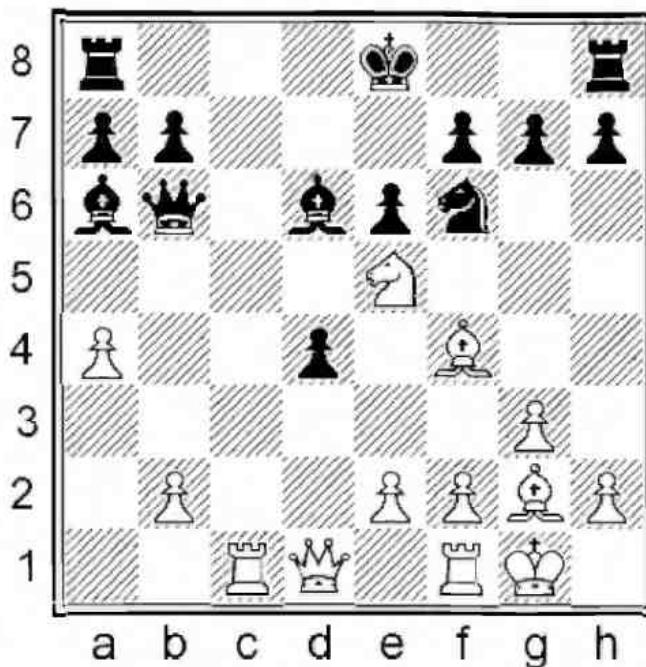
is deadly for Black, so he has to retreat the bishop – 12... $\mathbb{B}e7$ , but after 13. $\mathbb{E}c1$  0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  15. $\mathbb{E}c7$  White's threats are very dangerous, for instance: 15... $\mathbb{E}ad8$  16. $\mathbb{E}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17. $\mathbb{E}c7$   $\mathbb{E}a8$  18. $\mathbb{E}xd4+$ – Prakken-Held, Olomouc 2000.

## 12. $\mathbb{E}c1$

White counts on exploiting the open c-file.

## 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

## 13.a4 $\mathbb{Q}a6$



It may seem that Black is OK, since he has solidly defended the b7-pawn and has almost completed his development. However, there follows

## 14.a5! $\mathbb{W}b4$

Here 14... $\mathbb{W}xa5$  runs into the crushing blow 15. $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ; now Black will not be able to castle, and his position quickly collapses.

## 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

We have seen that the knight is usually very effective on this square.

## 15... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

## 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$ $\mathbb{W}xd6$

## 17. $\mathbb{W}xd3\pm$

Thanks to the powerful bishop on g2, White wins the b7-pawn. 17... $\mathbb{E}b8$  is no help because of 18. $\mathbb{E}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}xb7?$  19. $\mathbb{E}c8+$ . The extra pawn on the queenside assures White the better chances, and, in addition, with action on both flanks, his bishop is superior to the knight.

## B) 7. $\mathbb{W}a4$

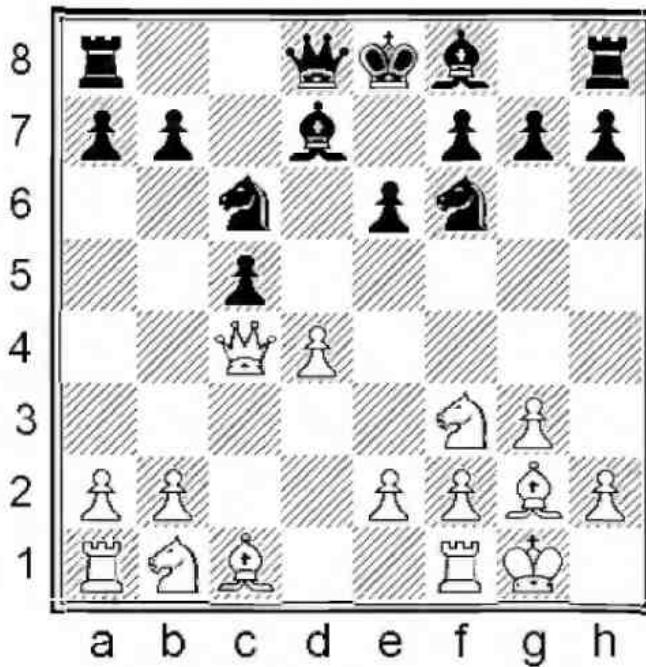
This move became fashionable quite recently and has quickly gained great popularity.

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

7...cxd4 is risky in view of 8.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (10...  $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c3 13. bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ . Now the light-squared bishop is either exchanged off, or driven off the long diagonal, after which there is no doubt over White's advantage, for instance 16...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17. f3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7\pm$  Mikhalevski-Onischuk, Gibraltar 2011) 11.  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$  bxc6 12.  $\mathbb{B}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{E}d1+$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$ . White obtains a very favourable ending, and for 'full satisfaction' he only needs to exchange the opponent's active rook. 14...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (Damljanovic-Abramovic, Kragujevac 2011) 16.  $\mathbb{B}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ . White has carried out his plan – he has exchanged the rook on d1. In the subsequent play, the weakness of the pawns on a7 and c6 should tell.

### 8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$

White is promised less by 8. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0 13.  $\mathbb{B}d1$  (13. a3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  a6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}dxe7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  h6 20. b4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ , draw, Ilincic-Kosic, Budapest 2011) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}bd4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  18. b3  $\mathbb{Q}d6=$  Mikheev-V. Sveshnikov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.



### 8... $b5$

This idea has been known since the 1950s. Exploiting the fact that White cannot take the pawn because of ...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  and ...  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ , Black 'empties' the long diagonal with tempo, getting all his pieces and pawns out of the x-ray of the Catalan bishop.

For a long time, it was considered that the position is equal, but I do not agree with this assessment.

Let us consider some alternatives.

A) White is better after 8...  $\mathbb{W}b6$  9. dxc5  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11.  $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  12.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  14. b3  $\mathbb{W}b5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 (M. Andersen-A. Dasaolu, Gibraltar 2011) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{G}xf6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d6\pm$ ;

B) Nor does Black obtain full equality after 8...cxd4 9.Qxd4 Bc8 10.Qc3 Qxd4 11.Qxd4 Qc5 12.Qh4. A classical Catalan situation: White's advantage is quite small, but nonetheless, he retains definite pressure. Play could continue:

B1) 12...0-0 13.Qxb7 Bb8 14.Qf3 Bb4 (this is Black's idea: he gives up a pawn, but in return, activates his pieces. However, his compensation is not sufficient for equality) 15.Qg5 Qd4 16.Qd2 Qc7 17.Qd1! (move by move, White neutralises his opponent's initiative, whilst retaining the extra pawn) 17...Bfb8 18.a3 Bc4 (18...Ba4 19.Qe3 e5 20.Qc2 Qa5 21.b4 Baxb4 22.Qd2± Kaidanov-Yang, Saint Louis 2011) 19.Qe3 Ba4 20.Qb1 e5 21.b4± Kramnik-Naiditsch, Dortmund 2010;

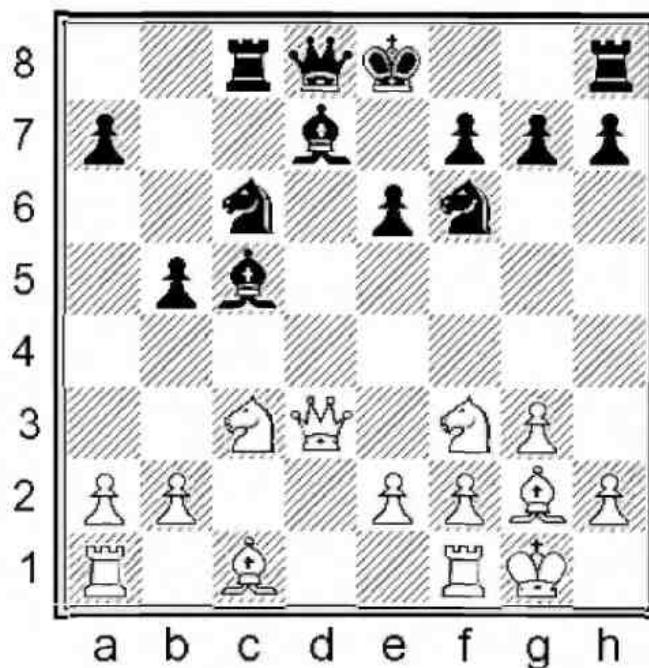
B2) 12...Qc6 13.Qd1 Qc7 14.Qh6! (a nice trick) 14...Qf8 15.Qxc6+ bxc6 (even worse is 15...Qxc6 16.Qac1+— Quinn-Palmer, Dublin 1993) 16.Qac1± Zhang Zhong-Yu Lie, Jinan 2005.

#### 9.Qd3 Bc8

In the event of 9...c4 10.Qd1 Bc8 there follows the break we are already familiar with: 11.b3, and the black pawns on the queenside become an object of attack. Play might continue: 11...Qe7 12.bxc4 bxc4 13.Qc3 0-0 (Taksrud-Glenne, Norway 1994) 14.Qd2±.

#### 10.dxc5 Qxc5

#### 11.Qc3



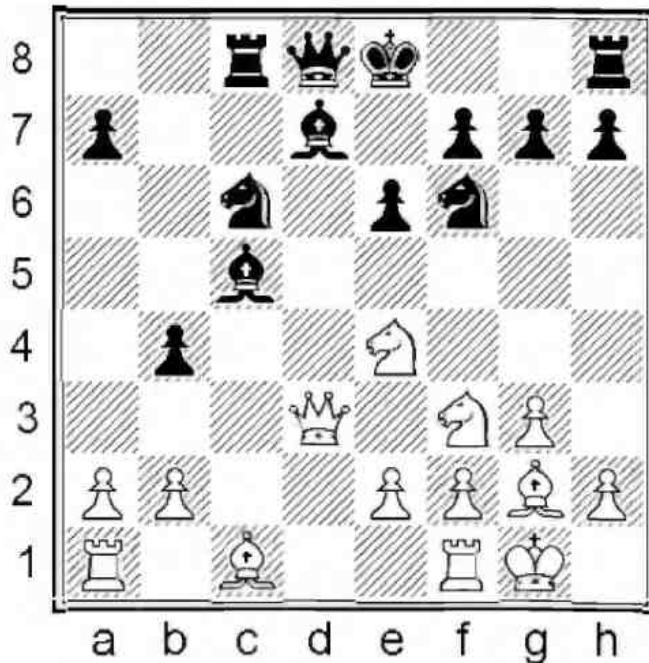
This shows that with the move 8...b5 Black not only gained a tempo, but also weakened his pawn structure. He is half a tempo short of completely consolidating his position and obtaining fully-fledged play.

#### 11...b4

Or 11...Qb4 12.Qd1 0-0 13.Qe5 (exploiting the fact that Black has moved his knight from c6, White occupies an excellent outpost in the centre of the board) 13...Qe8 14.Qxd8 Rxd8 15.Qg5 h6 16.Qxf6 gxf6 17.Qg4±.

Or 11...0-0 12.Qg5 (the pawn is immune for the moment: 12.Qxb5? Qb4; 12.Qxb5 Qb4, and the queen is trapped) 12...Qb4 13.Qxf6 gxf6 14.Qe4±. White has managed to break up his opponent's pawn structure and has obtained the chance to attack the king.

12.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$



There is another idea, which I like even more: 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  0-0 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{B}cd8$  16.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  18.  $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ . Black's position is quite solid, but he continues to experience definite problems. White wants to play  $\mathbb{E}ac1$ , and when possible e2-e4 and  $\mathbb{Q}fe5$ . Black must patiently defend a slightly worse position.

12...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$

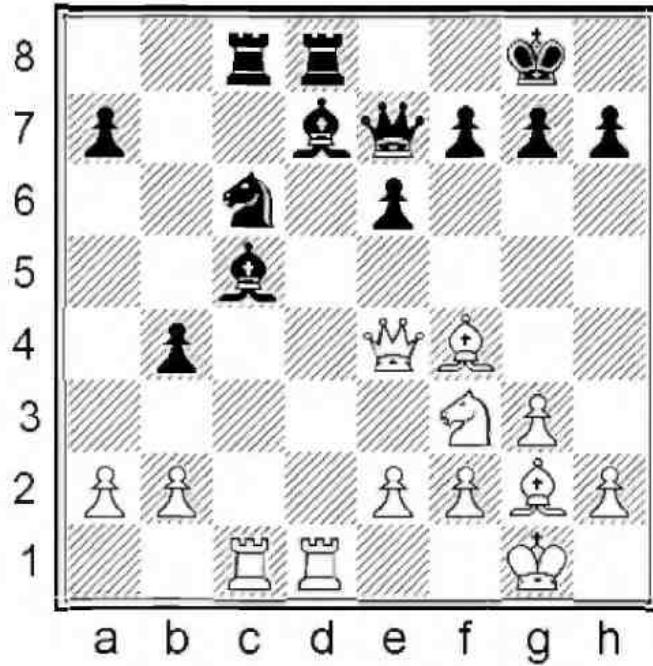
13.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$  0-0

14.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$

15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$

16.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$

The pawn structure is practically symmetrical, but on account of his more active pieces, White retains a small advantage.



**16...h6**

White also has the better prospects after 16... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17. $\mathbb{B}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$  18. $\mathbb{W}c2$ . The bishop hangs, and after it moves, there follows  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with a double attack on h7 and c6. By a miracle, Black has a tactical defence: 18... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{B}d7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (underlining the vulnerability of the pawn on b4) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $axb6$  23. $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$ .

**17.g4!?**

An unexpected and very strong move: White's threats on the kingside can prove very unpleasant.

Practice has also seen 17.b3!?, so as to establish the bishop on the long dark diagonal, after the exchange of knights on e5.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}e8$**

A. Fominykh-Ruban, Voronezh 1988.

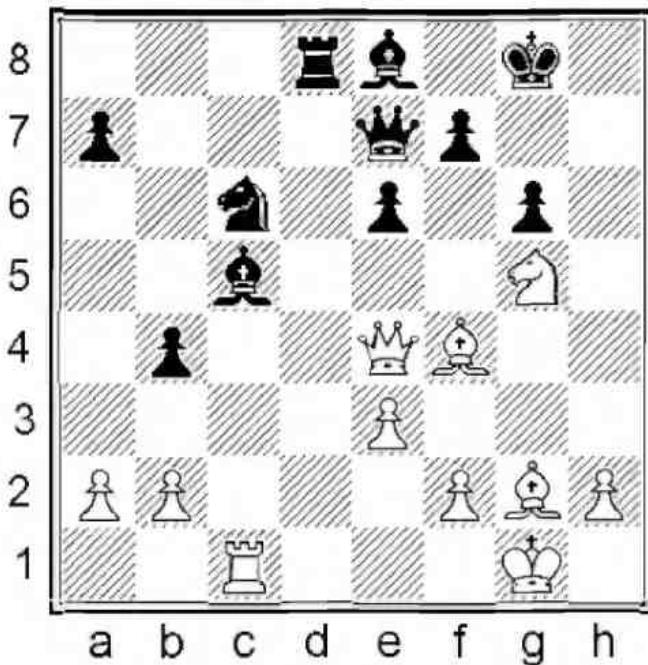
**18. $\mathbb{B}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$**

**19.g5 hxg5**

**20. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  g6**

**21.e3±**

An important move, covering the important square d4. Later White will combine threats on the kingside with pressure down the open c-file, because the bishop c5 and knight c6 occupy somewhat exposed positions.



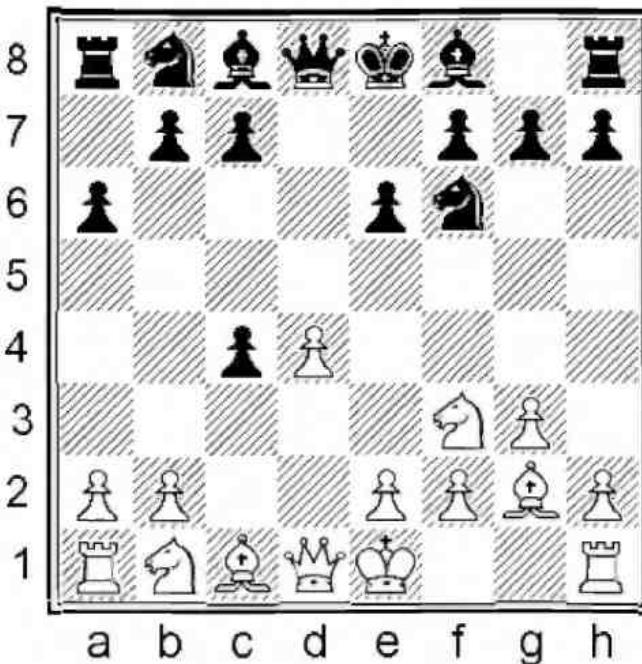
### Conclusion

The variation with ...d5xc4 and ...c7-c5 is a very serious attempt by Black to obtain rapid equality, by exchanging the central pawns and preparing to exchange pieces. However, it results in him being slightly behind in development, after which it turns out not to be so simple to neutralise White's initiative. White puts one knight on e5 and the other heads via a3 to c4, not shrinking at the temporary sacrifice of a pawn. He then brings his bishop to f4, queen to b3 and his rooks go to c1 and d1. All of White's pieces take part in the game, and his initiative is very strong. I recommend the line with 7.Qe5 to those who love active piece play, because White has many interesting possibilities here.

Of course, it must be admitted that, if Black defends in the best way possible, then White's advantage will be very small. But some slight pressure remains, so one must be prepared in advance for a long battle, with slightly the better chances. From a practical viewpoint, defending such positions is not so pleasant.

## Chapter 10 – Combining Defence and Attack

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.e4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  a6



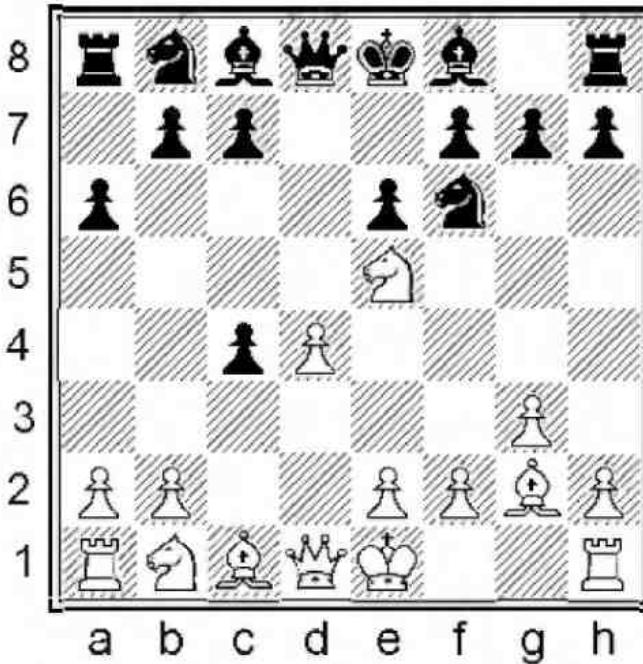
Black wants to strengthen the pawn on c4 with the move ...b7-b5 and at the same time reserves the possibility of the advance ...c7-c5.

This is what Vladimir Kramnik has said about the line:

*The variation with ...dx $c$ 4 and ...a6 used to be very popular, but in general, it is only for real specialists. White has a mass of possibilities, and in extremis, he can always simply sacrifice a pawn by b2-b3, when White has pleasant, practical compensation. This is one of the reasons this line has never really appealed to me for Black; if White does not want to fight hard for an opening advantage, he can always just obtain good practical compensation and a pleasant position to play. Even so, the line has its supporters, for example Loek van Wely, who plays it all the time.*

*Of course, this is one of only a few variations of the Catalan where Black can play for a win. He hangs on to the c4-pawn and starts somewhat strange, scrappy play. It is a very risky variation for Black, but it is playable.*

6. $\mathbb{Q}e5$



**A) 6...Ba7**

**B) 6...c5**

**C) 6...Bb4+**

**A) 6...Ba7**

In this cunning manner, Black frees the long diagonal so as to be able to solve as soon as possible the problem of his light-squared bishop.

**7.0-0 b6**

**8.Qc3 Bb7**

**9.Qa4+ Qfd7**

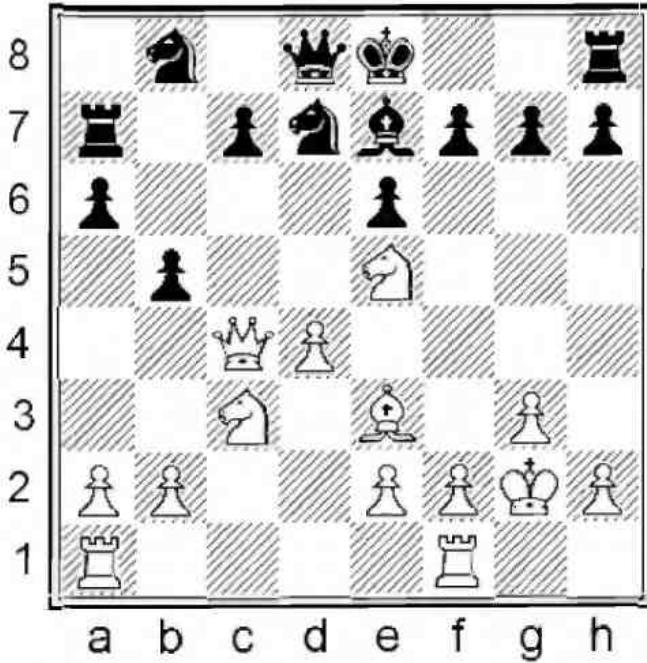
Beliavsky-Portisch, Hungary 1998/99.

**10.Qe3 Bxg2**

**11.Qxg2 Be7**

Black cannot play ...b6-b5 because of Qxb5.

**12.Qxc4 b5**



Only now is this move possible, but White has already regained the sacrificed pawn and obtained superiority in the centre.

**13.♗b3 ♗xe5**

**14.dxe5 c5**

**15.a4±**

An important move, forcing the opponent to weaken his queenside pawns. White's chances are preferable.

**B) 6...c5!?**

After this move the second knight is brought into the battle:

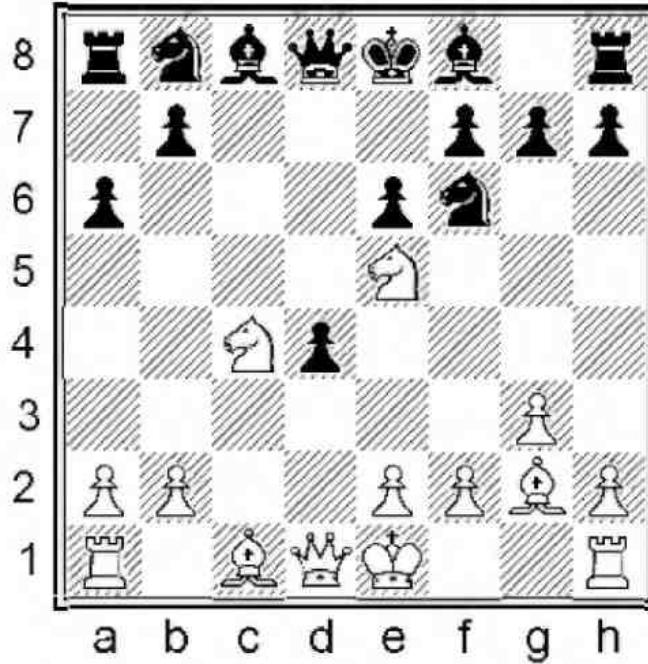
**7.♘a3**

In my opinion, everything has already been said about 7.♘e3 ♘d5 8.dxc5 ♘d7 9.♘xc4 ♘xe3 10.♘xe3 ♘xc5 – Black has no weaknesses, whilst White's slight initiative is easily offset by Black's two bishops, for instance: 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘c3 ♘xe3 13.fxe3 ♘g5 14.♗d4 ♘f6 15.♗f4 ♘c5 16.♗d4 ♘g5 17.♗f4 ♘c5 18.♗d4 ♘g5, draw, Wang Yue-Leko, Astrakhan 2010.

**7...cxd4**

If Black voluntarily exchanges queens with 7...♕xd4 8.♕xd4 cxd4 9.♘axc4, then he faces a rather dismal defence in the ending, for example: 9...♗bd7 (9...♗fd7 10.0-0 f6 11.♘xd7 ♘xd7 12.e3 ♘c5 13.exd4 ♘xd4 14.♗d1 e5 15.♘d6+ ♖f8 16.♗e3 ♘xe3 17.fxe3± Razuvayev-Beliavsky, Tashkent 1980) 10.0-0 ♘xe5 11.♘xe5 ♘d6 12.♘c4 ♘c7 13.♘f4! (it is important to prevent the pawn coming to e5, whilst it is also useful to weaken the dark squares in the enemy camp) 13...♗xf4 14.gxf4 ♘b8 15.♗fd1 ♖e7 16.♗xd4± Karpov-Van Wely, Monaco 2001.

**8.♘axc4**



**B1) 8...♝a7**

**B2) 8...♝c5**

**B1) 8...♝a7**

**9.♗d2**

An important resource: now Black does not have the tempo move ...b7-b5 because of the entry of the bishop on a5, with very unpleasant threats.

**9...b6**

He has to limit himself to this modest move.

**B11) 10.♕b3**

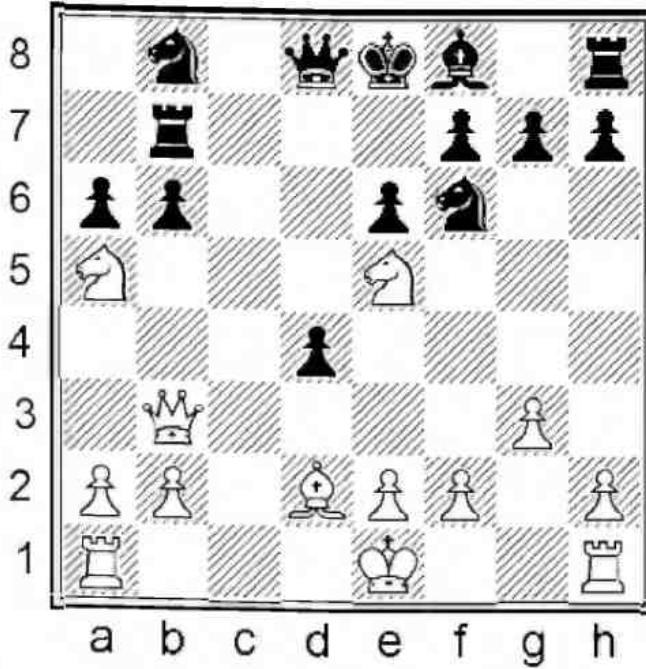
**B12) 10.0-0**

**B11) The direct attack is interesting:**

**10.♕b3 ♜b7**

**11.♗xb7 ♘xb7**

**12.♘a5**



Here, Black has three rook moves at his disposal, but only one leads to equality.

**B111) 12...♜e7**

**B112) 12...♜c7**

**B113) 12...♜a7**

**B111) 12...♜e7**

**13.♝c1 ♜e7**

13...bxa5 14.♛a4+ ♜bd7 15.♜xa5!?, ♛a8 16.0-0±.

**14.0-0 ♜c5**

A) 14...♜bd7 15.♝ac6 ♜c8 16.♝xd7 ♜xd7 17.♝xd4±;

B) 14...♜xc1 15.♜xc1 ♜bd7 16.♝ac6 ♜a8 17.♝xd7 ♜xd7 18.♝xd4±;

C) 14...bxa5 15.♛a4+ ♜bd7 16.♜xa5 ♜d6 17.♜xc7 ♜xc7 18.♝c6 ♜a8 19.♜fd1 ♜d8 20.♝xd8 ♜xd8 21.♜xd4 0-0 22.♛xa6±.

**15.♝d3 0-0**

**16.♝xc5 bxc5**

**17.♜f4 ♜c8**

**18.♝b7 ♛d7**

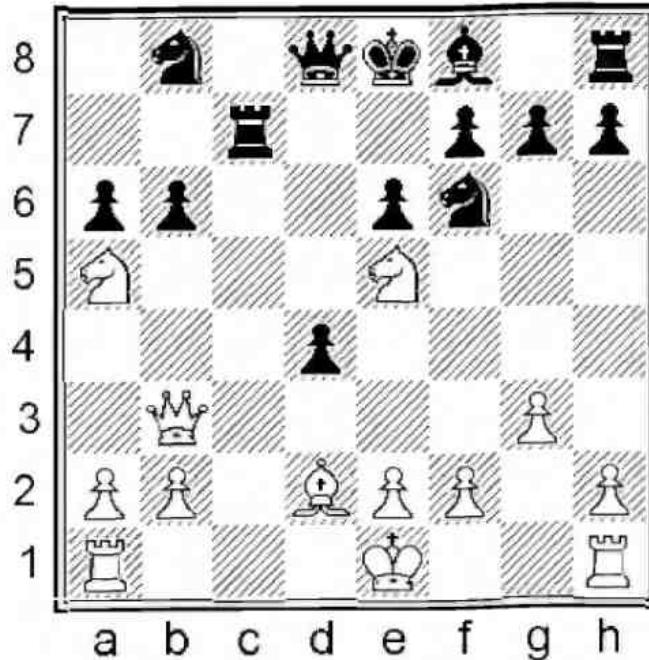
**19.♝xc5 ♛e7**

19...♝b5 20.♝xb5 axb5 21.♜e5±, Zhu Chen-Zhao Xue, Istanbul 2008.

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$**

**B112) If Black sets a trap for the queen, by means of**

**12...  $\mathbb{E}c7$**



then White can boldly fall into it:

**13.  $\mathbb{W}xb6!$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

It turns out that 13...  $\mathbb{E}c1+$  is bad because of 14.  $\mathbb{E}xc1$   $\mathbb{W}xb6$  15.  $\mathbb{E}c8+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}ec4!$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  17.  $\mathbb{E}xb8!+-$ .

**14.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}ac4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  0-0**

**17. 0-0 $\pm$**

The black pawns at a6 and d4 are weak, whilst White has a very well placed knight at e5.

**B113) 12...  $\mathbb{E}a7$**

**13. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

If 13...  $bxa5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5\pm$ , White regains the piece with interest.

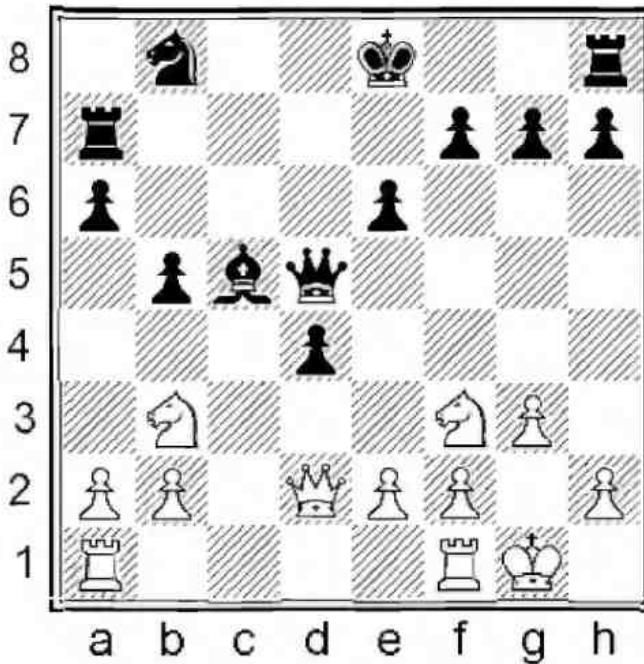
**14.  $\mathbb{W}a4+$   $b5$**

**15.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$**

**16.  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}d5$**

17.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$



White retains a slight initiative, and definite accuracy is still required of Black.

18...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$

18... 0-0 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20.  $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  21.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{E}d7$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  24.  $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (Dizdar-I. Novikov, Lucerne 1998) 26.  $\mathbb{Q}a5\pm$ .

19.  $\mathbb{Q}fxd4$  0-0

20.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}d7$

with equality.

**B12) 10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

11.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}xb7$

Black has solved the problem of his light-squared bishop, but now he has a different problem – he lags behind in development.

12.  $\mathbb{E}c1$

**B121) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

**B122) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

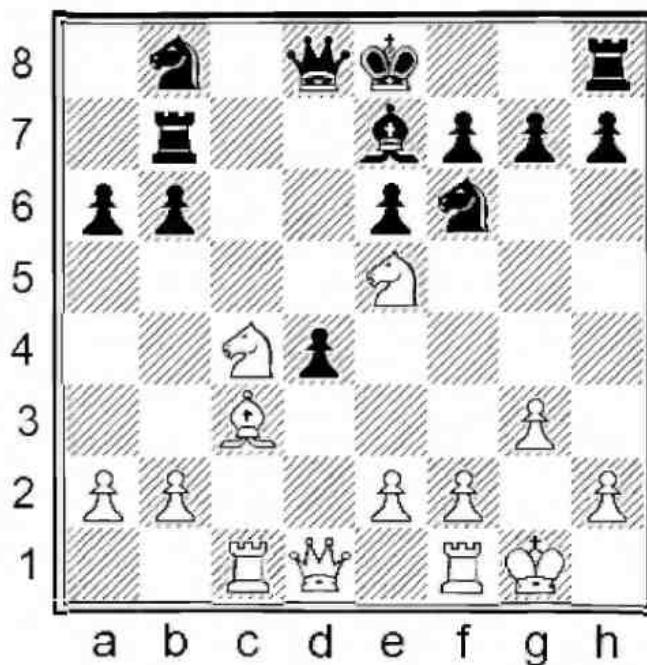
**B123) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**B124) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

### B121) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

This most natural developing move runs into the unexpected and attractive refutation

13. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$



13... $\mathbb{B}c7$

Taking the bishop is bad because of forks by the two knights: 13...dxc3 14. $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  cxb2 17. $\mathbb{B}c8+-$ ) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}cd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a5$  bxa5 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3+\pm$ .

Or 13...0-0 14. $\mathbb{W}xd4$  b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{B}c7$  16. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  18. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{B}c2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{B}xd1+$  20. $\mathbb{B}xd1$   $\mathbb{B}xe2$  21. $\mathbb{W}f3\pm$  Fridman-Dzagnidze, Gibraltar 2011. White can regain the pawn at any moment, whilst it remains a big question how Black can complete his development.

14. $\mathbb{W}xd4$

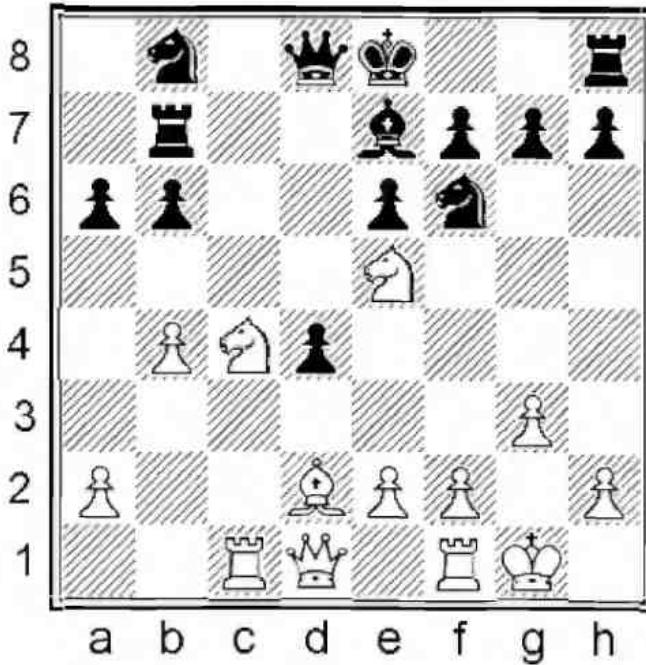
White has established material equality and obtained a highly promising position: he has a lead in development and Black's queenside is weak.

### B122) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

13.b4

13. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{B}c7$  14.b4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}ac6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0 18. $\mathbb{B}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}xd1$  21. $\mathbb{B}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  22. $\mathbb{B}c1!$  f6 (22... $\mathbb{Q}xb4?$  23. $\mathbb{B}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  24. $\mathbb{B}d6$  f5 25. $\mathbb{Q}g5+-$ ) 23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}f7=$  Wang Yue-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$



**14.♗e3!**

An important tactical resource: White attacks the stray d4-pawn, cut off from its base, exploiting the fact that the bishop cannot be taken, because of the loss of one of the rooks.

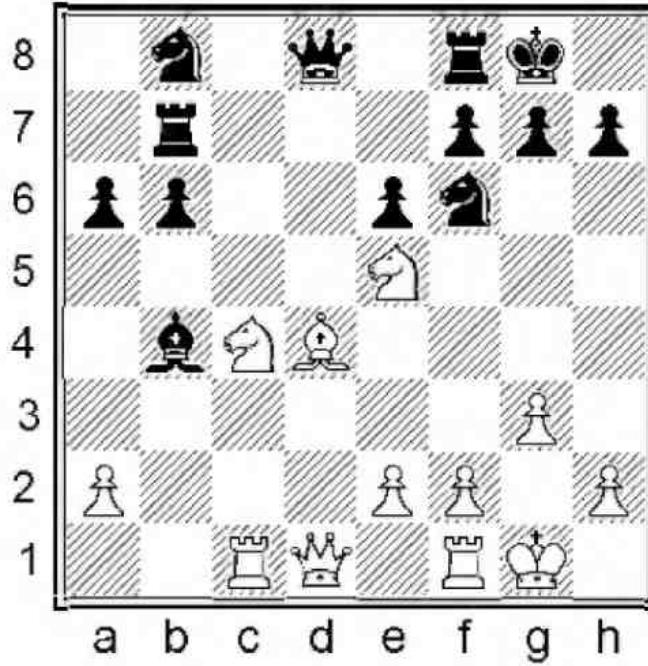
Weaker is 14.♗b3 0-0 15.♗fd1 ♗c7 16.♗f4 b5 17.♗xf7 ♗xf7 18.♗xc7 ♗xc7 19.♗d2 ♗d7 20.♗f3 ♗c6 21.♗g5 h6 22.♗xe6 ♗e4+ Volokitin-Navara, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

**14...0-0**

14...dxe3 15.♗xd8+ ♗xd8 16.♗xf7+ ♗e8 17.♗cd6+ ♗xd6 18.♗xd6+ ♗e7 19.♗xb7+–.

**15.♗xd4 ♗xb4**

15...♗d5 16.a3 f6 17.♗f3 e5 (Giri-Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 2010) 18.e4 exd4 19.exd5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd4±.



**16.♕xb6!**

Another nice tactical blow: now if Black takes the bishop, White exchanges queens and takes on b6, with an extra exchange.

**16...♝xd1**

**17.♜fxd1 ♜bd7**

**18.♝d4 ♜c7**

**18...♜c8 19.♜b1±.**

**19.♞d3 ♜e7**

**20.♞b6 ♜b7**

**21.♞c8 ♜a3**

**22.♜c3 ♜b2**

**23.♞xb2 ♜xb2**

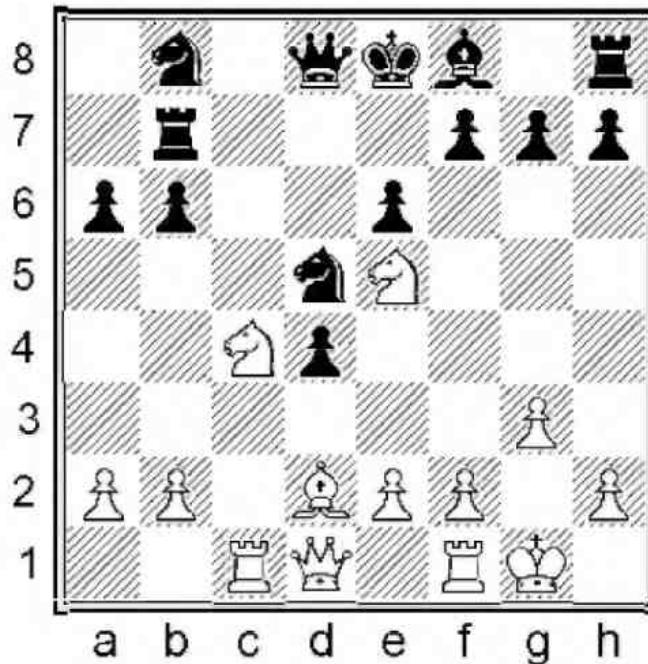
**24.♜a3 ♜xe2**

**25.♞e7+ ♔h8**

**26.♜xa6±**

So far Van Wely-Robson, Moscow 2009.

**B123) 12...♞d5**



**13.  $\mathbb{W}a4+$ !**

Forcing the opponent to play ...b6-b5, weakening the a5-square.

White is also slightly better after 13.e3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14.exd4 0-0 15.Qe3±.

**13...b5**

13... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xa6$ , and Black's position quickly collapses.

**14.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$**

The knight was invulnerable because of the hanging position of the rook on b7; but now White begins a cavalry raid on the queenside.

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{R}c7$**

**16.  $\mathbb{R}xe5!$   $\mathbb{R}xe5$**

**17.  $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{W}c7$**

**18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$**

18... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  loses immediately because of 19.  $\mathbb{R}c1$  and 20.  $\mathbb{R}c8+$ .

**19.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6\pm$**

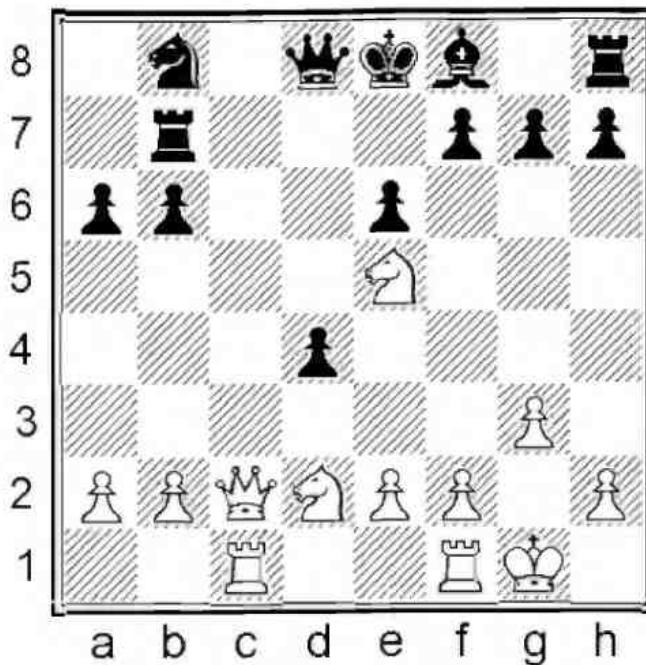
Berczes-Halvax, Austria 2010/11.

**B124) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**13.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$**

**14.♘xd2**

In many cases, exchanges help White, despite the fact that he is temporarily a pawn down. He has exchanged the opponent's active knight for his modest bishop on d2 and now controls the c-file, whilst his queen has an open path to e4.



**14...♝c5**

He does not succeed in closing the open file.

**15.b4! ♘d6**

Of course, it is bad to play 15...♝xb4? 16.♛a4+.

**16.♛e4 ♜c7**

Tkachiev-S. Atalik, Moscow 2005. Here I recommend that White simply recapture the pawn, first bringing the knight to an excellent post:

**17.♘d3 0-0**

**18.♘xd4**

The pawn structure is virtually symmetrical, but White has a lead in development, more actively placed pieces, and the knight on b8 can become a real problem for Black, because it is hard to bring it into play.

**18...♜xc1**

**19.♜xc1 ♘e7**

**20.♛c4±**

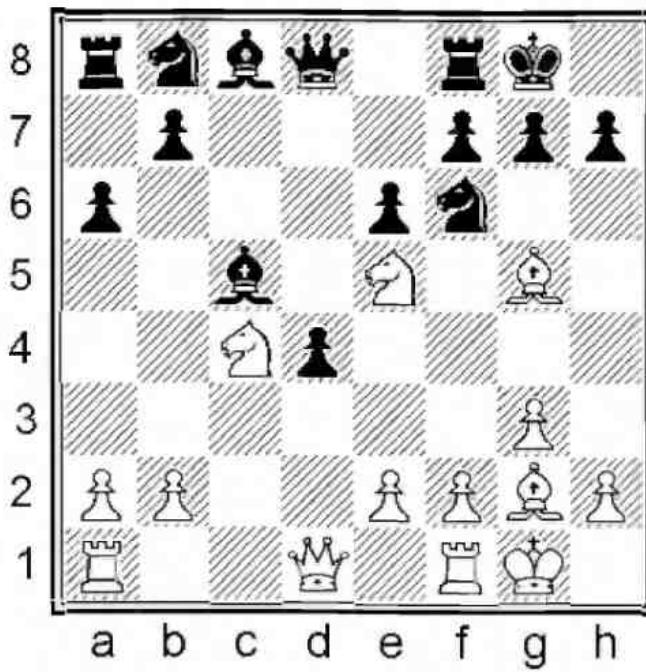
Firm control of the c-file ensures White a lasting advantage.

## B2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c5$

Undoubtedly the strongest reply for Black. At this moment, I do not see a precise path to an advantage for White, but I think it should be possible to find one.

9.0-0 0-0

10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



10...h6

The strongest – Black forces the play.

If 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  it is hard for Black to complete the development of his queenside, for example:  
12... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  ± RYBKA-Hannibal X, Internet 2010.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$

11...gxf6 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  (Raetsky-Mahesh, Biel 2004) 15. $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$  b6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4!?$  ±.

12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$

13. $\mathbb{W}a4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

After the tempting 13..b5? White replies with the cold 14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  bxc4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ –. Dubious is 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  followed by  $\mathbb{W}xb7$  and a clear advantage to White.

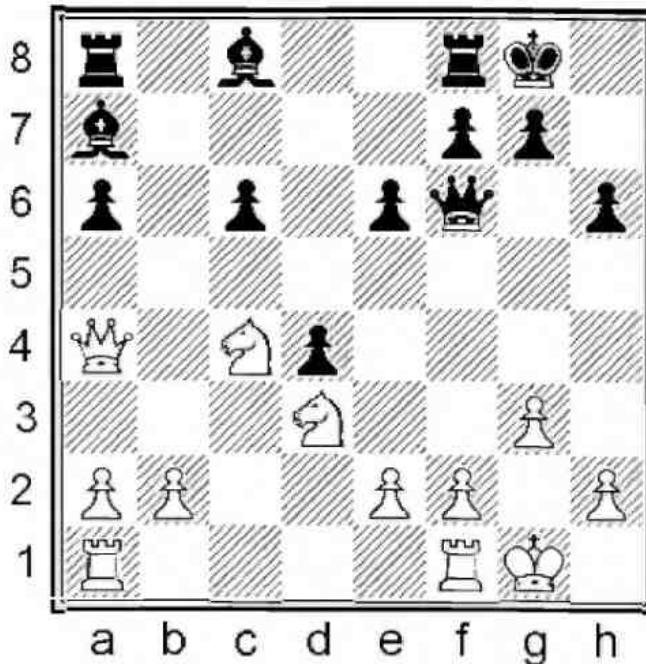
14. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$

It is always difficult to part with the Catalan bishop, but White will remain with beautiful blockading knights against the

black bishops, and Black's camp contains many weaknesses.

On 14... $\mathbb{E}ac1$  very strong is 14...e5! (14...b5 15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  bxc4 16. $\mathbb{E}xc4\pm$ ) 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  b5! (I think Anand missed this lovely tactical idea; White is better after 15...bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$  c5 17. $\mathbb{Q}d7\pm$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$ ! axb5 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  e4=) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}cxe5$   $\mathbb{W}e4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4=$  Anand-Topalov, Sofia 2010. Even in this position, White can continue to fight for the advantage, but I believe that his play can be strengthened; probably some improvement will soon be found.

**14...bxc6**



**15.b4!**

White should not rush to regain the pawn, as after 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Black's hands would be freed: 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  d3 24. $\mathbb{Q}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}b6=$ .

**15... $\mathbb{W}d8$**

**16. $\mathbb{E}ab1$**

Again, the principle 'do not hurry' is seen in action: the c6-pawn is not going anywhere, and it is important to take it the best possible way.

Less good is 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ ? (the key idea for White, as this allows him to exchange the potentially very strong black bishop, leaving him with the 'fool' on a7) 17... $\mathbb{B}b6$  (17...a5 18.bxa5  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  19. $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  20.a4 $\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20.bxc5  $\mathbb{E}c6$  21. $\mathbb{E}ac1$  f6 22. $\mathbb{E}c4$  e5 23.f3  $\mathbb{E}b8$  24. $\mathbb{E}fc1$  a5=.

**16... $\mathbb{W}d5$**

**17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$  f6**

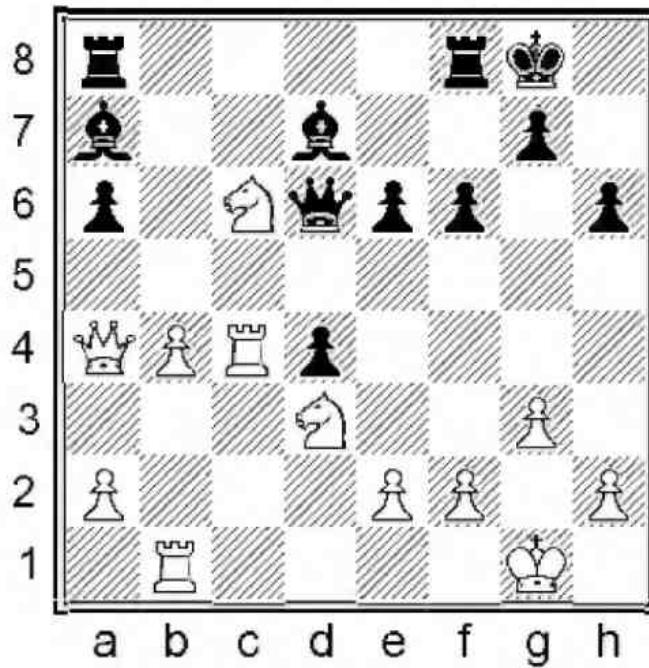
**18. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

**19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**

Now is the right time – White should enter on the c6-square.

19... $\mathbb{W}d6$

20. $\mathbb{E}c4!$



Defending everything!

20... $\mathbb{E}fc8$

21. $\mathbb{E}bc1 \mathbb{Q}b6$

22. $\mathbb{W}c2 e5$

23.a4 e4

24. $\mathbb{Q}f4 d3$

25.exd3 e3

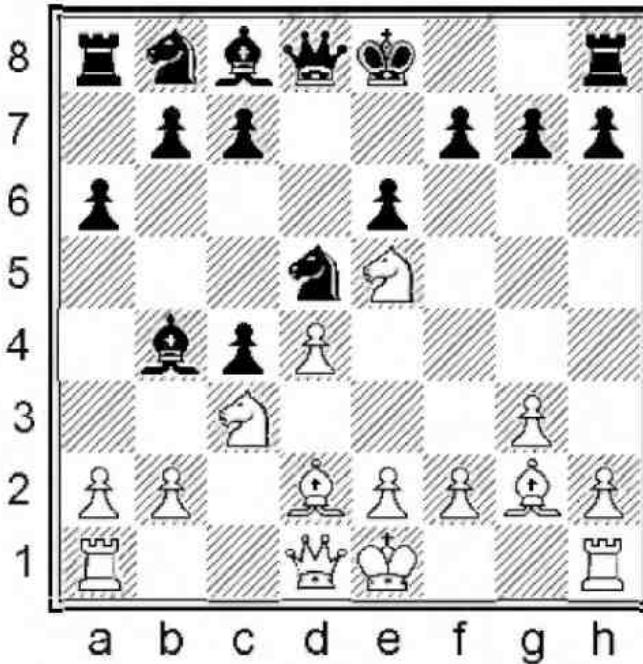
26.d4 exf2+

27. $\mathbb{Q}xf2\pm$

C) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+!?$

7. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d5$

8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



**C1) 8...♝b6**

**C2) 8...b5**

**C1)** The attempt to defend the c4-pawn with a piece by

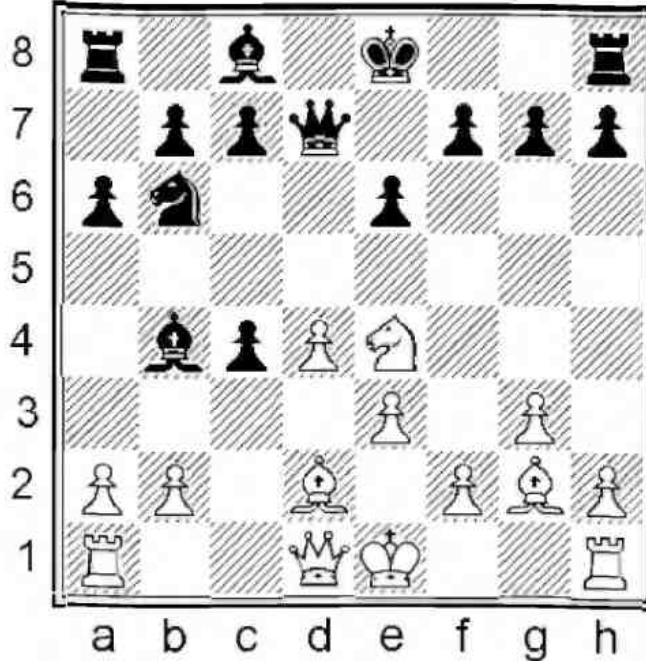
**8...♝b6**

usually only delays its capture by a few moves.

**9.e3 ♛d7**

**10.♝xd7 ♜xd7**

On 10...♛xd7 the reply 11.♝e4! is very unpleasant for Black, for example:



- A) 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  12.0-0 0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$  a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  axb4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  e5 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  exd4 18.exd4  $\mathbb{W}d6$  19. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$ ;
- B) 11... $\mathbb{W}b5$  12.0-0 0-0 13.a4  $\mathbb{W}a5$  14. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  15. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17.a5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$  Nakamura-Kraai, Saint Louis 2010;
- C) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  12. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  13.0-0 0-0 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ , and White firmly seizes the initiative, for instance 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{E}fc1$  b6 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  b5 19.b3 (a typical idea, which I very much like: when Black defends the c4-pawn with the move ...b7-b5, we can always offer a positional pawn sacrifice with b2-b3, to open the a- and c-files) 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  20.axb3  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  h6 22. $\mathbb{E}c2$  c6 23. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ . White has the superior position, with more than enough compensation for the pawn.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$**

White has regained the pawn, and thanks to the better pawn structure, he has the advantage.

**12...0-0**

**13.0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$**

Houska-Hammer, Bergen 2009.

**14.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**15.a4 a5**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

**17. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$**

**18. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  c5**

**19.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}xc5$**

20.b3  $\mathbb{E}fc8$

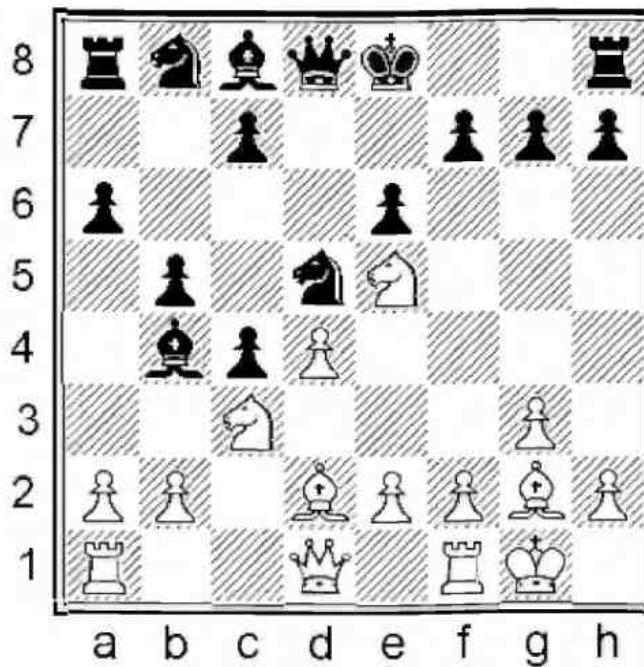
21. $\mathbb{E}fc1\pm$

C2) 8...b5

9.0-0

C21) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

C22) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$



C21) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$

After this move tactical complications begin, which will turn out in White's favour.

10. $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd2$

11. $\mathbb{Q}f6+$

This is why it was necessary to castle kingside first: now Black takes on d2 without check, and White has the chance to play this intermediate move.

11...gxf6

12. $\mathbb{Q}xb7 fxe5$

12... $\mathbb{E}a7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c6+-$ .

13. $\mathbb{Q}xa8 c3$

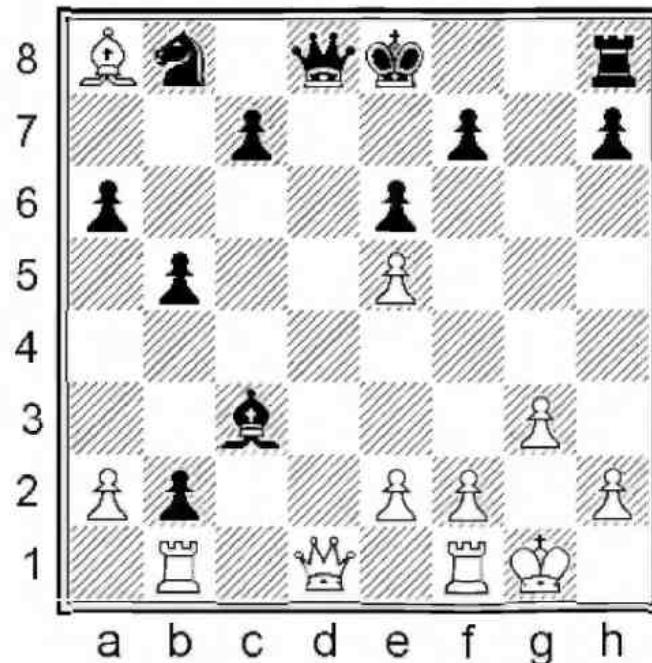
Or 13... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  14. $\mathbb{W}c2$  0-0 15.e3  $\mathbb{W}d6$  16. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{B}d8$ . Now Black cannot escape from the pin on the d-file, and also bring his knight into play. White quietly strengthens the pressure: 17.a4  $\mathbb{B}g7$  18.axb5 axb5 19. $\mathbb{B}f3\pm$ .

#### 14.dxe5

14.bxc3  $\mathbb{B}xc3$  15.dxe5  $\mathbb{B}xa1$  16. $\mathbb{W}xa1$  c5 17. $\mathbb{B}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  18.f4 c4 with mutual chances.

#### 14...exb2

#### 15. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{B}c3$



A crazy position: Black is an exchange down and has a weak king, but in return, he has a very strong pawn on b2, supported by the bishop.

#### 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$ $\mathbb{B}xe5$

The alternative is 16... $\mathbb{W}d4$  17. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  18.a3 (preventing ...b5-b4; White wants to play  $\mathbb{B}d3$ , to drive away the enemy bishop from the long diagonal and take the pawn on b2) 18...c5 19. $\mathbb{E}d3$  b4 20.f4  $\mathbb{W}c7$  (20... $\mathbb{W}f6$  21.axb4 cxb4 22. $\mathbb{B}xb2$   $\mathbb{B}d4+$  (22... $\mathbb{B}xb2$  23. $\mathbb{B}c8+$   $\mathbb{B}e7$  24. $\mathbb{B}c5+$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  25. $\mathbb{B}d6$   $\mathbb{B}d7$  26. $\mathbb{B}c6$   $\mathbb{B}e7$  27. $\mathbb{B}b8+$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  28. $\mathbb{B}xd7+$   $\mathbb{B}e7$  29. $\mathbb{B}xb4+$  winning) 23. $\mathbb{B}g2$   $\mathbb{B}xb2$  24. $\mathbb{B}c8+$   $\mathbb{B}e7$  25. $\mathbb{B}c5+$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  26. $\mathbb{B}d6+-$ ) 21. $\mathbb{B}xc3$  (21.axb4 cxb4 22. $\mathbb{B}xb2$  fails to 22... $\mathbb{W}a7+$  23.e3 0-0 – Black has regained the exchange, with an extra pawn) 21...bxc3 22. $\mathbb{B}xc3$  0-0 23. $\mathbb{B}xb2\pm$ .

#### 17. $\mathbb{B}fd1$

An unclear position results from 17. $\mathbb{B}c6+$   $\mathbb{B}f8$  18. $\mathbb{B}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  19. $\mathbb{B}e4$   $\mathbb{B}g7\infty$ .

#### 17... $\mathbb{W}e7$

White is better after 17... $\mathbb{W}f6$  18. $\mathbb{B}d3$ .

#### 18.f4 $\mathbb{B}g7$

#### 19. $\mathbb{B}c6+$ $\mathbb{B}f8$

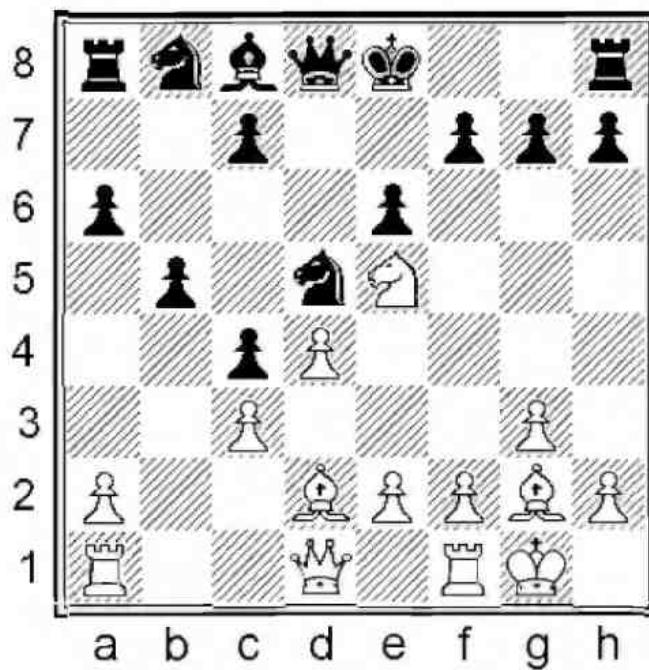
**20.e4 ♖b4**

**21.e5±**

White has shut the ♗g7 out of the game, after which he will take on b2 and stand better.

**C22) 9...♗xc3**

**10.bxc3**



**C221) 10...0-0**

**C222) 10...f6**

**C221) 10...0-0**

**11.a4**

11.e4 ♗b6 12.f4 ♗b7 13.f5 exf5 14.♗xf5 ♗8d7 15.♗g4 ♖e7 16.♕c2 ♖ae8 17.♗e1 f6 18.♗f4 ♗a4 19.♗e3 ♖a3 20.♗b1 ♗db6 21.♗h4 ♗c8 22.e5 f5∞ Nogueiras-Ivanchuk, Havana 2006.

**11...c6**

11...f6 12.♗f3 c6 13.♕c2 ♗b7 14.h4 ♖e8 15.♗fe1 ♗d7 16.e4 ♗c7 17.♗c1 (a very strong manoeuvre: the bishop transfers to the weakened diagonal a3-f8) 17...♖h5 18.♗a3 c5 19.dxc5 ♗f7 (D. Gurevich-Hess, Philadelphia 2009) 20.♗d1 e5 (20...bxa4 21.♗xa4) 21.♗h3±. By combining several ideas, White convincingly shows that the two bishops are a great strength in this position.

**12.♕c2 f6**

**13.♗g4**

White wants to play e2-e4, and later, perhaps, place his knight on e3.

**13...♞d7**

**14.e4 ♜e7**

**15.axb5 cxb5**

**16.♝c1**

A typical and strong manoeuvre: less convincing is 16.e5 ♞d5 17.exf6 ♞7xf6 18.♝e5 ♖h8 19.♝fe1 with compensation.

**16...♝b7**

**17.♝a3 ♕e8**

**18.♝fd1 ♜b6**

**19.♞e3**

White plays very logically, steadily strengthening his position.

**19...♝ad8**

**20.♛b1 e5**

**21.d5 ♞c8**

Thus far the game Bareev-Korotylev, Krasnoyarsk 2007.

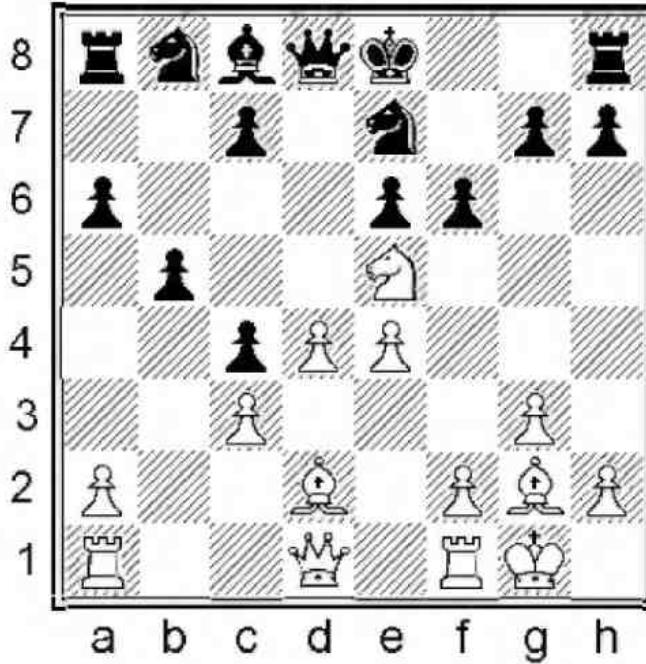
**22.♛b4!**

A very strong manoeuvre, preparing to put the knight on d6. If Black plays 22...♞f8, then after 23.♝ab1± there is a threat of capturing on c4. The pressure on Black's position grows.

**C222) 10...f6**

**11.e4 ♜e7**

Obviously, 11...fxe5? is bad because of 12.exd5 exd5 13.♛h5+.



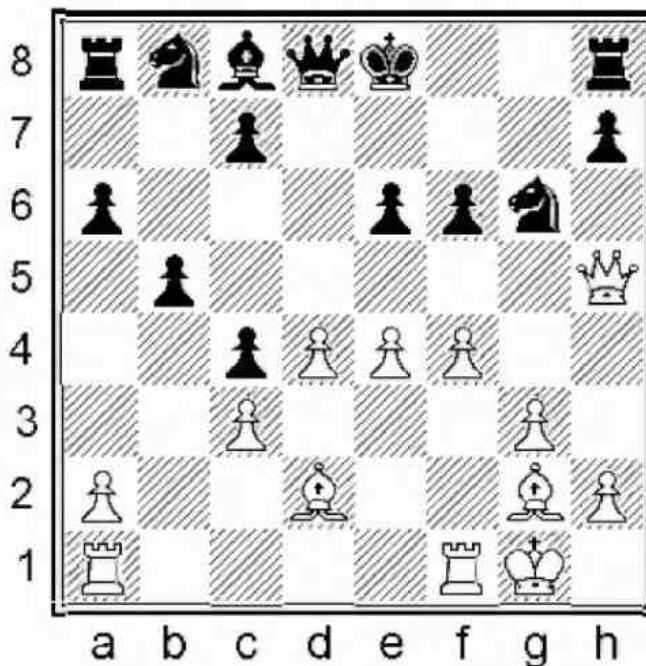
**12.  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$ !**

Also good is 12.  $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mathbb{Q}b7!?$  (12...c6 13.a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 15.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  f5 16. exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}d7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ ) 13. a4 0-0 (13...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. axb5 axb5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}b6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  with compensation Yevseev-Khrushev, St Petersburg 2009) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5 (14...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b1 \mathbb{Q}b6$  16. axb5 axb5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5\pm$ ) 15. d5 exd5 16. exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$  18. axb5 $\pm$ .

**12...g6**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xg6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$**

**14.f4**



Black has a clear extra piece, but it is difficult to see a satisfactory defence for him.

**14...c6**

14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15.f5 loses at once, whilst after 14...0-0 there is the very unpleasant 15.f5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ .

**15.f5  $\mathbb{Q}f7$**

Cheerless is 15...exf5 16.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  17. $\mathbb{E}ae1+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{E}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19. $\mathbb{E}ef1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+-$ .

**16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$**

This brilliant blow was probably prepared earlier. Now Black cannot construct a defence.

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

If 16...exf5, than 17.exf5  $\mathbb{E}a7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  19.fxg6 hxg6 20. $\mathbb{W}xh8+!$  (the coup de grace, which spares Black long suffering) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  22. $\mathbb{E}xf6+-$ .

**17.e5!**

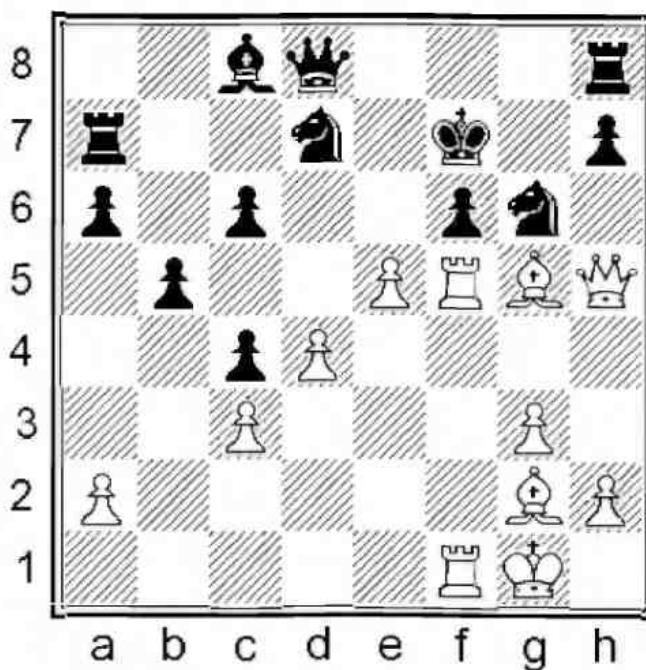
Not allowing Black the slightest hope of survival.

**17...exf5**

Or 17... $\mathbb{E}a7$  18.fxe6+  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  20. $\mathbb{E}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21. $\mathbb{E}af1$  with irresistible threats.

**18. $\mathbb{E}xf5$   $\mathbb{E}a7$**

**19. $\mathbb{E}af1$**



White has a very strong attack. The game did not last long.

**19...♝c7**

**20.♝xf6+ ♕xf6**

**21.♝xf6+ ♔g8**

**22.♝d6 ♕f8**

**23.♝d8 ♔e6**

**24.♝e4 ♜c8**

**25.♝xf8+ ♕xf8**

**26.♞f6**

Black resigned, M. Kopylov-Solleveld, Germany 2010.

### Conclusion

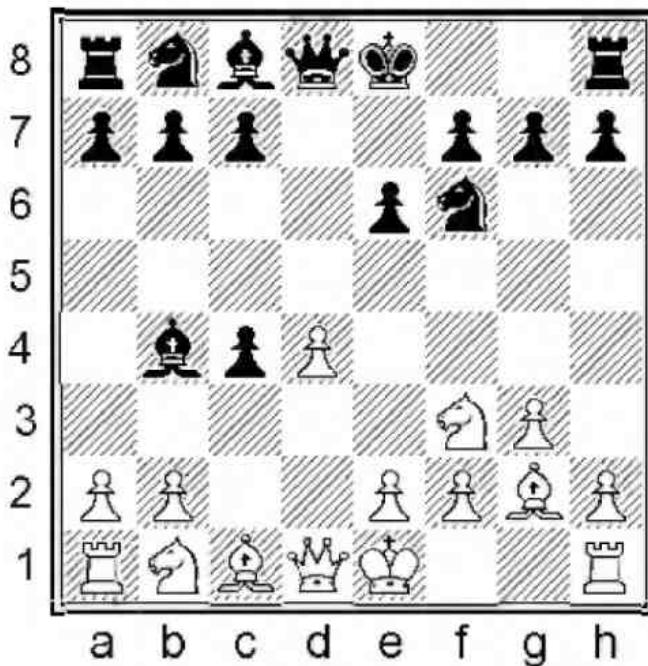
This is a very important line, in one of the sub-variations of which (6...c5, as played by Topalov against Anand in their 2010 world championship match) the ball is currently in White's court. Even so, I think that with such excellent squares as c4 and d3 for his knights, he has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn and can still fight for the advantage.

If Black does not play 6...c5, then White has simple play with the initiative. If after 6...♝b4+ 7.♞c3 Black exchanges the bishop for the knight on c3, then White later brings his bishop to a3 and establishes control over the weakened dark squares. He puts his central pawns on d4 and e4, his knight on e3, and later he can put a rook on b1, establishing the tactical threat of ♜xc4, defending against which will not be easy. In addition, White can create the strategic threat of d4-d5, which is also very unpleasant.

We can draw the following general conclusion: this variation leads to complicated play, in which White has the better prospects.

## Chapter 11 – Bishop Check after 4...dxc4

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dxc4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4+$



It is probably somewhat tedious to try to remember all the move-orders and the numerous possibilities for Black. But once you have learned them, you start to feel a certain confidence in your strength and will be really ready to play the Catalan against anyone, not fearing if the opponent tries to surprise you with an unexpected continuation. At school, we all had to learn a certain amount by heart, so we know how to do it.

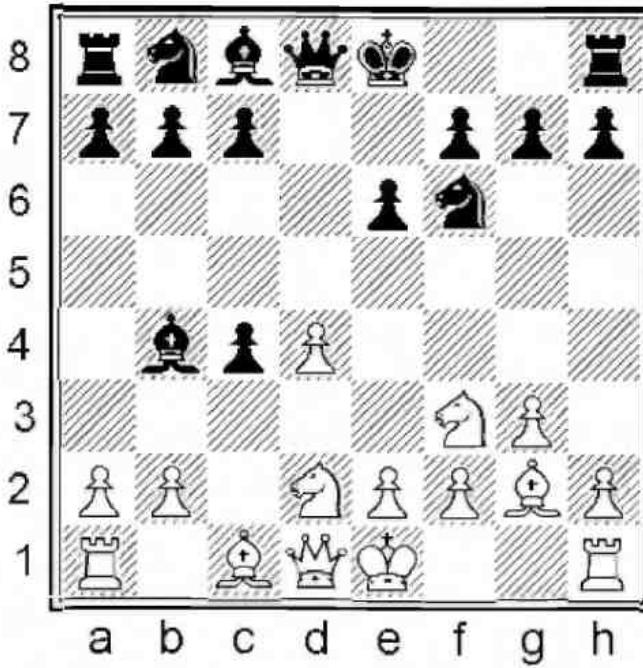
**A) 6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

**B) 6. $\mathbb{Q}d2$**

**A)** The pawn sacrifice

**6. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

is quite promising. Now Black has a wide choice.



**A1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**A2) 6...0-0**

**A3) 6...b5**

**A4) 6...c3**

**A1) 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**7.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$**

Incidentally, Black cannot take on d4, because after the exchange of knights and a queen check on a4, he loses his bishop. However, it is worth considering 7...c3 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  cxb2 9. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  0-0 10. $\mathbb{E}c1$ . Thanks to the pressure on the c-file, and the long white diagonal, White has good compensation for the pawn. For example, play might continue: 10... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.a3 a6 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c6 17. $\mathbb{Q}ac4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  18.a4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd5$  21.a5 with compensation Papaioannou-Tiviakov, Budva 2009.

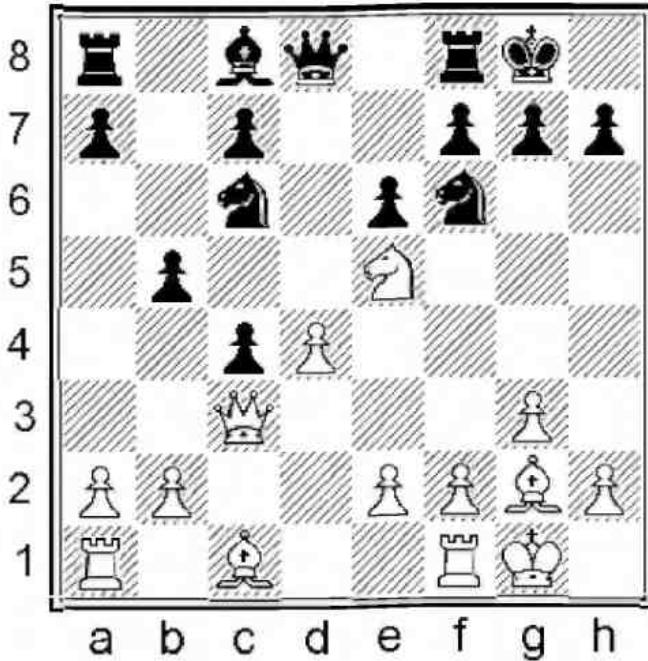
**8. $\mathbb{W}xd2$  0-0**

**9. $\mathbb{W}c3$  b5**

This is not an oversight – thanks to a small tactical trick, Black saves the exchange, but even so, he is still a long way from equality.

In reply to 9... $\mathbb{W}d5$  (Petursson-Nei, Tallinn 1981), White can simply continue developing, because it is practically impossible for Black to retain the extra pawn: 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{W}e3$  f5 12. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$ .

**10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$**



**10...Qxd4**

**11.Qe1**

White easily defends against the threat of a fork on e2, and now it is very difficult for Black to cover the holes in his queenside.

**11...c6**

**12.Qe3 Qf5**

Giardelli-Slipak, Argentina 1992.

**13.Qc5 Qb7**

Black hopes to buy his way out at the cost of the exchange, but White does not rush to take it: the bishop is very strong on c5, and he can continue to strengthen the pressure against the opponent's queenside.

**14.a4 Qd5**

**15.Qd2**

Threatening e2-e4.

**15...Qc7**

**16.Qc1±**

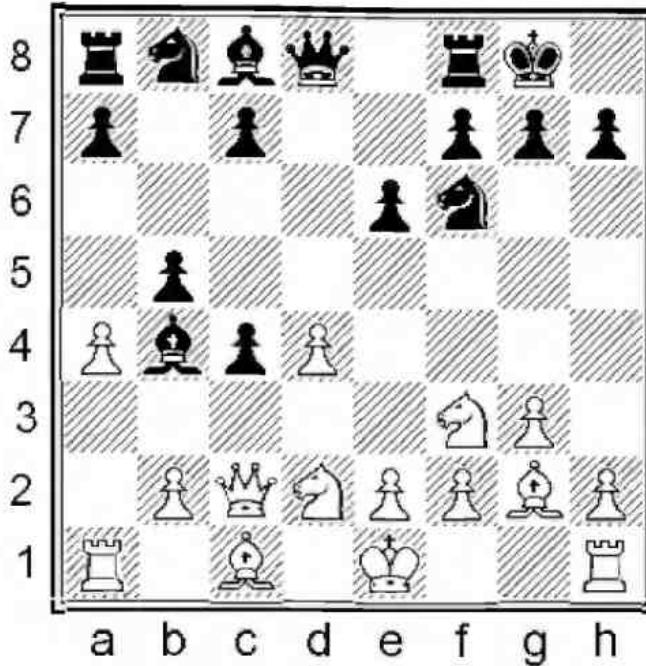
**A2) 6...0-0**

**7.Qc2**

An unclear position arises after 7.0-0 c3 8.♘c4 cxb2 9.♗xb2 with compensation.

7...b5

8.a4



8...bxa4

Black cannot defend the pawn on b5, and with it the pawn on c4, since after 8...c6 9.axb5 cxb5 there follows, with decisive effect, 10.♗g5! h6 11.h4!, and Black resigned in Aronov-Ushakov, corr. 1997.

9.0-0 ♘b7

10.♘xc4 c5

This break can be played at once, or after some small preparation, but the essence of things does not change: White retains a small advantage. For example: 10...♗bd7 11.♗xa4 a5 12.♗d2 ♘e4 13.♗d1 c5 14.dxc5 ♘c6 15.♗xb4! (White obtains a pawn for the exchange, but the main thing is that his two connected passed pawns, supported by the bishop pair, become very strong) 15...axb4 16.♗xb4 ♘a4 17.♗d4! (an important move: the pawn c5 must be blockaded) 17...♗xg2 18.♗xa4 ♘xf1 19.♗xf1± Gelfand-Almasi, Monaco 2003.

11.♗g5 ♘bd7

White also retains a small initiative after 11...♘c6 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.♗xa4 ♘e7 (Haba-Hübner, Germany 1990/91) 14.e3 ♘ac8 15.♗fd2?±. White has protected the important transfer point d4 and now threatens to transfer his knight to e4 or b3.

12.♗xa4 ♘b6

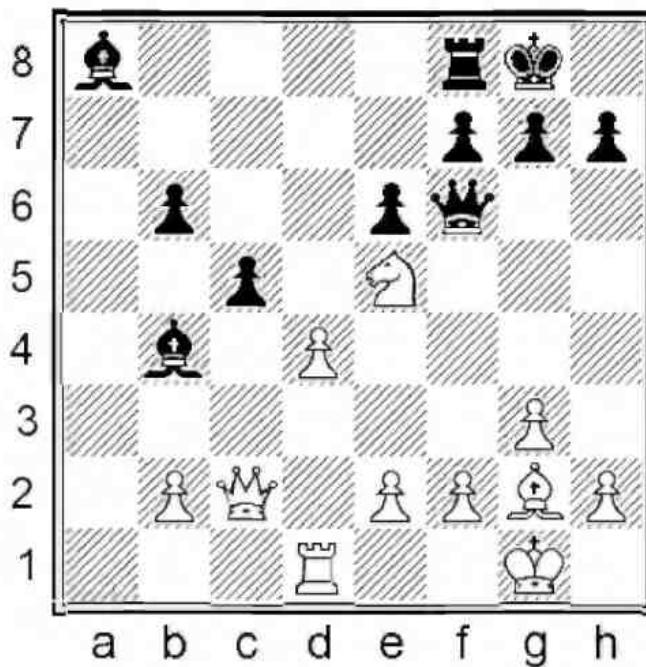
13.♗xb6 axb6

14.♗xa8 ♘xa8

15.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$

17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$



White exploits to the maximum the mobility of his knight; pay attention to the bishop on b4 – Black did not exchange it in time, and now what should in principle be a powerful piece is transformed into a target.

17...  $\mathbb{W}e7$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{R}xa8$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{W}d6$

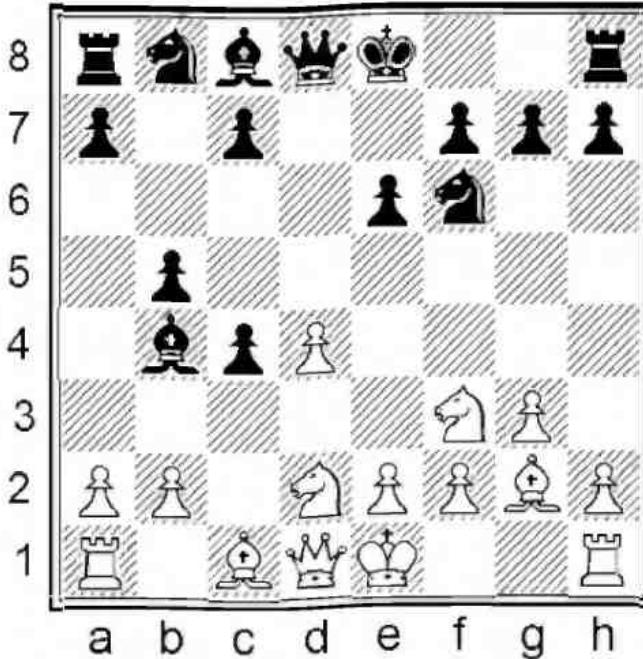
20.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $cxb4$

21.  $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$

Papaioannou-Mastrovasilis, Rhodes 2008. The extra central pawn and control of the open c-file ensures White a lasting initiative.

A3) 6...b5

This continuation requires extremely concrete play from both sides.



**A31) 7.0-0**

**A32) 7.♘e5**

On 7.a4 a very strong reply is 7...c3! 8.bxc3 ♖xc3 9.♗b1 b4∞. Black has managed to close not only the b-file, but also the a3-f8 diagonal, and his bishop on c3 is not so easy to shift.

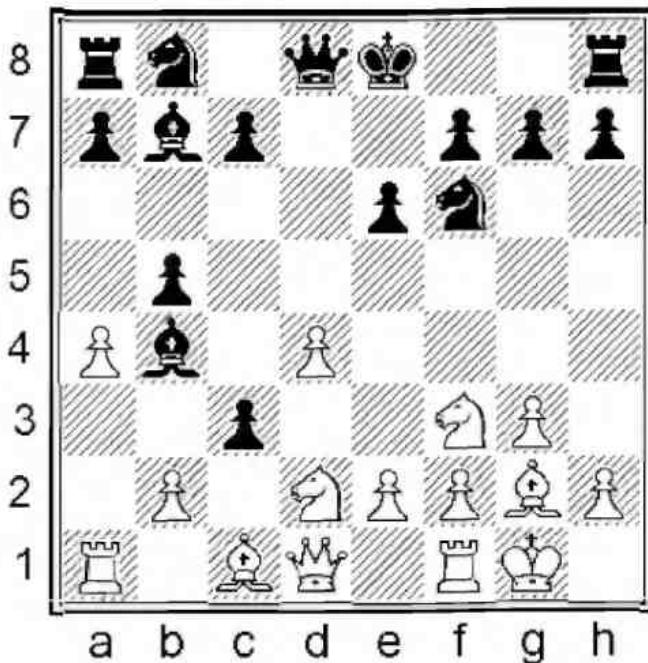
**A31) 7.0-0 ♖b7**

Also good is 7...0-0 8.a4 c6.

**8.a4 c3!?**

This appears to be best. If Black defends the b5-pawn immediately, then he remains permanently worse, for example 8...c6 9.axb5 cxb5 (9...♖xd2 10.♕xd2+–) 10.♘xc4! ♘bd7 (Enquist-Ahman, Sweden 1996) 11.♘d2! ♕e7 12.♘a5±.

Or 8...a6 9.axb5 ♖xd2 (on 9...axb5 there follows the already familiar operation 10.♕xa8 ♖xa8 11.♘xc4±) 10.♕xd2! axb5 11.♖xa8 ♖xa8 12.♗g5! (an unusual fork! White regains the pawn and obtains a positional advantage) 12...♗d5 13.♗xg7 ♔g8 14.♗h6±. Black has very weak dark squares, on both flanks.



**9.Qb1!?**

A computer move, the point of which is not immediately obvious. White's idea consists in attacking the b5-pawn and, at the same time, driving the enemy bishop from b4.

**9...exb2**

**10.Qxb2 a6**

**11.Qb3 Qd6**

**12.axb5 Qd5**

White's plan is fully realised in the variation 12...axb5 13.Qa3! Qa5 14.Qc2±.

**13.Qa4 0-0**

**14.Qe5**

With energetic play, White develops the initiative in the centre and on the queenside.

**14...axb5**

**15.Qxb5 Qxa1**

**16.Qxa1 c5**

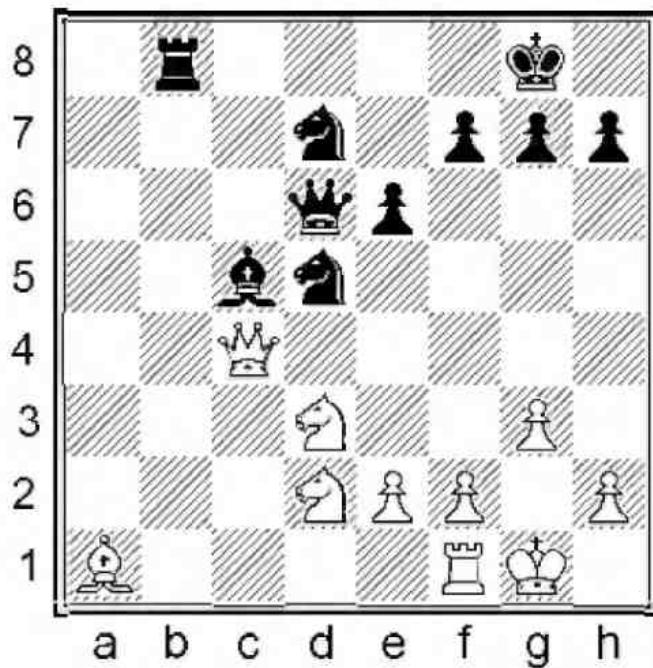
**17.Qd3 Qbd7**

**18.Qxd5 Qxd5**

**19.dxc5 Qxc5**

20.♘d2 ♜b8

21.♛c4±



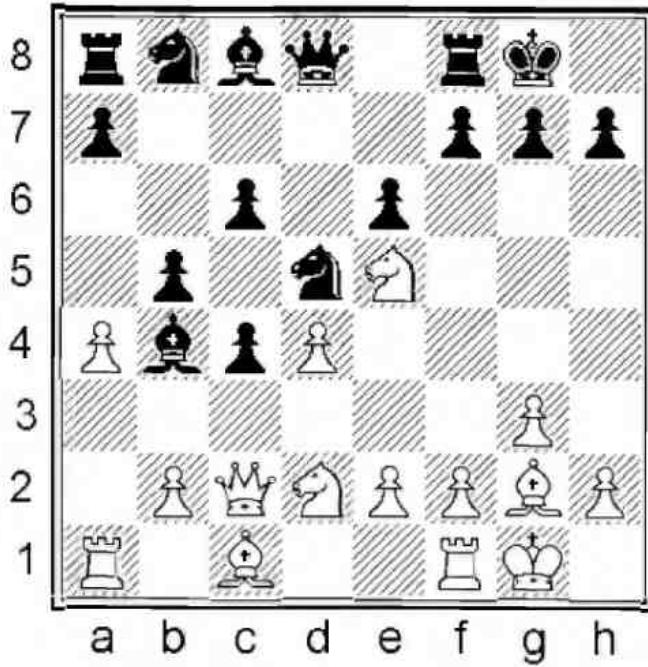
Despite the numerous exchanges, Black has still not achieved full equality, as his minor pieces occupy rather unstable positions.

A32) 7.♘e5 ♘d5

8.0-0 0-0

9.a4 c6

10.♛c2



**10...Bb7**

This was the game Naumann-Beliavsky, Germany 2004/05.

On 10...f6 White replies 11.Qef3 Be7 12.e4 Qb4 13.Wc3, then plays b2-b3 and obtains a small advantage, A. Zaitsev-Nikolaevsky, Kharkov 1967.

**11.Qd1 f6**

**12.Qef3 Qd6**

**13.e4 Qb4**

**14.Wc3 Qd3**

**15.b3**

Everyday life in the Catalan – White has given up a pawn, but the bishop on b7 is shut in, White has the centre and the black queenside is under pressure.

**15...Qb4**

**16.Wc2 Qxc1**

**17.Qaxc1 e3**

After 17...cxb3 18.Qxb3 the white knight hurries to jump into c5.

**18.Qb1 bxa4**

**19.bxa4 We7**

**20.Qxc3 Qd7**

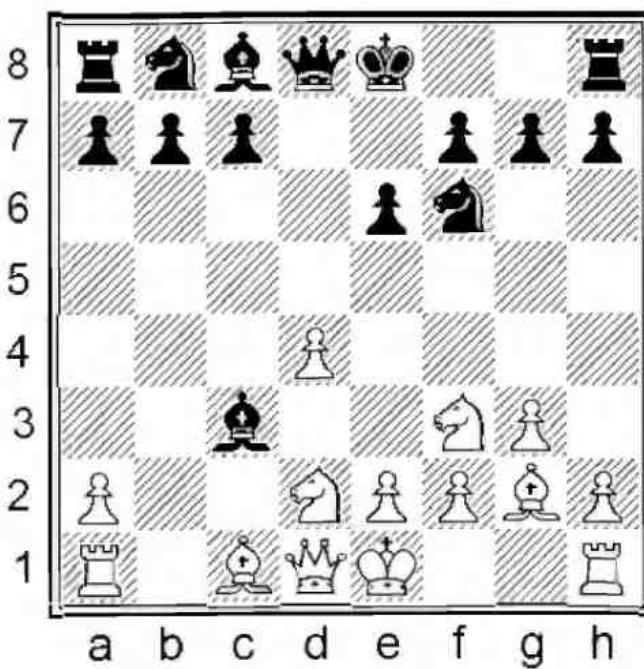
21.  $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$

Material equality has been re-established and White's position advantage is obvious.

A4) 6...c3!

I think this is Black's best reaction.

7.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

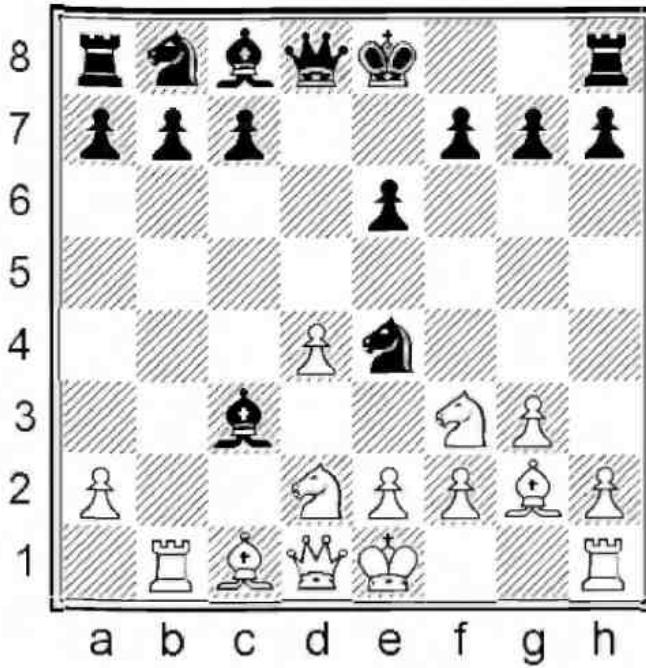


8.  $\mathbb{E}b1$

The position has a somewhat closed character, and gambit play 'a la Greco' does not work: 8.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  9.  $\mathbb{W}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7\mp$ . Black will later evacuate his king from the centre and remain with an extra exchange.

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

Practice has also seen 8...0-0 9.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  (the 'greedy' capture of another pawn is worth considering: 9...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$ , since after 11.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  White's compensation, his pressure on the opponent's position, assumes a fairly abstract character. For example, Rybka recommends 12.  $\mathbb{W}c3?$  followed by 0-0 and  $\mathbb{E}fd1$ . It is possible to regain one pawn at once, of course, but then Black will escape all danger: 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $f5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3+$   $e5$  18.  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , Sviridov-Bocharov, Tomsk 2009, and when he wants, Black can take the knight, agreeing to a draw by perpetual check) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (now it is already bad to take the central pawn: after 11...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  13.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  Black has a very suspicious-looking position) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  with compensation .



**A41) 9.e3**

**A42) 9.0-0**

**A43) 9.♘c2**

I recommend the new continuation 9.♘c2, because the other moves, which have been tested in practice, do not bring White any advantage.

**A41) 9.e3 ♗xd2+**

If 9...♗a5 10.♗c2 ♘c3 11.♗b3 ♘d5 12.♗a3 with compensation the black king is caught in the centre, whilst the bishop on a5 may turn out to be out of play.

**10.♘xd2!**

White wants to preserve the bishop on c1, which has no opponent.

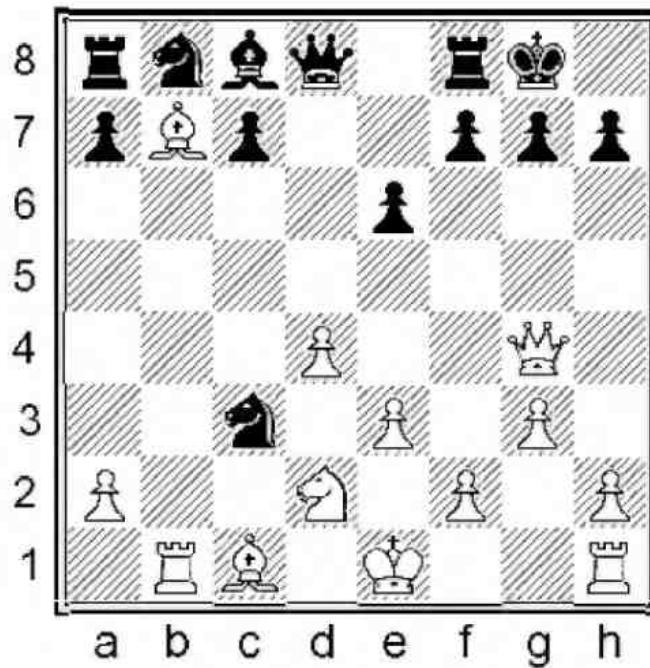
**10...♘c3**

Accepting the challenge; weaker is 10..♗xd2 11.♗xd2 0-0 (the anti-positional 11...c6?! further weakens the already weak dark squares, and after 12.♗a3 f6 13.0-0 ♖f7 14.e4!± (A. Mikhalevski-Kaenel, Biel 1999) White begins to call the tune) 12.♗a3! (an important intermediate move, the aim of which is to take control of the square c5, with tempo. The recapture of the b7-pawn should be delayed for a move, as 12.♗xb7?? is bad because of 12...♗xb7 13.♗xb7 ♖d5, whilst in the variation 12.♗xb7 ♗xb7 13.♗xb7 ♘d7 14.♗xa8 ♗xa8 15.0-0 Black continues 15...c5 and achieves reasonable play) 12...♗e8 13.♗xb7 (now this is the right moment) 13...♗xb7 14.♗xb7 ♘d7 15.♗xa8 ♗xa8 16.0-0±. The backward pawn on c7 will cause Black permanent trouble.

**11.♗g4! 0-0!**

Black must refrain from excessive greed. After 11..♗xb1 12.♗xg7 ♕f8 13.♗xb1 c5 14.0-0± White's advantage is close to overwhelming, despite the exchange deficit; Black simply won't be able to complete his development.

**12.♗xb7**



**12...e5!?**

An elegant counter-blow, which practically forces White to go into an equal ending.

**13.♕xc8 ♕xc8**

**14.♗xc8 ♕xc8**

Black's chances are at least not worse.

**A42) 9.0-0 ♗xd2**

**10.♗xd2**

With the pawn on e2, instead of e3, White has nothing else.

**10...♘xd2**

**11.♕xd2 ♔d7**

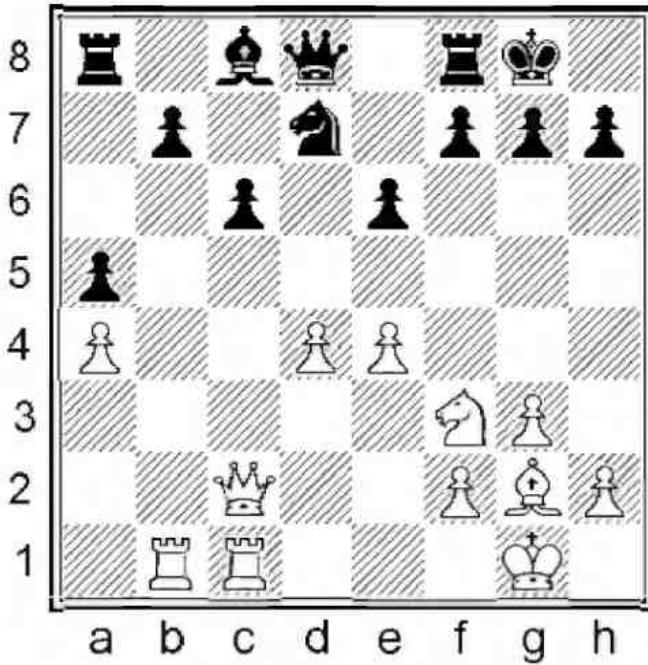
Also good is 11...0-0.

**12.♖fc1 0-0**

**13.a4 a5**

**14.♕c2 c6**

**15.e4**



Black's position is solid, but passive, and it is not easy for him to solve the problem of his light-squared bishop.

**15...♝f6**

**16.♜d1 ♜a6**

**17.♝f1 ♜b6**

**18.♜xb6 ♛xb6**

**19.e5**

The signal to start an attack on the kingside.

**19...♝d5**

**20.♝g5 f5**

A necessary measure: Black nips the attack in the bud, but gives himself a weak pawn on e6.

**21.exf6 ♛xf6∞**

Haba-Hübner, Germany 1992/93.

**A43) 9.♛c2**

It appears that this continuation has never been seen in practice.

**9...♝xd2**

**10.♝xd2!**

It is important for White to keep his dark-squared bishop.

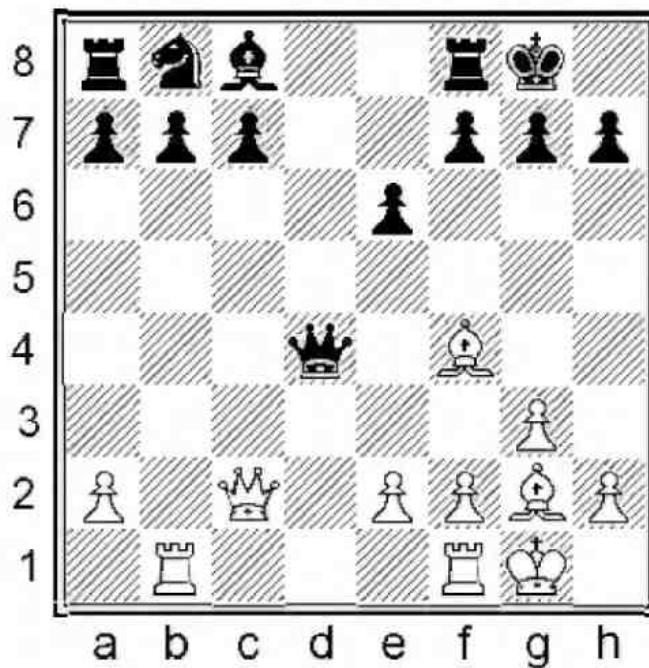
**10...♝xd2+**

10...♝xd4 11.♗a3 is very risky for Black.

**11.♝xd2 0-0**

**12.♝f4 ♜xd4**

**13.0-0**



**13...c6**

Black has to create new holes in his position.

**14.♜fd1 ♜f6**

**15.♝d6 ♜e8**

15...♜d8!? 16.♜b3 with compensation.

**16.♝xb8!?**

A small combination, with the help of which White re-establishes material equality.

**16...♜xb8**

**17.♝xc6 ♜d8**

**18.♜xd8+ ♜xd8**

**19.♛a4 a6**

20.  $\mathbb{W}f4 \mathbb{E}a8$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{Q}xb7$

22.  $\mathbb{E}xb7 \mathbb{W}d1+$

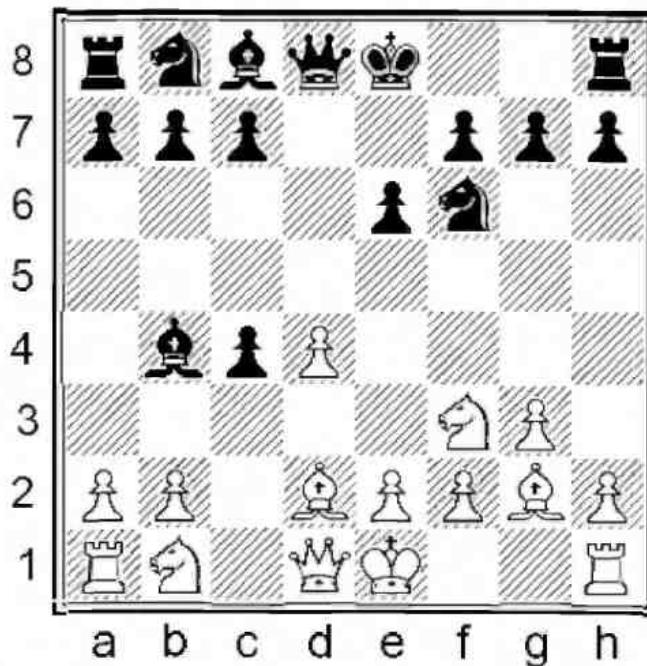
23.  $\mathbb{Q}g2 \mathbb{W}d5+$

24.  $\mathbb{W}f3 \mathbb{W}xf3+$

25.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3\pm$

The difference in piece activity gives White a definite advantage. Of course, the variation given is not forced, but it clearly demonstrates Black's problems.

B) 6.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$



The strongest move, after which Black again has a wide choice.

B1) 6...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

B2) 6...  $a5$

B3) 6...  $c5$

The simple-minded exchange of bishops does not bring Black equality: 6...  $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  7.  $\mathbb{W}xd2$  (I like this line for White, because he has already solved one of his problems, i.e. what to do with his dark-squared bishop. Our plan in the next few moves is also very clear: regain the pawn on c4 and develop pressure on the c-file and the long white diagonal) 7... 0-0 (the attempt to hold the gambit pawn with 7...  $b5$  8.  $a4$   $c6$  9.  $axb5$   $cx b5$  turns out to be futile: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  11.  $\mathbb{W}g5\pm$  and White wins back the material, obtaining a clear positional advantage) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (attacking the pawn on c4 and at the same time preventing the move ...  $b7-b5$ ) 8...  $c5$  (8...  $\mathbb{W}e7$  9. 0-0  $c5$  10.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  11.  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xc4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ ) 9.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}xd8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13.  $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$ . Black still experiences difficulties completing his development. White can play either  $\mathbb{Q}f3-e5$ , or  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , strengthening the pressure. It is clear that Black's

main problems are connected with the poor position of the bishop on c8.

### B1) 6...♝e7

Black has lured the enemy bishop to what is assumed to be a poor square on d2, and now retreats his own bishop. Now White also has a choice: he can immediately set about regaining the c4-pawn or first continue his development.

### B11) 7.0-0

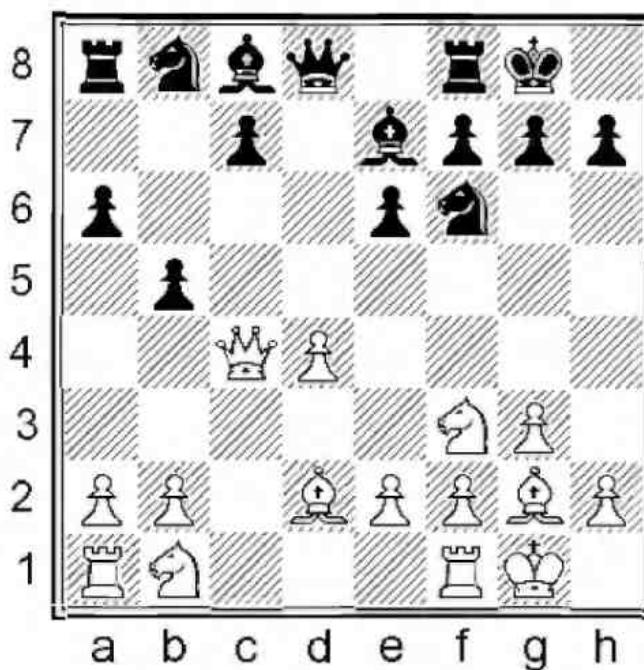
### B12) 7.♗c2

### B11) 7.0-0 0-0

After 7...♝d7 8.♗c2 ♜e6 9.♗xc4 Black reaches a position examined later under the variation 7.♗c2.

8.♘a4 a6

9.♗xc4 b5



This position is well-known to Catalan theory, only with the white bishop on c1, instead of d2. This difference should be in White's favour: he can bring his rook to c1 quickly, whilst the bishop is ready to jump to a5.

10.♗c2 ♜b7

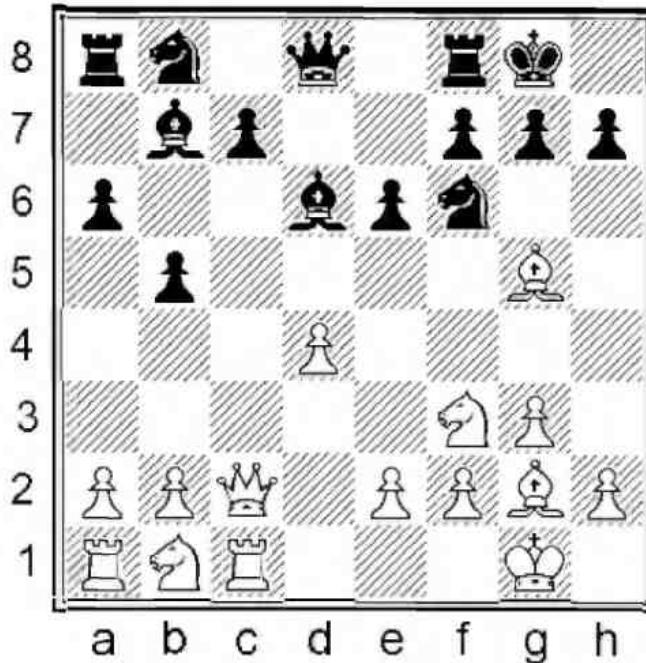
11.♖c1

The most logical move, although 11.♗d1!? is also not bad, for instance: 11...♝e4 12.♗c1 ♜b7 13.♗f4 ♜d5 14.♗c3 ♜xf4 15.♗xf4 ♜d6 16.♗e3 ♜d7 17.♗e4 ♜xe4 18.♗xe4 ♜b8 19.♗ac1 ♜b6 20.♗e5 ♜b8 21.♗c2 ♜e7 22.♗e4 g6 23.e3 ♜d8 24.f4± Cs. Horvath-Mochalov, Rethymnon 2003. Now it is very hard for Black to get rid of the backward pawn on c7, whilst his other thematic break, ...c6-c5, is practically impossible.

11...♝d6

The attempt to solve his positional problems by tactical means, exploiting his small development advantage, is not very convincing: 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.e3  $\mathbb{E}a7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}xb7$  17. $\mathbb{W}c2$  h6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{E}bb8$  19. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{E}bc8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  (White has won a pawn and consolidated his position) 20... $\mathbb{W}d5$  21.a3± Psakhis-Kurajica, Benidorm 2002.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$**



We have reached a typical position for this variation, but White has an extra tempo, as his rook is already on c1.

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

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$**

**14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

One of the key questions of the Catalan is whether Black will achieve ...c7-c5, or will White prevent it? This is one of those cases where White manages to stop this break, and thanks to this, he obtains the advantage.

**14... $\mathbb{E}c8$**

**15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**16. $\mathbb{W}c3$**

The whole battle revolves around the square c5.

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

Or 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  b4 19. $\mathbb{W}c6$  e5 20.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (Black's queenside pawn structure is hopelessly damaged; White is just waiting for the most favourable conditions to harvest his crop) 21... $\mathbb{W}e7$  22.e4  $\mathbb{E}fe8$  23. $\mathbb{E}f1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  24. $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  25.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ± Khalifman-Tissir, Shenyang 2000.

**17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  b4**

18.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

This intermediate move is directed at preventing ...c7-c5; however, it was also possible to permit Black this small triumph: 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20.  $dxe5$  c5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ .

19...  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$

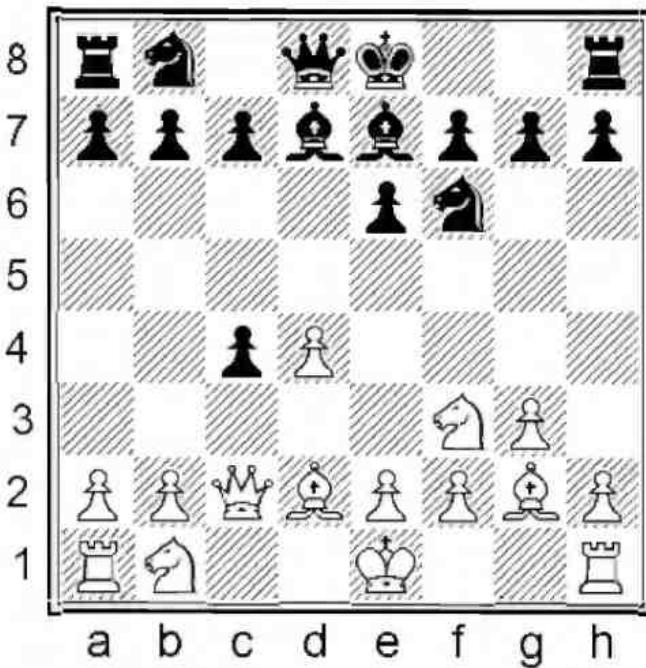
22. f4  $\mathbb{Q}ed8$

23.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

24.  $\mathbb{Q}c2\pm$

Safin-Kritz, Dieren 2002.

B12) 7.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$



8.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$

After 8.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  Black happily puts his bishop on the long diagonal – 8...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , but even here, White has the right to count on a small advantage after 9. 0-0:

A) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}a4+$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$  followed by  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ;

B) 9... 0-0 10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  a6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  h6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c6 18. e4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h7\pm$  Onischuk-Bologan, Sevastopol 2004;

C) 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  12.bxc3 (weaker is 12. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ) 12...0-0 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14.c4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  15. $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{E}ab8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$ .

**8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

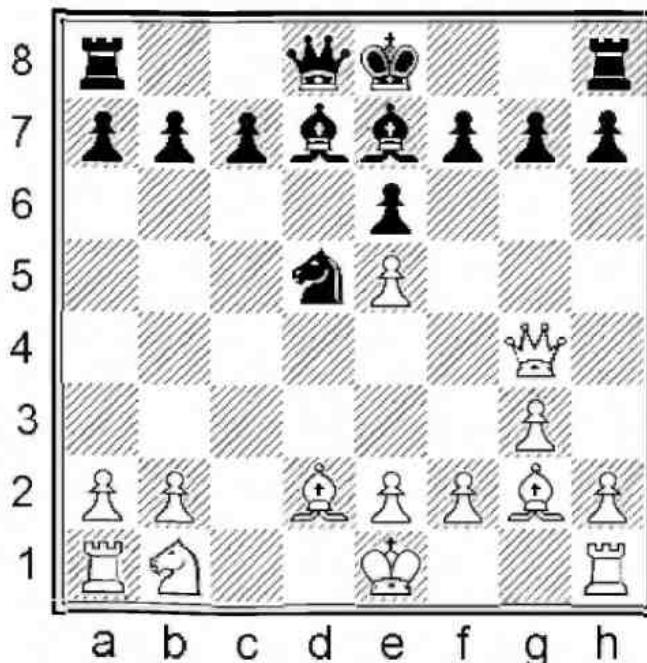
Prospectless is 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  10.e3±, then White takes the c4-pawn and obtains a positional advantage, with material equality.

**9. $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

Earlier, I played this as Black, but then I became familiar with Boris Avrukh's excellent book on the Catalan, and was forced to admit the strength of his recommended move 11. $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

**11. $\mathbb{W}g4!$**



Even the line that Lautier played against me did not permit me equality: 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.0-0-0 0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{E}xd8$   $\mathbb{E}fxd8$  15. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16. $\mathbb{E}d1\pm$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ) 12.bxc3!?

c6 (12... $\mathbb{E}b8$  13. $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14.h4 h5 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ ) 13. $\mathbb{W}g4$  g6 14. $\mathbb{E}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15. $\mathbb{W}e4$  h5 16.h4± followed by  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , Lautier-Bologan, Calvia 2004.

**11...g6**

**12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

Also good is 12.0-0 c6 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  0-0 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$ .

**12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$**

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$**

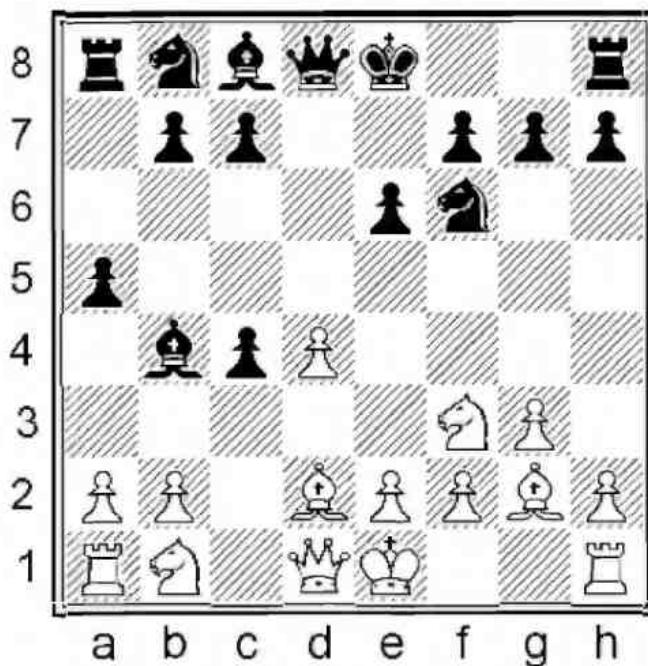
**14. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$**

The key moment for understanding White's whole strategy: he wants to play  $\mathbb{W}f3$  and  $h2-h4$  (Avrukh). White has a space advantage and controls the long white diagonal; his advantage is obvious.

Less promising is 14.0-0 c5 15.a4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16.e4 0-0 17.h4 b6 18.f4  $\mathbb{W}b7$  19. $\mathbb{E}ae1$  h5 20. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b5  $\Rightarrow$  Lemke-Bebersdorf, Germany 1995.

## B2) 6...a5

Black tries to seize space on the queenside and provokes his opponent to exchange on b4, after which his rook on a8 would immediately be in play, and the white knight would not be able to come to c3.



### B21) 7. $\mathbb{W}c2$

#### B22) 7.0-0

### B21) 7. $\mathbb{W}c2$

This move is fairly popular. Now Black has a lot of possibilities, but I have not found clear equality for him. The best continuation is probably to take on d2, but then play is for two results.

#### B211) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

#### B212) 7...b5

#### B213) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+!?$

#### B211) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

It is not difficult to neutralise the pressure on d4, whilst the knight on c6 is not so well placed.

#### 8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{W}d5$

#### 9. $\mathbb{W}d3$ 0-0

In the ending, Black also does not have clear equality: 9... $\mathbb{W}e4$  10. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11.a3±, and after the exchange on d2, White relieves the blockade on e4.

10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}h5$

11.h3  $\mathbb{B}d8$

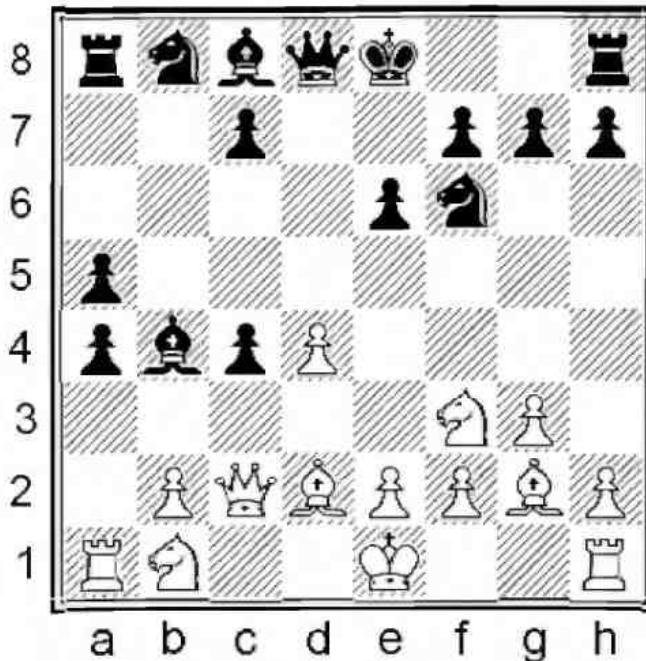
12.a3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

13.bxc3±

Fridman-Bartel, Dresden 2008. White has the two bishops and mobile pawns in the centre, whilst Black still has the problem bishop on c8.

B212) 7...b5

8.a4 bxa4



The black queenside resembles a sieve. White easily regains the sacrificed pawns and obtains a clear advantage.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{B}a6$

10. $\mathbb{W}xa4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

11. $\mathbb{W}c2$

White also has the better play after the simple 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ !?

11... $\mathbb{Q}b5$

12.e3 c5

13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

15.  $dxc5$  0-0

15...  $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$  16.  $\mathbb{W}a4\pm$ .

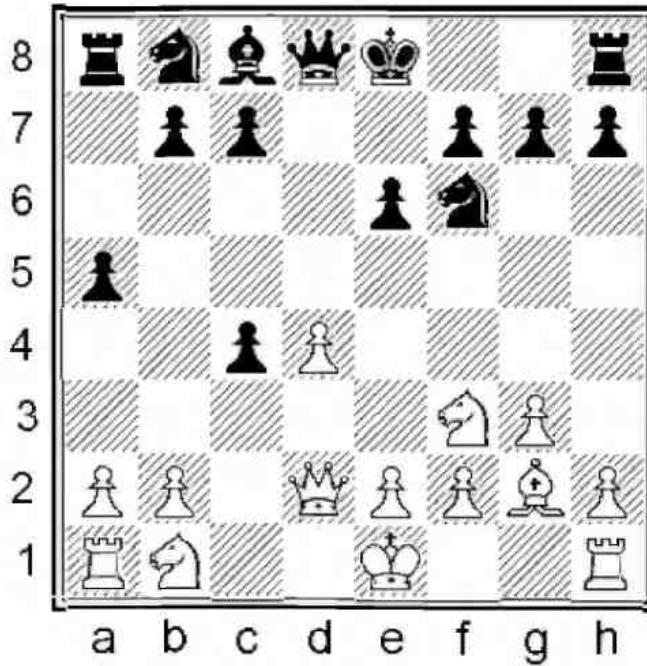
16. 0-0  $\mathbb{W}d3$

17.  $\mathbb{B}ac1\pm$

B213) 7...  $\mathbb{Q}xd2+!?$

8.  $\mathbb{W}xd2!$

With this rather non-standard recapture, White prevents the unpleasant reply ...b7-b5. Less is promised by 8.  $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$  in view of 8...b5 9. a4 c6 10. b3 cxb3 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  b4 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (Danielian-T. Kosintseva, Calvia 2004) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{W}c5$   $\mathbb{W}e7=$ .



8...c6

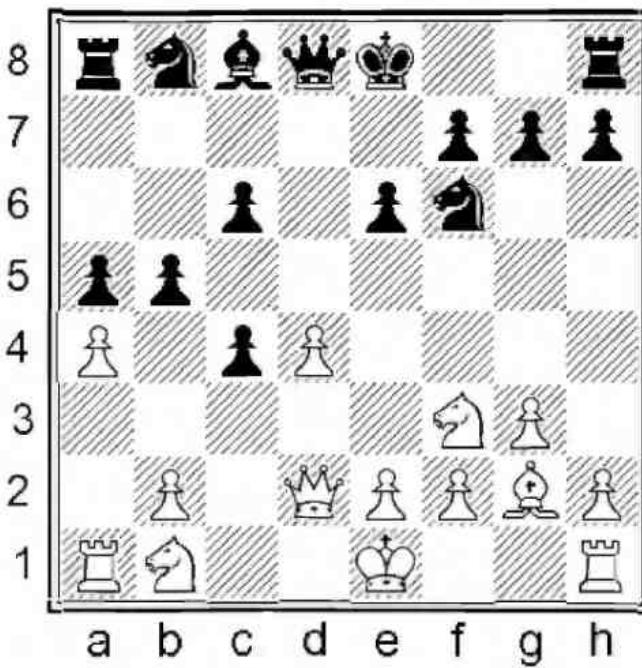
A) Here after 8...b5 there follows the double attack, with which we are already familiar: 9.  $\mathbb{W}g5!$  0-0 10.  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14. 0-0± Laznicka-Kosten, Austria 2008/09;

B) More modest is 8...b6, but then 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{B}a7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}xb7$  (Black has spent a mass of time exchanging his light-squared bishop, and will have to spend even more to return his 'fianchettoed rook' on b7 to the game) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}axc4$  0-0 13. 0-0  $\mathbb{W}e7$  (Wojtkiewicz-Gulko, San Diego 2006) 14.  $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  15.  $\mathbb{B}fd1$  c5 16.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{W}a3\pm$ ,

C) Or 8...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  with a well-known idea: to bring the bishop to c6, not fearing its exchange for the knight: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (harmless for Black is 9.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.  $\mathbb{B}fd1$  0-0 14.  $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{W}e7=$  Ivanisevic-Payen, San Marino 2006) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (the general strengthening move 11. e3 proves to be the loss of a crucial tempo, and Black manages to organise a blow in the centre: 11...  $\mathbb{W}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  e5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  exd4 14. exd4 0-0

15.d5 ♜b4 16.0-0 ♜bxd5 17.♗fd1 c6 18.♘xa5 ♜c7 19.♘c4 ♜fd8 20.a3 ♜b6 21.♗c2 ♜xc4 22.♗xc4 ♜b6, draw, Miroshnichenko-Kengis, Abu Dhabi 2006) 11...0-0 (the d4-pawn is not exactly inedible, but is certainly not very tasty: 11...♘xd4 12.♗xb7 ♜b8 13.♗g2 0-0 14.♗d1 c5 15.e3 ♜f5 16.♗xd8 ♜fxd8 17.♗xd8+ ♜xd8 18.♘xc4± Khuzman-Vul, Montreal 2007) 12.♗d1 ♜e7 13.0-0 ♜b4 14.♗c1± Damljanovic-Korneev, Vrsac 2006. Next move, White will take the c4-pawn and will stand slightly better.

**9.a4 b5**



**10.axb5**

It is worth considering playing with queens on: 10.♘a3 ♜a6 (10...♗d7!?) 11.♘e5 ♜d5 12.♘xc6 ♜xc6 13.axb5 ♜xb5 14.♘xb5 0-0 15.♘c3 with a small advantage to White.

**10...cxb5**

**11.♗g5**

The familiar double attack, but this time, the interesting stuff is just beginning.

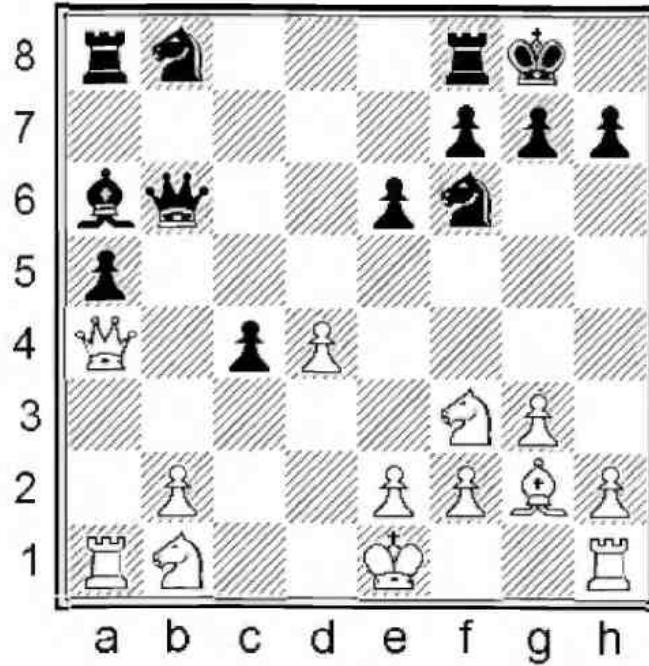
**11...0-0**

It is very risky to give up the g7-pawn: 11...b4 12.♗xg7 ♜g8 13.♗h6 ♜b7 14.♗bd2 ♜d5 15.♗c1±. Since White has no dark-squared bishop, Black can certainly hope to defend this position, but playing with one's king in the middle, on a board full of pieces, is not everyone's cup of tea.

**12.♗xb5 ♜a6**

Gambit play does not work here: 12...♘a6 13.♗xc4 ♜b4 14.♗b3! (thanks to this prophylactic move, White avoids the threat ...♘a6) 14...e5 15.♗xe5± Grischuk-Moiseenko, Sochi 2006.

**13.♗a4 ♜b6**



Black's queenside pawn structure is not all he could wish, but for the moment, the initiative is on his side. White's task is to try to stabilise the position and retain his positional pluses.

#### 14.0-0

Less is promised by 14.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ , after which Black has several replies:

- A) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is not very good, because of 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xc4$  (but not 15...  $\mathbb{W}b4+?$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xb4 \mathbb{Q}xb4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5 \mathbb{Q}8c6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 16.  $\mathbb{W}xc4 \mathbb{W}xb2$  17. 0-0±;
- B) The immediate 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  has been seen, with the idea of 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{W}b4+$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xb4 \mathbb{Q}xb4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}b5$  (it is not easy for White to complete his development, because the e2-pawn will be hanging) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}a6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}b7 \mathbb{Q}a7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{Q}d8$  (White has defended one pawn, but now another hangs) 21. 0-0 (21.  $\mathbb{Q}d1!?\pm$ ) 21...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{Q}d8$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}b8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}3c4 \mathbb{Q}xc4$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  g6 26. h4, draw, Meier-Khenkin, Saarbrücken 2009;
- C) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (simplest: Black removes an attack on c4 and then completes his development) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (15.  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{Q}c8$  16. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{Q}b4$  18.  $\mathbb{W}d1 \mathbb{Q}bd5\rightleftharpoons$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1 \mathbb{Q}xd4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{W}xd4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f3 \mathbb{W}b6$  20.  $\mathbb{W}xa5 \mathbb{W}xa5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5 \mathbb{Q}c6$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xf3$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xb2$  24. h4, draw, Leko-Kramnik, Dortmund 2009.

#### 14... $\mathbb{W}xb2$

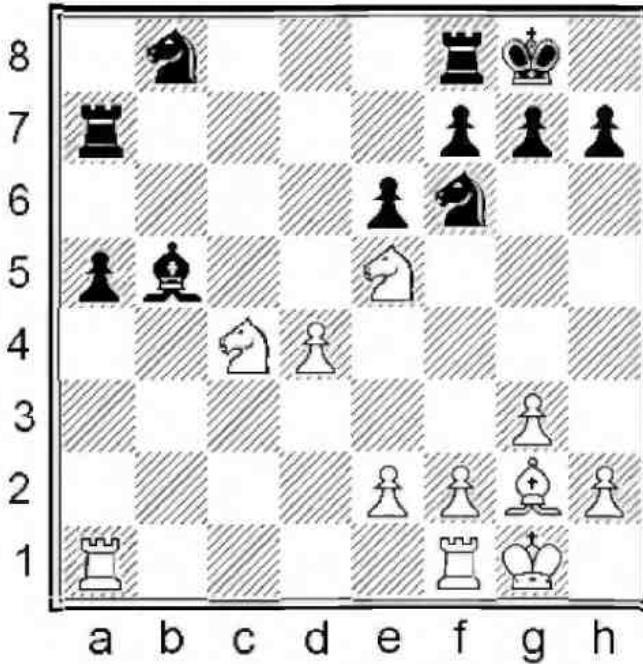
15.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}b5$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xa4$

17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2 \mathbb{Q}b5$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}a7$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}bc4!$



More accurate than 19.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}ec4$   $\mathbb{B}b8=$  Kramnik-Topalov, Elista 2006.

Black has many possibilities here, but precise equality is not apparent. His main problem is the weak pawn on a5.

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

- A) 19... a4 20.  $\mathbb{B}fb1\pm$ ,
- B) 19...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (20.  $\mathbb{B}fc1!$ ? f6 21.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ ) 20... exd5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  22.  $\mathbb{B}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  23.  $\mathbb{B}eb1\pm$ . Black has got rid of one weak pawn, but now he has another weakness, on d5;
- C) 19...  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  20.  $\mathbb{B}fc1$  a4 21. e3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  f6 23.  $\mathbb{B}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  25.  $\mathbb{B}a5$  (this illustrative variation shows how difficult it is for Black to defend his weak a5-pawn. White, on the other hand, has the ideal pawn structure, with all the pawns defending one another) 25...  $\mathbb{B}xa5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  29.  $\mathbb{B}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  30.  $\mathbb{B}c4$   $\mathbb{B}a8$  31.  $\mathbb{B}c5\pm$ .

**20.  $\mathbb{B}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**21. dx e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5**

**23.  $\mathbb{B}xa5$   $\mathbb{B}xa5$**

**24.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$**

**25. f4  $\mathbb{B}a8$**

**26.  $\mathbb{B}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

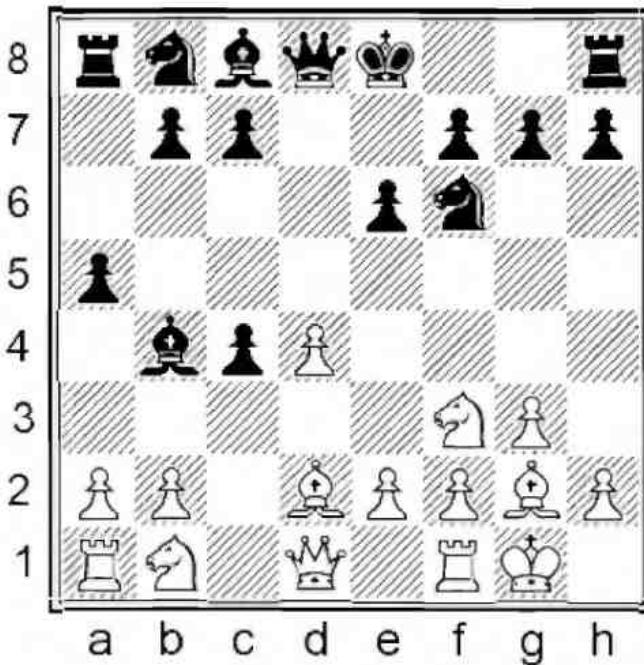
**27.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**28.  $\mathbb{B}a5$   $\mathbb{B}xa5$**

**29.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5\pm$**

White is likely to win the d5-pawn, whilst Black exchanges the f7-pawn for that on e5. We will reach an ending with 3v2 on one flank, with the stronger side having a knight, and the weaker side a bishop. Black faces a tedious defence.

### B22) 7.0-0

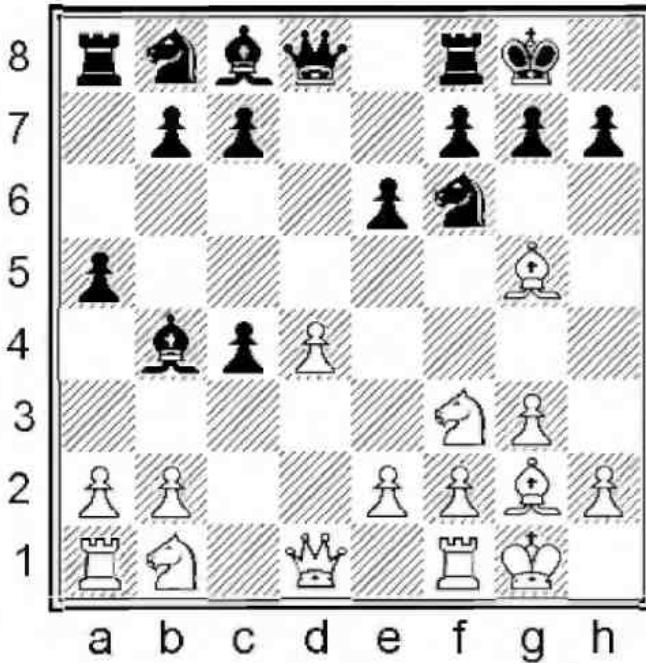


7...0-0

Alternatives are:

- A) 7...b5 8.a4  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  9. $\mathbb{Q}fxd2$  c6 10.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$  David-Brunello, Kallithea 2008;
- B) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  8. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  (the exchange of dark-squared bishops usually favours White. Here, one also wonders what the black pawn is doing on a5) 8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  b6 10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}axc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  f6 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14.e3 $\pm$  Roiz-Socko, Lublin 2009. White has a very comfortable position: the knight on d5 is pinned, he can act on the c-file and also, at the right moment, push his central pawns. Black faces an unpleasant defence;
- C) 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is also played, but I do not greatly like this set-up in the Catalan – the knight blocks the c-pawn, and so makes it hard for Black to achieve the break ...c7-c5. After 8.e3 play could continue:
  - C1) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 10.a4! (breaking up the opponent's queenside pawn structure) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  axb4 12. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ ;
  - C2) 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 (9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}bd2\pm$  Ortega-Rivas Pastor, Havana 1983) 10.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  12.b3 with the better chances for White;
  - C3) 8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 (Black must do something about his light-squared bishop; 9...b5 10.a4 (10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c5 $\pm$  Mikhalkishin-Kupreichik, Tbilisi 1976) 10... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.axb5 (or 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.axb5) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  12.b3 $\pm$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xb7\pm$ . This is even stronger than 13.e4  $\mathbb{Q}d4+$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  f5 21.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  23. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}a3\pm$  Shirov-Kortchnoi, Karlovy Vary 2007.

8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



A typical manoeuvre: White does not like his bishop on d2 and redirects it to g5, so that it takes part in the battle for the key squares e4 and d5. We are not afraid to exchange this bishop for the knight on f6, because we will retain the very strong light-squared bishop on the long diagonal, whilst the d4-pawn will control the central dark squares.

#### 8...b5

A) 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$ . If Black does not manage to get in ...c7-c5 in the near future, he will have problems with the pawn on c7 and also with his light-squared bishop, which will be hard to develop, especially if the pawn ends up on c6;

B) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9.e3:

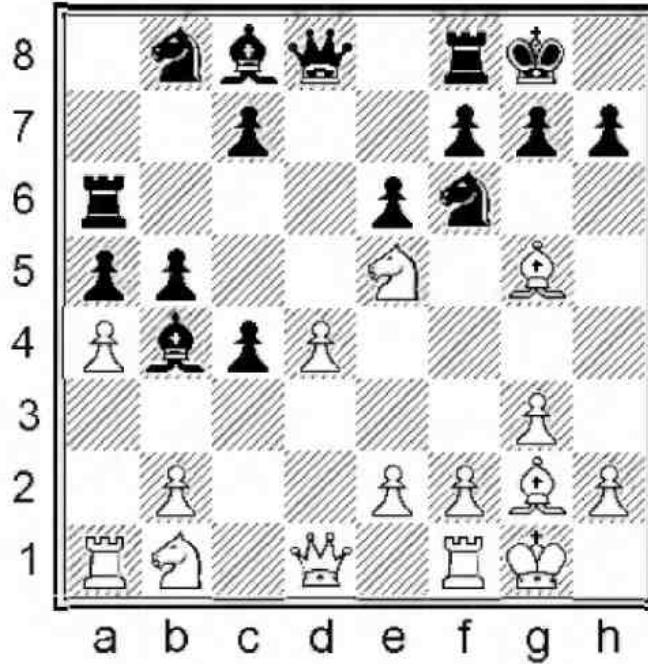
B1) 9... $\mathbb{E}b8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  b5 11.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13.axb5, draw, Lenic-Pavasovic, Nova Gorica 2009;

B2) 9...h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5 13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b5 15.a4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17.axb5  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4\pm$  Markus-Beliavsky, Turin 2006) 14. $\mathbb{Q}a4$ . This move is recommended by Boris Avrukh in his wonderful book. Also possible is 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c1!\pm$  Wells-Kortchnoi, London 2009;

B3) 9...e5 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4\rightleftarrows$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  13.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7?$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  with compensation) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.e6  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b5 $\rightleftarrows$  Buhmann-Landa, Germany 2009/10) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (the bishop on b4 is somewhat offside, so it makes no sense to drive it to a better square: 13.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.h4 h6 16.f3 g5 17.hxg5 hxg5 18.fxg4 gxg4 19.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4\rightleftarrows$  Ilincic-Heinz, Budapest 2009) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 (defending against the unpleasant threat of 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  (the black pawns have been broken up, and the only question is whether the knight will manage to return home without trouble) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d3$  19.b3!? $\pm$  (White sacrifices the exchange – admittedly, not for nothing, but for two pawns – to activate his forces and deprive the opponent of the two bishops) 19... $\mathbb{Q}c3$  20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  22.bxc4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ .

#### 9. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ $\mathbb{Q}a6$

#### 10.a4



Black experiences the same problems with his queenside pawn structure.

10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11.  $bxc3$   $a4$  12.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  13.  $e4$   $h6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  15.  $f4$  with compensation Beliavsky-Berescu, Hungary 2008/09.

**10...bxa4**

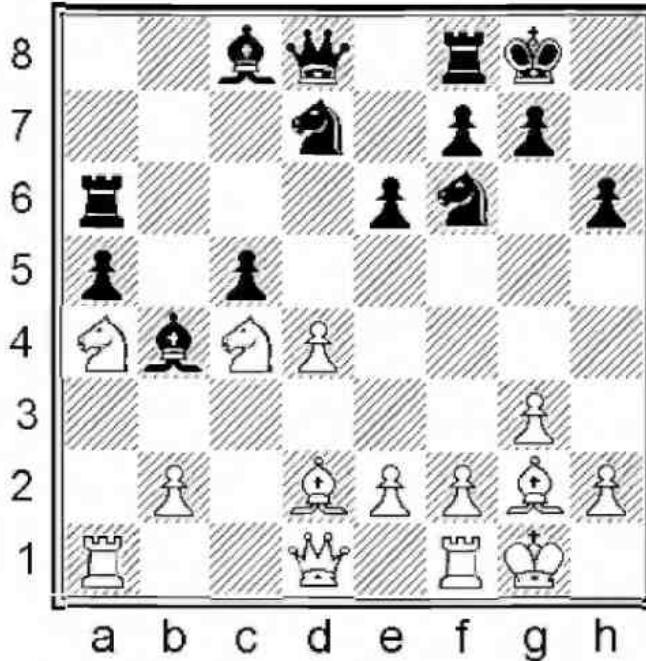
10... $c6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $h6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $gxf6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $c5$**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $h6$**

**14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$**



It is an interesting characteristic of the Catalan that it sometimes looks as though the position is completely simplified and equalised, as the pieces and pawns are exchanged, yet White retains a significant advantage, namely his bishop on g2 versus the black bishop on c8. We have just such a case before us: a few pawns have come off, but White's advantage is obvious. Of course, the possession of the long diagonal by itself does not bring White victory, and he must combine threats, attacking the black pieces and pawns.

**14...♝c7??!**

Better is 14...cx<sub>d</sub>4 15.♝xb4 ax<sub>b</sub>4 16.♛xd4±.

**15.♝f4! ♜a7**

**16.♞d6 ♜d5**

**17.♞b5 ♜b7**

**18.♞c7**

The knight has traversed a long route to reach this square!

**18...♜a7**

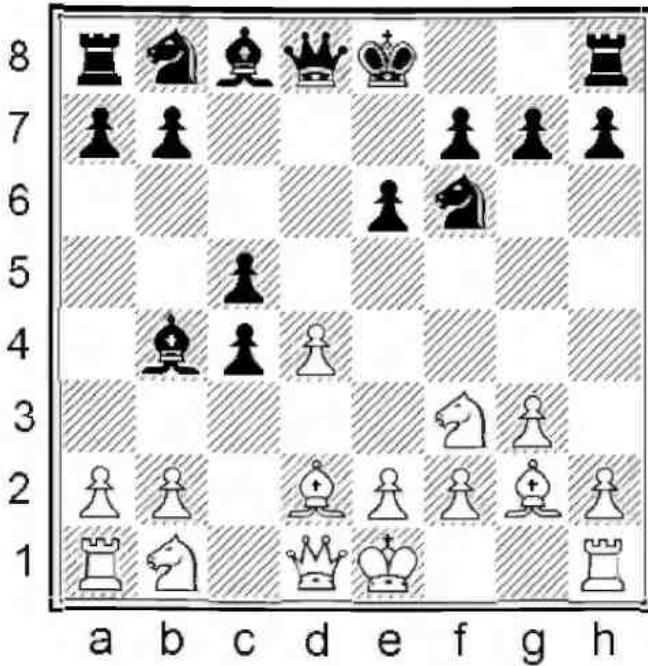
**19.♞xd5 exd5**

**20.♝d6 ♜e8**

**21.dxe5±**

Kramnik-Navara, Prague 2008. Extremely instructive play by Vladimir Kramnik!

**B3) 6...c5**



White now has a load of possible continuations, but I like best of all the relatively recent idea 7.  $\mathbb{W}c1!?$ . However, we will start with the more well-studied moves.

**B31) 7.0-0**

**B32) 7.dxe5**

**B33) 7.  $\mathfrak{Q}xb4$**

**B34) 7.  $\mathbb{W}c1$**

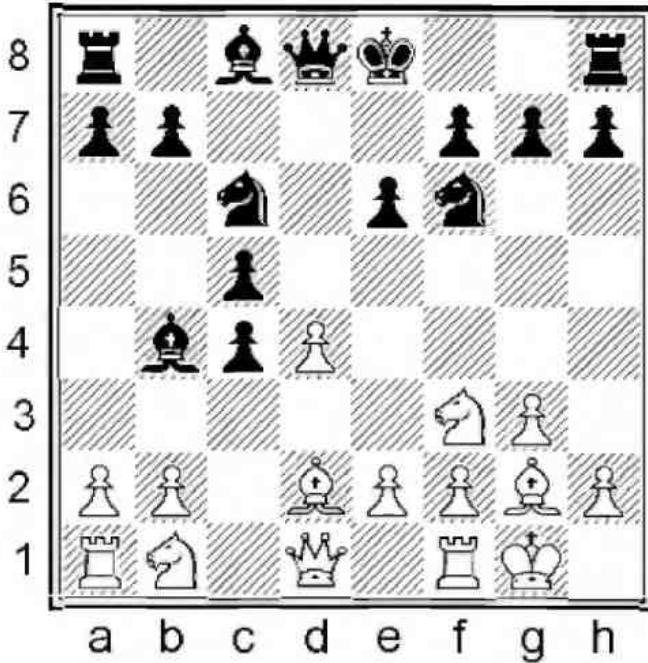
**B31)** In reply to the standard, but straightforward

**7.0-0**

Black has the choice between 7...0-0 and 7...  $\mathfrak{Q}c6$ .

**7...  $\mathfrak{Q}c6$**

Also not bad is 7...0-0, putting the onus on White. Then possible is: 8.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathfrak{B}xd2$  9.  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathfrak{Q}c6$  10. dxc5  $\mathbb{W}d5$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  (11.  $\mathbb{W}e3!?$ ) 11... exd5 12.  $\mathfrak{E}d1$   $\mathfrak{B}e6$  13.  $\mathfrak{Q}c3$   $\mathfrak{E}fd8$  14.  $\mathfrak{Q}d4\infty$  Stokke-Robson, Tromsö 2009.



**8.dxe5**

8.♗xb4 (White wants to take the pressure off his pawn on d4) 8...cxb4 (hardly good is 8...♗xb4?! 9.♕a3) 9.a3 0-0 (it is not easy to defend the extra pawn, so Black does not bother with it) 10.axb4 ♘b6 (he has to part with the pawn anyway: 10...♗xb4 11.♕a3 ♘c7? 12.♗e5±) 11.♗e5 ♘d5 12.♗xc4 ♘xd4 13.♗xd4 ♗xd4 14.♗d1 ♘c2 15.♗a5 ♘cxb4 16.♗c3 ♘d7 17.e4 ♘f6. Here, with the move 18.e5 White can immediately regain the sacrificed pawn, but then the position is considerably simplified, and the game equalised. The alternative is to continue a pawn down, but with hopes of long-term positional compensation.

**8...♗xc5**

**9.♘a4**

9.♕a3 ♘xa3 10.bxa3 e5 11.♘c3 ♘e7 12.♗a4 0-0 13.♗xc4 ♘e8=.

**9...0-0**

**10.♗xc4 ♘d5**

White has to be careful after 10..♗e7 11.♗d1 e5! (the typical move to free the bishop in the Catalan) 12.♘c3 ♘e6 13.♗a4 ♘b6 14.♗g5 ♘g4 15.♗f1, Aronian-Adams, Plovdiv 2010, and here Michael could have surprised Levon with the nice blow 15...♗xf2! 16.♗xf2 ♘xb2 17.♗d1 ♘xg5+.

**11.♗xd5 exd5**

**12.♘c3 d4**

**13.♘a4**

13.♗b5 ♘b6 14.♗f4 ♘e8 (an eye for an eye: Black has a weak pawn on d4, White one on e2) 15.♗fe1 ♘d5 16.♗d2 ♘d8 17.♗ac1 a6 18.♗a3 f6 19.♗c4 ♘c7 20.♗ed1 ♘e6.

13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

14. $\mathbb{B}fc1$   $\mathbb{B}e8$

15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$

Or 15.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.b5  $\mathbb{Q}d8$ .

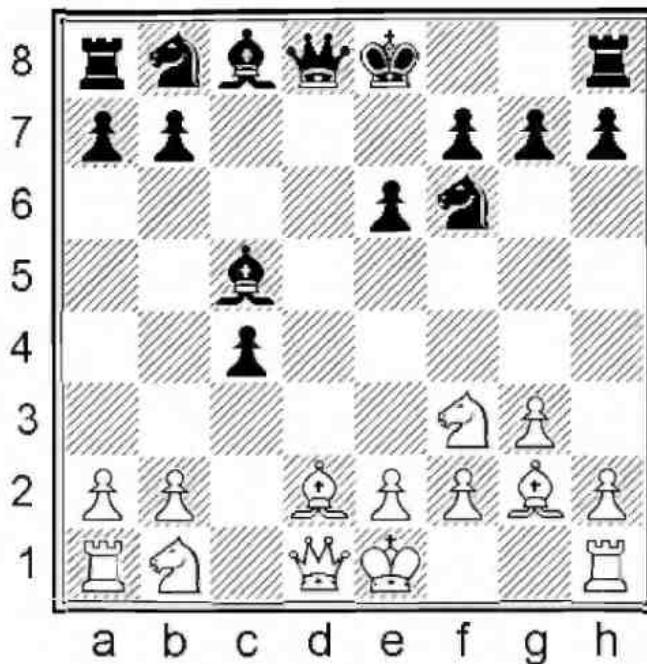
15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

Black has reasonable play.

B32) 7.dxc5

Now Black's task is simplified, because after White regains the c4-pawn, there follows either ...b7-b6 or ...b7-b5, and the bishop comes to the long diagonal.

7... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



8. $\mathbb{Q}a4+$

8.0-0 0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  b5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  12. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{B}fc8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{B}a8$  19. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6\#$  Hammer-Gharamian, Cap d'Agde 2010) 10...b6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  with unclear play.

8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

9. $\mathbb{W}xc4$

9.0-0 a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5 12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , and Black gradually takes over the initiative.

9...b5!

**10.  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{B}b8$**

**11.  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{B}xb2\uparrow$**

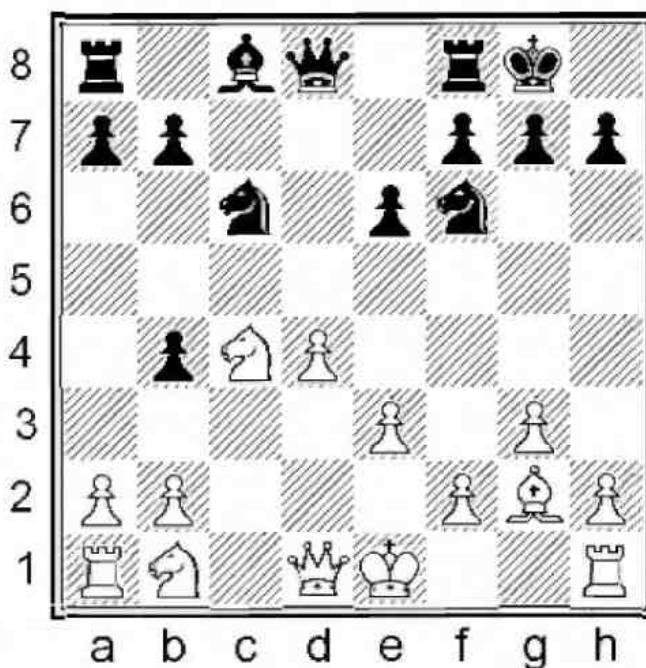
**B33)** Nothing results from Avrukh's suggested variation

**7.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $cxb4$**

**8.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  0-0**

**9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**10. e3**



**10...e5!**

Thanks to this paradoxical move, putting the pawn *en prise*, Black prevents his opponent from imposing his will.

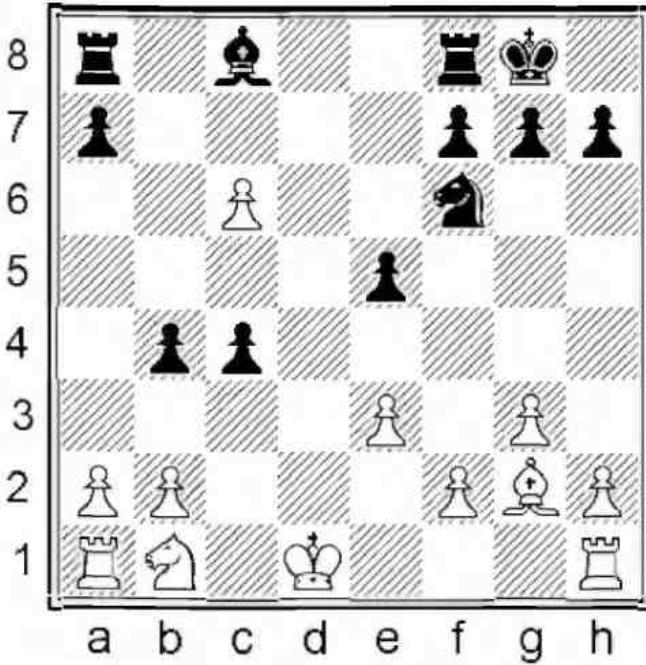
**11. d5**

11.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.  $f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xh1$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xh1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  21.  $axb3$   $b6$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (Sargissian-Moiseenko, Moscow 2009) 22...  $f6\bar{}$ .

**11...b5**

**12.  $dxc6$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $bxc4$**



It is hard with the human eye to give a definite assessment of this position, but given the forcing nature of the position, and its importance, we should not be ashamed to employ the genius of Houdini, who assures us it is all in vain, the position is a draw.

**14.a3 ♜g4+**

**15.♔c1**

Nor does White get any advantage after 15.♔e1 ♜fd8 16.f3 ♜e6 17.axb4 ♜d5 18.b5 ♜xe3 19.♔f2 ♜d1+ 20.♔e2 ♜xb2 21.♔c3.

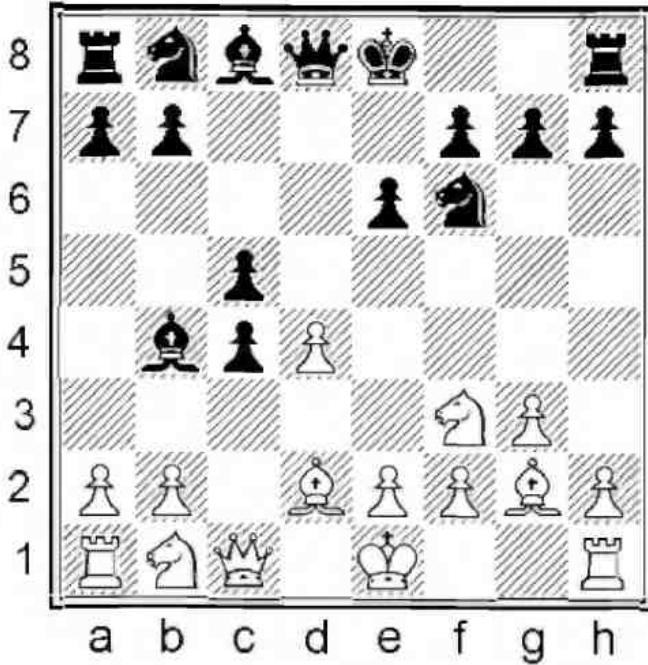
**15...a5**

**16.♗d2 ♜e6**

**17.♗d1 b3**

**18.♗f3 ♜g4?**

**B34) 7.♕c1!?**



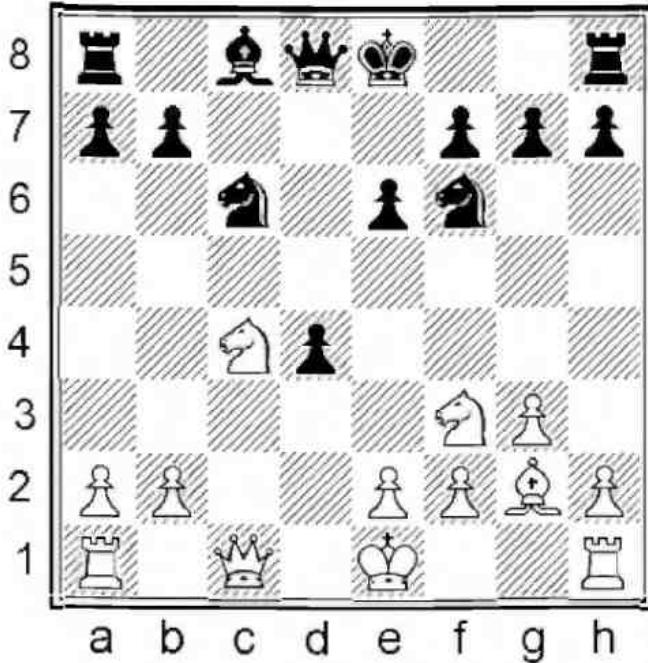
White does not reveal his intentions; he wants to regain the pawn on c4 quickly, and obtain a small but stable advantage, on account of his Catalan bishop. The exchange of the c- and d-pawns does not interfere with this at all.

**7...Qxd2+**

The alternative is 7...0-0 8.0-0 (premature is 8.Qxb4 cxb4 9.Qxc4 on account of 9...a5 10.0-0 b6, and Black successfully solves the problem of his light-squared bishop: 11.Qc1 Qa6 12.Qc2 Qbd7 13.Qd1 Qe7 14.Qbd2 Qac8 15.e3 e5? Ramirez-Robson, Saint Louis 2011) 8...Qc6 9.Qxb4 cxb4 10.Qxc4±. Once Black has brought his knight to c6, the exchange on b4 is fully appropriate, because now it is hard for Black to play ...b7-b6 and ...Qa6 (b7). Thanks to the extra pawn in the centre and the standard Catalan bishop pressure, White's chances in this position are clearly better.

**8.Qbx d2 cxd4**

**9.Qxc4 Qc6**



Black has won a pawn and defended it with two pieces, but he will still not be able to keep it.

#### 10.0-0 0-0

On 10... $\mathbb{W}e7$ , with the idea of defending the d4-pawn with ...e6-e5, White plays 11. $\mathbb{W}f4$  d3?! (understanding that the pawn cannot be held, Black tries to break up his opponent's structure. But White ignores this diversion, and simply stops Black castling) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d6+$   $\mathbb{K}f8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (an important tactical nuance: exploiting the fact that the knight on d6 is indirectly defended, White blockades the e6-pawn) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ . It is hard for Black to complete his development, whilst White is already prepared to begin an invasion on the c- and d-files. Black's position is very dangerous.

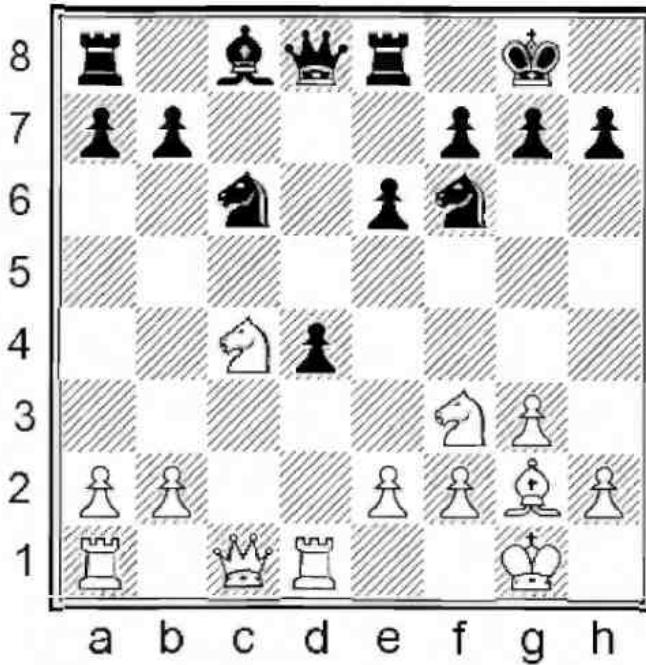
#### 11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

**B341) 11... $\mathbb{B}e8$**

**B342) 11... $\mathbb{W}e7$**

Opening the centre by means of 11...e5?! plays into White's hands: 12. $\mathbb{Q}fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  16. $\mathbb{W}c3\pm$  Sebenik-Mastrovasilis, Novi Sad 2009. Black's problem is always the same: developing the bishop on c8.

**B341) 11... $\mathbb{B}e8$**



This move has the same idea of ...e6-e5, but now there is the very strong

**12.b4!!**

This brilliant move exposes the drawbacks of Black's position. The pawn cannot be taken because of 13.Qxd4 and 14.Qd6, so he has to allow White to seize space on the queenside.

Weaker is 12.Qfe5 Qd7 (12...Qxe5 13.Qxe5 Qb6 14.Qd2 Qd8 15.Qac1± Prohaszka-Kr. Szabo, Hungary 2010) 13.Qd2 Qc7 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Qxc6 Qxc6 16.Qxd4 Qec8 17.b3 h6 18.Qd3 b5 19.Qd6 Qc7 20.Qad1 Qd8=.

**12...a6**

**13.Qce5 Qd7**

**14.Qb2**

Thanks to the inclusion of the moves 12.b4 a6 White has obtained an excellent post at b2 for his queen.

**14...Qc8**

**15.a4**

White wants to drive the knight from c6, after which his bishop on g2 will not have an opponent on the long diagonal. Then White will take on d4 and, with equal material, he will have strong pressure on the queenside.

**15...Qe7**

**16.Qxd7 Qxd7**

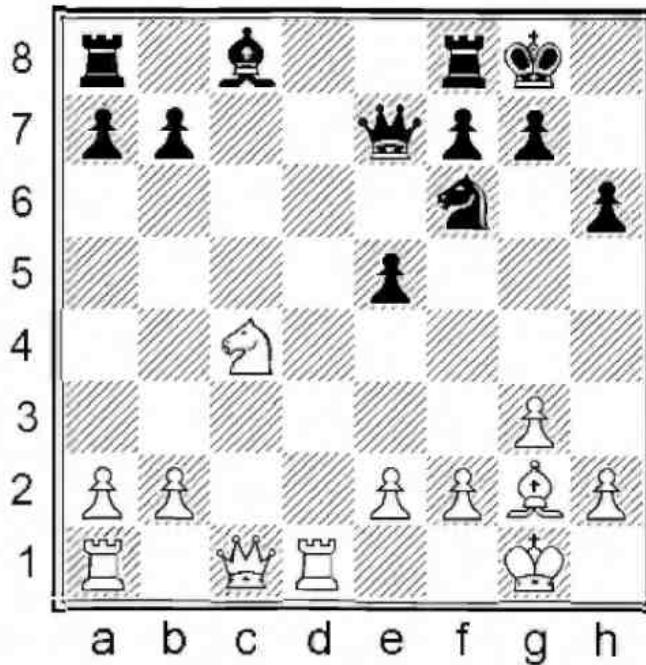
**17.b5±**

**B342) 11...Qe7**

12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

13.  $\mathbb{B}xd4$  e5

14.  $\mathbb{B}d1$  h6



15.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$

I really like this square for the queen: from here, she not only attacks the e5-pawn, but also cooperates excellently with the bishop on g2.

15...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}a3!$

Another advantage of the queen's position on e3: White offers to go into an ending, in which he will be able to exploit his lead in development and the vulnerability of the black queenside.

16...  $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

17.  $\mathbb{Q}xa3\pm$

Elianov-Fedorchuk, Sibenik 2009.

White's plan is extremely simple: he wants to play  $\mathbb{Q}a1-c1-c7$ . Black faces a difficult defence.

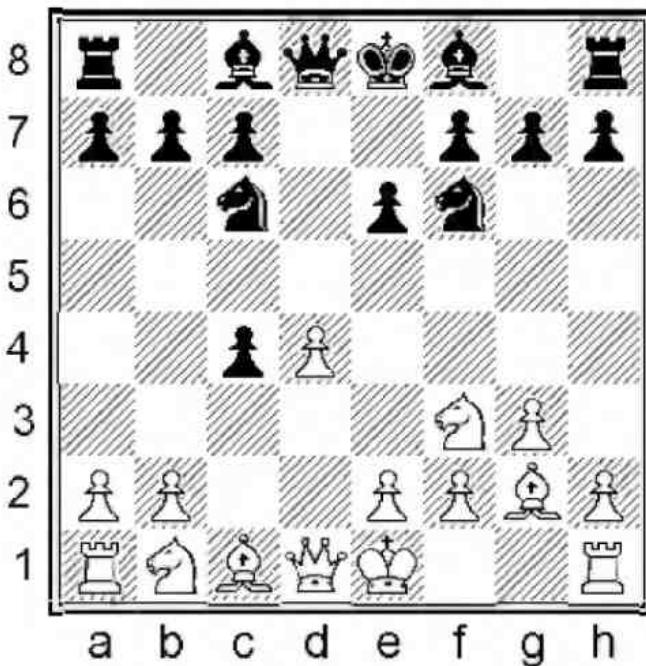
## Conclusion

After 5...  $\mathbb{Q}b4+$  events develop quite favourably for White. In practically all variations, he is ready to exchange his dark-squared bishop, so this check does not really bother him. White's subsequent strategy is also quite simple: he wants to regain the sacrificed pawn, retaining the pressure from the Catalan bishop on the opponent's queenside. Sometimes, Black manages to advance ...c7-c5 and take the pawn on d4. In his turn, White quietly completes his

development, at the same time keeping an eye on the enemy queenside and not forgetting to take back the d4-pawn at the first convenient moment. The position can simplify quite a lot, but even with limited material, White retains the classical Catalan advantage, thanks to his strong bishop on g2.

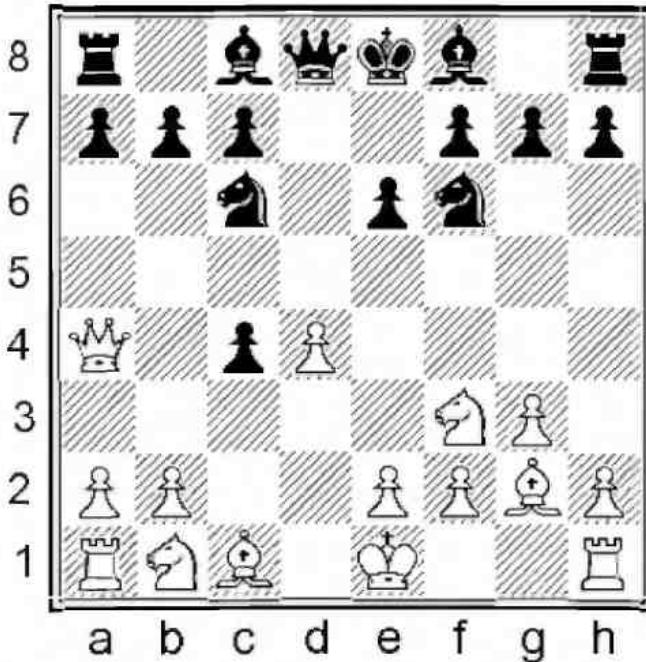
## Chapter 12 – Developing the Knight

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3 dx $c$ 4 5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$



In our day, this continuation has become extremely popular. The main drawback of the move is obvious: now Black will find it hard to carry out the advance ...c7-c5. But the move also has many advantages. Most of all, Black develops his pieces, towards the centre: from c6 the knight attacks the d4-pawn and controls the square e5, hampering the opponent's typical manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ -e5.

6. $\mathbb{Q}a4$



White wants to regain the c4-pawn at once, after which the position of the knight at c6, on the half-open file, blocking the c7-pawn, will not be so good.

**A) 6...♞d7**

**B) 6...♝b4+**

**A) 6...♞d7**

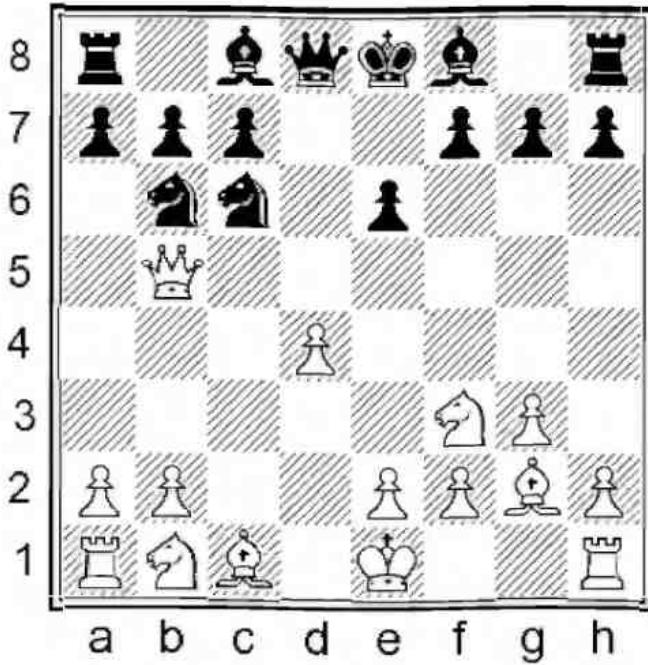
Without bothering to hang on to the c4-pawn, Black transfers his other knight to the queenside, hoping to initiate favourable complications.

7.♛xc4 ♞b6

8.♛b5!

An important subtlety! White wants to provoke the move ...a7-a6 and only then bring the queen to d3.

The modest 8.♛d3 is also possible, after which Black plays 8...e5 9.♛xe5 (9.♛g5 ♛e7!?) 9...♞b4 10.♛c3! (stronger than 10.♛b3 ♛e6 11.♛d1 ♛xd4 12.♛xd4 ♜c2+ 13.♛d1 ♛xd4 14.♛xb7 ♛d8 with compensation and Black has a satisfactory game, as it is hard for White to untangle) 10...♛xd4 11.0-0 ♛xc3 12.♛xc3 ♛d6 13.♛f3 0-0 14.♛b5±. In the endgame, the bishop pair guarantees White a lasting advantage.



**8...♝d7**

Or 8...a6 9.♕d3 e5 10.♗e3 (after Black has played ...a7-a6, this move grows noticeably in strength: now, at the appropriate moment, White is ready to exchange on b6, devaluing the opponent's pawn majority on the queenside) 10...exd4 11.♗xd4 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 ♕xd4 13.♗xd4 ♜b4+ 14.♗c3 0-0 15.0-0-0± Avrukh-Berg, Bajada de la Virgen 2005.

**9.♗b3**

The bishop on d7 blocks its queen's influence on the d-file, so now White can bring his queen to a better square.

**9...♞a5**

**10.♕d3 c5**

Black has managed to get in this important break, but to do so, he has had to worsen the position of both knights.

**11.0-0 ♞c6**

**12.♗d1 exd4**

**13.♗xd4 ♜xg2**

**14.♗xg2 ♔d5+**

**15.e4 ♔d7**

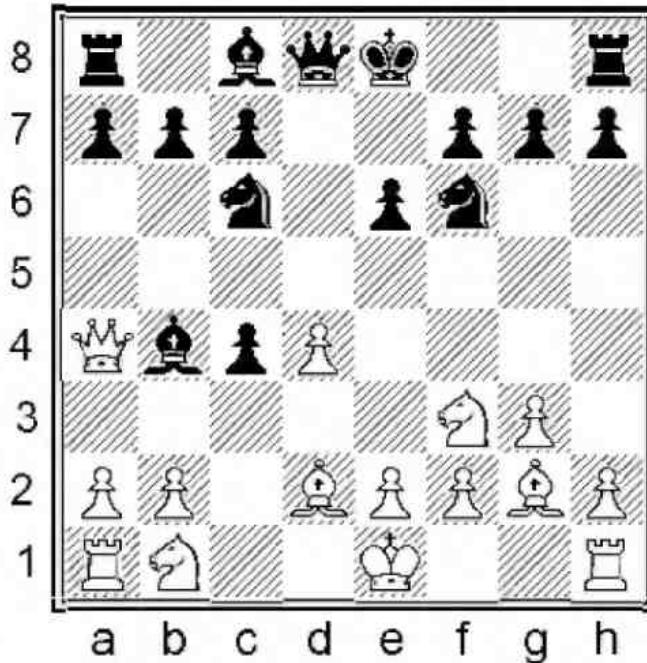
**16.♗e2±**

The crowning of White's central strategy – Black will not find it easy to escape from his opponent's pressure, complete his development and find useful work for his knights. This was the game Tkachiev-Libiszewski, Besancon 2006, which I recommend you study carefully. As I have already said, Grandmaster Tkachiev is one of the best specialists in the

white side of the Catalan.

B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$

7. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



B1) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

B2) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

B1) In reply to

7... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

I offer a choice of several continuations.

B11) 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

B12) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

B13) 8.0-0

B11) 8. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

9. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$

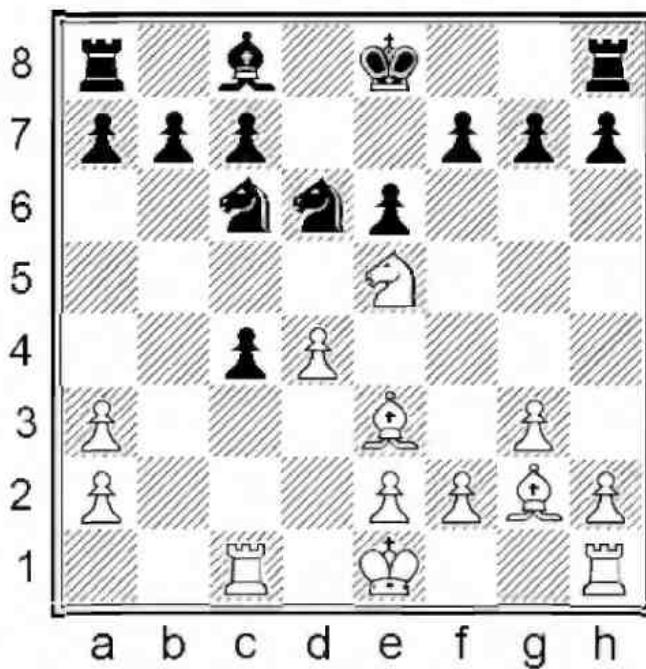
Taking another pawn is rather dangerous: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , and the black king is caught in the centre.

10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

**12.bxa3 ♜d6**

**13.¤e5**



A fairly typical endgame has arisen: White will regain the pawn on c4 and try to create pressure on the queenside.

**13...♝d7**

**14.0-0**

**14.¤xc4 ♜f5 15.♗f4 ♞c8 16.e3 ♜fe7**, Gustafsson-Khenkin, Altenkirchen 2005. Black is very thoroughly entrenched, and with his doubled pawns on the queenside, White finds it very hard to break down his opponent's barriers. For example, 17.♗b1 b6 18.g4 h5 19.gxh5 ♞xh5 20.♗g3 ♜a5=.

**14...f6**

**15.¤xc4 ♜f5**

**16.♗fd1 ♜xe3**

**17.¤xe3**

Is White's initiative sufficient to compensate for the weaknesses of his queenside pawn structure? It is in his favour that he controls the open b- and c-files, whilst his ♗g2 is very strong. All these factors, taken together, guarantee White a definite advantage.

**17...0-0-0**

**18.¤c4 ♞he8**

**19.e3 ♜b8**

**20.♗b1**

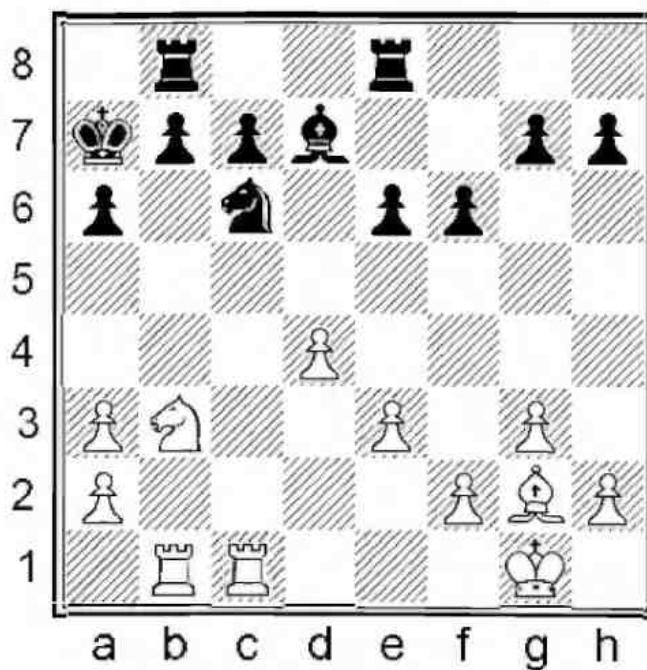
Having defended his position in the centre, White directs his rooks to the queenside.

**20...a6**

**21.♖dc1 ♖a7**

**22.♘d2 ♕b8**

**23.♘b3±**



The critical moment in the game. Black cannot prevent the knight coming into c5, since after 23...b6? 24.♗xc6 he loses a knight. Therefore, he has to adopt passive defence.

**23...♖e7**

**24.♖c3 ♖e8**

**25.♖bc1 ♕d8**

**26.f4 ♕c8**

**27.♖h3 ♕d8**

**28.♗g2 ♕c8**

**29.♔f2 ♕d8**

**30.g4**

A second front – White seeks objects of attack on the kingside.

**30...♖d6**

31.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

32.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

33.  $h4$

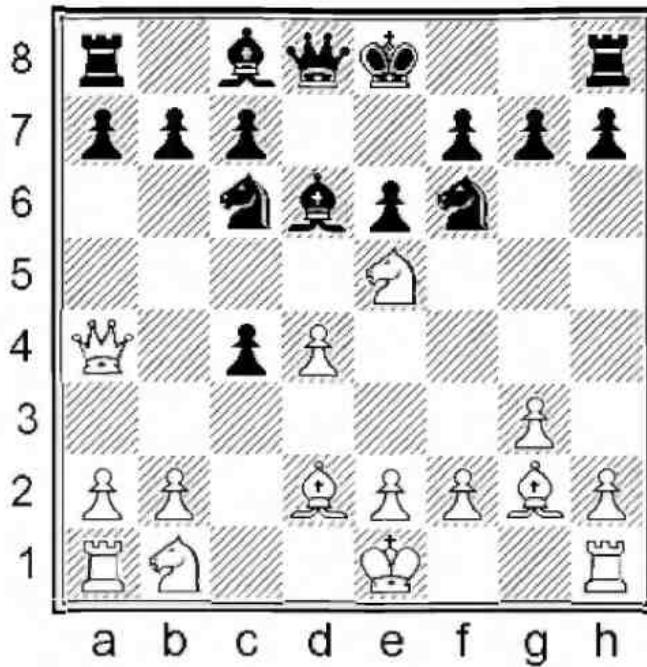
Continuing to play for pressure; also not bad is 33.  $f5$   $exf5$  34.  $gxf5 \pm$  Tkachiev-Schenk, France 2006.

33...  $\mathbb{Q}f7$

34.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$

35.  $h5 \pm$

B12) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$



An aggressive and quite promising move: White immediately provokes a crisis.

8...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

Black is worse in a lasting way after 8...  $0-0$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxcc6$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$ , for example: 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11.  $b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.  $0-0$   $c5$  13.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17.  $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \pm$  Ragger-Farago, Austria 2010/11.

9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $bxcc6$

10.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{W}d5$

An inferior endgame awaits Black at the end of the variation 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.  $0-0$   $0-0$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}a3 \pm$ .

11.  $f3$

White has exchanged off his Catalan bishop, and this move is necessary to ‘fill in’ the holes on his kingside.

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

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}c5$

13. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

Less is promised by 13.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. $\mathbb{W}c2 \mathbb{Q}b7$  15.a4 0-0-0 $\Rightarrow$  Marin-Tregubov, Plovdiv 2008. White gives up a second pawn, but eventually turns his opponent's pawns into what backgammon players call 'blots' [i.e. isolated units, which can be hit and knocked off the board, translator's note].

13... $\mathbb{W}b5$

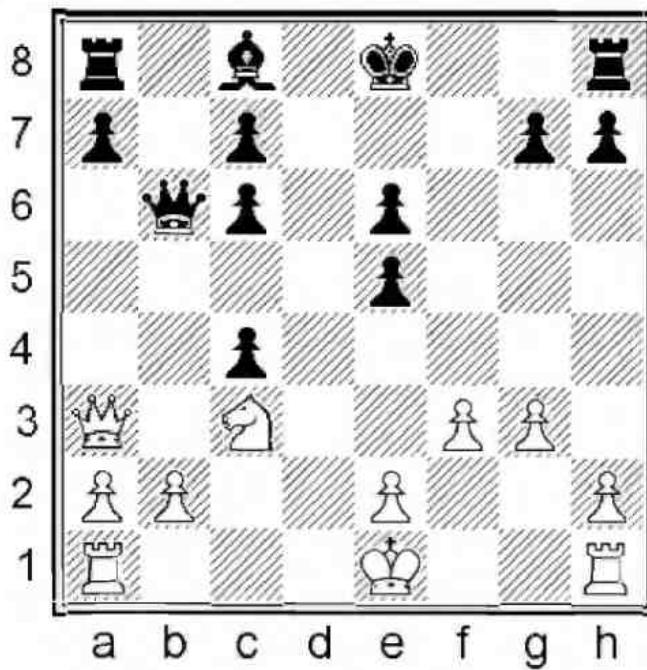
14. $\mathbb{W}a3 \mathbb{Q}xe5$

More cautious is 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$ , declining the Greek Gift, so as to prepare queenside castling immediately.

15. $\mathbb{Q}f4 f6$

16. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{W}b6$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5 fxe5$



The extra pawns only serve to prevent Black activating his bishop.

18.0-0-0  $\mathbb{E}b8$

19. $\mathbb{E}d2\pm$

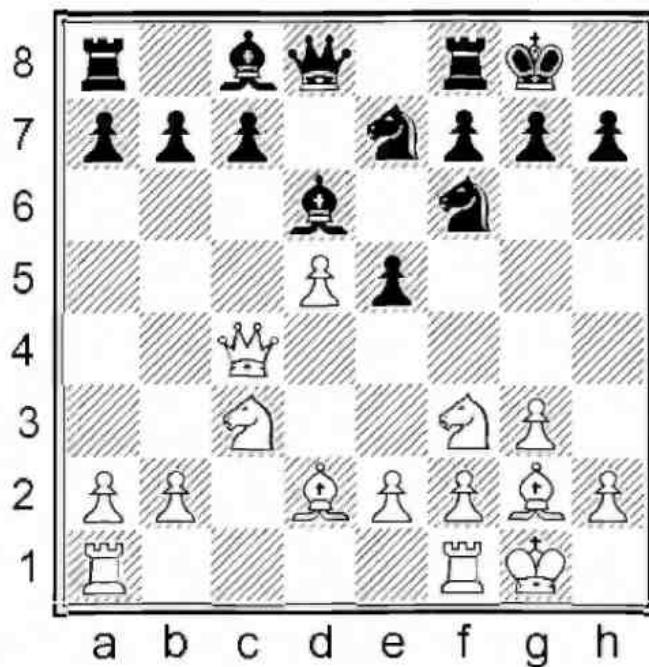
Raetsky-Carron, Lausanne 2003. It is interesting that, at first, the engines assess the position as equal, but the longer you leave them to run, the more and more they elevate their assessment of White's chances. It is hard for Black to achieve a normal level of piece coordination, and his broken pawns constitute an excellent target for the opponent.

### B13) 8.0-0 0-0

9.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  e5

10. d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$



We have another typical position. White has seized space, and his strong pawn on d5 cramps the opponent, and the pressure on the c-file should not be underestimated. On the other hand, Black's position is very solid, and breaking down his defensive barriers is far from simple. But he lacks an active plan, and must construct his game in accordance with what his opponent does.

11...h6

A) 11...c6 12. dx $c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13.  $\mathbb{R}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14.  $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ ;

B) 11...a6 12.  $\mathbb{R}fd1$  b5 13.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  (13.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  b4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}exd5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  with compensation Raetsky-Shariyazdanov, Biel 1999) 13...b4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.  $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$ ;

C) 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (this is another manoeuvre we have already come across. The bishop reaches g5 in two steps) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  h6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 15. dx $c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16.  $\mathbb{R}fd1$  (Black offloads the pawn c7, which is in need of defence, but now he has another problem – to find a safe position for his queen, which is being x-rayed by the rook at d1) 16... $\mathbb{R}c8$  17.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ . Black has not been able to come up with anything better than to offer the exchange of queens. But then he has a doubled, and rather vulnerable pawn, on b6: 18.  $\mathbb{W}xb6$  ax $b6$  19. a4  $\mathbb{E}a8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$  Grabarczyk-Hnydiuk, Plock 2000.

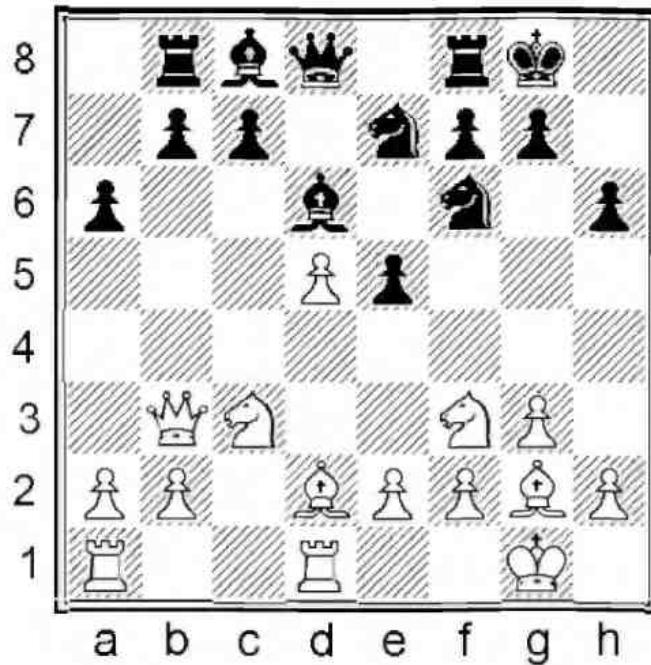
12.  $\mathbb{R}fd1$  a6

13.  $\mathbb{W}b3$

13. a4 c6 14. dx $c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  15.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  gx $h6$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}e7\infty$  Vaganian-Zviagintsev, Poikovsky 2002.

**13...♝b8**

Of course, Black would like to get rid of the d5-pawn with the move 13...c6, but then White has very simple play for the initiative: 14.dxc6 ♜xc6 15.♜e3 ♜c7, Filippov-Kortchnoi, Toliatti 2003, 16.♜b6 ♜e7 17.♜h4 ♜e6 18.♜d5±.



**14.♜e1!**

Remember this manoeuvre, which is quite typical for the Catalan: White opens the d-file for his rooks and frees the d2-square for the knight.

**14...♝g4**

**15.♜ac1 b5**

**16.h3 ♜h5**

**17.a3 ♜d7**

**18.♞h4 g5**

**19.♞f3 ♜h8**

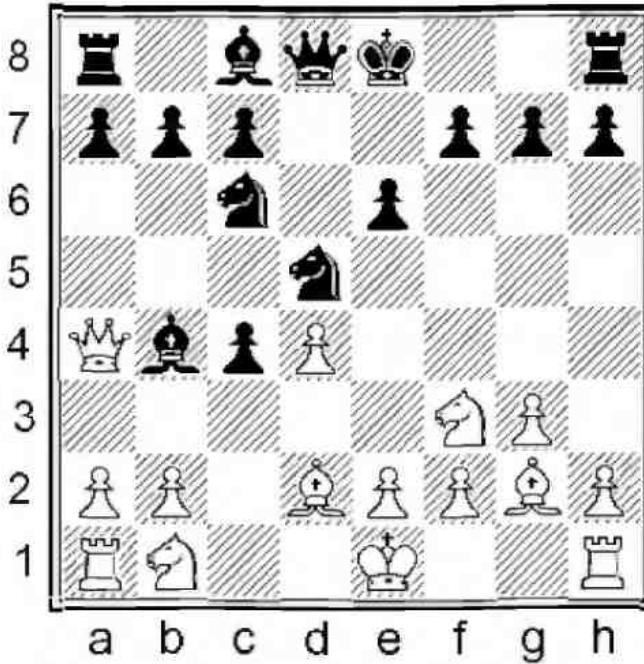
19...b4!? 20.axb4 ♜xb4 21.♛a2 ♜fb8 22.♞d2 ♜xb2 23.♝xa6 ♜g7 24.♞c4 ♜2b4 25.♛a2±.

**20.♞a2±**

Evdokimov-Alexandrov, Sochi 2005.

White wants to transfer the knight via b4 and c6, strengthening the pressure on the enemy position.

**B2) 7...♞d5**



Black hangs onto the extra pawn and continues to block the 4th rank.

**B21) 8.♗b5**

**B22) 8.♕xb4**

**B21)** Those who enjoy playing a pawn down, but with the initiative, may prefer

8.♗b5

**B211) 8...0-0**

**B212) 8...♝xd2+**

Transferring the dark-squared bishop to the long diagonal does not promise equality, because White can prevent the central break: 8...♝e7 9.♕xc4 ♜b6 10.♗d3 ♜f6 11.♗c3! (prophylaxis against ...e6-e5) 11...0-0 12.0-0 ♜d5 (A. Fominykh-Beshukov, St Petersburg 2001) 13.♗bd2±.

**B211)** Interesting is

8...0-0

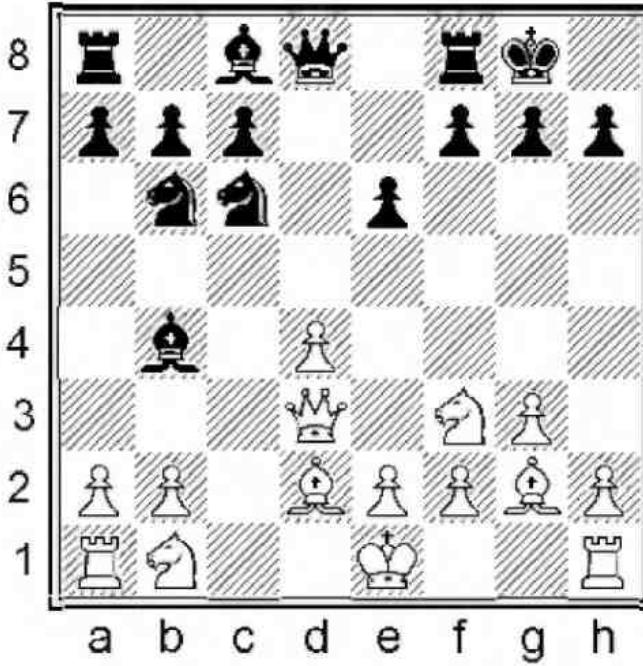
as a result of which the white queen comes under a small ‘carousel’, which ends in a slightly better endgame.

9.♕xc4

On 9.♗c3?! both 9...♝xc3+ 10.♗xc3 ♜b6 11.0-0 a6 12.♗c5 ♜d6±, and 9...e5 10.dxe5 ♜e6 11.0-0 a6 12.♗a4 (Romanishin-Brodsky, Nikolaev 1995) 12...♝e7± are good.

9...♜b6

10.♗d3



**10...e5**

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  11. $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$  e5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  – see 10...e5.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$**

**12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$**

12. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4=$  leads only to equality.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

G.J. de Boer-So. Polgar, Netherlands 1996.

**13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$**

**14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c2+$**

**15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$**

**16.e3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$**

**17. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$**

The knight is heading to c5, to strengthen the pressure on the enemy queenside.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

**18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

**19. $\mathbb{Q}hd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$**

20.  $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}d5$

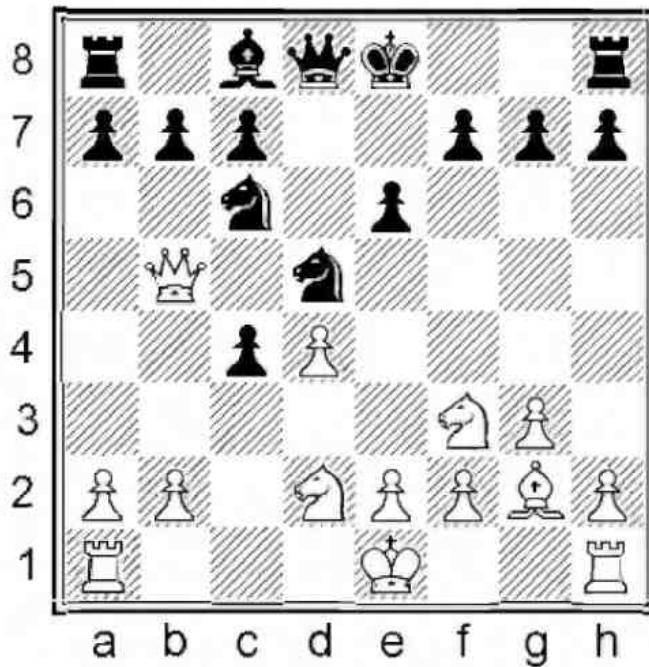
21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}de4\pm$

White has managed to get at the b7-pawn, which the black rook must guard.

B212) 8...  $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$

9.  $\mathbb{Q}bx d2$



9...  $c3$

In this way, Black would like to keep the extra pawn.

He is also far from equality after 9... 0-0 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}b6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d5$  (11...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  e5 (Nebolsina-Gutierrez Castillo, Istanbul 2005) 14. e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15. d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1\pm$ ) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}b6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{Q}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c5 \mathbb{Q}d6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c1 \mathbb{Q}d8$  16. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}db4$  18. a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e5 20. b4  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 23.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c6 24.  $\mathbb{Q}d1 \mathbb{Q}e6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  (a typical Catalan device: White forces the enemy rook to occupy a passive position) 25...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$  Prusikin-Skipchenko, Pulvermühle 2004.

10.  $bxc3 \mathbb{Q}xc3$

11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}d5$

12. 0-0 0-0

13.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1 \mathbb{Q}e7$

13... f6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1 \mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3 \mathbb{Q}c8$  16. e4  $\mathbb{Q}de7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$  Orlinkov-Zavialov, Moscow 2009.

14. e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$

15.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}b3! \pm$

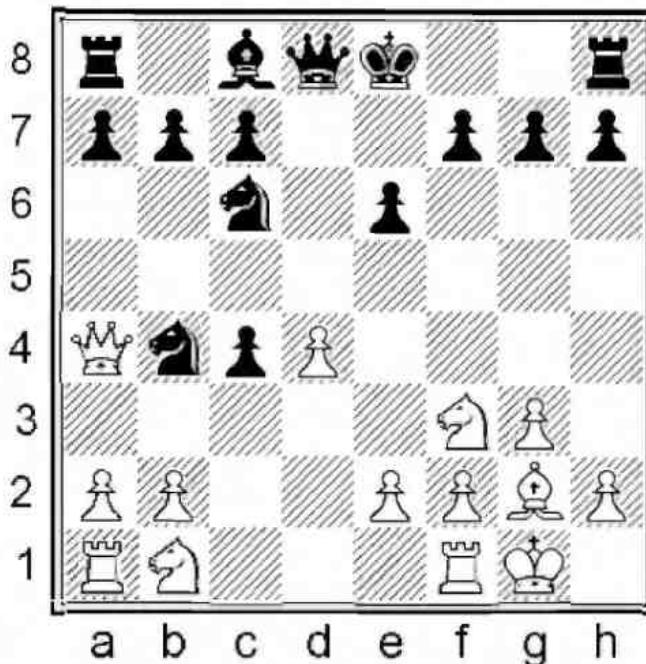
Romanishin-Dokhoian, Bad Godesberg 1994. White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn: he controls the centre and will develop his pressure on the queenside.

B22) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}dx b4$

9.0-0

The simplest way to obtain a small advantage for White in this position.

Long forcing variations arise after 9.a3, but at present, it seems everything is in order for Black: 9...b5 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}c2+$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c6+$  (nor does anything result from either 15.  $\mathbb{Q}1c3$  0-0, or 15.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}1c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 19.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  20.  $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}hc8$ . The white pieces clearly lack targets in the enemy camp, whilst the black heavy pieces are comfortably ensconced on the open lines. If anything, it is White who has to be careful here.



Here, Black has quite a large choice of possibilities.

B221) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

B222) 9...  $\mathbb{E}b8$

9...0-0 10. a3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c2 \pm$  Tukmakov-Kelecevic, Crans Montana 1999.

B221) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

10.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$

A small tactical subtlety: now if Black takes the knight on e5, then White takes the knight on b4.

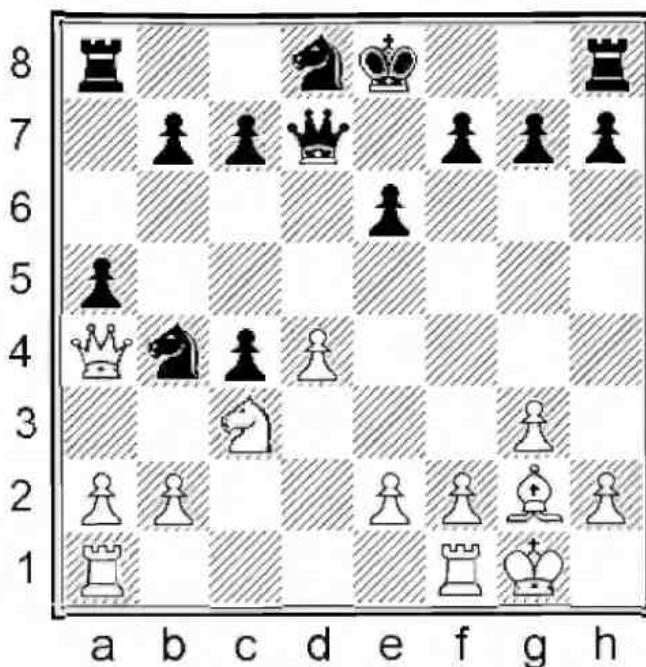
A double-edged struggle results from 10.a3 b5, for instance: 11. $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  12. $\mathbb{B}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}6xd4$  13. $\mathbb{W}c5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8\#$  Kunte-Babu, New Delhi 2010.

10...a5

11. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

- A) 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13. $\mathbb{B}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  f5 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  17. $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{B}b4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ ;
- B) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$  13. $\mathbb{W}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$  c5 15.e3, and Black remains a piece down;
- C) 12... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  13.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{B}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 16. $\mathbb{B}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  17. $\mathbb{W}xc4\pm$ .



13. $\mathbb{W}b5!$

This cunning move practically forces Black to exchange on b5, after which the white knight develops great activity.

13... $\mathbb{W}xb5$

14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$

Sebenik-Mazi, Bled 2003.

15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

Somewhat surrounded, the knight nonetheless retreats to a3, from where it not only attacks the c4-pawn, but also prevents its being defended with the move ...b7-b5.

The move 15. $\mathbb{B}fc1!$ ? also deserves attention.

15... $\mathbb{Q}dc6$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$

17. e3  $\mathbb{Q}hd8$

18. a3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

19.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  a4

20.  $\mathbb{E}fe1\pm$

White is ready to play  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and transfer the bishop via f1 to b5; thanks to his strong bishop, White firmly seizes the initiative.

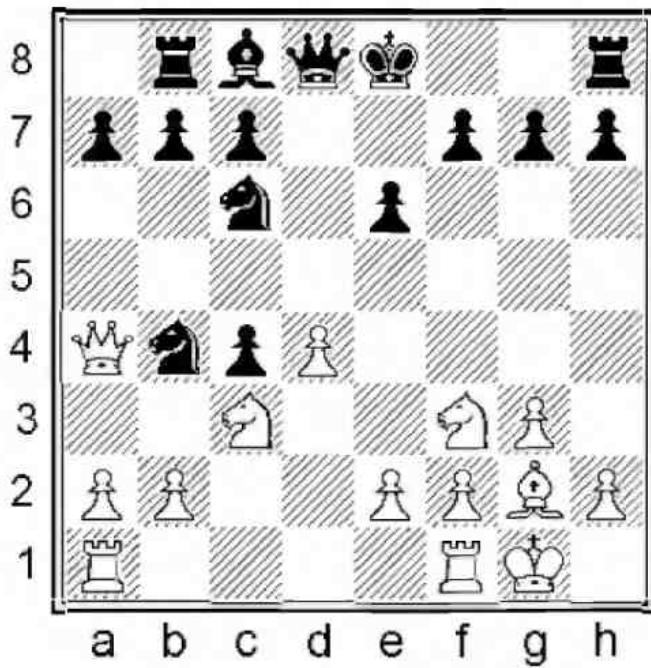
By the way, the subtlety of the previous move lies in the fact that after 20.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$  the reply 20... f5 is good, for example: 21. e4 fxe4 22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  g6 23. f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c6 26.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  with a very solid position for Black.

Meanwhile, the immediate 20. e4 is bad because of 20...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  21. exd5  $\mathbb{Q}e2+$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  23.  $\mathbb{E}xc1$  exd5 $\mp$ .

B222) 9...  $\mathbb{E}b8$

10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

It is not possible to regain the pawn with the direct 10.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  0-0 (10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.  $\mathbb{E}b5$  0-0 12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (Tkachiev-Godena, Cannes 1999) 13.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  f6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}b5\pm$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{E}b5$ , because here Black has the unpleasant (for White!) resource 11... b6! 12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  exd5 15. a4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  16.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$  c6 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f6 $\mp$ .



10... a6

The complications after 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11. a3 b5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  turn out in White's favour: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}xb2$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{E}b3$  16.  $\mathbb{E}fc1$ . White has defended all of his vulnerable points and now has obtained an obvious positional advantage, with material equality. Play could continue: 16... 0-0 (16... c5 17.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  0-0 19.  $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  – Urban-S. Ivanov, Lubniewice 1995) 17. a4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18.  $\mathbb{E}ab1\pm$ .

10... 0-0 11. a3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}ce7$  13. e4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xc3\pm$  Lalic-Meijers, Haarlem 2002. White outstrips his opponent in

development and has a clear advantage in the centre.

### 11. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

White also fails to get sufficient compensation after 11.a3 b5 12.  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0-0 14.  $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{B}b6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. e3  $\mathbb{W}e7$  17. b3 cxb3 18.  $\mathbb{W}xb3$  e5 19. d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  20.  $\mathbb{W}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  (Petursson-Chabanon, Paris 2004) 21...  $\mathbb{W}d8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5\#$ .

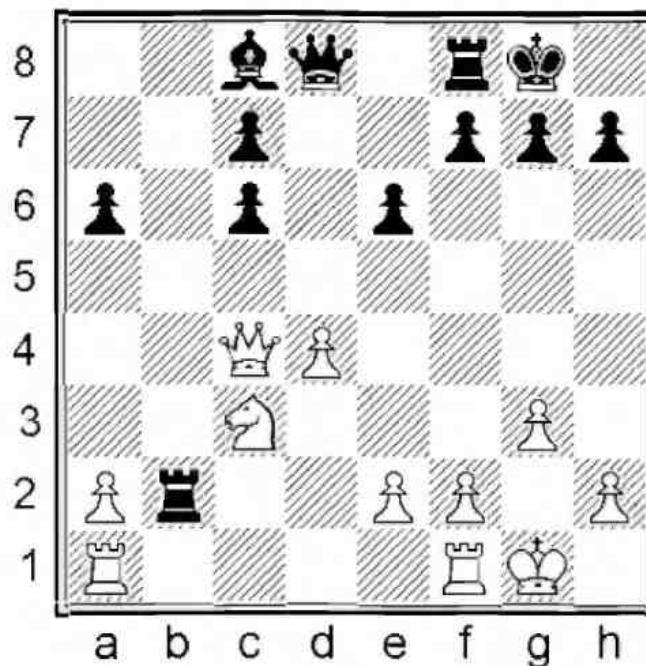
### 11... 0-0

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ $\mathbb{Q}xc6$

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$ bxc6

### 14. $\mathbb{W}xc4$ $\mathbb{E}xb2$

14...  $\mathbb{W}d6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  16.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  e5 17. dxе5  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}h3$  19.  $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$  Enhbat-Ippolito, Internet 2008.



Black has kept the extra pawn, but from a positional point of view the knight is clearly stronger than the bishop, which is blocked in on all sides by its own pawns, whilst the weak pawns on a6, c6 and c7 are easy targets for White.

### 15. $\mathbb{E}ab1$

15.  $\mathbb{E}fb1$   $\mathbb{E}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{W}c5$  h6 17. e3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18.  $\mathbb{E}b3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  19.  $\mathbb{E}ab1$   $\mathbb{E}xb3$  20.  $\mathbb{E}xb3$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  21. f4  $\mathbb{W}f5$  (21...  $\mathbb{W}g6$  22. e4± is worse), and Black is close to equality.

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

Black cannot concede control over the b-file.

### 16. $\mathbb{W}c5$

Tying the enemy queen to the defence of b6.

**16...h6**

Khalifman-S. Ivanov, St Petersburg 1996.

**17.a4**

A very direct and clear plan: White wants to force his opponent to exchange rooks and thanks to this, to seize the open lines on the queenside.

**17...a5**

Otherwise White plays a4-a5 and fixes the a6-pawn, which would be a lasting weakness in the black camp.

17... $\mathbb{E}xb1$  18. $\mathbb{E}xb1$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (19. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $cxd6$  20. $\mathbb{E}b6$   $c5$  21. $dxc5$   $dxc5$  22.a5  $\mathbb{E}d8$  23. $\mathbb{E}c6\pm$ ) 19... $\mathbb{W}d5$  20. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $cxd5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  22. $\mathbb{E}b8\pm$  Buhmann-Laznicka, Polanica Zdroj 2007.

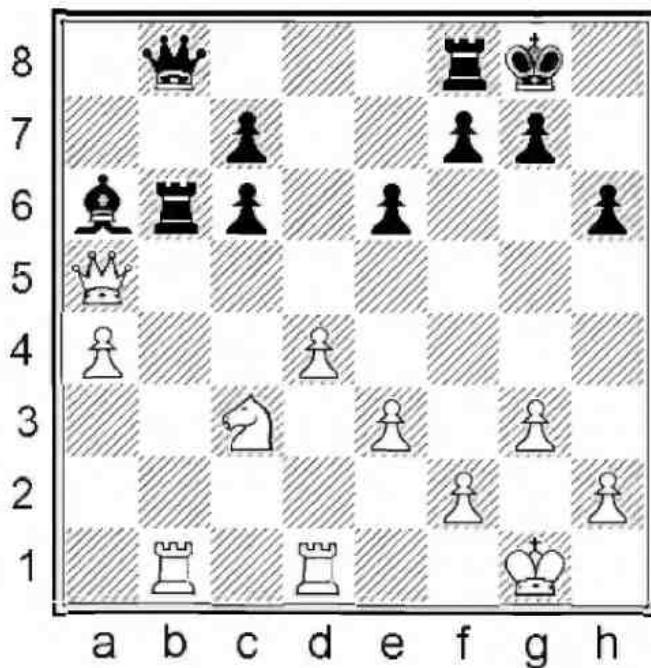
**18. $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

**19.e3**

19. $\mathbb{W}xa5$   $\mathbb{E}xb1$  20. $\mathbb{E}xb1$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  21. $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  22. $\mathbb{E}b7$   $\mathbb{E}d8\rightleftharpoons$  Ilincic-Rombaldoni, Budapest 2007.

**19... $\mathbb{W}b8$**

**20. $\mathbb{W}xa5\pm$**



Material is already equal, and White's positional advantage is not in doubt.

### Conclusion

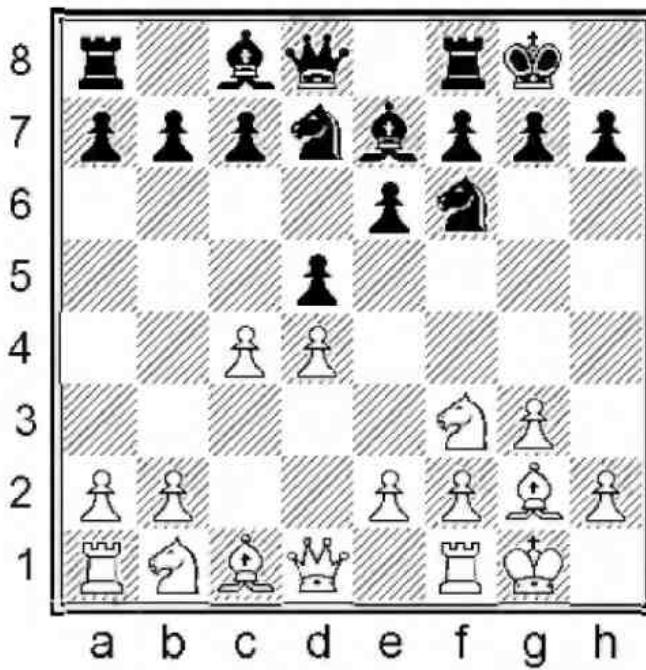
In reply to 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  we bring our queen out to a4, so as to regain the c4-pawn as soon as possible. Usually we will manage to do this, after which White remains with the better pawn structure – his pawn on d4 against the pawn on

c7, which assures him a small, but stable advantage.

The attempt to defend the c4-pawn with ... $\mathbb{E}b8$  does not work if White plays  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  and exchanges on c6, before Black gets in ...b7-b5. After this, Black's pawn structure is ruined, and White remains with a strong knight against the inactive bishop on c8. A few accurate moves force Black either to cede control of the b-file or to give back the pawn. In either case White's chances are preferable. Of course one must be prepared for the Catalan endgame, with a small but lasting advantage for White.

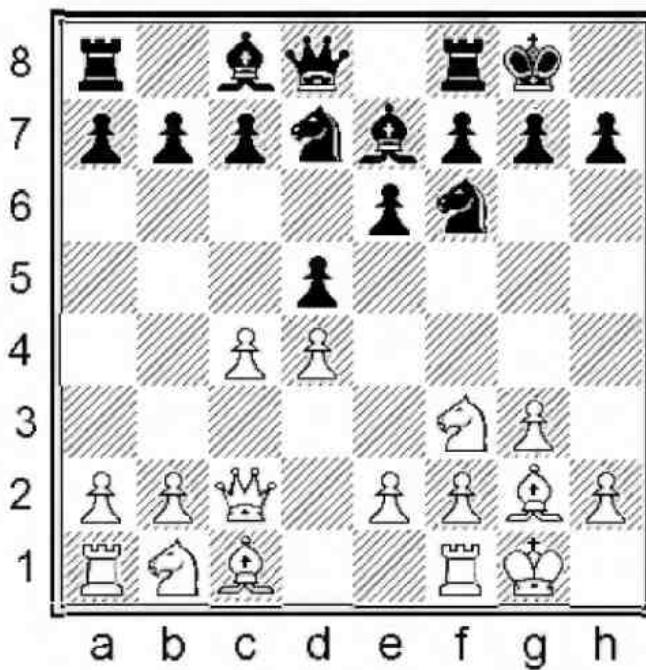
## Chapter 13 – Keeping the Position Closed

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



Of course, the main continuation here is 6...dxc4, a position I have played myself many times, with both colours. But before we cover the main line, we will take a look at another black set-up, involving the moves ...bd7 and ...c7-c6.

7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$



**A) 7...b6**

**B) 7...dxc4**

**C) 7...dxe4**

**D) 7...c6**

It is too hasty to play the immediate 7...c5 because of 8.cxd5 dxd5 9.Qc3 (the simplest) 9...Bb4 10.Bb1 Qf6 (otherwise a2-a3 is very unpleasant; the knight needs a retreat on d5) 11.dxc5 (maybe even stronger is 11.Bd1 Qbd5 12.e4 Qxc3 13.bxc3 Qd7 14.Qf4 Qa4 15.Qd2± Quinteros-L.Kovacs, Stip 1977) 11...Qxc5 12.Qg5 Qbd5 13.Qxd5 exd5 14.Qc2 Qb6 15.Qad1 h6 16.Qf4± Karpov-A. Sokolov, Brussels 1988.

7...Be8 is sometimes played, indeed, not even that rarely, although personally I do not see the sense of the move.

8.Qbd2 (the simplest; White intends to open play in the centre with the move e2-e4) 8...Bb8 9.e4 dxe4 10.Qxe4 Qxe4 11.Qxe4 Qf8 12.Qe3 b6 13.Qe5 Qb7 14.Qf4 Qf6 15.Qc6± Khurtsidze-Lopang, Ekaterinburg 2007.

**A) 7...b6**

**8.cxd5 Qxd5**

If 8...exd5 9.Qc3 Qb7 White will bring the bishop to f4 with 10.Qf4 and intends Qf3-e5 followed by e2-e4; this is a typical Queen's Indian plan. It is hard for Black to obtain active counterplay.

**9.a3**

White does not wish to allow the enemy knight into b4, so he first covers this square and only then advances e2-e4.

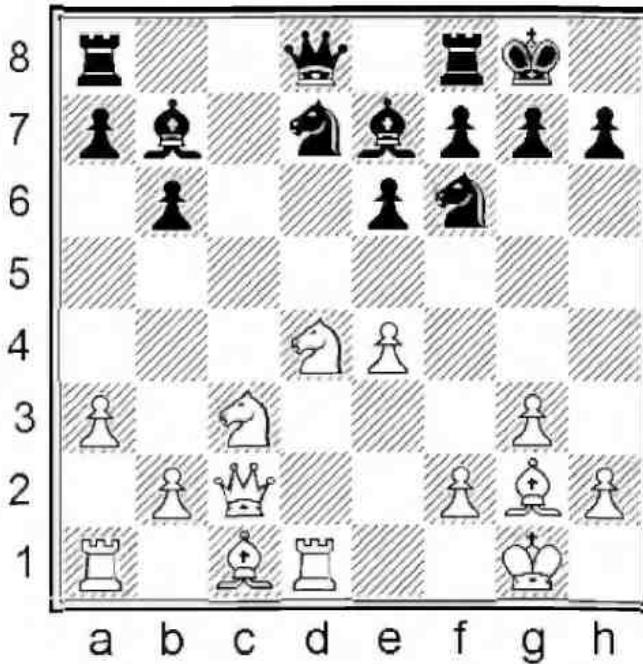
**9...Qb7**

**10.e4 Qf6**

**11.Qc3 c5**

**12.Qd1 cxd4**

**13.Qxd4**



White has a pleasant position: he has some space advantage, and Black still has to find a convenient post for his queen.

**13...Qc7**

**14.Qe2**

White wants to place his rook on the c-file, and then the queen on c7 will feel uncomfortable. In addition, now there is a tactical threat of e4-e5, with which Black must reckon.

**14...e5**

14...Qe5 15.Qf4 Qac8 16.Qdb5 Qb8 17.Qxa7 – White wins a pawn, without any particular compensation.

**15.Qcb5 Qd8**

**16.Qf5±**

**B) 7...dxc4**

A perfectly plausible and even quite good move, but in this line the knight is not terribly well placed on d7.

**8.Qxc4**

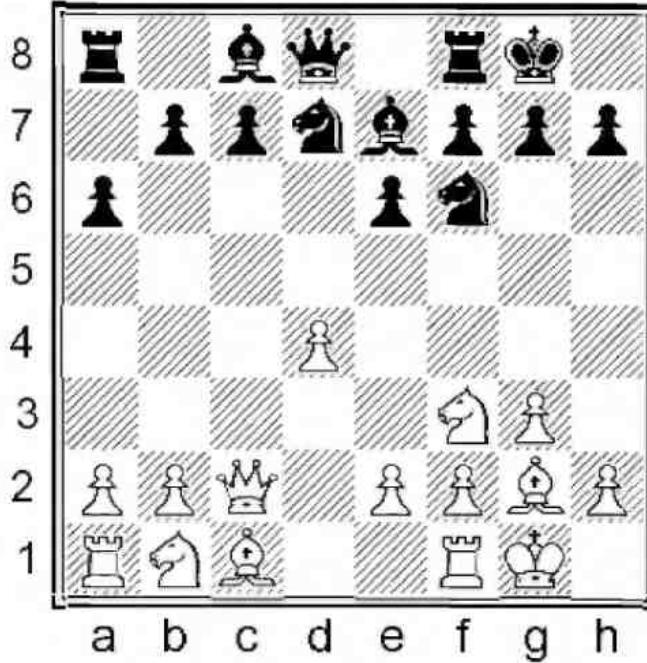
**B1) 8...a6**

**B2) 8...Qb6**

If 8...c5, then 9.dxc5 Qxc5 10.Qc3 Qe7 11.Qg5 Qb8 12.Qd1 (the white pieces are strafing the enemy camp and prevent the opponent from quietly completing his development) 12...Qb6 13.Qh4 h6 14.Qge4 Qxe4 15.Qxe7 Qxe7 16.Qxe4± Juhasz-Dimitrijevic, Senta 2006. The exchange of queens has not greatly eased Black's problems: he still has trouble developing his queenside, without in the process losing at least a pawn.

**B1) 8...a6**

9.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$



9...  $\mathbb{B}a7$

What contortions Black is forced into, in order to complete the development of his queenside, which is raked by the Catalan bishop! The natural move 9...  $\mathbb{B}b8$  has a significant drawback: as soon as Black plays the planned break ...c7-c5, White will bring his bishop to f4 with tempo (or White will bring the bishop to this excellent square first, and actually prevent the ...c7-c5 break). For example: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  (waiting tactics; on 10...b5 there follows 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14. a3  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  15. e4± Weidlich-Worbs, GDR 1987) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12. e4 c6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{B}a8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  hxg6 16.  $\mathbb{W}b3$ ± Vaganian-Giorgadze, Vilnius 1980. One can only feel sorry for the bishop on c8.

10.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  b6

10...c5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  (Neubauer-Pokorna, Tatranske Zruby 2009) 14. d5! b4 15. d6 bxc3 16. dxе7  $\mathbb{W}xe7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ±.

11.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

12. e4  $\mathbb{B}b7$

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$

Black's piece manoeuvres on the queenside remind one of a game of tag!

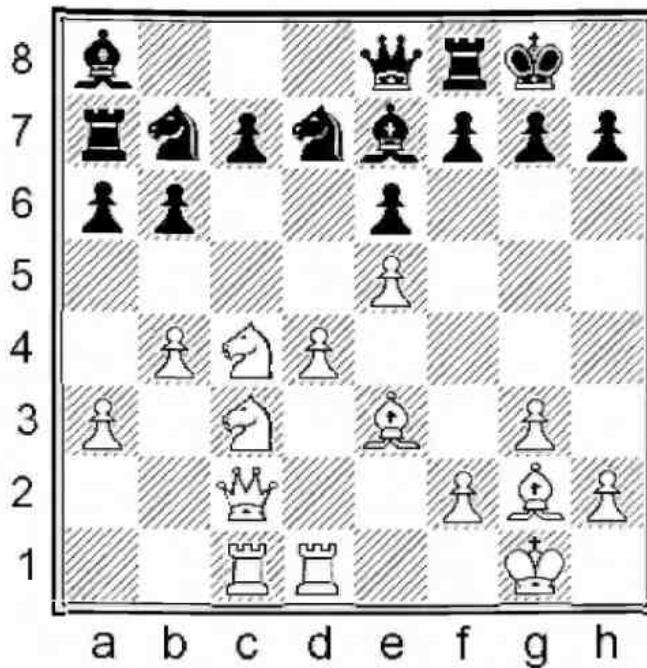
15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$

16. a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

17.  $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

**18.b4 ♜b7**

**19.e5**



Quite a picture! Of course, this game involves players of two very different classes, but even so!

**19...♜d8**

**20.d5 exd5**

**21.♝xd5 ♜e6**

**22.f4+–**

Bacrot-Riff, France 2007.

**B2) 8...♝b6**

**9.♛c2 ♜d7**

**10.♝e5 ♜b5**

This was the game Koneru-Nguyen Ngoc Truongson, Budapest 2005.

White is better after 10...♝bd5 11.e4 ♜b6 12.a4 a5 13.b3 ♜e8 14.♛a3± Franco Alonso-Andres Gonzalez, Spain 1996.

**11.♝c3 ♜a6**

Frankly, rather a strange set-up for Black.

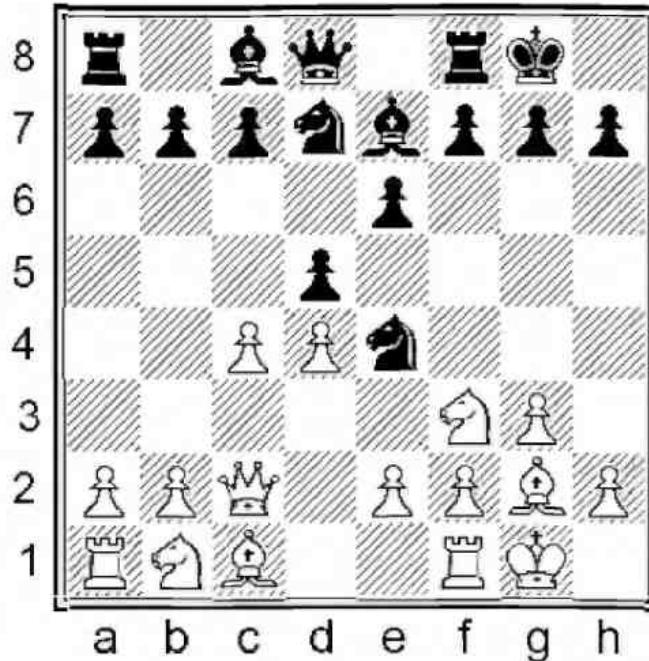
**12.♜d1 ♜fd5**

**13.a3 c6**

**14.♘e4±**

The position looks extremely sad for Black: he has no counterplay and his pieces work poorly together.

**C) 7...♘e4**



Black wants at least to exchange a pair of knights, since in a cramped position, any exchange helps the defender. If White plays insufficiently energetically, then Black will set up a Stonewall with the move ...f7-f5, and can start to think about active play on the kingside.

**C1) 8.♘fd2**

**C2) 8.♘c3**

**C1) 8.♘fd2 f5**

Without the knight on e4, the Stonewall formation looks a little ‘loose’, and White will win the battle for the dark squares: 8...♘xd2 9.♘xd2 c6 10.♗d1 f5 11.♘f3 ♘d6 12.♗f4! ♘f6 (the exchange on f4 favours White, because it is then practically unrealistic for Black to dream of counterplay on the kingside) 13.♘xd6 ♗xd6 14.e3 ♘e4 15.♘e5 ♘d7 16.b4!± Ushenina-Urosevic, Zlatibor 2007.

**9.b3 c6**

**10.♗b2 ♗e8**

**11.♘xe4 fxe4**

**12.f3 exf3**

**13.♗xf3**

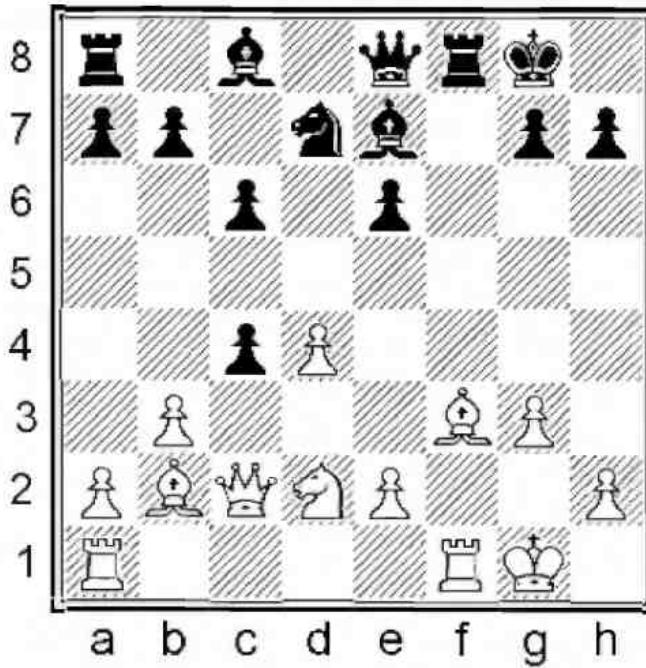
In reply to 13.exf3 Black equalises the chances with the help of the exchanging operation 13...dxc4 14.bxc4 e5! 15.dxe5

$\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , and if White takes the knight, then a check follows on c5, winning back the bishop, whilst the attempt to set up a pin by 16.  $\mathbb{E}e1??$  just loses to 16...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5+$ .

13...dxc4

14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$

In order to retain his opening initiative, White has to sacrifice a pawn, since after 14.bxc4 there follows the same counterblow 14...e5!.



14...cxb3

15.  $\mathbb{W}xb3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$

17.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$  with compensation

Yevseev-Brendel, St Petersburg 2006. White undoubtedly has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but it would hardly be appropriate to speak of his having the advantage.

C2) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

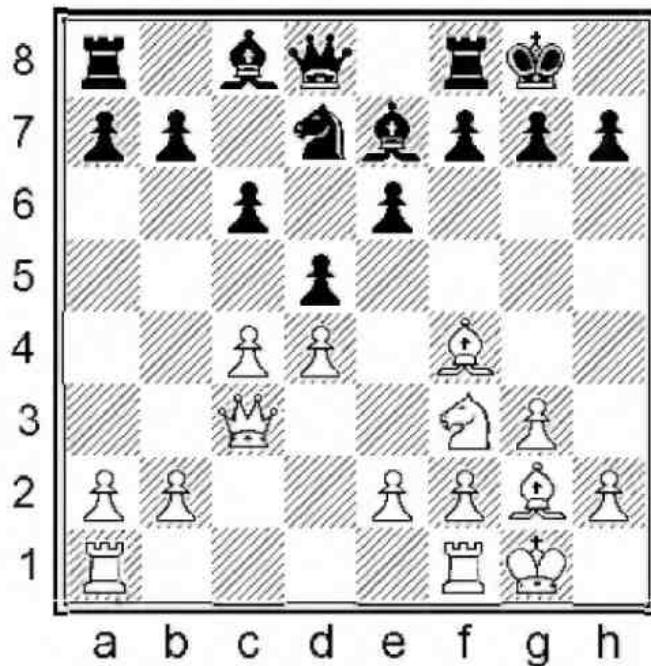
Or 8...  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (White develops a piece and also sets a small trap) 9...b6? (this naive reply leads to the loss of a pawn) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 (even worse is 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  11. cxd5 exd5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (no better is 11...  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$ ) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1\pm$  C. Bauer-Vasilev, Cannes 2000.

9.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$  c6

10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$

As I have already said, without the ‘cementing’ knight on e4, it is unfavourable for Black to set up a Stonewall with

...f7-f5, as he merely seriously weakens the dark squares in his camp.



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

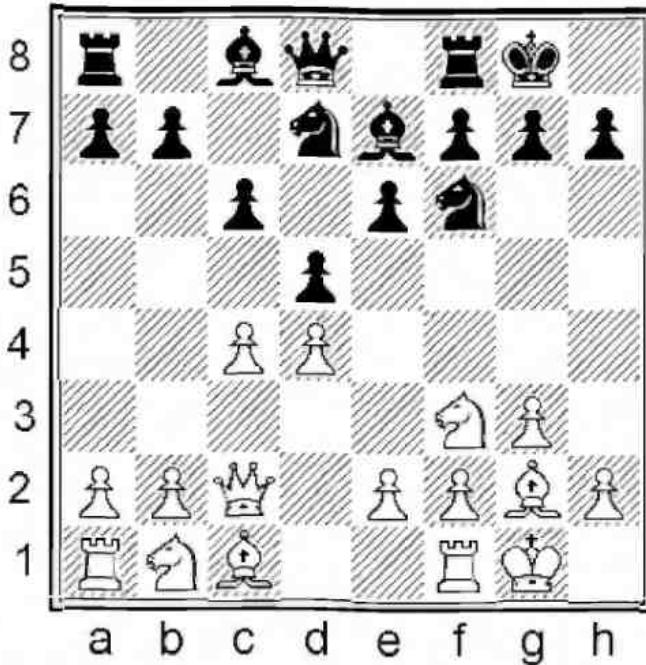
11. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}h5$

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3 f6$

13. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$

Adamski-Kazmierczak, Warsaw 2009.

D) 7...c6



A basic move, a key part of the set-up with ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  and ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . Black's unchallenging formation allows White to respond in different ways.

**D1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

**D2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

**D1)** Interesting is

**8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  b6**

If Black leaves the fianchetto on the back burner, then White calmly prepares and carries out favourably the advance e2-e4: 8... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (the knight on g6 is misplaced, so if the bishop must be exchanged, it should be for the other knight) 11...b6 12.e4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx $e4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  17.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18.c5! (a standard device: in order to shut in the bishop on b7, White will often even sacrifice on c5, but in this case, as we will see, it is bad for Black to take the pawn) 18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (on 18...bxc5 19.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  there follows 20.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21.b5 with a large advantage) 19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$  Ghaem Maghami-Hönick, Calvia 2006.

**D11) 9.exd5**

**D12) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

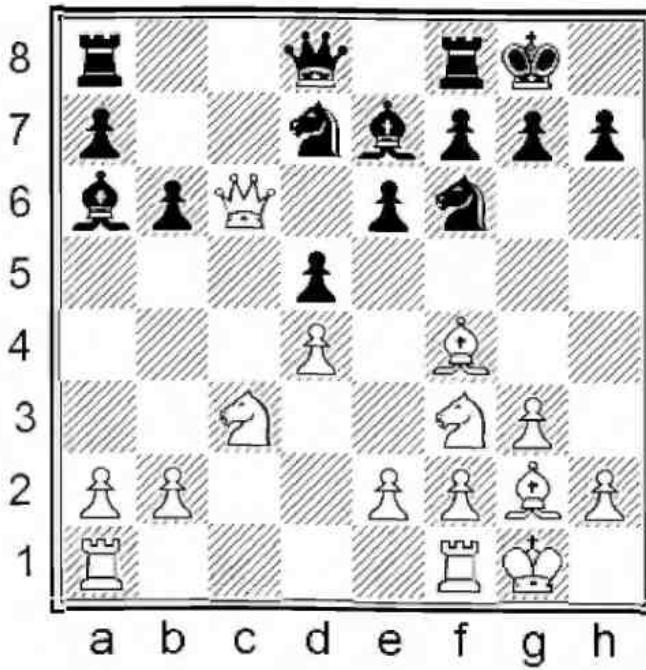
**D11)** The exchange on d5 deserves consideration, opening the c-file, on which the white queen is already posted:

**9.cxd5 cxd5**

The pawn sacrifice 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  does not look very convincing: 10. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  12.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$  Kachur-A. Mamedov, Odessa 2007.

**10. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

**11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**



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

11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  is risky, because of 12. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  13.b3 b5 14. $\mathbb{W}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb3$  15.axb3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16. $\mathbb{E}fc1$  with serious pressure on the queenside.

**12. $\mathbb{W}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

An interesting try is 12...b5!? 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$ , although here too, after 16. $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{E}fc8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$  White's chances are preferable, Nogueiras-Browne, Linares (Mexico) 1994. He has a pawn majority on the queenside, whilst it is hard for Black to get at the weak pawn on d4.

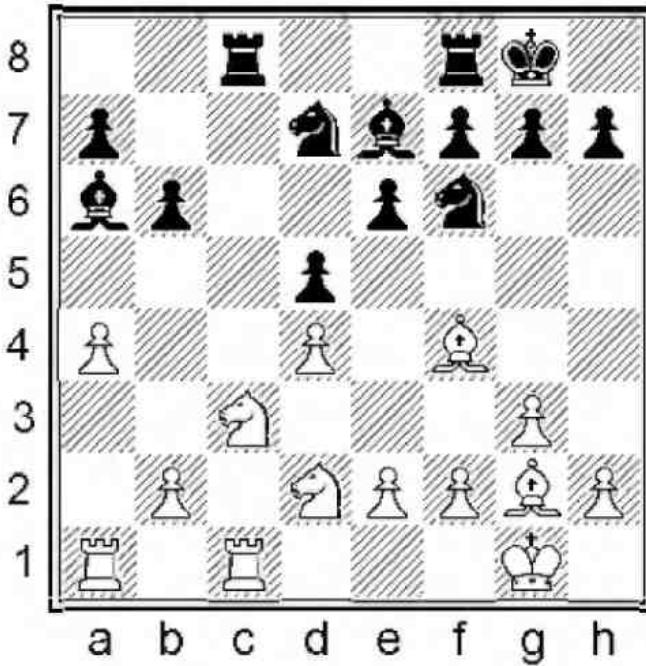
**13. $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$**

**14. $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$**

14... $\mathbb{E}fc8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17.a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18.a5± Stamenkov-Florentiades, Gothenburg 2005.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$**

**16.a4**



White gradually builds up the pressure on the queenside. No real counterplay is apparent for Black; his position is solid, but passive.

**16...Qh5**

**17.Qb5 Qxf4**

**18.gxf4 Qb4**

**19.Qf3 Qxc1+**

**20.Qxc1 Qxb5**

**21.axb5 Qd6**

**22.f5!?**

White exploits the opportunity to eliminate his doubled pawn. However, 22.e3 is also good.

**22...exf5**

**23.Qh4 g6**

**24.Qxd5 Qf6**

**25.Qb3 Qg7**

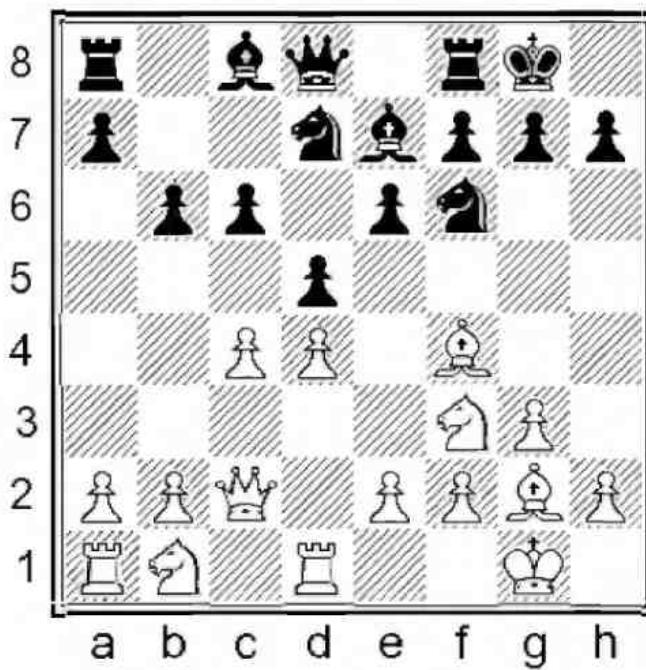
**26.Qf3 Qe8**

**27.Qc6 Qb8**

**28.Qc4±**

Andersson-Portisch, Ter Apel 1994.

D12) 9.♗d1



D121) 9...♝b7

D122) 9...♝a6

D121) A somewhat passive set-up is

9...♝b7

followed by transposition into a Dutch-type position:

10.♝c3 ♐h5

10...♜c8 11.♝e5 ♐h5 12.♝c1 f5 13.♛a4± A. Slavin-Almond, Newport Pagnell 2010.

11.♝c1

Here the dark-squared bishop is too valuable a piece, and White will agree to exchange it only for the bishop on e7.

11...f5

12.b3 ♜c8

13.♝b2

The direct preparation of the bishop exchange on a3 allows Black to quickly prepare the break ...c6-c5 and obtain equality: 13.a4 a5 14.e3 ♜d6 15.♝a3 ♜xa3 16.♝xa3 ♜e7 17.♜aa1 ♐hf6 18.♜ac1 ♐e4 19.♛b2 ♐xc3 20.♜xc3 c5 (it was hard to stop this; now Black has satisfactory play) 21.♜dc1 ♜cd8 22.♛e2 g6 23.cxd5 ♜xd5, draw, Tkachiev-Lalic, Pula 1999.

13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

14.e3  $\mathbb{W}e7$

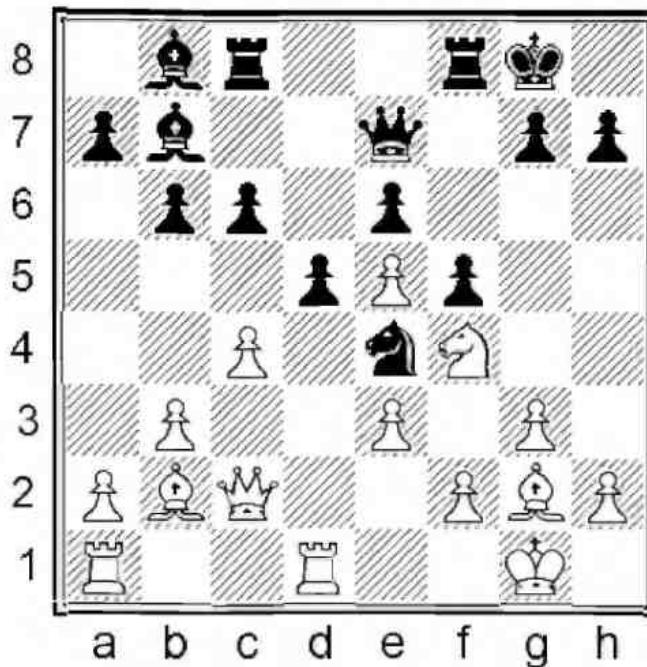
15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}hf6$

Here the advance 15...c5 allows White to open the long diagonal, on which he has far-sightedly placed his bishop:  
16.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ .

16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

18.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$



19.a4

Interestingly, in a game played eleven years later, White pushed his other rook's pawn two squares, and also obtained a clear advantage: 19.h4  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}cd8$  22.b4 $\pm$  V. Mikhalevski-Broomfield, Caerleon 2005.

19...g5

20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  g4

21. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$

Marin-Pogorelov, Andorra 1994.

D122) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

10. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Immediately attacking the pawn on c6.

## 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

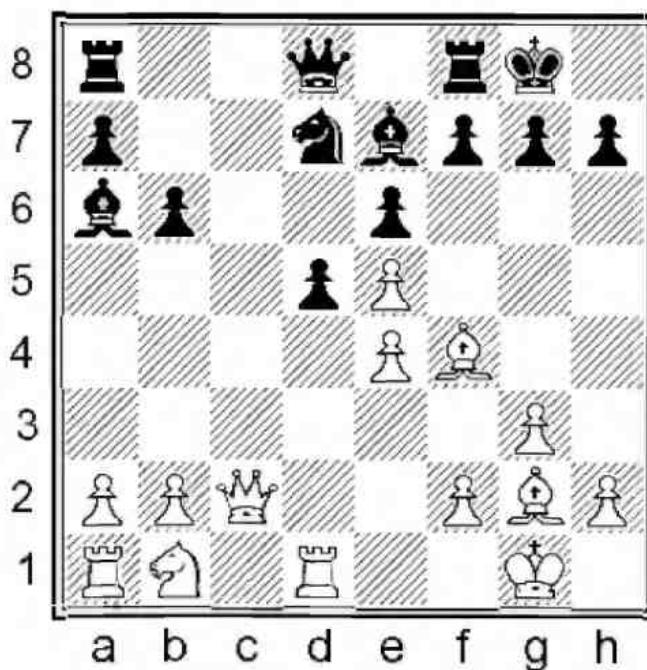
10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.b3  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  13.e4 h6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  15.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17.a4± Burmakin-Graf, Ohrid 2001; 10... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  dxc4 13.e4 b5 14.a4 a6 15.axb5 axb5 16.d5 exd5 17.exd5 e5 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  b4 19.d6 bxc3 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  h6 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  with compensation HammerAdams, Novi Sad 2009) 12.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.cxd5 cxd5 14.e4 d4± – see 10... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.cxd5 cxd5 13.e4  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d4 Tkachiev-Yakovenko, Dresden 2007.

## 11.dxe5 $\mathbb{Q}d7$

After 11... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  we have a classic case of the knight on the edge standing badly. 12...f5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  16.e3 g6 17.a4 (having strengthened his centre and insured himself against a possible enemy diversion on the kingside, White begins an offensive on the opposite flank) 17... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}dc1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (here, the knight does not stand a lot better than on h5. Its natural route goes via e8 and c7 to... a8) 20.h4  $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  21.a5 b5 22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b4 23.b3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  a6 28. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ± Tkachiev-Tukmakov, Porec 1998.

## 12.cxd5 cxd5

## 13.e4



With the help of this central blow, White wins a pawn. The diagonal a6-f1 is cleared completely, and the bishop on a6 is just firing into thin air.

## 13... $\mathbb{Q}c8$

A) Black has also tried the immediate 13...d4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  g5 (otherwise White puts his pawn on h4, completes his development, and begins to prepare an offensive on the kingside) 16. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  (maybe it is simplest of all to demonstrate an advantage for White after 16.b4 gxf4 17.bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  18.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ±) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  bxc5 24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f6 25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ± Tkachiev-Filippov, Fügen 2006. Material is equal and White has a serious positional advantage: he has two powerful bishops and his opponent

has weaknesses on both flanks;

B) The flank blow 13...g5? looks unconvincing in view of 14.Qe3 Qxe5 15.exd5 Qc8 16.Qc3 Qe8 17.d6 Qd8 18.Qd2 Qd7 19.Qxg5 Qc4 20.Qc1± Wojtkiewicz-Kustar, Sioux Falls 2000;

C) 13...dxe4? 14.Qxe4 (a double attack) 14...Qc8 15.Qxh7+ Kh8 16.Qc3±, and trapping the bishop leads to great unpleasantness: 16...g6? 17.Qxg6 fxg6 18.Qxg6 with an overwhelming position (with material equality).

#### 14.Qc3 d4

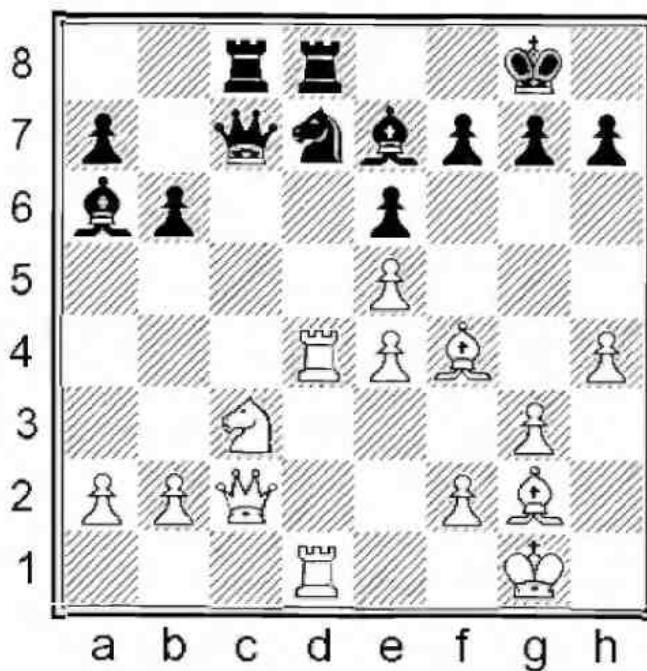
On 14...dxe4 there follows another fork: 15.Qa4!. Admittedly, Black can save his piece, but at considerable cost: 15...Qd3 16.Qxe4 b5 17.Qxa7 Qc7 18.Qd4 Qxe4 19.Qxe4±.

#### 15.Qxd4 Qc7

#### 16.Qad1 Qfd8

16...Qxe5? loses to 17.Qa4 Qb7 18.Qd7.

#### 17.h4



#### 17...h6

Black obtains an inferior endgame after 17...Qb8 18.Qxd8+ Qxd8 19.Qxd8+ Qxd8 20.Qa4 Qd7 21.Qxd7 Qxd7 22.Qf1 Qxf1 23.Qxf1± Gelfand-Alexeev, Moscow 2008.

#### 18.h5 Qc5

#### 19.Qf1 Qg5

#### 20.Qxg5 Qxd4

#### 21.Qxd4 Qxf1

22... $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$

23. $\mathbb{W}d1\pm$

Tkachiev-Yakovenko, Dresden 2007.

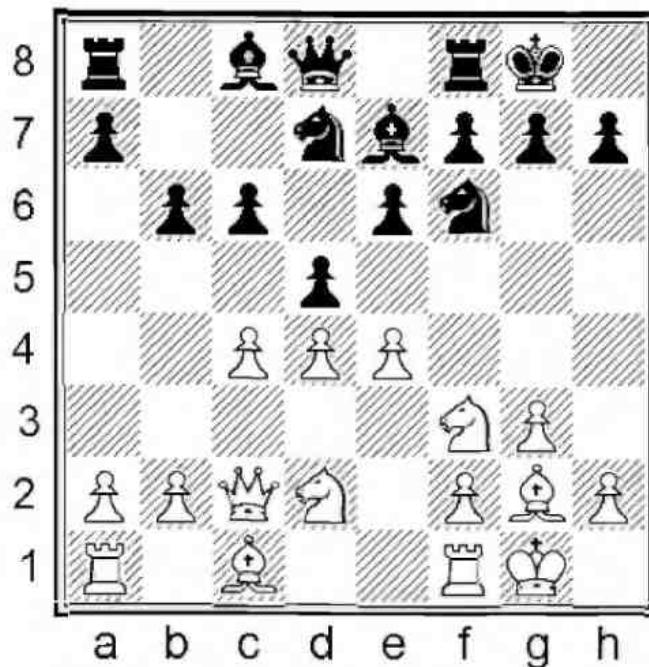
D2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

With the familiar idea of e2-e4. White brings the knight to d2, rather than c3, so as not to sacrifice the c4-pawn.

8...b6

If 8...b5, then 9.c5 e5 (otherwise White plays e2-e4, and this break becomes virtually impossible) 10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (White allows his opponent to regain the e5-pawn, but defends that on c5, and also controls the square d4. It is also worth considering 11.e4, for example: 11...d4 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}2b3\pm$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14.a4 b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  (preparing e2-e4; Black is obliged to stop this) 15...f5 16.a5! (an important move: later the pawn on b4 will come under attack) 16... $\mathbb{W}c7$  17.b3 g6 18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  a6 19. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$  Kozul-Madina, Benidorm 2006.

9.e4



D21) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

D22) 9...dxe4

D23) 9...dxc4

D24) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

D21) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

An interesting attempt to create counterplay.

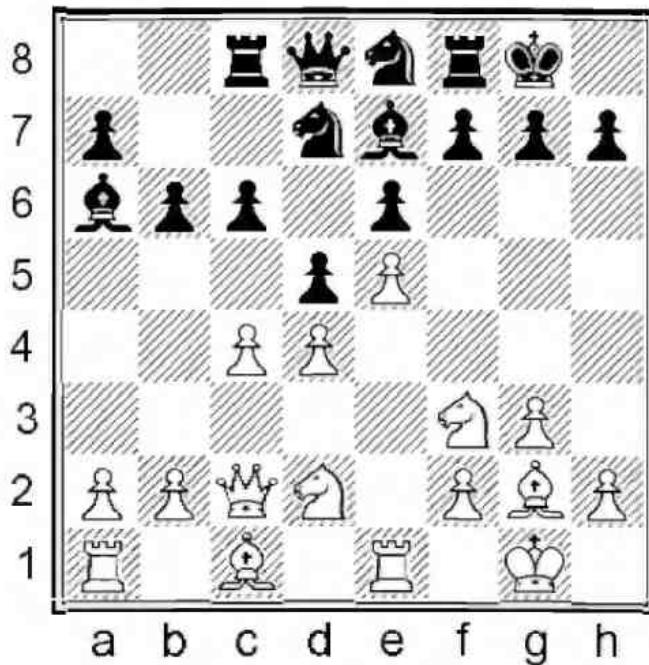
## 10.e5

Not good is 10.exd5 cxd5 11.♗a4 ♗c8, Marttala-Aagaard, Stockholm 2004/05, after which the initiative passes to Black.

## 10...♝e8

## 11.♕e1 ♗c8

11...♝c7 12.b3 ♗c8 13.h4 c5 14.a4 dxc4 15.bxc4 cxd4 16.♝xd4 ♜xe5 17.♗b2 with compensation Van der Stricht-Sielecki, Netherlands 2010/11.



## 12.♗f1!

An important moment, at which we should pause for a deeper look. In the Catalan, it often happens that, having played e4-e5, White has to acknowledge that his bishop has fulfilled its mission on g2 and needs to seek a new diagonal.

Therefore, White retreats it to f1, so as to transfer it to d3 and attack the enemy kingside. In addition, White can exchange on d5 at the right moment and exchange light-squared bishops.

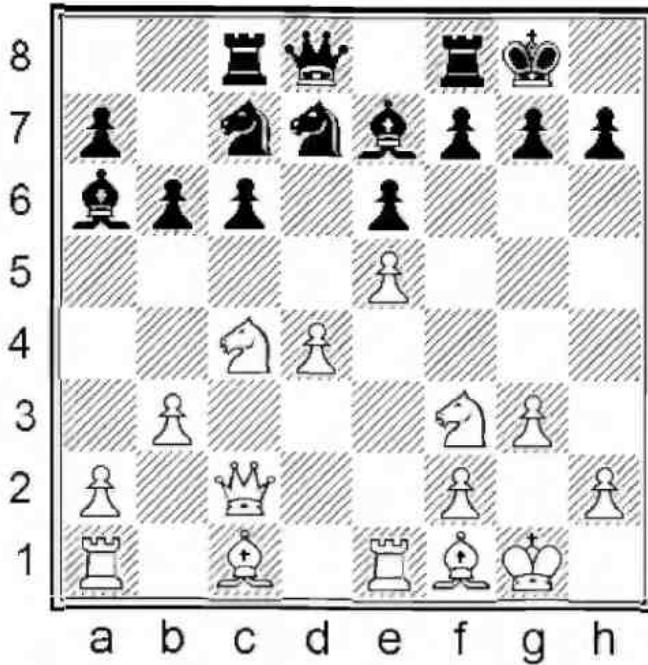
Little is promised by 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.♗a4 ♜c7 14.♗f1 ♜b8 15.♗xa6 ♜cxa6 16.a3 ♗d7 17.♗xd7 ♜xd7 18.♗f1 b5 19.♗d2 ♜ab8= Ruck-M. Stojanovic, Banja Luka 2007.

## 12...♞c7

In order to find some future for this knight, Black will have to exchange on c4, even though this is a definite strategic concession.

## 13.b3 dxc4

## 14.♝xc4



We have reached a position rather typical of the modern treatment of the Caro-Kann (with 3.e5). Yes, Black has an outpost on d5 at his disposal, which will be occupied by the knight from c7, but all his other pieces are passively placed.

**14...♝d5**

**15.♛e4!±**

A multi-functional move. One idea is obvious – to play ♜d3 and force the weakening move ...g7-g6. Another is rather more veiled: 16.♕g4 ♖h8 17.♘g5!, removing the dark-squared bishops, and allowing the knight deep into enemy territory on d6.

**15...b5**

**16.♝e3 ♕e8**

**17.h4 ♞f8**

**18.♞xd5!**

A somewhat unexpected exchange, but White has accurately assessed the consequences of the change in the pawn structure in the centre.

**18...cxd5**

If 18...♛xd5 19.♕xd5 cxd5 20.a4! we see how far-sighted the move ♘g2-f1 was: the pawn on b5 is pinned, and it is very hard for Black to sort out his pieces and pawns on the queenside. If 20...♜b8, then 21.♘d2±.

**19.♕g4**

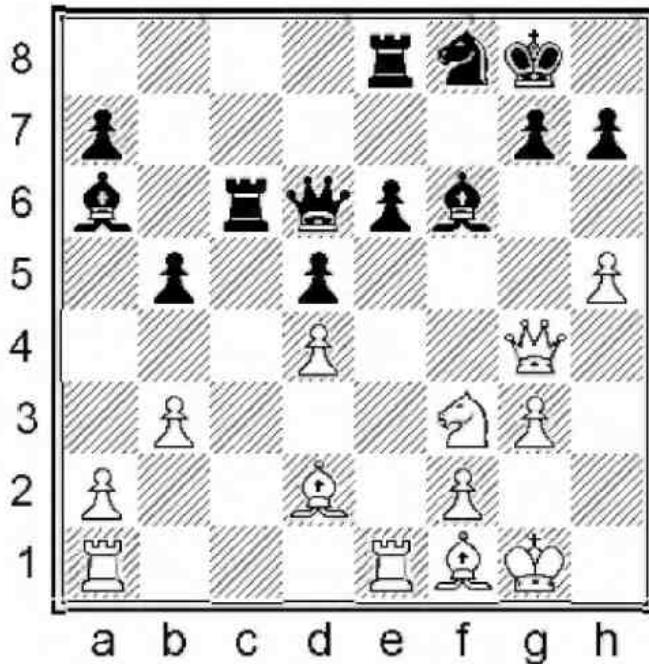
White steps up the pressure on the kingside, whilst Black lacks counterplay.

**19...♜c6**

20.h5 f5

21.exf6 ♘xf6

22.♗d2 ♖d6



Black wants to play ...b5-b4 and exchange the opponent's light-squared bishop, which should play an important role in the attack; but White does not allow this.

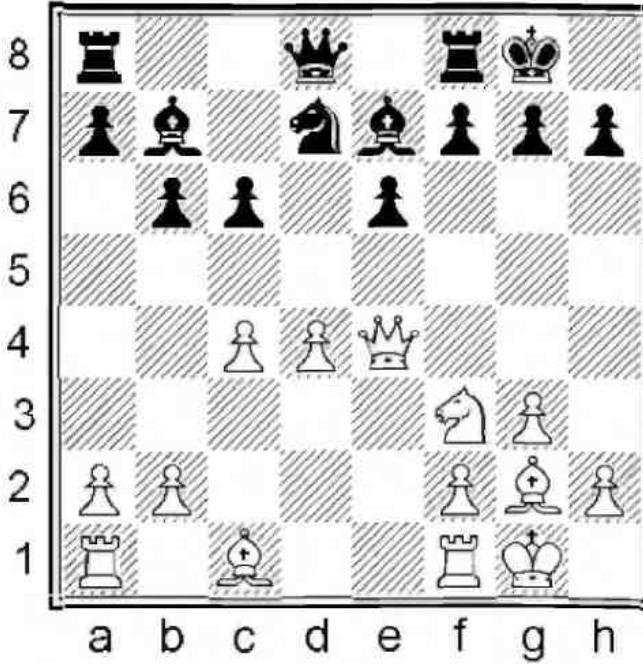
23.a3!±

Cifuentes Parada-Flear, Polanica Zdroj 1992.

D22) 9...dxe4

10.♗xe4 ♗xe4

11.♖xe4 ♘b7



**12.  $\mathbb{R}d1$**

White should prevent the opponent from playing ...c6-c5 and exchanging the c-pawn for the d-pawn, so he immediately puts the rook opposite the enemy queen on the d-file.

**12...  $\mathbb{W}c8$**

By defending the bishop, Black already threatens ...c6-c5.

Less convincing is 12...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  (13...  $\mathbb{W}c8$  14.  $\mathbb{E}e1\pm$ ; 13...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{A}d6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  16. c5! – if possible, then White does well to cut off the break ...c6-c5 at the roots. Now the bishop on b7 will remain shut in its own camp for the remainder of the game. 16...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  b5 15.  $\mathbb{W}b3!$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$  Lopez Gomez-Diaz Joaquin, Zarate 1992.

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

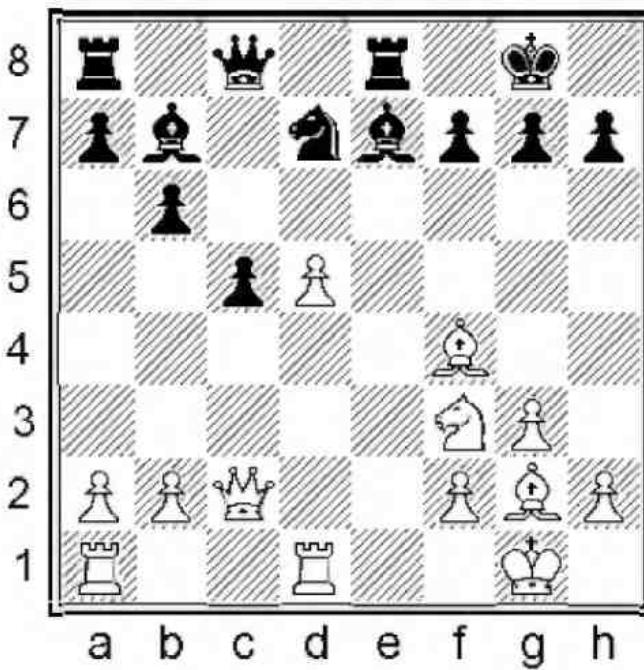
Also possible is 13.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  h6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  c5 18. dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19.  $\mathbb{E}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  21.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  22.  $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ , but the move 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  looks more solid and consequential.

**13... c5**

**14. d5  $\mathbb{E}e8$**

**15.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  exd5**

**16. exd5**



White obtains a strong passed pawn on d5, which cuts the enemy position into two.

**16...♝f6**

**17.♝g5 ♛xg5**

**18.♛xg5 ♜f8**

**19.a4 ♚g4**

**20.♝e3 a5**

**21.♛b3 ♜d7**

**22.♝f4 ♜a6**

**23.♚e1±**

Miroshnichenko-Bojkov, Izmir 2006.

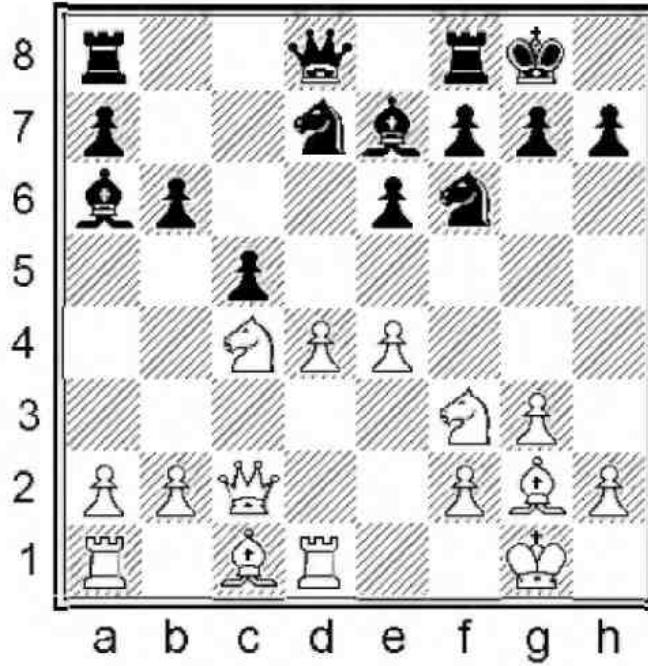
**D23) 9...dxc4**

This exchange gives White an easy game.

**10.♝xc4 ♜a6**

If 10...♝b7, then 11.♚d1 (but not 11.e5 ♜d5 12.♛e4 b5 13.♝cd2 c5 14.♛g4 g6= Ragger-Bulski, Germany 2010/11) 11...c5 12.♝fe5 cxd4 13.♝xd4 ♜c5 14.♝d3 with the initiative for White.

**11.♚d1 c5**



**12.d5**

If it is possible, then of course White's best reply to the break ...c6-c5 is to play d4-d5.

**12...exd5**

**13.exd5 ♜xc4**

**14.♕xc4 ♜d6**

Black tries to blockade the position, but White has sufficient resources to break down this blockade.

**15.a4 ♜e8**

**16.♕c2**

Control of the light squares plays quite a significant role in this position.

**16...♛c7**

**17.♘d2**

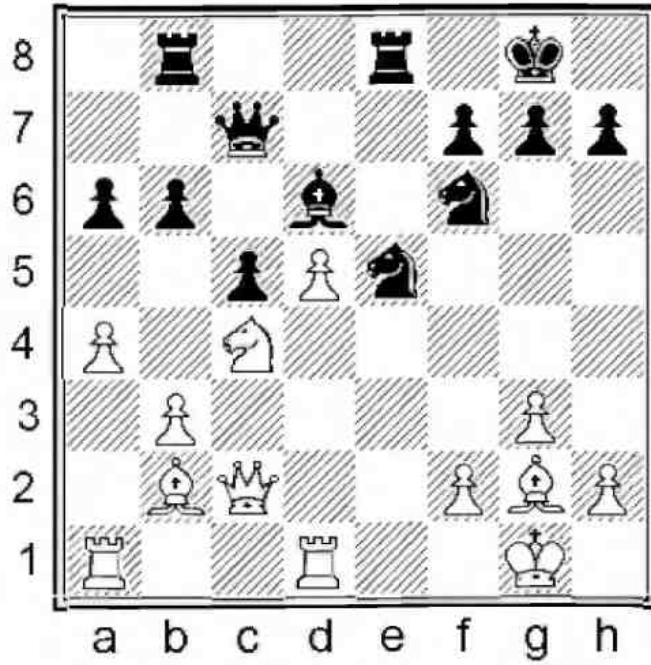
The knight transfers to c4, so as to take aim at the blockader on d6.

**17...♘e5**

**18.b3 a6**

**19.♗b2 ♜ab8**

**20.♘c4**



**20...Qxc4**

Otherwise White would exchange on d6 and Black would have to blockade the pawn with his queen. And the queen, as is well known, is a poor blockader, which is easy to drive away. Black prevents this positional threat, but now the pawn on d5 becomes a protected passed pawn, whilst the pawn b6 may become an object of attack.

**21.bxc4 Qd7**

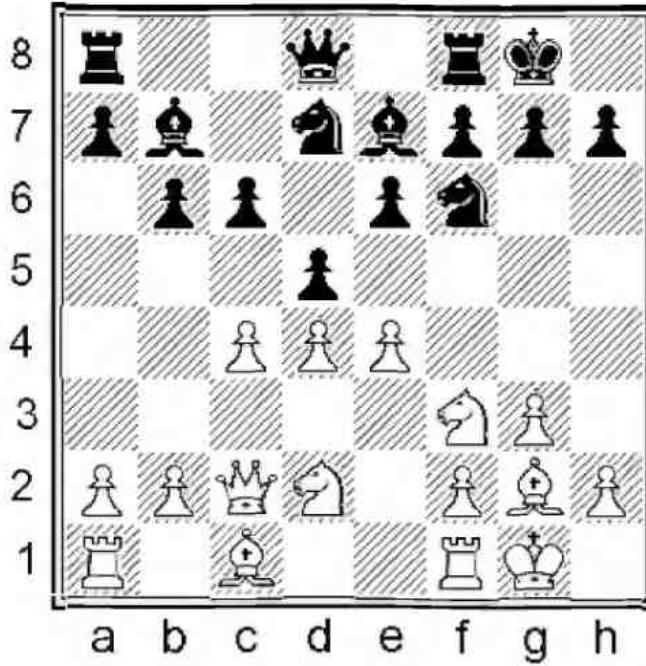
**22.Qe4 h6**

**23.Qh7+ Kh8**

**24.Qf5±**

Izoria-Zhao Jun, Richardson 2007. White has two bishops, a space advantage and a strong passed pawn, and can develop pressure on both flanks.

**D24) 9...Qb7**



Now if White wants to get anything, he has to close the centre with 10.e5. Black is quite comfortable in all other lines.

#### D241) 10.♗e1

#### D242) 10.e5

Harmless for Black is 10.b3 ♜c8 11.♗b2 c5 12.exd5 (somewhat better is 12.e5 ♜e8 13.dxc5) 12...exd5 13.♕h4 cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♜c5 15.♗c3 ♜e8± Krasenkow- C. Hansen, Malmö 1994.

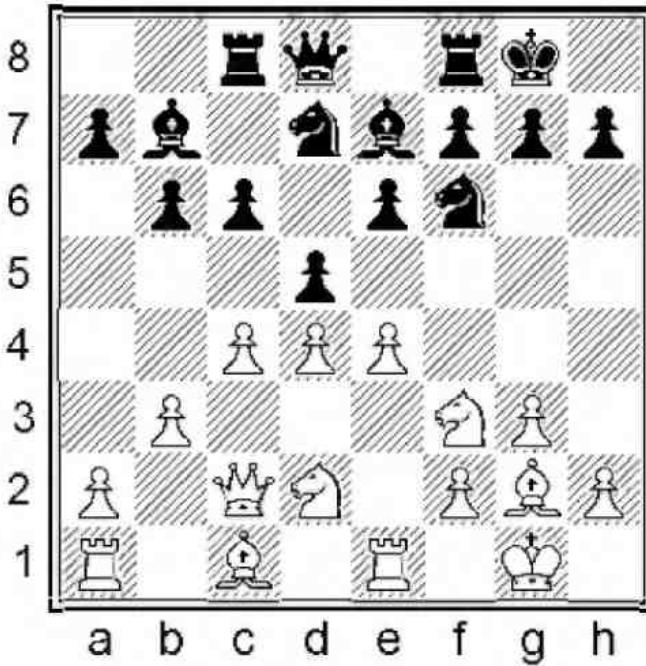
#### D241) 10.♗e1 ♜c8

The knight on d2 prevents the development of its own bishop on c1, therefore Black wants to wait for the move b2-b3 (or e4-e5 – this possibility remains an option for White) and only then exchange on e4.

White obtains a small advantage after the immediate 10...dxe4 11.♗xe4 c5 12.♗xf6+ ♜xf6 (on 12...♜xf6 there follows 13.♗f4! – here the bishop is no less active than on b2, and White saves a tempo on preparing the fianchetto – 13...cxd4 14.♗ad1±). Black needs to get his queen off the d-file somehow, since this file will soon or later be opened, but where the queen should go is a big question) 13.♗g5! ♜xg5 14.♗xb7 ♜b8 15.♗e4 (an interesting alternative is 15.♗xg5 ♛xg5 16.♗c6 followed by ♘ad1 and ♛a4) 15...♝xc1 16.♗xh7+ ♔h8 17.♗axc1 ♗f6 18.♗e4 ♛xd4 19.♗cd1 ♛e5 20.♗f3 ♛c7 21.♗d3± Aronian-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

#### 11.b3

We assume that White stubbornly refrains from e4-e5, which is not bad here either.



**11...dxe4**

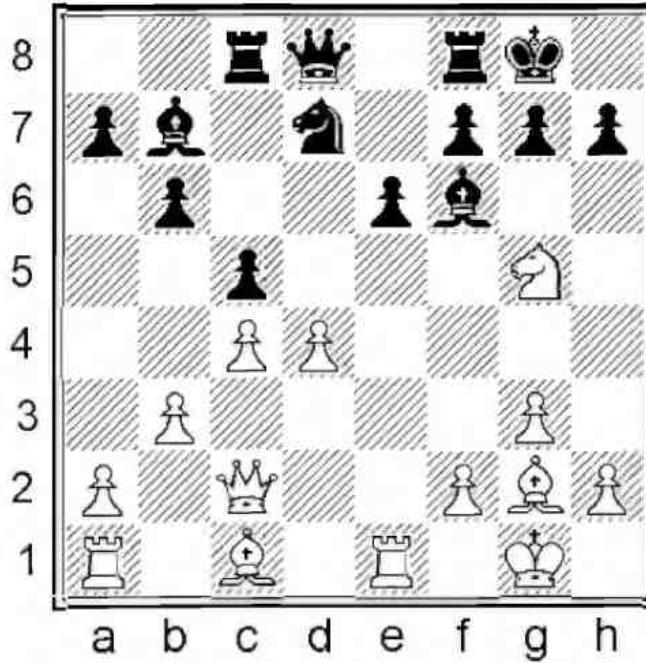
Now this is the time to make this exchange; on the other hand, weaker is 11...c5 12.exd5 exd5 13.Qb2 dxcc4 14.Qxc4±.

**12.Qxe4 c5**

**13.Qxf6+ Qxf6**

Black has taken appropriate measures in good time, to prevent his opponent establishing dominance over the long black diagonal. If 13...Qxf6 14.dxc5 Qxc5 15.Qb2± White's chances are preferable: he has a queenside pawn majority, he controls e5 and does not allow his opponent to advance his pawns in the centre (Bushkov-Mokshanov, Kazan 2009).

**14.Qg5**



As distinct from the game Aronian-Tiviakov, quoted above, here Black's rook is already on c8, whilst White has played the not very useful move b2-b3. The inclusion of these two moves helps Black.

**14...♜xg5**

**15.♜xb7 ♜c7**

The rook comes to c7 and defends the knight on d7 again.

**16.dxc5**

Nothing comes from 16.♚e4 ♜xc1 17.♜axc1 (17.♜xh7+?! ♔h8 18.♜axc1, and here Black has a pleasant choice: 18...f5, 18...♛f6, 18...cxd4) 17...♛f6 with equal chances.

**16...♛f6**

Thanks to his extra pawn on the queenside, White has slightly the better chances in the endgame arising after 16...♜xb7 17.c6 ♜c7 18.♜xg5 ♜xg5 19.cxd7 ♜xd7 20.♜ad1 ♜fd8 21.♜xd7 ♜xd7 22.♜d1±.

**17.♜b1**

The assessment is not changed by 17.♜b2 ♜xb2 18.♛xb2 ♜xb7 (18...♛xc5?! 19.♜ed1!±) 19.c6 ♜c7 20.cxd7 ♜xd7=.

**17...♜xb7**

**18.c6 ♜c7**

**19.cxd7 ♜xd7=**

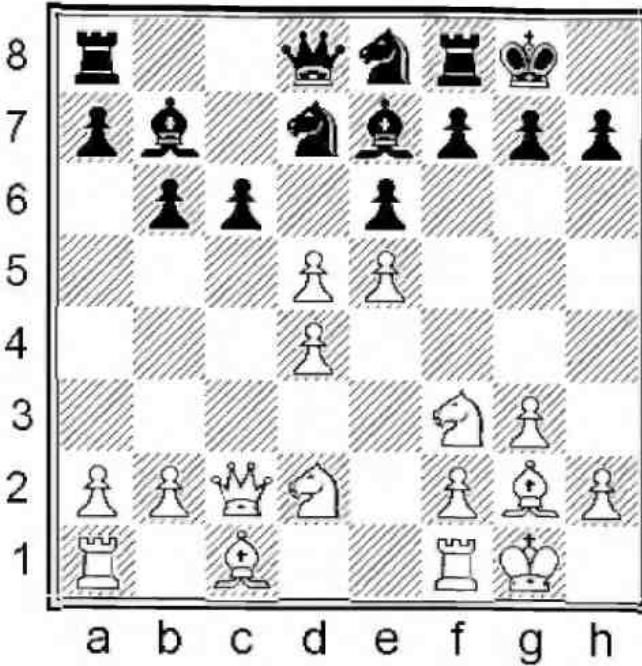
Razuvayev-Jussupow, Minsk 1979.

**D242) 10.e5**

As the previous examples have shown, it is hard for White to count on any advantage without this seizure of space.

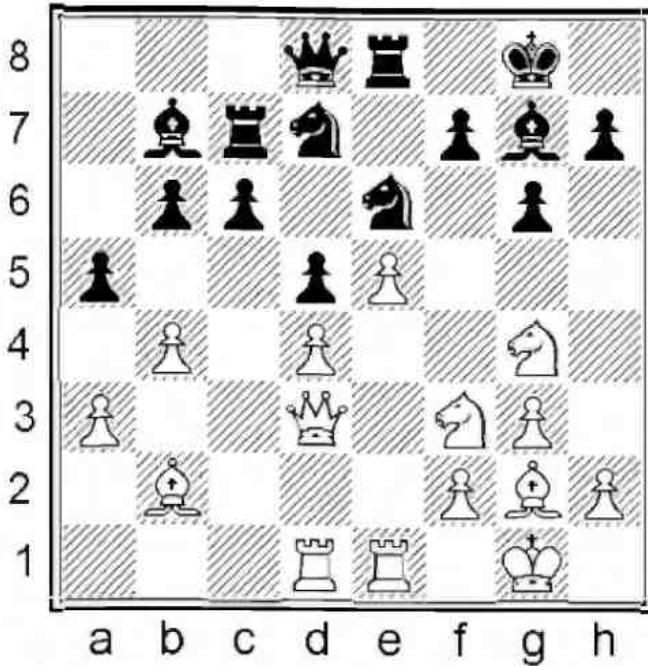
10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

11.cxd5



11...cxd5

The alternative is 11...exd5 12. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  (White transfers the knight to the kingside, via e3 to f5 or g4) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g6 (Black does not want to allow the enemy knight into f5, but to stop this, he has to weaken his king. However, after 14... $\mathbb{E}e8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  cxd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  19. $\mathbb{E}e1$  White's chances are also preferable) 15.b3 (15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c5 16. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19.h4 cxd4 20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\pm$  Gordon-Gormally, Canterbury 2010) 15... $\mathbb{E}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  (Black's only chance of counterplay is with the break ...c6-c5, so White overprotects the d4-pawn in anticipation of this) 16... $\mathbb{E}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5 18.a3  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{E}ad1$  (again, a prophylactic move, directed against ...c6-c5; in this case, the pawn on d5 will become weak, and Black is unlikely to be able to hold it) 19... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}c7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  22.b4.



Little by little, White is accumulating positional pluses: first he seizes space, and then he will be ready to go over to more decisive action. He can increase the pressure quietly, without rushing, both on the kingside (for example, by h2-h4,  $\mathbb{Q}c1$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ), and on the queenside, where the opponent has a weak pawn on c6. 22...axb4 23.axb4  $\mathbb{W}e7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{R}a8$  25. $\mathbb{R}a1\pm$  Khetsuriani-Pelletier, Athens 2005.

### 12. $\mathbb{B}e1$

Freeing the square f1, but not so much for the knight (as after 11...exd5) as for the bishop. We will soon see where the bishop is heading.

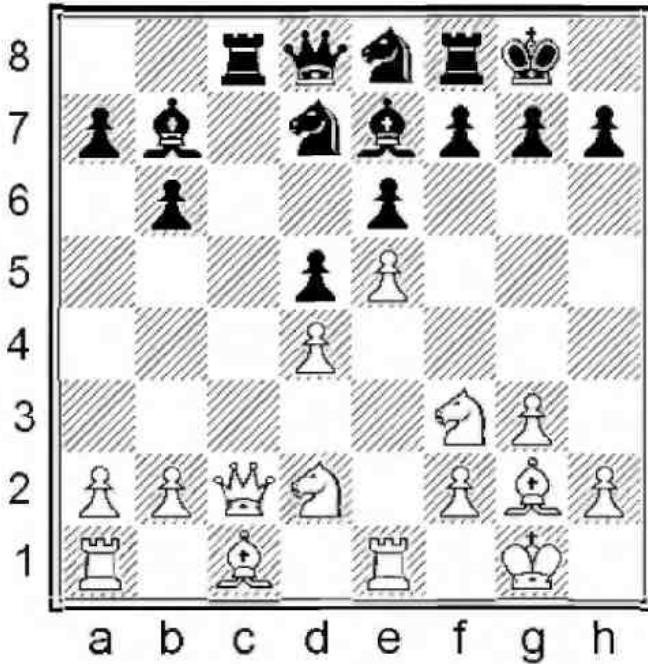
### 12... $\mathbb{B}c8$

The following examples show that the exchange of light-squared bishops is far from a panacea for all Black's troubles. Even after this exchange, his position remains cramped, the knight on e8 is suffering, and his rooks are disunited.

A) 12...a5 13. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{B}xa6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  b5 16.h4  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 18.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$  Rotstein-Spraggett, Figueira da Foz 2010;

B) 12... $\mathbb{W}c7$  13. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  20. $\mathbb{B}ec1$   $\mathbb{B}c7$  21. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b5 23.a3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  24. $\mathbb{B}c5\pm$  Albürt-Westerinen, Reykjavík 1982;

C) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ ? (in this structure, the bishop is no beauty on g2, and White himself offers the exchange, so as to recapture on f1 with the knight and open the path of the bishop c1) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  (Avrukh-Trajkovic, Internet 2004) 15. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ .



### 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$

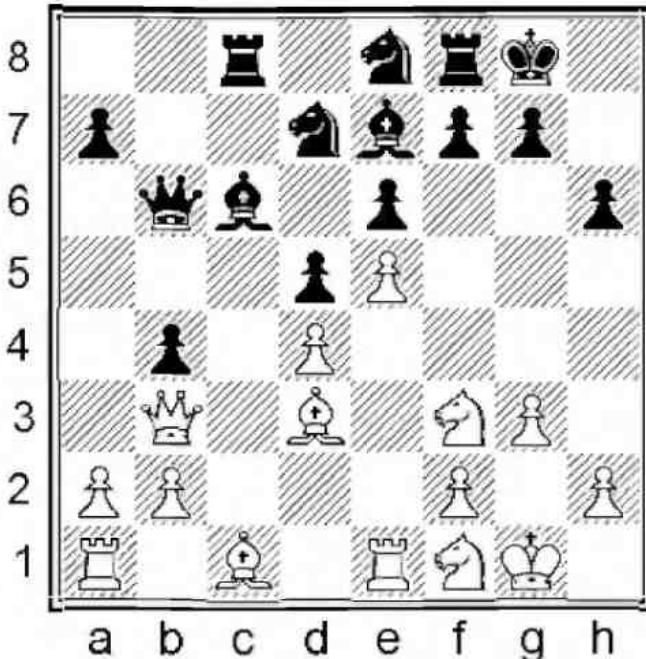
Preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and provoking ...a7-a5.

The more modest retreat is also possible – 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ , in order to transfer the queen to the kingside at an appropriate moment. Black still has definite problems in this line, too, for example: 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  (otherwise White can put his knight on e3 and cover all the entry squares on the c-file) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  (the knight continues to suffer in the endgame) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ ? (at some moment, White must stop exchanging pieces, else he will not have enough forces to storm the enemy position) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  22. a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23. b4 f6 24. exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}g4\pm$  Heberla-Kuba, Dresden 2007.

### 13...a5

The main continuation: Black immediately prepares the bishop's emergence on a6. We will also look at some other continuations:

A) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  b5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  b4 16. h4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  18. hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  19. b3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  bxc3 26.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}xf1\pm$  Ovetchkin-Kuba, Dresden 2007) 14...b5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b4 17.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h6.



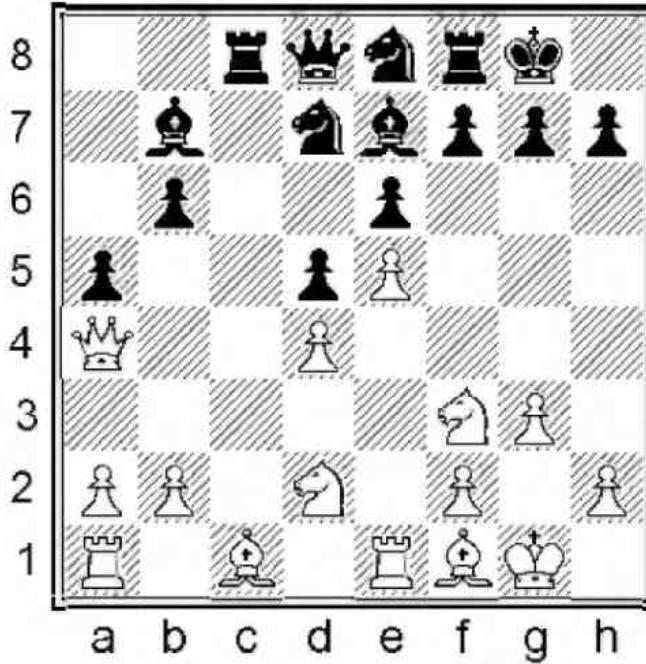
18.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (White's idea is simple, but very unpleasant: he wants to create a battery along the b1-h7 diagonal, forcing Black to further weaken his kingside. Avrukh's idea is also worth consideration: 18.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5 21.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  followed by  $\mathbb{W}g4$  and  $\mathbb{Q}f4-h5$ ) 18...  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (taking control of two key squares at once – c2 and d3) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (Kozul-Kovacevic, Vukovar 2005) 19... a5 20. a4 bxa3 21. bxa3 a4 22.  $\mathbb{W}b2\pm$ . Black has managed to seize space on the queenside, but on the other wing he is liable to come under a crushing attack at any moment. White only needs to regroup a little, and bring his queen to the right-hand side of the board;

B) 13...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  a6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (clearly here, as on the last move, White cannot take the a-pawn because of  $\mathbb{E}a8$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (Black carries out a very slow, and, to my mind, passive plan) 16. h4 a5 17. a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  (the simplest: now the light squares in the enemy camp are weakened, and White bases his play on seizing the c-file after  $\mathbb{Q}f1$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  and  $\mathbb{E}ac1$ ) 18...  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$ ;

C) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  a5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  17.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  (the queen has done her job on the queenside, and now it is time to transfer her to the other wing) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{E}c4$  19.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  (forcing a weakening of the black kingside) 19... g6 20.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{E}b4$  (Black hopes to buy his way out at the cost of an exchange, but to get in return some queenside counterplay) 21.  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{E}xb2$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{W}xf8$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$  Avrukh-Filippov, Halkidiki 2002. Black does not have full compensation for the sacrificed material. White is ready to exchange rooks and take the initiative on the queenside.

#### 14. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

Also good is 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (or 15.  $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{W}xc8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  h6 20. a3 $\pm$  Ulibin-Leer Salvesen, Stockholm 2010/11) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  16.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  18.  $\mathbb{E}c3\pm$ .



**14...Qb8**

White also retains the better chances after 14...Qc6 15.Qd1 Qc7 16.Qd3 Qb5 17.Qb1 Qe8 18.h4 Qf8 19.Qh2 Qa6 20.a3 Qc7 21.Qdf3 Qb8 22.Qg5 Qc6 23.Qe3 f6 24.exf6 Qxf6 25.Qg4± Stefanova-Pelletier, Athens 2005.

**15.a3**

15.Qd3 Qa6 16.Qb1 Qc6 17.Qf1 Qb4 (17...Qd7 18.Qd1 f6 is worth considering) 18.Qd2 f5 19.Qd1 Qe7 20.h4± Filippov-Portisch, Kallithea 2002.

**15...Qa6**

**16.Qxa6 Qxa6**

**17.Qf1 Qec7**

**18.h4**

Without any hurry, White begins to prepare an offensive on the kingside.

**18...Qe8**

**19.Qd1 Qd7**

**20.Qg5 f6**

**21.exf6 gxf6**

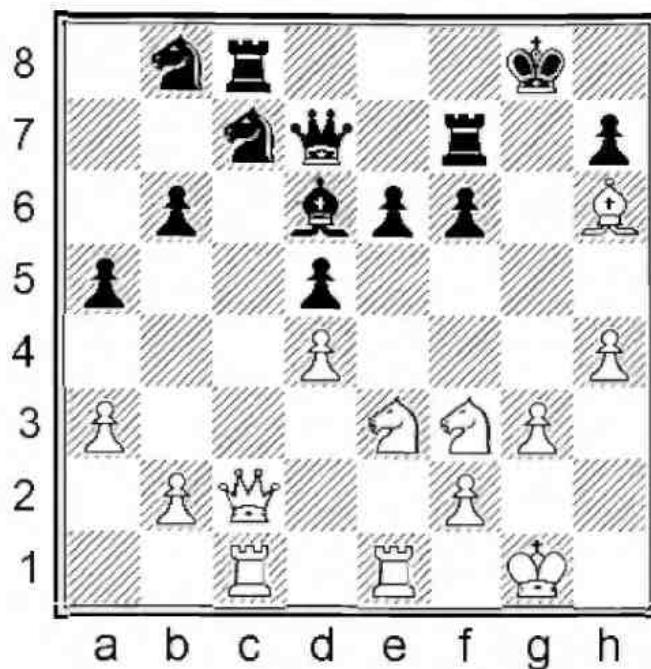
**22.Qh6 Qf7**

**23.Qc1 Qd6**

24.  $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$

25.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$

Meier-Ghaem Maghami, Dresden 2010. I think we can stop here.



White's advantage is not the subject of any doubt: Black has weak pawns and king, and his knights occupy extremely unfortunate positions. White has unpleasant pressure on the c- and e-files, and now needs to regroup his cavalry, whereupon the opponent's position will be extremely difficult to defend.

### Conclusion

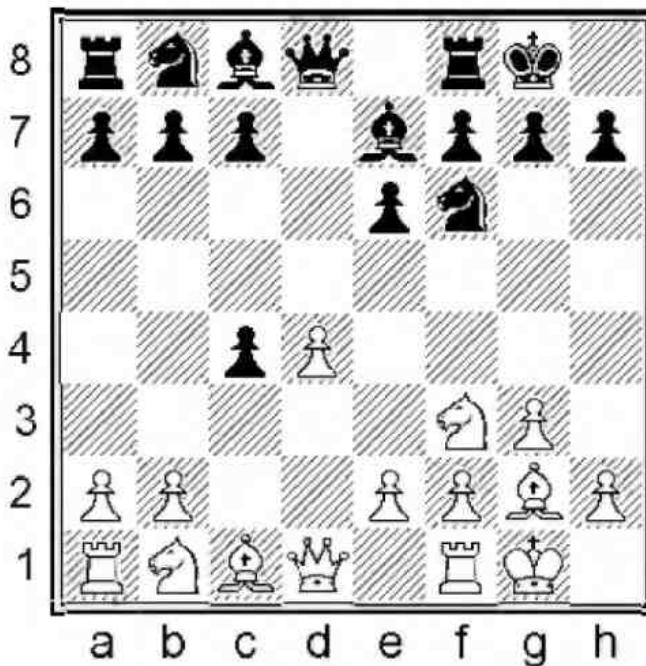
So, what conclusions can we draw about the plan with ... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , ...c7-c6, ...b7-b6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? After White advances e4-e5, Black obtains a cramped and rather unpleasant position. We get a pawn structure reminiscent of the French or the Advance Caro-Kann, with Black still having his bad light-squared bishop, whilst the knight on e8 also occupies a very unfortunate position. Black can get his bishop to a6, but White may even exchange light-squared bishops, because his advantage does not run away even then: he has a space advantage, and Black cannot dictate conditions on the queenside, because the white queen is very strong on this flank.

In addition, White can always create threats on the kingside. He can transfer his bishop via f1 and d3 to b1, and set up a mate threat by  $\mathbb{W}c2/\mathbb{W}d3$ , so as to force a weakening of the enemy king's pawn cover. Then White can advance h2-h4-h5, transfer the knight from d2 via f1 and e3, to f5 or g4. Sometimes, he can agree to the exchange of light-squared bishops and seize the c-file, which can also be sufficient for a lasting advantage.

Thus, this is a very complicated line, with a large number of interesting ideas for both sides, but if the reader follows the outlines I have suggested, his position is much easier to play.

## Chapter 14 – Classical Variation

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6.0-0 dx $c$ 4



Finally, we have reached Black's main line in the Catalan. This is known as the Classical Variation.

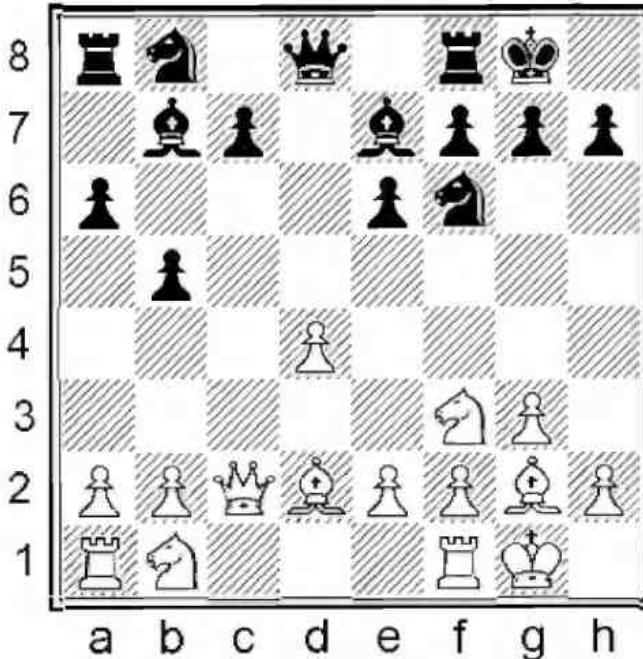
7. $\mathbb{W}c2$  a6

Here White has a choice: to retake on c4 at once, or first play a2-a4, preventing the move ...b7-b5. I recommend

8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5

9. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



The main move. White brings his bishop to this square voluntarily, despite the fact that Black has not previously given the check on b4. Now in the diagram position, Black has a wide choice of different plans.

**A) 10...♝c6**

**B) 10...♝d6**

**C) 10...♝bd7**

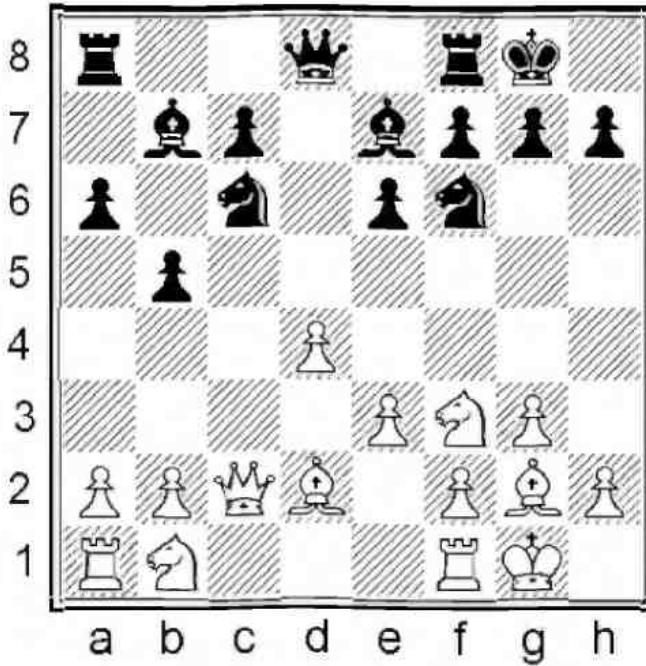
The prophylactic move 10...h6 allows White to develop pressure on the c-file at once: 11.♜c1 ♜d6 12.♝f4 (weaker is 12.e3 ♜bd7 13.♝a5 ♛e7 14.♝bd2 c5 15.dxc5 ♜xc5 16.b4 ♜a4 17.a3 ♜ac8† Iskusnykh-Short, Mumbai 2004) 12...♜xf4 13.gxf4 ♜c6 14.e3 ♜c8 (or 14...♝b4 15.♛e2 ♛d6 16.♝bd2±) 15.♛e2!? ♜e7 16.♝bd2±.

**A) 10...♝c6**

A logical-looking move – Black develops a piece with tempo (by attacking the d4-pawn). Admittedly, on c6, the knight prevents the freeing break ...c7-c5, without which it is difficult to obtain full equality. But nothing is stopping the knight moving again to another square, for example b4, again with tempo.

In my view, this continuation is insufficient for equality, but it is frequently played, so we will examine it in some detail.

**11.e3**



**A1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

**A2) 11... $\mathbb{R}a7$**

**A3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

**A1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

Black wants to put his king's rook on c8, and then move the knight from c6 and play ...c7-c5.

**12. $\mathbb{R}c1$**

Interesting is 12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  with the idea of  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , for example: 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}b7+$  15.f3  $\mathbb{E}fd8$  16.a3 $\pm$ ) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}b7+$  16.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$  (more accurate than 17. $\mathbb{R}c1$  e5! 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d1+$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xc7$  23. $\mathbb{R}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2=$  Ehlvest-Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1988) 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{R}fe8$  19. $\mathbb{R}ac1\pm$ ;

12.a3  $\mathbb{R}c8$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  13.e4 e5 14. $\mathbb{R}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{R}c8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$  Marin-Itkis, Bucharest 1993) 13. $\mathbb{R}e1$  a5 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  15.e4 b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{R}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18. $\mathbb{R}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19.d5 b3 20. $\mathbb{W}c4\pm$  Timman-Hjartarson, Amsterdam 1989.

**12... $\mathbb{R}c8$**

**13.a3 h6**

**14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

Black's idea, as we have already said, is to advance ...c7-c5, but White manages to prevent this by a simple mechanism.

**15.b4**

In general, this is one of the main ideas of this variation as a whole – not to allow the opponent to play ...c7-c5.

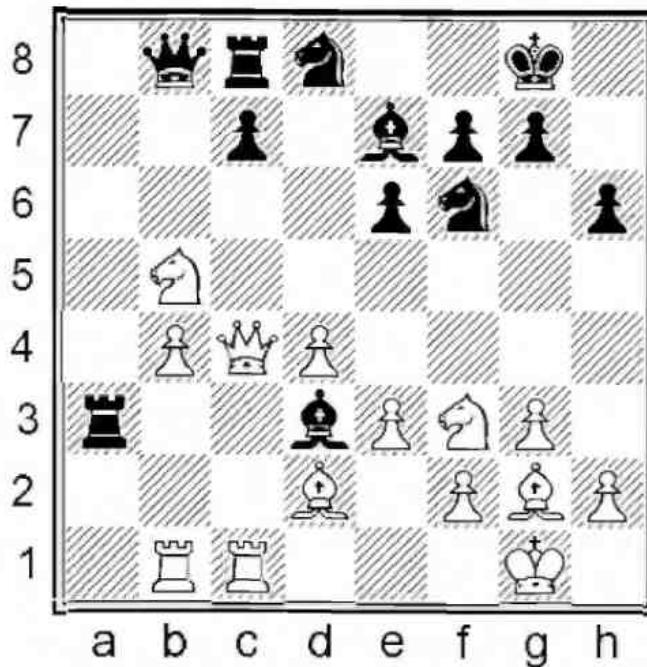
**15...a5**

16.  $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $a \times b4$

17.  $a \times b4$   $\mathbb{Q}a3$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d3$



20.  $\mathbb{Q}xa3!$

This is not even a sacrifice, but the exchange of queen for rook, bishop and pawn. From the positional viewpoint, this operation is very favourable for White, because as a result, he completely extinguishes his opponent's activity and obtains control over the situation on the board.

20...  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}fe5$

White's pieces are excellently coordinated, whilst Black's are scattered around the board.

22...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

23.  $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

24.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

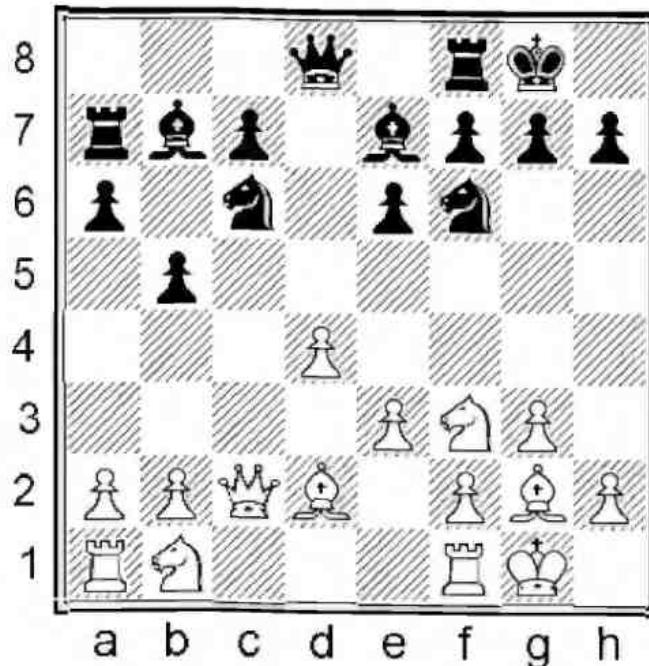
25.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$

26.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $f6$

27.  $\mathbb{Q}c5\pm$

Laznicka-Short, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

A2) 11...  $\mathbb{E}a7$



Another typical idea for Black: he wants to play ... $\mathbb{W}a8$ , creating threats on the long diagonal, which White has weakened by the move e2-e3.

12.  $\mathbb{E}c1$

12.e4?!  $\mathbb{W}a8$  13.  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14.  $\mathbb{W}b3$  a5 15. e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  axb4! 17.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! 18.  $\mathbb{W}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8\mp$  Hjartarson-Short, Belgrade 1989.

12...  $\mathbb{W}a8$

13.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$

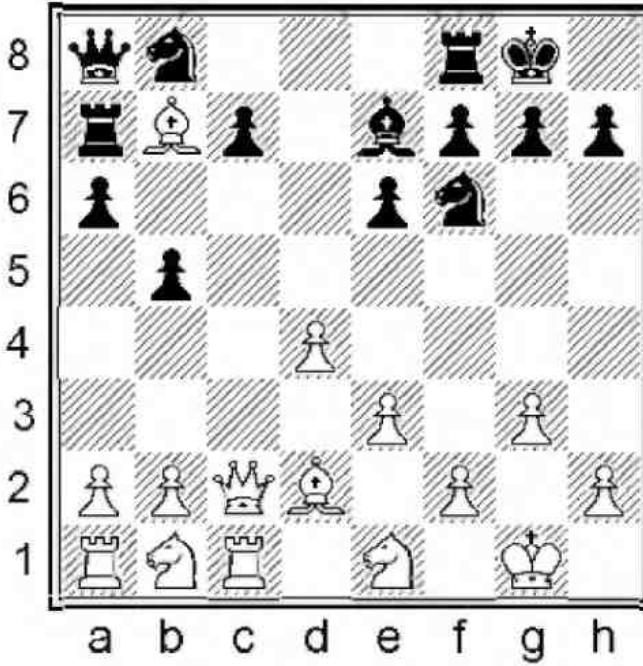
Defending against the threat of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ .

It is also worth considering 13.  $\mathbb{W}d1$ , for example: 13...  $\mathbb{E}c8$  14. a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  17.  $\mathbb{E}xc3$  e5 18.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  20.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  g6 21.  $\mathbb{Q}de4\pm$  Suba-Veingold, Alicante 2000.

13...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$

Black eliminates the Catalan bishop and prepares the thematic advance ...c7-c5.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$



**14...Rxb7**

If the rook recaptures on b7 (14...Rxb7) White also establishes control over the c-file: 15.Qd3 Rc8 16.Qa5 b4 17.a3 b3 (17...bxa3 18.Qxa3±) 18.Qc4±.

**15.Qa5 Rc8**

15...c5 16.dxc5 Rc8 (16...Qc6 17.Qb6 Raa8 18.a4 bxa4 19.Qc3 Rfc8 20.Qxa4± A. Fominykh-Bologan, Ekaterinburg 2002) 17.Qd3 Qc6 (17...Qfd7 18.Qd2 Qc6 19.Qb3 Qce5 20.Qxe5 Qxe5 21.e4 Qc4 22.a4 Qf6 23.Qc3± Marin-Amura, Benasque 1997) 18.Qb6 Raa8 19.a4 bxa4 20.Qc3 Qd7 21.Qxa4, retaining a healthy extra pawn.

**16.Qd3!?**

Taking control of the square c5.

**16...Qfd7**

**17.Qd2 e5**

**18.Qb4**

18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.dxe5 c5 20.b3 Qd5 21.Qc3 Qc6 22.f4±.

**18...Qxb4**

**19.Qxb4 exd4**

**20.exd4 Qf8**

**21.d5 Qd8**

**22.Qf3±**

Ribli-Speelman, Germany 2002/03.

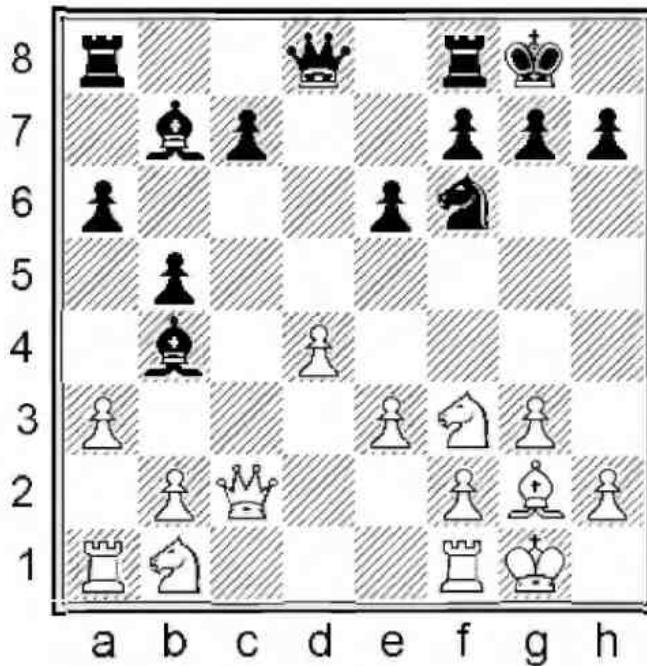
A3) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

12. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

White is happy to exchange his dark-squared bishop, which, frankly, is unlikely to become very active.

12... $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

13.a3



A31) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

A32) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

A31) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

White succeeds in taking control of c5 in time (he wants to play b2-b4 and  $\mathbb{Q}d2-b3$ ). In addition, the knight covers the important central square e4.

14... $\mathbb{E}c8$

With the direct threat of ...c7-c5.

Practice has also seen 14... $\mathbb{W}b8$  15. $\mathbb{B}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ . Thanks to the classical exchange of light-squared bishops, White obtains a good knight on e4 against a bad bishop on d6, Orlov-Vaganian, New York 1990.

Or 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$  15.e4 e5 16. $\mathbb{B}ac1!$  (an important move to include) 16... $\mathbb{E}ac8$  (16... $\mathbb{exd}4$  17.e5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{B}fe1$ ) 17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  19.b4 with an edge for White.

## 15.e4

Premature is 15.b4, since Black obtains good counterplay by means of 15...a5 16.e4 (threatening a fork on e5; 16.bxa5 c5!) 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ! 17. $\mathbb{B}fb1$  axb4 18.axb4  $\mathbb{B}a8$  19. $\mathbb{B}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{B}xb5$   $\mathbb{B}a6$  21. $\mathbb{B}h5$  g6 22. $\mathbb{B}h4\pm$  Cherniaev-McDonald, England 2005/06) 17. $\mathbb{B}ab1$  axb4 18.axb4  $\mathbb{B}a8$  19. $\mathbb{B}fc1$   $\mathbb{B}a4$  20. $\mathbb{B}xc7$ , A. Fominykh-Kiriakov, Orel 1997, and here Black should have played 20... $\mathbb{B}a8$  with unclear play.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

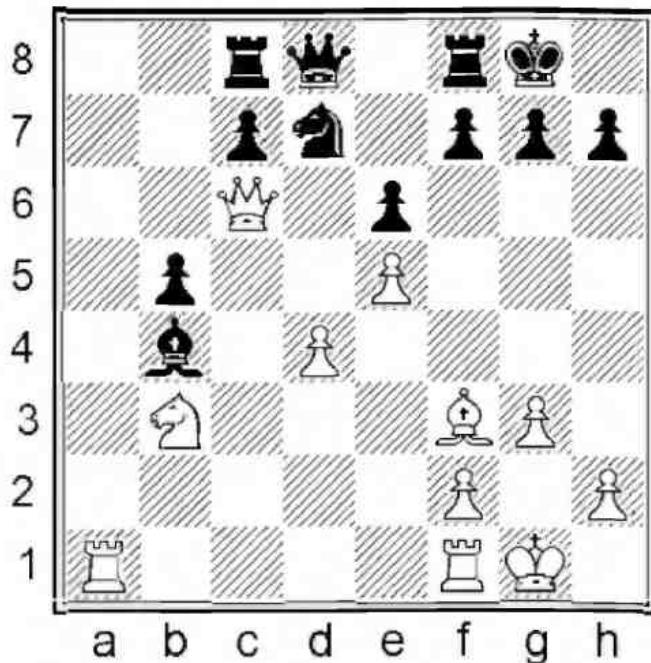
17.b4 a5

18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  axb4

20.axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

21. $\mathbb{B}c6\pm$



White has total domination on the queenside, Iskusnykh-Babu, Mumbai 2004.

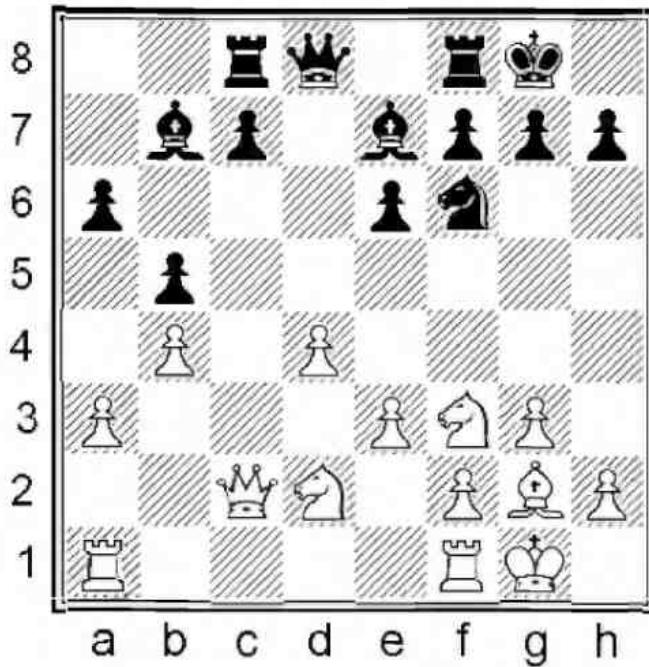
A32) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

The idea of this move is to ensure that the central advance e3-e4 does not come with tempo, thanks to the threat of a fork by e4-e5.

14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{B}c8$

14... $\mathbb{B}b8$  15. $\mathbb{B}fc1$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17. $\mathbb{B}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ . A case where two knights prove stronger than two bishops, Budnikov-Pigusov, Katowice 1991.

## 15.b4



White carries out all the ideas with which we are already familiar. Less is promised by 15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.  $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $c5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19.  $\mathbb{W}a5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  20.  $dxc5$  21.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  22.  $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}xc7$  23.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}fc8=$  Sosonko-Najdorf, Wijk aan Zee 1978.

## 15...a5

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}e5!?$

A very strong positional move. White wants, after the exchange of light-squared bishops, to bring his knight into  $c6$  with tempo. There it will defend the  $b4$ -pawn, prevent the break ... $c7-c5$ , and, most of all, will play on the nerves of the opponent.

Also interesting is 16.  $\mathbb{W}b2!?$   $axb4$  17.  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (17...  $\mathbb{W}d6$  18.  $\mathbb{E}fb1$   $\mathbb{E}a8$  19.  $\mathbb{E}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  21.  $\mathbb{E}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  22.  $\mathbb{E}5xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$  Bruzon- Capo, Morelia 2007) 18.  $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{E}a8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ .

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

16...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $axb4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  (the square  $c6$  is the key to Black's position!) 18...  $\mathbb{E}a8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}ac6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $exd5$  22.  $axb4\pm$  Kramnik-Carlsen, Dortmund 2007. White has an ideal, strategically winning position.

### 17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ $c6$

The only move. If White manages to establish his knight on  $c6$ , then Black's position will become hopeless.

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

This simple move assures White a comfortable advantage. The pawn  $c6$  is weak; White can double or even treble his heavy pieces on the  $c$ -file, to strengthen the pressure. In addition, White controls the central squares  $c5$  and  $e5$ , at the same time depriving his opponent of counterplay.

White can try 18.  $\mathbb{E}fc1$ , hoping for 18...  $axb4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  (19.  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}d7\infty$ ) 19...  $\mathbb{E}xc6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $bxa3$

21.  $\mathbb{W}xb5\pm$ . However, instead of 18...axb4 much stronger is 18... $\mathbb{W}d5+!$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$  axb4 20. axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4\mp$ .

**18...axb4**

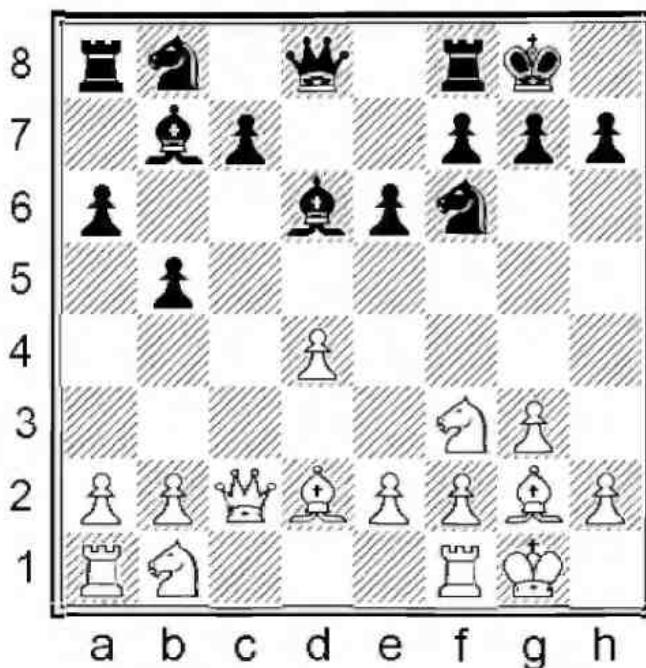
**19.axb4  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**20.  $\mathbb{W}b3\pm$**

The weakness on c6 is securely fixed, which ensures White's advantage.

**B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

Black wants to play ... $\mathbb{W}e7$  and ...c7-c5.



**11.  $\mathbb{B}e1$**

White prepares to exploit the position of the bishop, to play e2-e4.

White is promised nothing by the exchange of bishops: 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  (12...h6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  14. e4 e5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5 16. d5 c4 17.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  18. f3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{E}c8=\circ$  Hillarp Persson-Kr. Szabo, Budva 2009) 13. e4 e5 14. dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. f4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  16. b3  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  h6 18.  $\mathbb{Q}gf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  (pressurising the e4-pawn) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}e7=$ , and Black is certainly not worse, Elianov-Carlsen, Foros 2008.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

White is better after 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  12. e4 e5 13. dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

**12.  $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$**

On 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  White carries out his plan: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. e4 e5 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d1\pm$ ) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3\!?$   $\mathbb{E}a7$  (15... $\mathbb{E}ab8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17.  $\mathbb{E}e3\pm$ ) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , and Black is tied up, since 18...c5 does not work here, because of 19. dxе5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b6\pm$ .

13.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

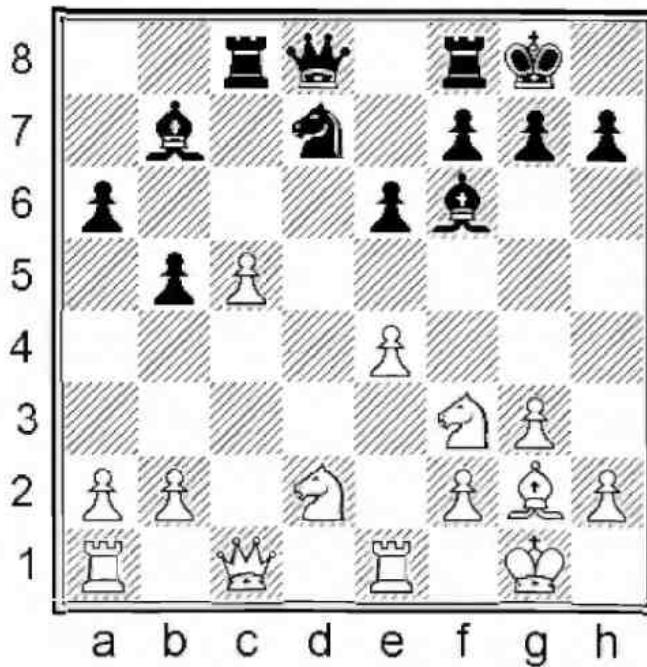
14. e4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

If Black has to retreat the bishop to e7, then his concept has clearly failed.

15.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c5

16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

17. dxe5  $\mathbb{E}c8$



18. b4!?

An interesting try: White sacrifices the exchange, but obtains in return a strong passed pawn and a very solid position. Of course, the more modest 18.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  was also possible, with somewhat the better chances.

18...  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$

19.  $\mathbb{W}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

After this counter-sacrifice, White's chances are clearly superior. I analysed the more restrained continuation 19...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  h6 21.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  23. a3±. White controls the situation and can gradually prepare, for example, the advance e4-e5 followed by the knight entering on d6. His chances are preferable.

20. bxc5  $\mathbb{E}xc5$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{E}c8$

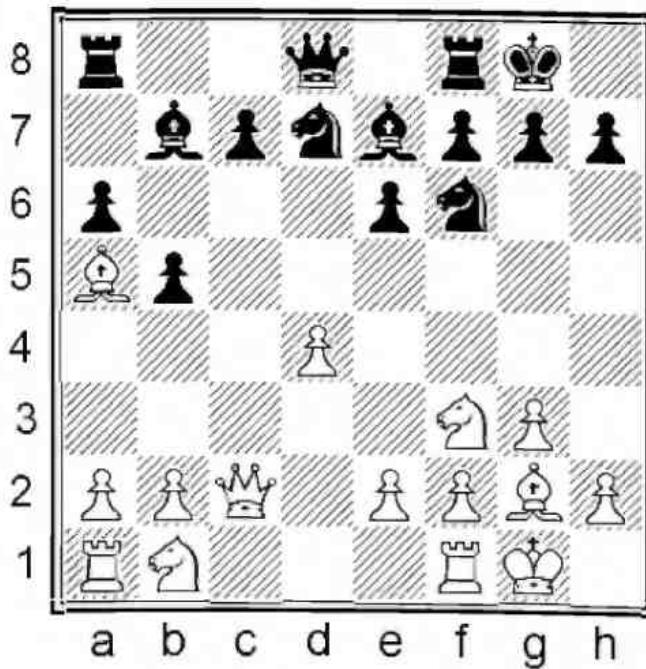
22. e5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$

23.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$

C) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

11. $\mathbb{Q}a5$

With the knight on d7, this idea works in its best form.



C1) 11... $\mathbb{E}a7$

C2) 11... $\mathbb{E}c8$

The sacrifice of the pawn on c7 is also highly interesting: 11... $\mathbb{E}e4$  12. $\mathbb{W}xc7$  (the alternative is the quiet 12. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}5b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  17. $\mathbb{E}ad1$  c5 18.d5!±) 12... $\mathbb{W}xc7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{E}ac8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{E}c2$  15.b3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{E}xe2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{E}b2$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b6$  f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{E}d2$  22. $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{E}xd1+$  23. $\mathbb{E}xd1$   $\mathbb{E}b8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , and White retains a definite initiative.

C1) It is possible to defend the pawn indirectly:

11... $\mathbb{E}a7$

12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

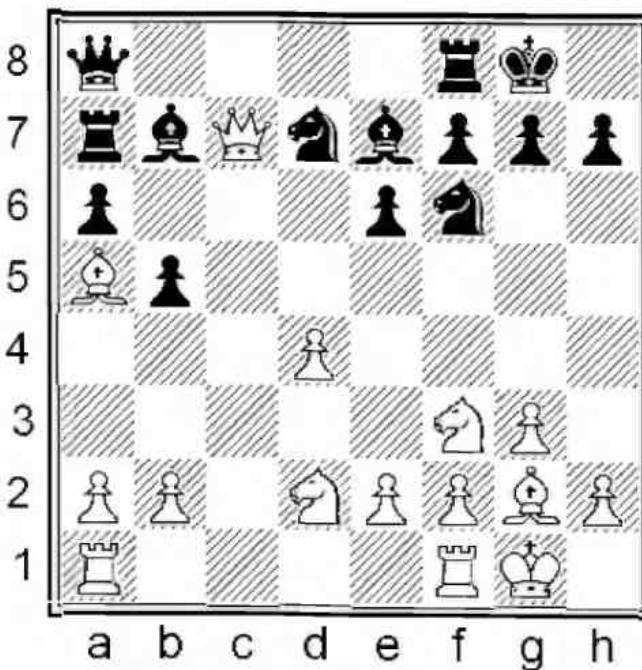
12. $\mathbb{Q}xc7?$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  13. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , and White loses a piece.

12... $\mathbb{W}a8$

12... $\mathbb{W}c8$  13. $\mathbb{E}ac1$  (13.b4  $\mathbb{W}a8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  e5 15.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{E}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{W}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18. $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19. $\mathbb{E}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}bc4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  21. $\mathbb{E}xb7$   $\mathbb{E}xb7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  24. $\mathbb{E}d1$ ± Romanov-Sanikidze, Yerevan 2007) 13...c5 14.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16. $\mathbb{W}xc8$   $\mathbb{E}xc8$  17. $\mathbb{E}xc8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fd4$ ±.

13. $\mathbb{W}xc7$

Exploiting a tactical nuance to grab the pawn. 13.b4 ♜b8 14.a3 ♜c6 15.♗b3 ♜xa5 16.♗xa5 ♜e4 17.♗b3 c6 18.♗e3 ♜d8 19.♗b3 a5= Klinger-I. Zaitsev, Moscow 1989.



**13...e5**

It is also possible to regain the pawn with 13...♜xf3 14.♝xf3 ♜xc7 15.♝xa8 ♜c2, but after 16.♝g2 ♜xb2 17.♝fc1 White's chances are still superior, thanks to the two bishops.

**14.♗c2 exd4**

**15.♝h3±**

Black has re-established material equality, but his d4-pawn is weak and his pieces not very harmoniously placed, whilst the white bishops are very active and exert influence all over the board.

Also worth considering is 15.♗b3 ♜e4 16.♗d1 ♜c5 (16...♜e5 17.♝b6±) 17.♗xc5 ♜xc5 18.b4 (18.♗c1 ♜d7 19.b4 ♜b6 20.♗xb6 ♜xb6 21.♗xd4± Stohl-Zelcic, Austria 2005) 18...♜e7 19.♗xd4±.

**C2) 11...♜c8**

**12.♗bd2**

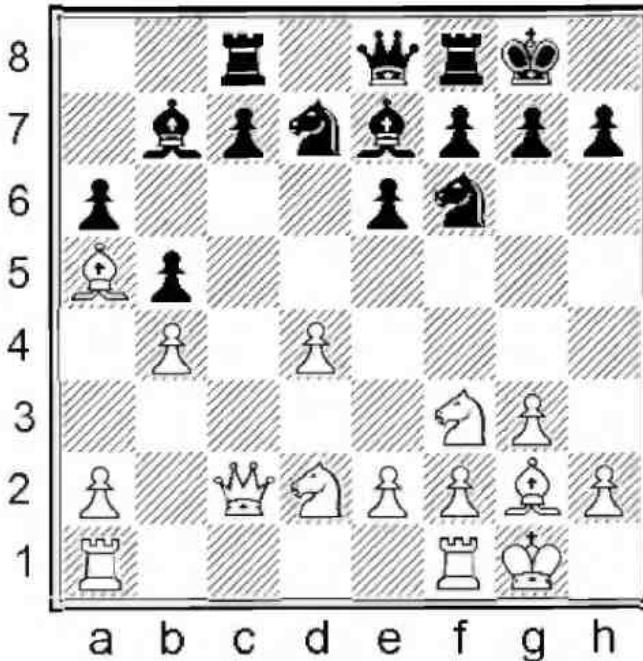
12.♗e1 ♜e4 13.♗d1 ♜a8 14.♗bd2 ♜e4 15.a4 ♜e8 16.♗xe4 ♜xe4 17.axb5 axb5 18.♗b3 c5= Suba-King, London 1991.

**C21) 12...♛e8**

**C22) 12...♝b8**

**C21) 12...♛e8!?**

**13.b4**



We should discuss this move in more detail. As a rule, one should avoid such moves, because it is obvious that the bishop on a5 is shut out of play. Consequently, if you do decide to play such a move, you have to be very clear that it leads to favourable consequences.

Thus, White fixes the c7-weakness and wants to develop pressure along the c-file, with his heavy pieces. If he later manages to capture on c7 with his bishop, then the bishop will return triumphantly to play.

But a further important question arises: cannot Black exploit the weakness of c4? All the while it is controlled by the knight at d2. White does not have to worry about a black knight coming to c4 and then taking on a5.

And one last thing. In a long manoeuvring battle, it is likely that Black will sooner or later have to play ...c7-c6, and then move the knight from d7. Then White can play  $\mathbb{Q}a5-b6-c5$  and obtain a clear positional advantage. White's plan also includes the exchange of light-squared bishops and the knight transfer from f3 to d3.

White is promised little by 13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  c5 14. dx $c$ 5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5=\mathbb{R}xc5$  = PeltsUpton, Thessaloniki 1984.

**13...Qd6**

**14.e4 e5**

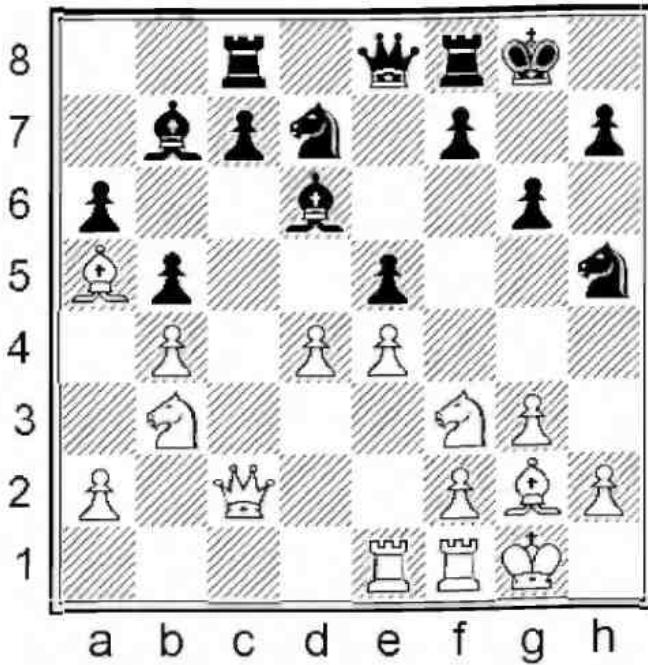
**15.Rae1**

Setting up an opposition between rook and queen on the e-file.

**15...g6**

15...exd4 16.e5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}ef3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xe8$   $\mathbb{Q}fxe8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xf1\pm$ . One cannot yet say that White's position is winning, but he does have an extra piece, when all is said and done.

**16.Qb3± Qh5**



**17.dxe5**

17.  $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ .

17...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  f5

19. exf5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$

Ivanisevic-Maximenko, Jahorina 2003.

21. fxg6  $\mathbb{Q}hf6$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}c5+--$

C22) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$

13.a3

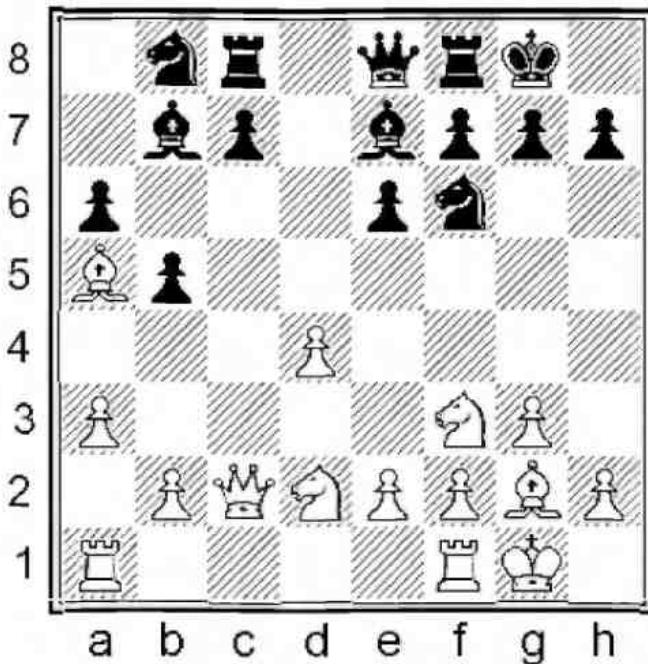
A useful prophylactic move. After ...  $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6$  the bishop goes to c3, and White does not have to fear either ... b5-b4, or ...  $\mathbb{Q}c6-b4$ .

Bringing the knight to b3 is premature, because Black obtains the opportunity to first put his bishop on e4, and then the knight to c6: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$  b4 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6\#$ ) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  b4 (15...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  a5 (16...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ) 17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a4 18.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5=$ .

C221) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$

C222) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

C221) 13... $\mathbb{W}e8$



**14.b4**

With the pawn on a3 and the knight on d2, White is ready to play this.

Neither 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  nor 14. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  16.b4 e5 17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  are dangerous for Black.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

The knight has managed to defend the bishop and now White is not frightened of the exchange on a5.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$**

White threatens e2-e4. In order not to allow this, Black must exchange on a5.

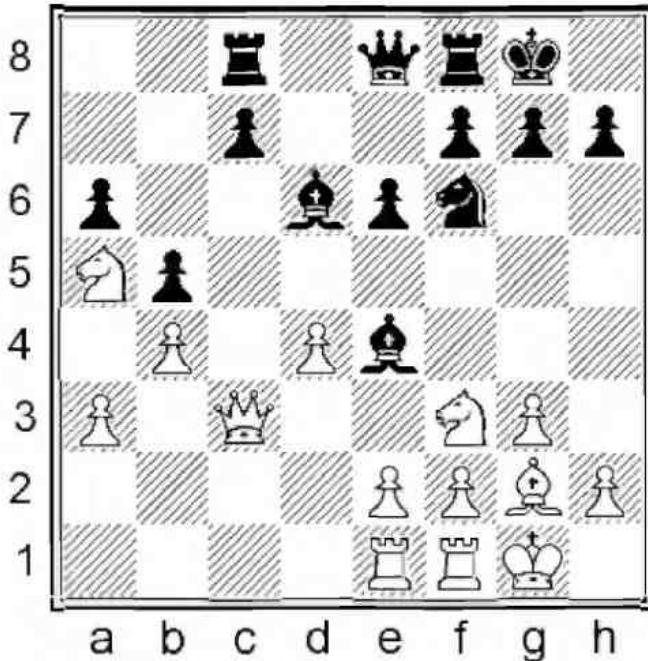
16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$  is too slow, since Black untangles after 16...e5 17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}xe5=$ .

**16... $\mathbb{Q}xa5$**

On 16...e5 there is the unpleasant 17.e4!.

**17. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

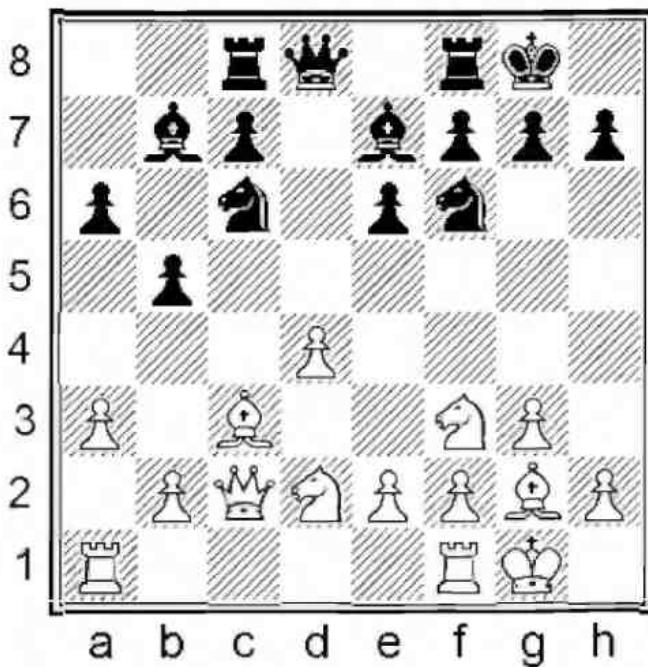
**18. $\mathbb{W}c3$**



White's advantage is not in doubt. At a minimum, he can play  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  and after the exchange of light-squared bishops, occupy the square c6. He will also be able to build up pressure on the c-file.

#### C222) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$



As we have said, the knight on c6 obstructs the advance ...c7-c5, while White, in his turn, threatens b2-b4 to fix the c7-pawn.

14...b4

On 14...a5 White has the effective pawn sacrifice 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  19.e4  $\mathbb{B}a8$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}fd1\pm$

Meanwhile, after 14...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  there follows the classical press 15.b4!±.

15.axb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$

Giving up the bishop is premature: 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$ , since Black carries out the freeing break 17...c5 18.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  21. h4  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}c1+$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  with equality.

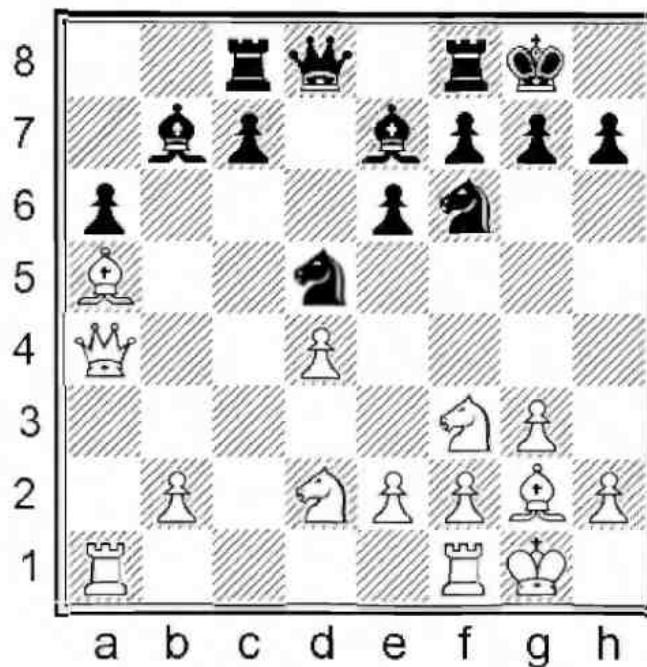
16...  $\mathbb{Q}bd5$

A) 16...c5 17.dxc5±;

B) 16... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  17.e4±;

C) 16... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (statically, Black's position is rather dubious, so he tries to hold it with the help of dynamics, creating tension on the queenside) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$ . The queen voluntarily moves away from the attacks, whilst Black's queenside pawn weaknesses remain. He faces a difficult defence, especially taking into account the fact that practically any piece exchange will favour White. As the old wisdom runs, 'the good pieces will sooner or later be exchanged, while the weak pawns remain'. 20...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  c5 (Beliavsky-Lautier, Odessa 2006) 23.  $\mathbb{Q}df3?$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  24. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4\pm$ .

17.  $\mathbb{Q}a5!\pm$



A very strong move: the bishop returns to this square, from which it controls the entire queenside.

17...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

19.  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$  c5

**20.e4 ♜c7**

**21.dxc5 ♜xc5**

**22.♗e1 ♜b5**

White's play creates a strong impression, for its logic and power. Note that the bishop on a5 and the knight on e5 attack many important squares in the black camp, and help White keep the position under control. Admittedly, Black has managed to create the one-move threat 23...♜xf2+, but it is easy for White to defeat this, whilst continuing to strengthen his position.

**23.♗ac4 ♜d4**

Another crude trap: White cannot take on c5 because of 24...♝e2+ and 25...♞xc1. Therefore, he first brings his king towards the centre.

**24.♔f1 ♜d6**

**25.♘d3**

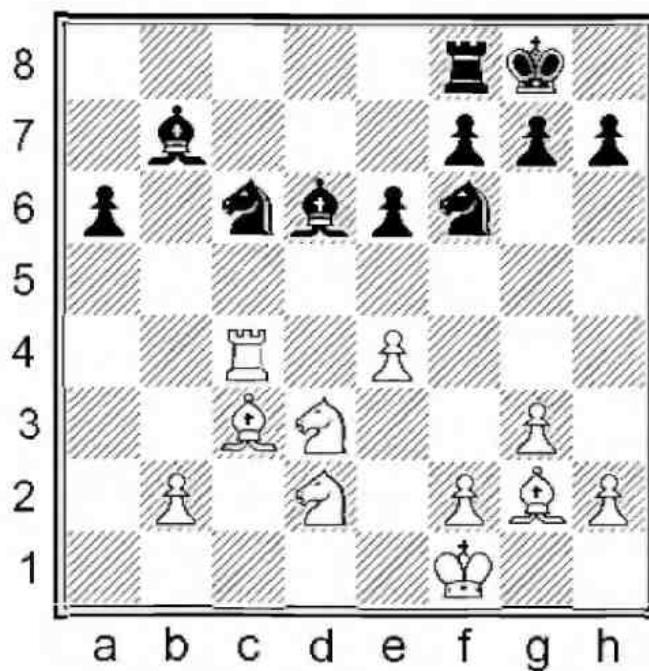
25.♘xf7 ♜xf7 26.e5 ♜xg2+ 27.♔xg2 ♜xc4 28.♘xc4 ♜e7 29.exf6 gxf6 30.♗b6±.

**25...♜xc4**

**26.♗xc4 ♜c6**

**27.♗c3±**

Thus far the game Gelfand-Leko, Wijk aan Zee 2006.



In this game, Boris demonstrated technique of the highest order. At first sight, it may look as though chances are equal, but this is far from the case. White wants to play e4-e5 and ♜c5, and even the exchange on f6 may at the right time prove unpleasant. White has rich play.

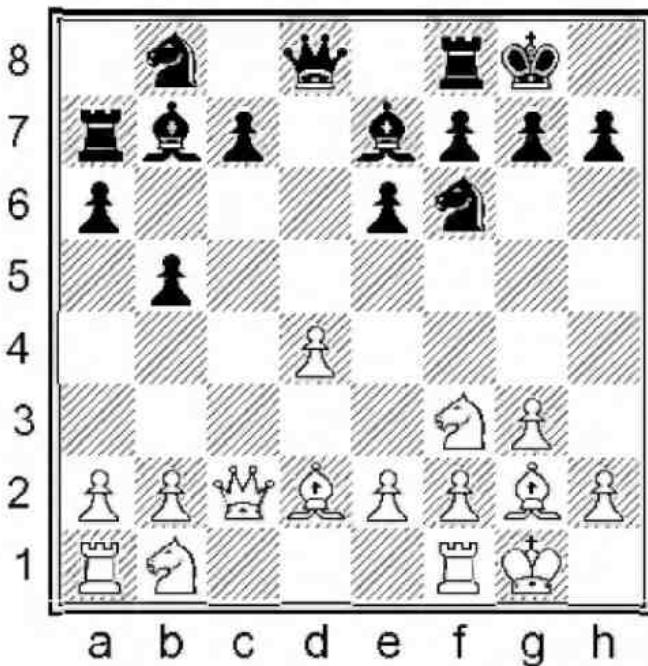
## Conclusion

Thus, we have looked at the first part of the main line for Black in the Catalan, and have studied the moves 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  and 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Here, White tries to create pressure down the c-file, not hesitating to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the opponent's knight. His plan often involves playing b2-b4 and fixing the backward pawn on c7; in many cases, White succeeds in blockading it firmly, by getting one of his knights to c6 (usually after the exchange of light-squared bishops).

If Black brings out his knight to d7, then White's set-up with  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  gains in strength – now it is hard for Black to drive the bishop away from this strong post. Note also the modest prophylactic move c2-c3: White prepares b2-b4 and at the same time prevents the enemy knight jumping to b4. Overall, this variation is better for White.

## Chapter 15 – Classical Variation 10...♝a7

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.g3 ♜e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxс4 7.♗c2 a6 8.♗xc4 b5 9.♗c2 ♜b7 10.♗d2 ♜a7



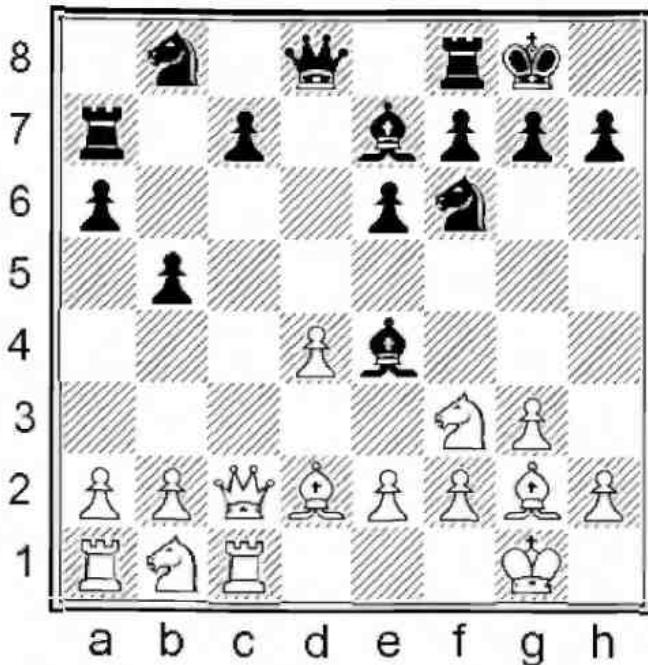
A rather unusual and cunning move, the analysis of which has cost me a good deal of time. This set-up is beloved of such strong grandmasters as Yakovenko and Grischuk. Black has very aggressive intentions: the essence of his plan is that White cannot prevent the break ...c7-c5. White needs to come up with some newer ideas here, instead of b2-b4. Eventually, I found a path to a small advantage.

**A) 11.♗c1**

**B) 11.a3!?**

**A)** A line seen often is

11.♗c1 ♜e4



The main continuation here is 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (A2), but we will also look at the alternative continuation 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  (A1).

**A1) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

**A2) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$**

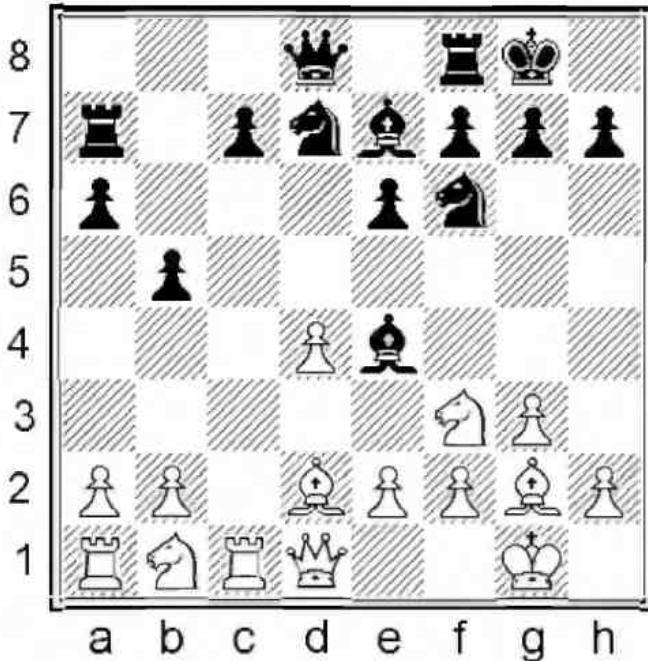
**A1) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

This move has not been studied very deeply so far. On the one hand, the queen is not so actively-placed here, but on the other, it pretty much avoids attacks from the enemy pieces.

12...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

Bad is 12...  $c5$  13.  $dxc5$ , but it is worth considering 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (P.H. Nielsen-Short, Internet 2004), and it is not so clear what White has for the pawn. Thanks to the two powerful bishops, strafing the board, he should have enough compensation, but can he count on anything more? This is arguable, for instance: 14.  $a4$   $c6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $b4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  with compensation. Of course, White's pressure is unpleasant, but he has given up two pawns.

However, this is probably the only way in which he can fight for an advantage.



**13.♗a5**

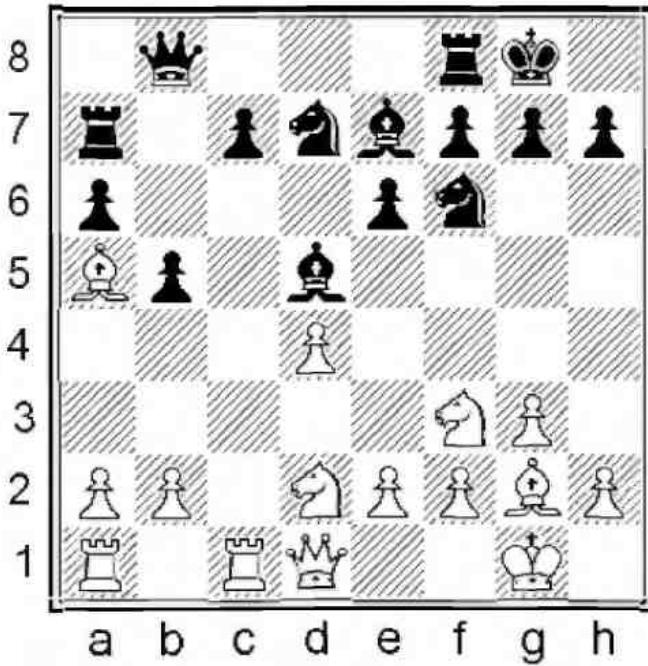
White hampers the advance ...c7-c5, whilst the knight transfer via b6 to d5 or c4 also looks dubious now – White can simply exchange on b6, devaluing his opponent's queenside pawn majority.

**13...♝b8**

Nonetheless, Black must try to get in ...c7-c5, otherwise the lack of harmony among his pieces will cause him to suffer. For example, 13...♜d6 14.♝bd2 ♜d5 15.♝c2 (also interesting is the attempt to double rooks on the c-file: 15.♝c3 ♜a8 16.♝ac1 ♜c8 17.a3 ♜b7 18.♝c2±; White prevents the break ...c7-c5, and without needing to 'bury' his bishop on a5, and now he prepares a central assault with e2-e4) 15...♜a8 16.♝e1 ♜e4 17.♝e5 ♜xd2 18.♜xd5 ♜xd5 19.♝xd7 ♜d8 20.♝f6+ gxf6 21.♝xd2±. In principle, the mass exchanges should play into Black's hands, because now he is not so cramped, although his king's pawn cover has been broken up and it will not be easy to stop a white pawn appearing on e4.

**14.♝bd2 ♜d5**

In reply to 14...♜a8 White can start doubling rooks on the c-file: 15.♝c2 (there is probably no need to shut in the bishop with 15.b4!?, although here too, White should be a little better) 15...c5 16.♝ac1 ♜c8 (on 16...cxsd4 there follows simply 17.♝xd4, and Black has trouble with the c6-square) 17.dxc5 ♜xc5 18.b4 ♜xc2 19.♝xc2± with powerful control of the c-file.



### 15.b4

In this version, it is not recommended to allow ...c7-c5, because the inevitable exchanges significantly drain the position of tension, for example: 15.♕e1 c5 (only thus; White retains a small advantage after 15...♝e4 16.♝xe4 ♜xe4 17.♝e5 ♜xe5 18.♜xe4 ♜c4 19.♝c3 b4 20.♜d2 ♜xd2 21.♝xd2±). Despite the opposite-coloured bishops, Black is still a long way from equality: he has a backward pawn on c7, and, the main thing, his rook is stranded on a7) 16.e4 ♜a8 17.♕e2 (White invites his opponent himself to exchange on d4, so as to fight for the c6-square, but here Black has sufficient resources not to lose this battle) 17...♝c8 18.h3 (it looks more logical to play 18.a3, although it is likely that this continuation will not change the assessment of the position) 18...cxd4 19.♝xd4 ♜c5 20.♝2b3 ♜b6 21.♝xc8+ ♜xc8 22.a4, Smejkal-Brückner, Berlin 1984, and here Black can equalise most precisely of all by 22...bxa4 23.♝xa4 ♜xa5 24.♝xa5 ♜c7=.

### 15...♝d6

16.♕e1 ♜xg2

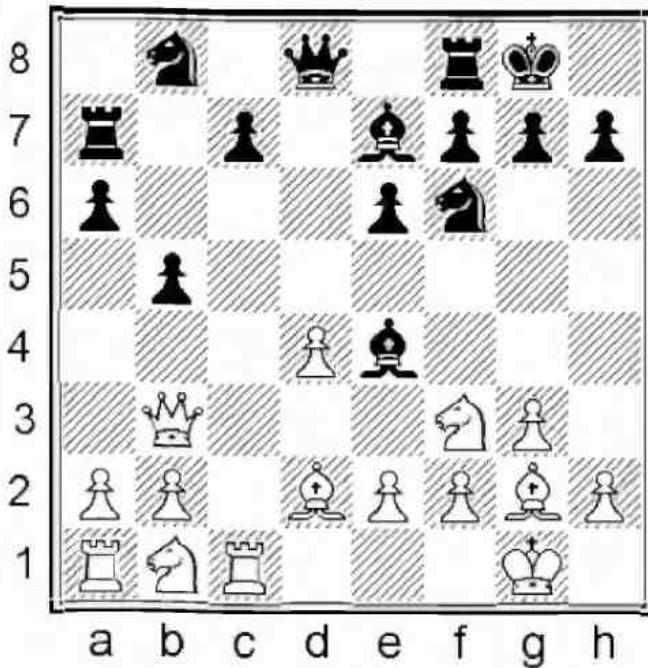
17.♝xg2 e5

18.dxe5 ♜xe5

19.♝ab1±

Despite the somewhat strange position of the bishop on a5, White's chances are superior: he has pressure against the backward pawn on c7 and can gradually advance his central pawns. Black, on the other hand, has a very badly-placed rook on a7, whilst his queen needs to find some way to become active.

### A2) 12.♝b3



This square is not a bad one for the queen in any event, and, in addition, from there it can easily be brought to the kingside via e3. The minus of the move is that, any moment, the queen can be hit.

**A21) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**A22) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**A23) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$**

**A21) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**13. $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

This idea is already familiar to us: White prevents both the break ...c7-c5 and the knight transfer via b6.

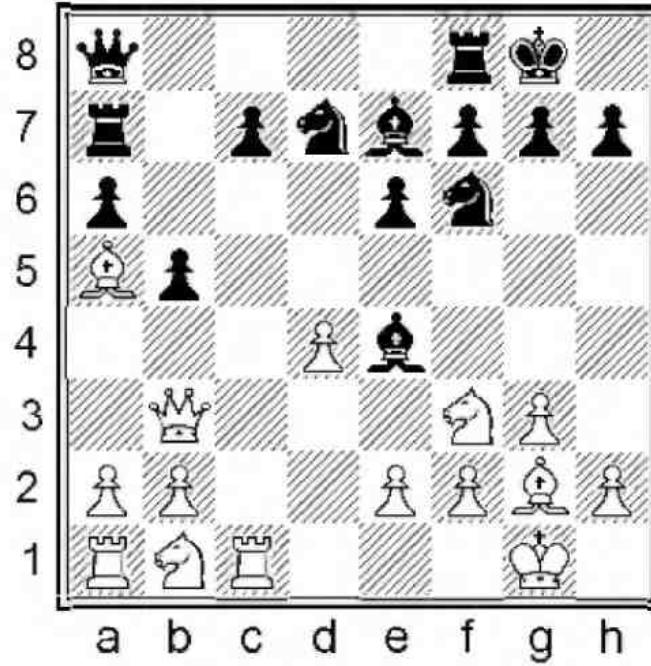
**A211) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a8$**

**A212) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

Unfavourable for Black is 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16.e4 e5 17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$  Ekström-Moor, Switzerland 2010.

On 13... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , as well as the exchange on b6, the simple 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2\pm$  is also good. White develops the knight, attacking the enemy bishop, and at the same time covering the c4-square.

**A211) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a8$**

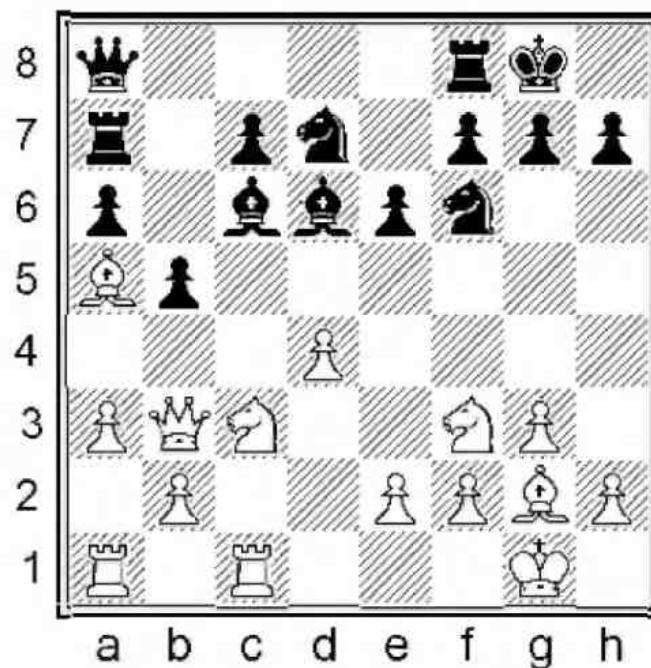


**14.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

Also good for White is 14.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (we have already spoken about this possible route for the queen) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (16...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ ; 16...  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17.  $b4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , C. Bauer-A. Sokolov, Besancon 2006, 18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}c3\pm$ ) 17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6!$   $cxb6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}g2\pm$  Avrukha- Quezada, Beer-Sheva 2005. White has effectively an extra pawn in the centre.

**14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**15.  $a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$**



Here, in my opinion,

**16.♕c2**

is very strong, after which it is hard to see any prospects for Black.

White played very badly in the following game, not only eliminating all his opponent's weaknesses, but also allowing him to start an offensive on the queenside: 16.♗b4 ♘b7 17.♕c2 a5! 18.♗xd6 cxd6± P.H. Nielsen-Leko, Dortmund 2005.

**16...e5**

It is not obvious what else to suggest to Black: 16...♝c8 17.b4, and 17...♝b6 fails to the nice blow 18.♝xb5!±; passive is 16...♝b7 17.b4±.

**17.e4 ♘b7**

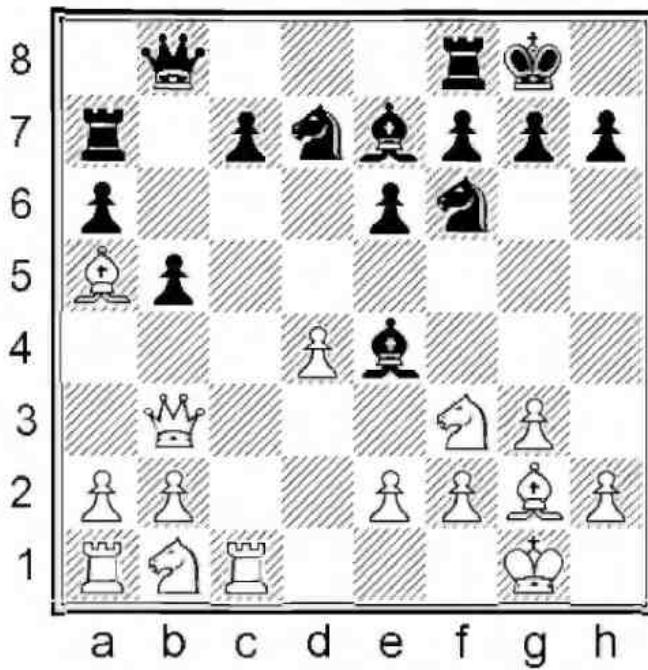
**18.dxe5 ♘xe5**

**19.♘xe5 ♘xe5**

**20.♗b4±**

Probably the best Black can manage here is to give the exchange for a pawn in some form or other.

**A212) 13...♝b8**



**14.♛e3**

White can also count on a small advantage after 14.♗bd2 ♘a8 15.♗e5!? ♘xg2 16.♗xg2 ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♘d7 18.f4 c5 19.♗e4±. It seems that Black has managed to simplify the position somewhat and advance ...c7-c5, but he is still a little worse: he has less space and his pieces are less well placed.

**14...b4**

Cutting off the retreat of the bishop on a5 and at the same time taking away the c3-square from the knight. However, the white bishop feels comfortable enough on a5 and the knight has another, more tempting path, as we will see.

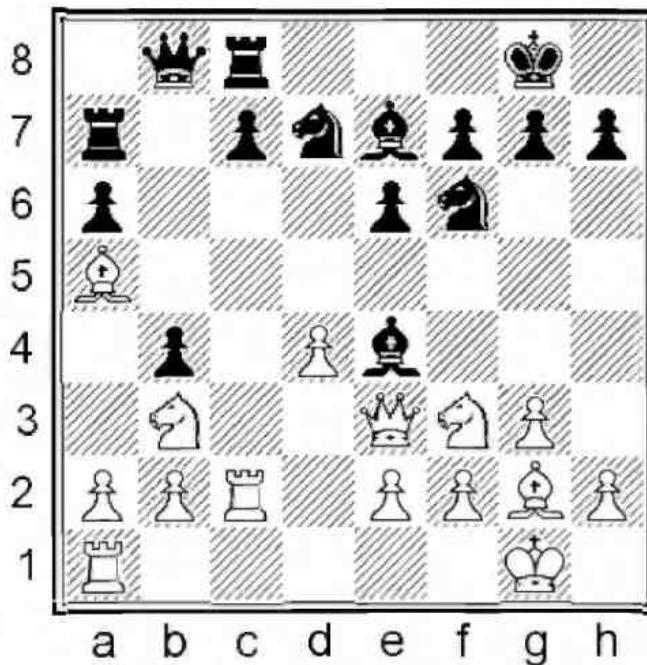
**15.♗bd2 ♘a8**

**16.♗b3**

White does not see any need to ‘liberate’ his bishop, although there is nothing wrong with that plan either: 16.a3 bxa3 17.bxa3 ♗d5 18.♗d3 ♘b5 19.♗c4± Roiz-A. Rychagov, Sochi 2007.

**16...♝c8**

**17.♝c2 ♘e4**



**18.♗e5!**

The tactical subtlety on which White’s play is based. Clearly, the rook cannot be taken, because of a crush after 19.♗c6.

**18...♝xg2**

**19.♗xd7 ♘xd7**

**20.♔xg2 ♘b5**

**21.♖ac1 e6**

So Black has failed to get rid of the backward pawn.

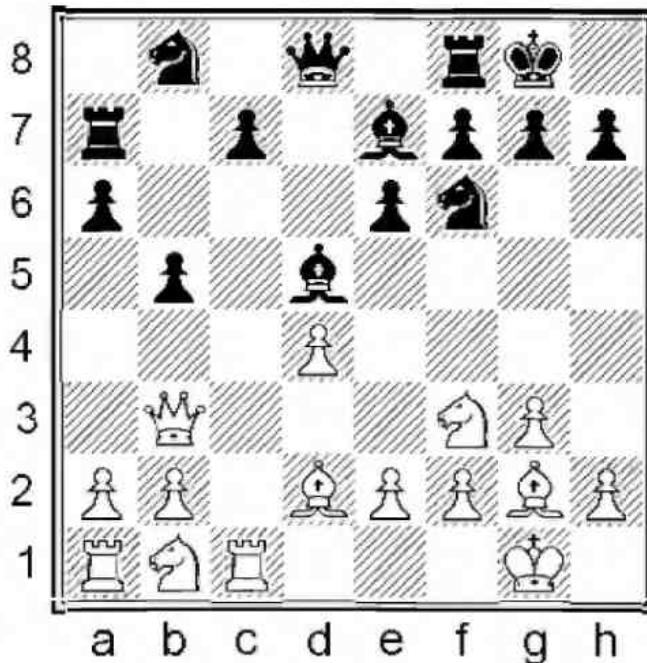
**22.♘f3 ♘b8**

**23.♗c4 ♘d7**

24.e3±

Gelfand-Harikrishna, Bermuda 2005. Black has been driven into a wholly passive defence.

A22) 12...♝d5



This is hardly a good idea: Black himself drives the enemy queen to a better square. But this plan has a deep concrete basis.

13.♛e3 ♛g4

White obtains the usual Catalan plus after 13...♝bd7 14.♚a5 ♛d6 15.♝c3 ♛b7 16.♝g5 ♛xg2 17.♝xg2 ♜a8+ 18.♛f3± as was seen in Hammer-Ivanchuk, Plovdiv 2010.

14.♛d3

The move 14.♛f4 looks very risky, but in fact, the white queen does not get trapped: 14...f5 15.♝c3 g5? (better is 15...♝xf3 16.♛xf3 ♜xd4 17.♝d1 here, White has rich compensation for the pawn) 16.♝xg5 ♛d6 17.♝xd5! (a beautiful refutation of Black's idea) 17...♝xf4 18.♝xe6 ♜xd5 (it seems this is the least of the evils, so badly are the black pieces placed) 19.♝xd5 ♛xd2 20.♝c2± Rahman-Mohammad, Dhaka 2008.

14...♝c4

15.♝xc4

Naturally, White does not wish to give up the e2-pawn. Therefore the exchange sacrifice is necessary, but at the same time very thematic.

15...bxc4

16.♛xc4 ♛f6

17.♝c3 ♛bd7

## 18.b4

Fixing the weak pawns a6 and c7.

18...c6

19.Qa4 Wb8

20.Qc5 Wb5

21.Qc1 Qc8

22.e3 Wxc4

23.Qxc4 Qd8

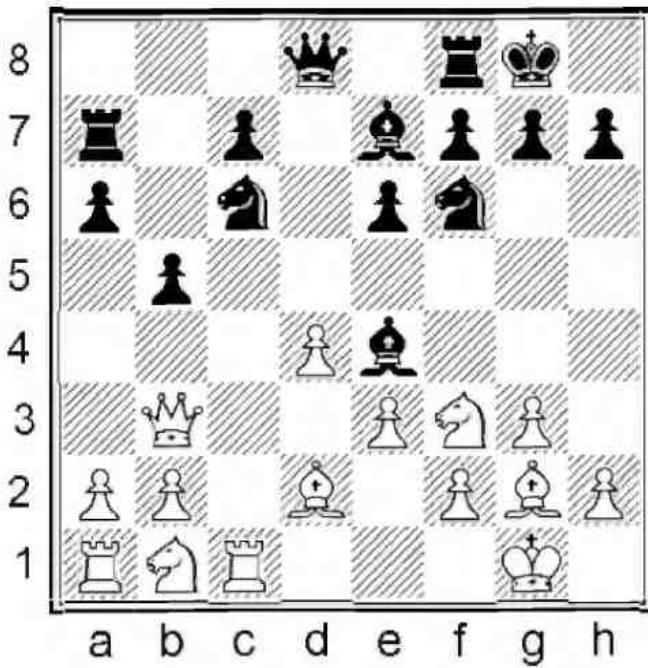
24.Qb3 with compensation

Sakaev-Karjakin, Sochi 2008. The pawn c6 will most likely fall soon, and then White will have both a positional and a small material advantage.

A23) 12...Qc6!?

A more dynamic plan: Black gains a tempo by attacking the d4-pawn and if White at some moment plays Qc3, then the black knight will come to a5 with another tempo, and then to c4.

13.e3



13...Wa8

Black creates a battery on the long diagonal. Now there is a threat of 14...Qxd4.

- A) The alternative is 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{W}c2$  (also interesting is 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$  b4 15. $\mathbb{A}e1$ , and later the queen's knight travels via d2 to b3 and c5) 14... $\mathbb{W}a8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  (preventing the tactical blow pointed out above) 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$ ;
- B) He does not solve all his problems by 16... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  (17...c5 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ , and 18...c5 (material equality can be maintained by 18... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , but after 19. $\mathbb{W}c6\pm$  White has a stable advantage) fails to 19. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{B}d7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc5\pm$ ;
- C) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  18. $\mathbb{W}c6\pm$  with a small advantage for White, Magomedov-Nakhapetiane, Moscow 2008.

**A231) 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

**A232) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

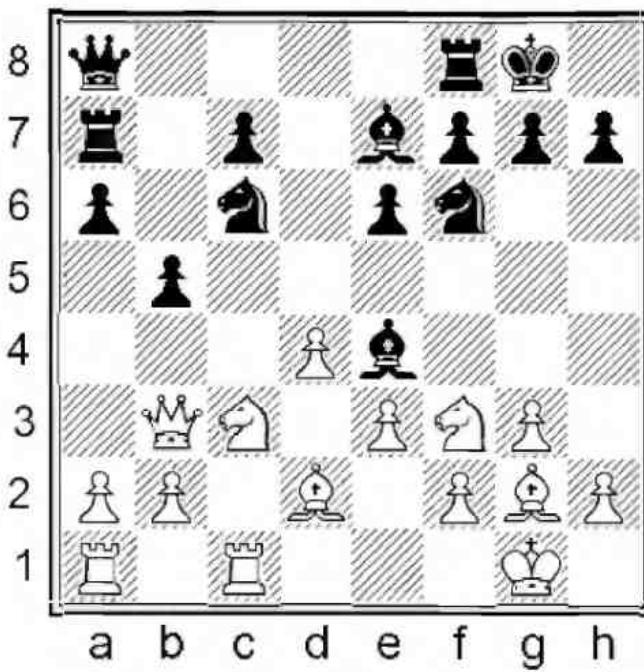
**A233) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

**A234) 14. $\mathbb{Q}h4$**

**A235) 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$**

In practice, it seems that the only move that has been seen is the natural 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$ , but we will also analyse other possibilities for White.

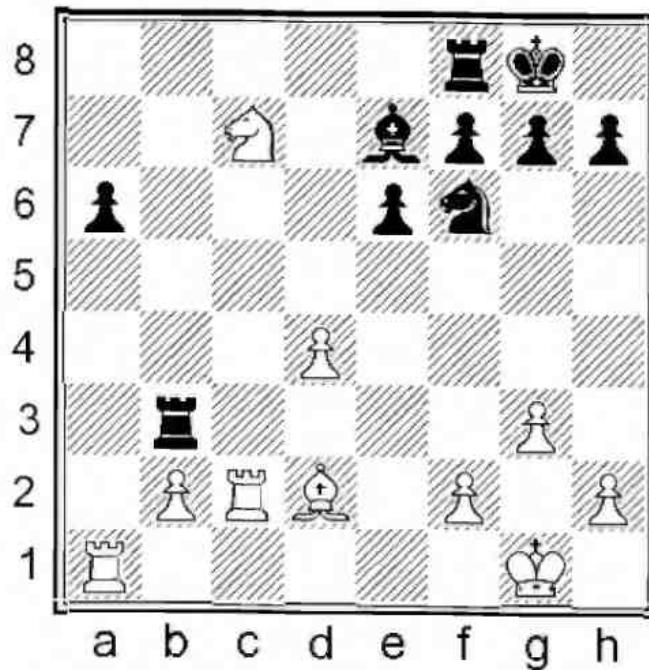
**A231) 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**



**14... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

It may appear that White's last move was an oversight, which is refuted by 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  (or 14... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15. $\mathbb{exd4}$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  16. $\mathbb{exd4}$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$ , but White has a clear refutation: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$  (thanks to this trick, White not only re-establishes material equality, but soon wins a pawn) 17... $\mathbb{W}xb3$  18. $\mathbb{axb3}$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  (an equal position arises after 19. $\mathbb{B}xc7$   $\mathbb{B}xb5$  20. $\mathbb{B}xe7$   $\mathbb{B}xb3$ ) 19... $\mathbb{B}xb3$  (White is clearly better after 19... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{B}xb3$  21. $\mathbb{d}5$   $\mathbb{exd5}$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ ) 20. $\mathbb{B}c2\pm$ . Maybe this endgame can be held, but Black needs to display great accuracy (Black has fewer problems after 20. $\mathbb{B}c3$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  h6 22. $\mathbb{B}a5$  (or 22. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{dx5}$   $\mathbb{B}xc5=$ ) 22... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{B}d8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{B}c8=$ ; 20. $\mathbb{B}a2$   $\mathbb{B}d3$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (21. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{B}c8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{B}xd4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{B}xc1+$  24. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{B}c2=$ ) 21... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  22. $\mathbb{B}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$

23.fxe3  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  24.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  25.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}e2=)$



20... $\mathbb{Q}fb8$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ? 21. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8\#$ ) 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  h6 22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}ac6$   $\mathbb{Q}cb8$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}a2$ . This sample variation shows some of the underwater reefs Black must dodge, to reach the safe haven of a draw. There is no doubt, however, that both sides' play can be improved in this line.

15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

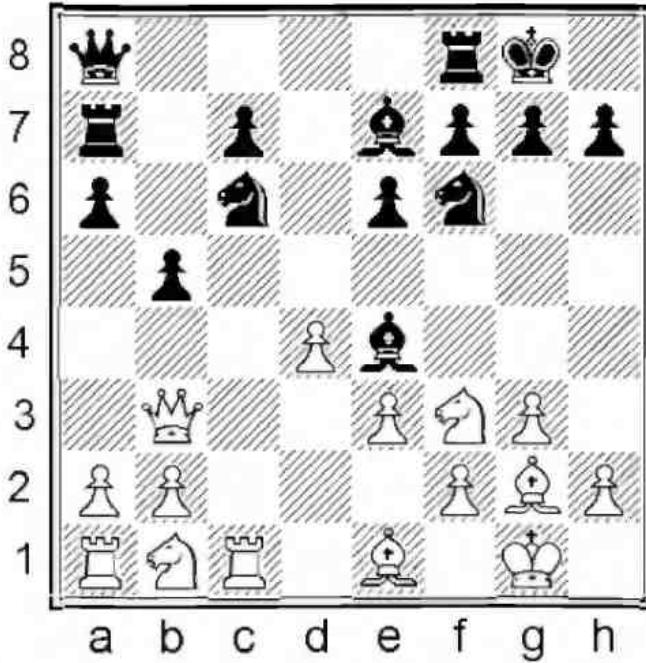
16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$

18.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$

The knight is on its way to c4, after which Black will certainly not be worse.

A232) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$



A rather slow move, after which Black will have enough time to regroup successfully.

**14...♝b8**

There is no good reason to drive the queen where she wants to go anyway: 14...♝d5 15.♛d1 only plays into White's hands.

**15.♛d1**

If 15.♝bd2 ♜d5 16.♛d3 ♜bd7 Black succeeds in preparing ...c7-c5.

**15...♝bd7**

The immediate 15...c5 is insufficient for equality, because it is not so easy to regain the gambit pawn: 16.♝bd2 ♜d5 17.dxc5 ♞d8 18.♛e2 ♜bd7 19.b4±.

**16.♝c3 ♜b7**

**17.b4**

Once and for all preventing ...c7-c5 but now White has decisively weakened the square c4, and Black directs his knight there.

**17...♞b6**

White retains slight pressure after 17...e5 18.a4 exd4 19.exd4 bxa4 20.♝xa4 ♜d5 21.♝c5±.

**18.a4!?** ♜xb4

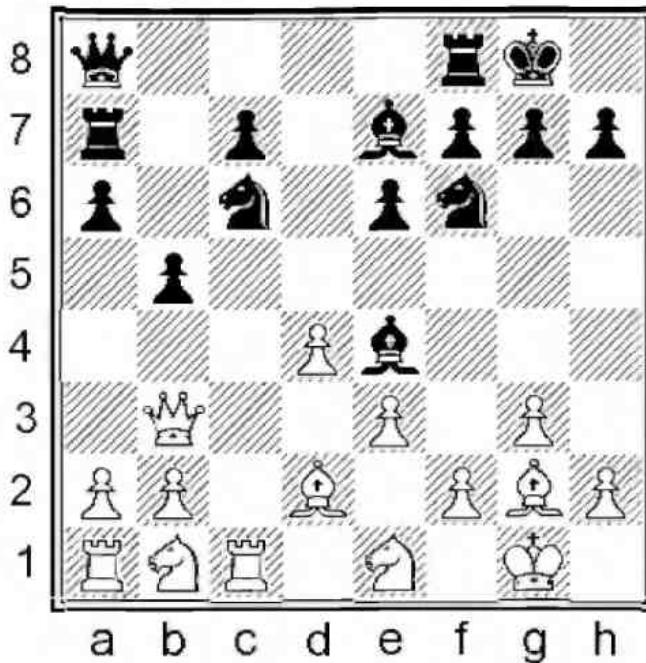
**19.axb5 ♜xc3**

**20.♝xc3 axb5**

Black has satisfactorily solved his problems. Of course, White has compensation for the pawn, but that is all.

**A233)** In reply to

**14.♕e1**



Black should immediately exchange bishops and set up a defence along the 6th rank:

**14...♝xg2**

Both 14...e5 15.♕xe4 ♜xe4 16.♗d5! ♜d8 17.♗xa8 ♜xa8 18.dxe5±, and 14...♝b8 15.f3 ♜g6 16.♗b4 ♜xb4 17.♗xb4 ♜bd7 18.e4 ♜c8 19.♝d3± (Bosiocic-Halkias, Negroponte 2010) are insufficient for equality.

**15.♝xg2 ♜d8**

**16.♖c2 ♜d6!**

A non-standard, but very strong manoeuvre: the rook heads to c6, to neutralise the pressure on the c-file.

**17.f4**

Otherwise White must also reckon with the break ...e6-e5.

**17...♝d7**

**18.♕e1 ♜d8**

**19.♝d3 ♜c6**

White has not managed to establish a secure outpost on c5 and now he cannot hold the c-file.

**20.♖d1 ♜xc1**

21.  $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  c5!

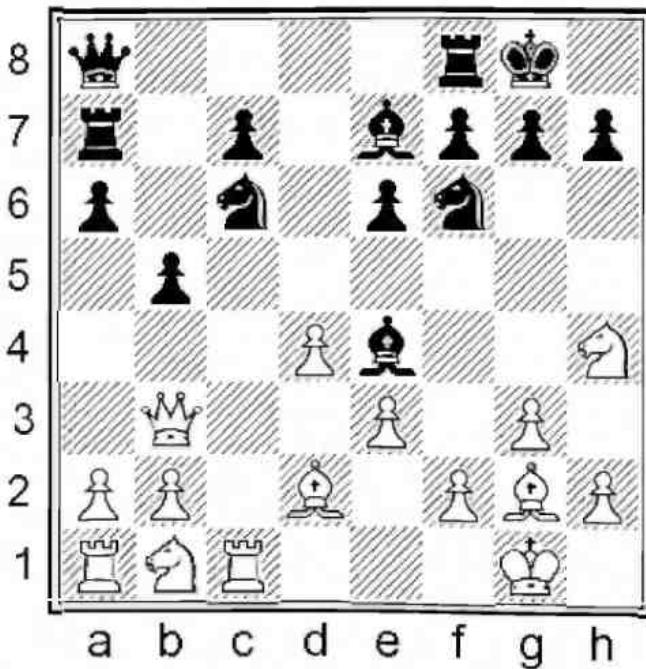
22.  $\mathfrak{Q}xc5$   $\mathfrak{Q}xc5$

23. dxe5  $\mathbb{E}c7$

24. b4 a5

Thanks to his advantage in development, Black quickly regains the pawn and obtains satisfactory play.

A234) 14.  $\mathfrak{Q}h4$



Now Black can exchange on g2 and go into the line seen above (with 14.  $\mathfrak{Q}e1$ ). But he also has a decent alternative:

14...  $\mathbb{E}d8$

15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathfrak{Q}xe4$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathfrak{Q}b8$

17.  $\mathfrak{Q}a5$   $\mathfrak{Q}xh4$

18. gxh4  $\mathbb{E}d6$

19.  $\mathfrak{Q}c3$   $\mathfrak{Q}xc3$

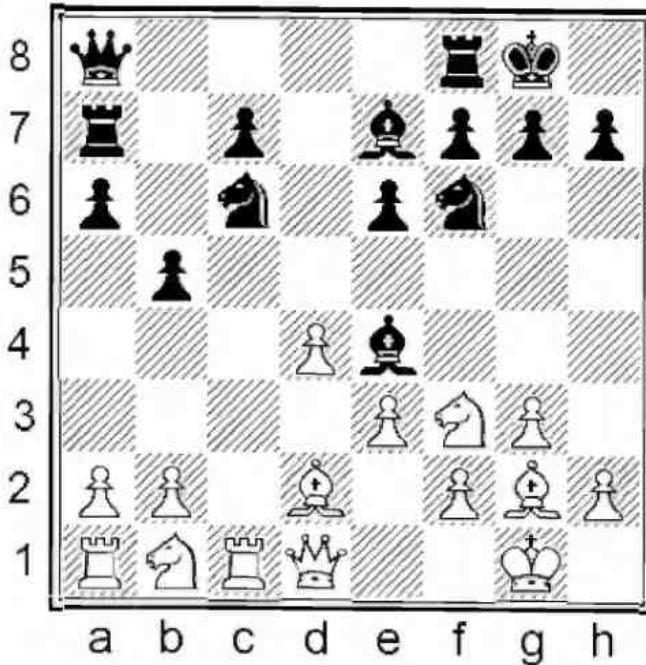
20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$  is bad because of 20... e5!.

20... a5!?

and Black seizes the initiative.

A235) 14.♘d1



The position in the diagram has been seen over the past 5-6 years in games of the very highest rank of players, therefore we should look at it in some detail.

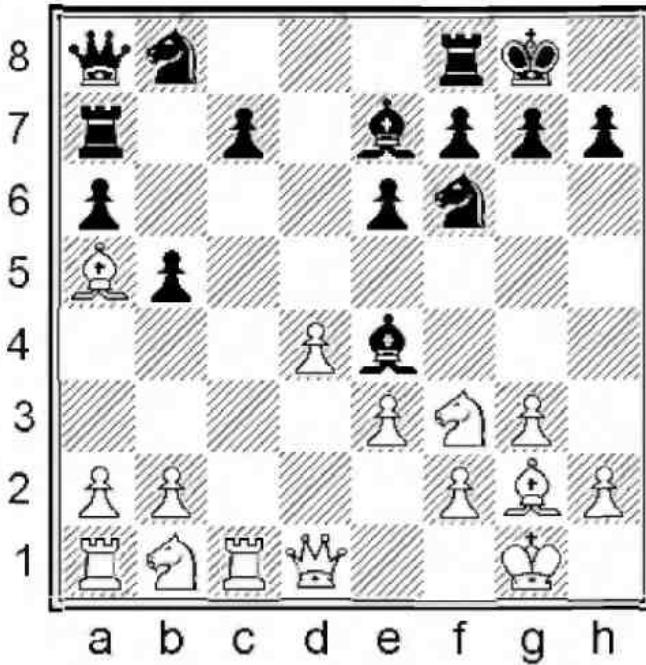
**A2351) 14...♝b8**

**A2352) 14...b4**

**A2351) 14...♝b8**

This flexible manoeuvre (the knight transfers to d7, and Black opens the path of the c-pawn) has been seen, for example, in the games of Anand and Karjakin. Almost its only drawback is the fact that the white bishop is able to come to a5, as it does at once.

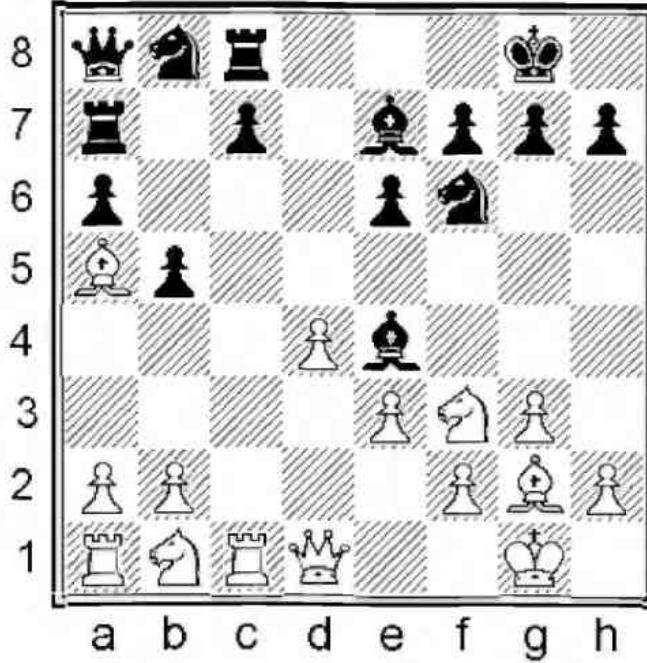
**15.♗a5**



**15...Bc8**

In reply to 15...Qc6 the bishop retreats one square further – 16.Qe1, and this favours White, who can now bring his queen's knight via d2 (with tempo!) to b3 and then, if the moment offers, to c5: 16...Qb8 17.b4 (one should not forget about this 'mechanical' means of stopping the move ...c7-c5. Admittedly, White must now pay careful attention to the square c4, so as not to see an enemy knight ensconced there) 17...Qbd7 18.a4 Qd5 (Black cannot secure a grip on c4: on 18...Qb6 there follows 19.axb5 axb5 20.Qc3 Qc6 21.Bxa7 Bxa7 22.Qf1, and if 22...Qc4, then 23.Qxb5. However, even without this, Black's position is quite unpleasant) 19.Qbd2 (here it is – the promised tempo!) 19...Qg6 (a piece is lost after 19...Qxb4? 20.Qxe4 Qxe4 21.Qe5) 20.Qb3 Qe4 (again the pawn is untouchable: 20...Qxb4? 21.Qxb4 Qxb4 22.Qe5 Qe8 23.Qc6) 21.axb5 Qxb4 22.Qxb4 23.Qbd2 Qxf3 (it turns out that the bishop has no convenient retreat square) 24.Qxf3± Avrukh-Sandipan, Turin 2006.

15...Qd6 16.a3 Qbd7 17.Qbd2 Qd5 18.Qf1 (the start of a deep strategic plan: White allows his opponent to advance ...c7-c5, but he does not refrain from the battle for the open c-file. Now the queen defends the bishop on g2, in the process unpinning the knight f3: at the appropriate moment, the knight will come to c6, via e5 or d4) 18...c5 19.dxc5 Qxc5 20.Qc2 (Black has trouble doubling rooks on the c-file, thanks to the bishop on a5) 20...Bb7 21.Qac1 Qb6 22.Qxb6 Qxb6 23.Qd4 (White has won the battle for the open c-file, and now he needs a penetration square) 23...Qe5 24.Qxd5 Qxd5 (Aronian-Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2007) 25.Qc6 Qxc6 26.Qxc6 Bb8 27.Qf3± and Black faces an unpleasant defence: his pieces are passive and his queenside pawns weak.



**16.a3!**

This multi-purpose move was discovered by Vladimir Kramnik. After other continuations, Black can draw fairly easily:

16.♗b6 (a nice-looking move, but that is all) 16...♝b7 17.♕c5 ♘xc5 18.dxc5 (less good is 18.♘xc5?! ♖bd7 19.♖c1 c5 and the initiative passes to Black) 18...♝a7 19.♖bd2 ♘d5 20.♗c2 a5 21.a3 a4 22.♗d3, and in this roughly equal position, the players agreed a draw, Ponomariov-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

16.♖bd2 ♘d5 17.♖b3 (here too, nothing is offered by 17.♗b6 ♜b7 18.♕c5 ♘xc5 19.dxc5 ♔c6 20.a3 ♜bb8 21.♗c2 e5 22.e4 ♗e6 23.♗c3, draw, Donchenko-Seyb, Nuremberg 2008) 17...♖bd7 18.♖c2 ♘e4 19.♖c3 ♘d5 20.♖cc1 ♘f6 21.♖c3 (he cannot double rooks on the c-file, and White starts to repeat moves) 21...♖d5 22.♖cc1 ♘f6, draw, Gelfand-Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

**16...♝d6**

**17.♖bd2 ♘d5**

**18.♗f1 ♘bd7**

**19.b4**

Less good here is 19.♖c2 (by analogy with Aronian-Karjakin above) because of 19...c5 20.dxc5 ♘xc5 – Black exchanges a pair of rooks and thereby greatly reduces the significance of the open c-file.

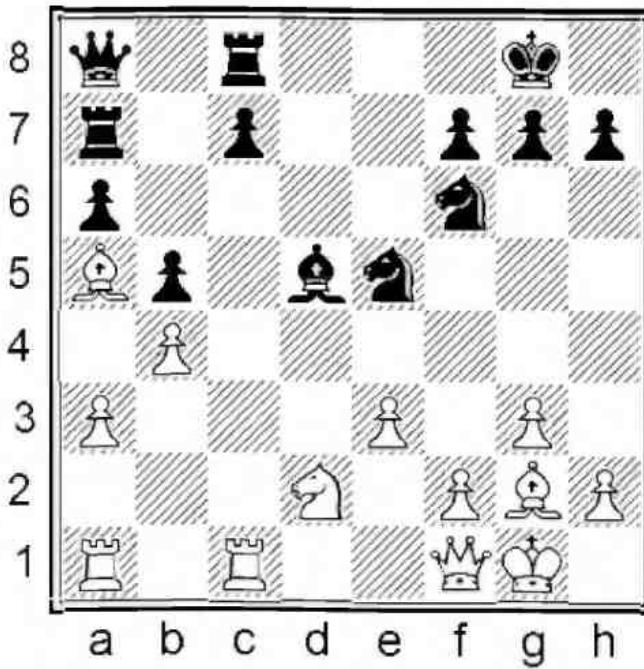
**19...e5**

White is better after 19...♝b6 20.♗e5.

**20.dxe5 ♘xe5**

On 20...♞xe5 Black, it seems, did not like the reply 21.♖d4.

**21.♖xe5 ♘xe5**



**22.f3!**

White wants to place his pawn on e4, after which the enemy bishop will feel out of place on the long diagonal.

**22...♝c4**

**23.♝xc4 ♜xc4**

On this square, the bishop looks well placed, but it does not bring Black any great benefits in reality, apart from closing the c-file and thus shielding the pawn on c7.

**24.♜f2 ♜e8**

**25.e4 c6**

The rook on a7 has to be brought into play somehow, but now the bishop on a5 can return home at any moment.

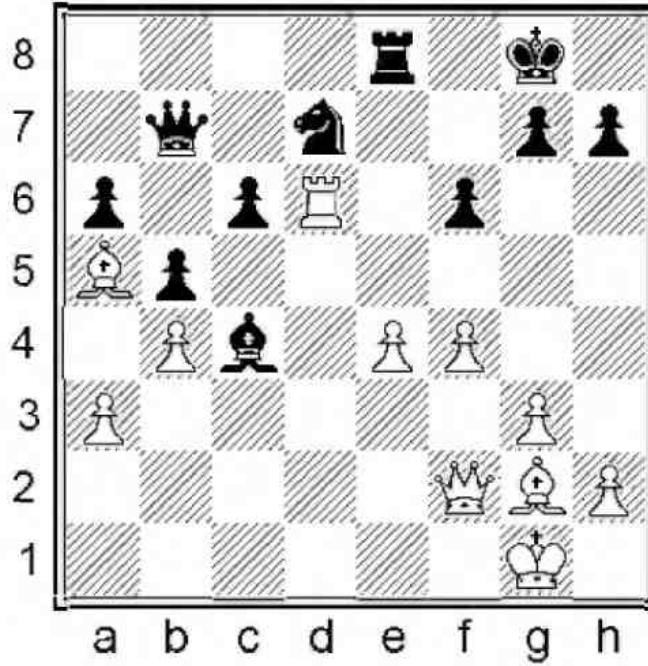
**26.♝d1 ♜d7**

**27.♝xd7 ♜xd7**

**28.♝d1 ♜b7**

**29.♝d6 f6**

**30.f4**



White has two bishops, a mobile pawn centre and active pieces – his large advantage is not in doubt.

**30...♝e6**

**31.♗d2**

Not hesitating to give the opponent something else to worry about: now he has to wonder how to neutralise the pressure on the d-file.

**31...♝e7**

**32.♗d4 ♛f8**

**33.♗d8 ♜d7**

**34.♗xd7 ♜xd7**

**35.♗xd7 ♛xd7**

**36.e5±**

Kramnik-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

**A2352) 14...b4**



Seizing space on the queenside and depriving the enemy knight of the ‘transfer point’ c3. However, he also loses control of another important square, namely c4.

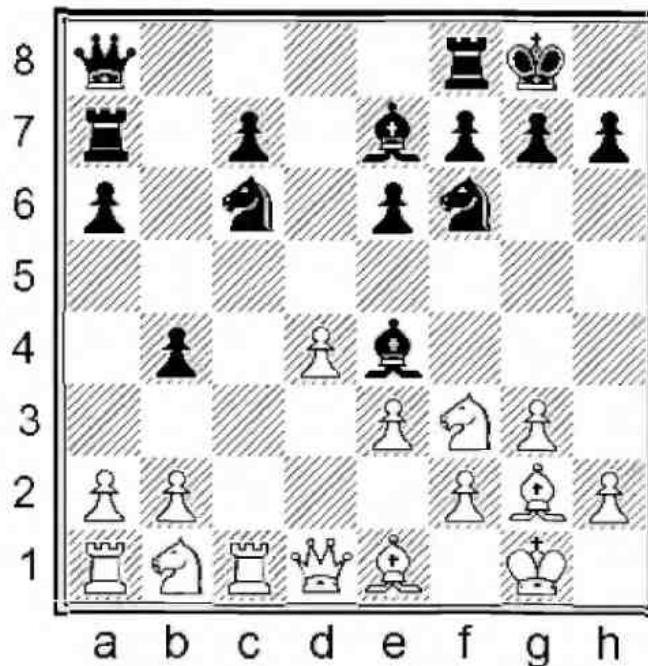
**A23521) 15.♘e1**

**A23522) 15.♗f1**

Black turns out to be well-prepared for the immediate break 15.a3: 15...♝b8 16.♘e1 a5 17.♕bd2 ♕d5 18.♗f1 bxa3 19.bxa3 a4!= Ponomariov-Anand, Leon 2007.

**A23521) 15.♘e1**

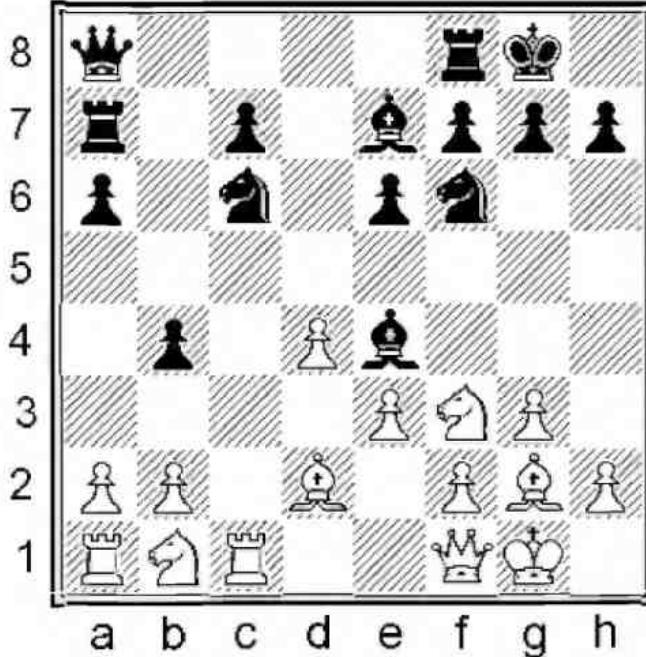
In this way, White frees the d2-square for the knight. We will consider various options for Black.



- A) 15...e5?! 16.Qbd2 Qd5 17.dxe5 (but not 17.Qb3 exd4 18.exd4 Qd8 19.Qd2 a5 20.Qf1 Qe4= Genutis-Friedel, Beijing 2008) 17...Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxg2 19.f3± Housieaux-Briscoe, Le Touquet 2008;
- B) 15...Qb8 16.a3 bxa3 17.bxa3 Qbd7 18.Qc3 (extremely slow is 18.Qb4 Qxb4 19.axb4 Qb8 20.Qbd2 Qd5 21.Qa4 h6= Grischuk-Yakovenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2009) 18...Qb7 19.Qa4 Qe4 20.Qa5 Qd5 21.Qe1 Qxg2 22.Qxg2 e5 23.e4 Qf6 24.f3± Baldauf-Bönsch, Austria 2010/11. Black still has the backward pawn on c7 and the manoeuvring possibilities for his minor pieces are extremely limited.
- The following two black moves, 15...h6 and 15...a5, are as yet little explored. In practice, they have justified themselves, but there is no doubt that White's play can be strengthened. Thus:
- C) 15...h6 16.a3 (since the black knight has not yet left c6, it makes sense for White to refrain from this move and simply bring his knight to d2) 16...Qb8 17.axb4 Qxb4 18.Qc3 Qb7 19.Qe2 Qd3 20.Qxd3 Qxf3 21.Qxf3 Qxf3 22.Qc2 Qb7= Le Quang Liem-Kasimdzhanov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010;
- D) 15...a5 16.Qbd2 Qd5 17.Qe2 (17.Qc4 Qb8 (Gitsis-Sigalas, Athens 2008) 18.a3∞; it is worth considering 17.Qf1!? with the idea of Qe5) 17...Qb8 18.Qh4 Qxg2 19.Qxg2 Qbd7= Jacobson-Blomqvist, Stockholm 2010/11;
- E) 15...Qd5 16.Qbd2 Qb8 17.Qh4 Qxg2 18.Qxg2 c5 (practice has also seen 18...Qbd7 19.Qf3 Qxf3 20.Qxf3 c5 21.Qf4 a5 22.Qd3 Qe4 23.Qc2 Qc8 24.Qac1 Qac7 25.dxc5 Qdxc5 26.Qf1 Qd6 27.Qxc5 Qxc5 28.Qxc5 Qxc5 29.Qxc5 Qxc5= Damjanovic-Efimenko, Zlatibor 2007; Black, in all probability, will make a draw) 19.dxc5 Qbd7!? (19...Qc8 (Suba-Vaganian, Bazna 2007) 20.Qc4!± 20.Qb3 a5 (starting quite forced play. White has several poorly placed pieces, so Black manages to regain the pawn and equalise) 21.c6 Qe5 22.Qd4 Qc7 23.a3 (23.Qc2 Qxc6 24.Qac1 Qfc8=) 23...bxa3 24.bxa3 Qfc8 25.Qxc6 26.Qxc6 27.Qxc6 Qxc6=.

## A23522) 15.Qf1!

We already know the point of this manoeuvre: White unpins the knight on f3.



In the diagram position, Black has tried various moves, but he has not succeeded in easily and completely extinguishing his opponent's opening initiative.

## 15...Qd5

Let us consider a few alternatives:

A) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  a5 17.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  bxa3 22.bxa3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}ab1\pm$   
 Aronian-Anand, Mainz 2007;  
 B) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20.f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  21.e4± Avrukh-Greenfeld, Beer-Sheva 2007;  
 C) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (the black knight retreats, and so White advances. The queen at f1 is now very well-placed, since the Catalan bishop is defended) 16...c5 (16... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ ) 17.dxc5 (it is not completely appropriate to include 17.f3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  – but not 17... $\mathbb{Q}xb1?$  18. $\mathbb{Q}axb1$  cxd4 19.f4± El Debs-Solomon, Dresden 2008 – 18.dxc5 a5 19.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c8\infty$ . Now after 20.axb4 axb4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{W}xa7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  White's pawn on e3 is hanging, and the a7-g1 diagonal in general is weakened) 17... $\mathbb{W}d5$  (here if 17...a5 18.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  White can take on b4 with a clear conscience and simply stand clearly better) 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  21. $\mathbb{W}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (Brunello-Halkias, Porto Carras 2011) 23. $\mathbb{Q}ca5$ . White exchanges the opponent's active heavy pieces and obtains an advantage in the ending, because the pawns on a6 and b4 are fairly vulnerable: 23... $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  25. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  26. $\mathbb{Q}c1\pm$ .

## 16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}c8$

16...h6 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  a5 18.a4 (it is useful to freeze these pawns, so as to stop Black seizing too much space on the queenside) 18...bxa3 19.bxa3 a4 20. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}fe5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 23. $\mathbb{Q}a5!\pm$  Giri-Khamrakulov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010. Exploiting the fact that Black cannot take twice on a5, because of the fork on c6, White lifts the enemy siege on the queenside.

## 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

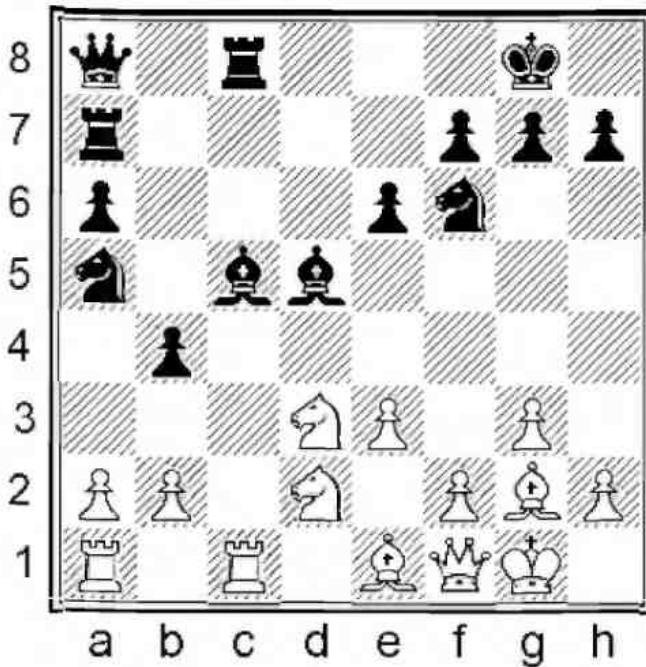
Black solves his problems successfully after 17. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  18.a3 bxa3 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  20. $\mathbb{W}xg2$  c5 21.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}ac4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  24. $\mathbb{W}xa8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5=$  Berkes- Efimenko, Germany 2007/08.

## 17... $\mathbb{Q}a5$

## 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$ c5

## 19.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

## 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3$



Black has carried out the advance ...c7-c5, but still has definite problems, because of the weakness of the pawns on b4 and a6.

**20...♝f8**

**21.♞xd5 ♛xd5**

**22.e4**

If 22.♝xc8 ♛xc8 23.♞f3 ♜c6 Black successfully regroups his forces and neutralises the opponent's attempts to create pressure on the c-file: 24.♝c1 ♜c7 25.♞d2 ♜f6 26.♝c4 a5 27.♝c1 ♜d6 28.b3 ♜d7 29.♝b1 h6= Maximenko-Lutz, Germany 2007/08.

**22...♞b6**

If the knight retreats the other way with 22...♞f6, then White, first of all, 'dominates' it with the move 23.f3!, and then begins operations on the queenside: 23...♝ac7 24.♝f2 ♜d7 25.♝xc7 ♜xc7 26.♝c1 ♛c8 27.♝xc7 ♛xc7 28.♝c1±.

**23.♝xc8 ♛xc8**

**24.♞f3**

The knight on b6 obstructs the b-file and now it is hard for Black to defend the b4-pawn.

**24...♛b7**

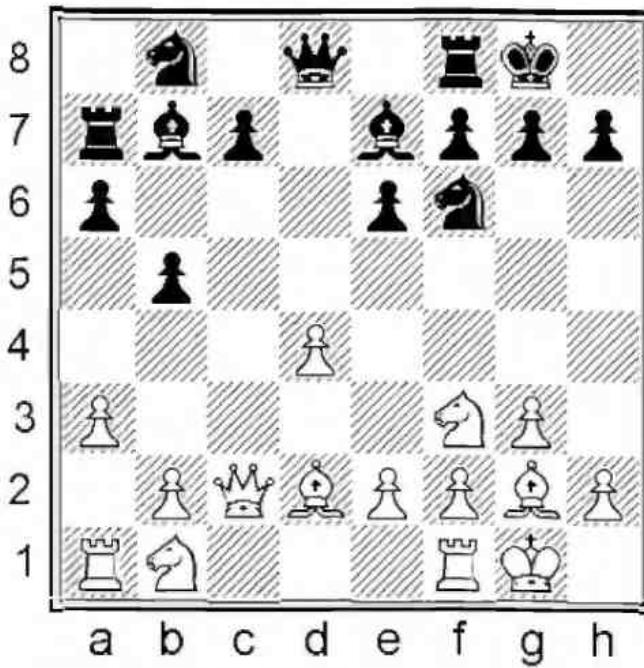
**25.♞xb4 ♛xe4**

**26.♛d3 ♛xd3**

**27.♞xd3±**

Kramnik-Leko, Moscow 2007.

B) 11.a3!?



B1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

B2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

B1) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

It was this move over which I had to break my head longest of all.

B11) 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

B12) 12. $\mathbb{Q}a5$

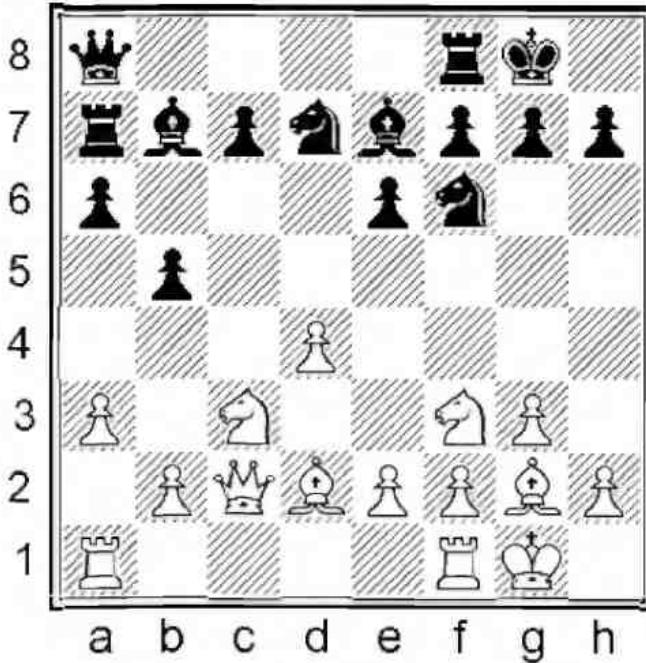
B11) In reply to the direct

12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$

Black has the subtle reply

12... $\mathbb{Q}a8!$

If he plays 12...c5 immediately, then White's idea is justified: 13.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14.b4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ , and Black still has to work hard to equalise. His main problem is the lack of a suitable square for his queen. There could follow: 16... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (here the queen is well-placed, although now the queenside can come under attack) 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  (22... $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  25. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  26. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ ) 23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  e5 24. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  25. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xd2\pm$ .



### 13. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

Other continuations can also be tried, but there too, Black can equalise with one or two accurate moves, for example:

13.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  c5 (on 13...  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  White has the striking and very effective response 15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{E}fxa8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  c5 18.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xg5\pm$ ) 14.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  15. b4 (15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}c8$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{E}c8=$ ;  
 13. b4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (also good is 13...  $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ ? 14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6\rightleftharpoons$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18.  $\mathbb{W}c2$  a5 (the black pieces are fairly well placed to begin active operations on the queenside) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20.  $bxc5$  a4 $\rightleftharpoons$ .

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

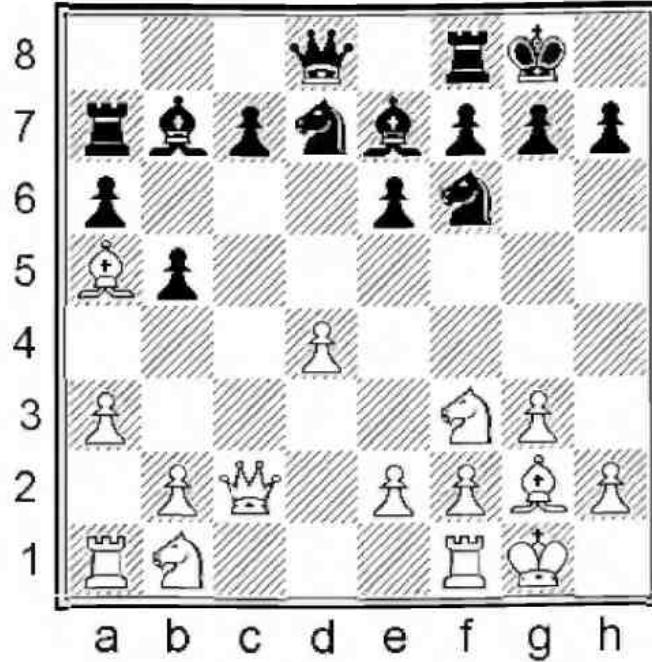
Interesting complications arise after 13... h6 14.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ; 14. b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  – in both cases, with mutual chances) 14... c5 15.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. a4  $\mathbb{Q}d8$ . Exploiting the slight lack of activity amongst the enemy forces, White can offer quite a promising sacrifice of a piece for two pawns: 18. a5 (18.  $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ ?) 18...  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ ?  $axb5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ . But Black has a nice retort: 21...  $\mathbb{Q}h1$ ! 22. f3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  23. exf3  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  with double-edged play.

### 14. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

Weaker is 14...  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ .

### 15. $\mathbb{E}xd2$ $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightleftharpoons$

#### B12) 12. $\mathbb{Q}a5$



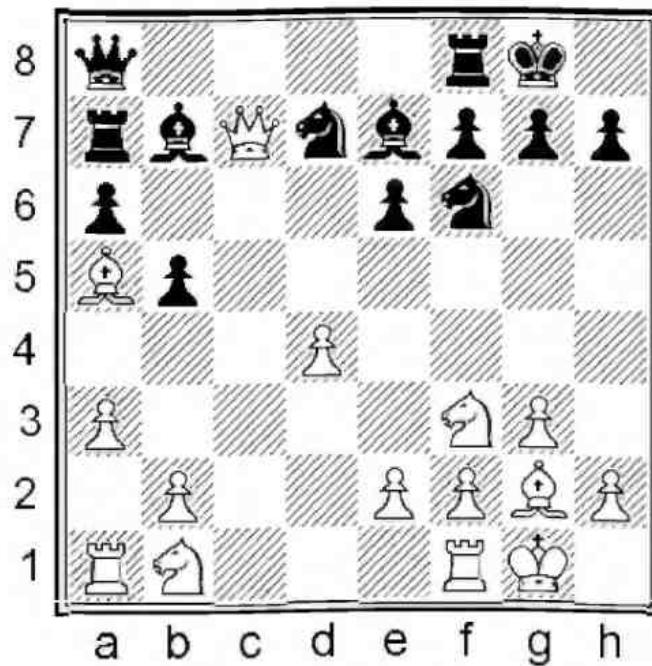
We have already discussed this; after the black knight goes to d7, the reply  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is perfectly logical.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}a8$**

**13. $\mathbb{W}xc7$**

Exploiting the tactical possibilities of the position, White takes a pawn.

Little is promised by 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3 \mathbb{E}c8$  14. $\mathbb{E}fd1$  (or 14.b4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ) 14...c5 15.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$  h6 17. $\mathbb{W}b1 \mathbb{Q}c6=$  or 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  c5 14.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ .



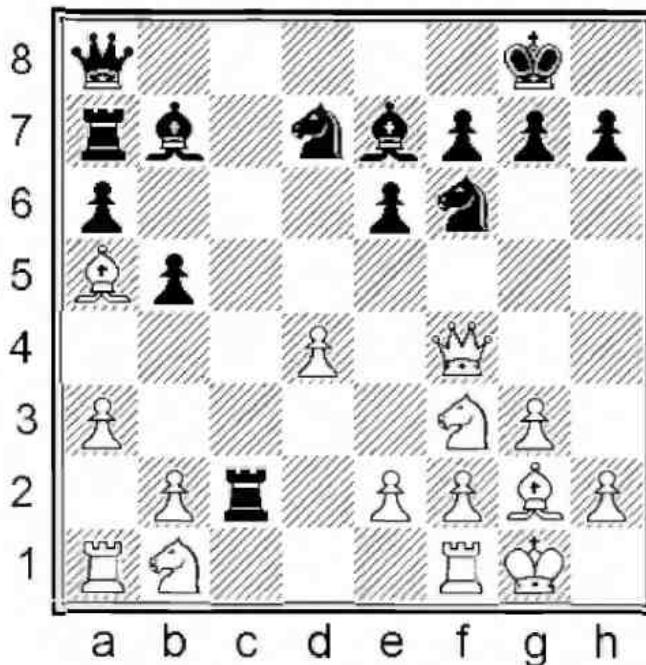
**13... $\mathbb{E}c8$**

He does not equalise after 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{E}xc7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xa8\pm$ .

Somewhat premature is 13...e5, since after 14. $\mathbb{W}c2$  exd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  the pawn on d4 is very weak, and sooner or later, Black will lose it. Play could continue 15... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd8!$ ? (16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  d3 18.exd3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  gxf6 20. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f5\pm$  Feller-Pileckis, Yerevan 2007) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (White does not hurry to win the d4-pawn; first he needs to complete his development, and take control of the c-file) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (White has escaped from the pin on the long diagonal, and also strengthened the pressure on the d4-pawn) 19... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 21. $\mathbb{Q}e5\pm$ . One of the most important questions in the Catalan is which pieces to exchange, which to retain, and, in addition, precisely when to exchange them. If you learn to answer these questions correctly, then you will have excellent prospects in this opening.

Now White exchanges his strong Catalan bishop, but spoils the opponent's pawn structure and occupies a strong central point with his knight. He wants to exchange the other knight, and restrict the enemy bishop with the move f2-f3.

**14. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{E}c2$**



Black immediately regains the pawn, but the rook on the second rank will be somewhat cut off from the rest of its forces.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

Interesting is 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ! – this idea seems not to have been met in practice. Then: 15... $\mathbb{E}xb2$  16. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (the point of White's idea. After  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  the extremely active black rook is trapped, so Black is practically forced to sacrifice the exchange) 17... $\mathbb{E}xf3$  18.exf3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xf3$  20. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  (after the exchange of queens Black faces a cheerless defence in the ending) 21. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ . White's chances are superior, not only because of his small material advantage, but also his control of the c-file.

**15... $\mathbb{E}xb2$**

**16. $\mathbb{E}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**17. $\mathbb{W}e4$  b4**

17... $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}xd8$  19. $\mathbb{W}d3\pm$ . White has superiority in the centre. In addition, the rook on b2 may become a target.

18. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $bxa3$

19. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

19. $\mathbb{B}xa3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  20. $\mathbb{W}xa3$   $\mathbb{B}b5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}f8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}7f6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $axb5$  24. $\mathbb{W}xf8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  with approximate equality.

19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xa3$

It is understandable that White cannot take the rook, but it was worth considering 20.e4!?.  $\mathbb{Q}5f6$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}5b6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  with compensation) 21. $\mathbb{Q}fd2$   $\mathbb{B}b5$  22.f3  $\mathbb{W}f8$  (Solomon-Rizouk, Africa 2009) 23. $\mathbb{Q}b1!\pm$ .

20... $\mathbb{Q}b5$

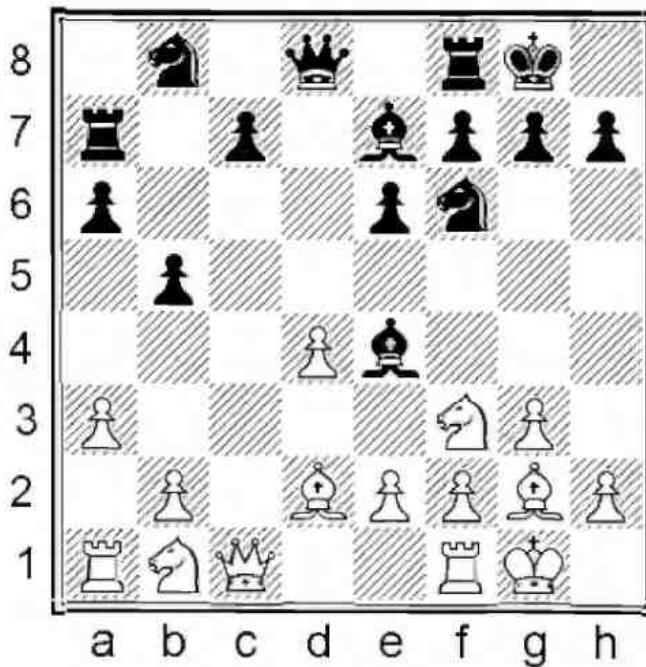
20... $\mathbb{Q}xa3$  21. $\mathbb{W}xa3$   $\mathbb{B}xe2$  22. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{B}e4$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$ .

21. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$

Kramnik-Grischuk, Mexico City 2007. The bishop on a5 is very strong, and significantly restricts the opponent's possibilities.

B2) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

12. $\mathbb{W}c1$



12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

If 12...a5, preventing  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and taking space on the queenside, then 13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ ? (creating the threat of d4-d5; White is promised less by 14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  15. $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  16. $\mathbb{B}fc1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$ , and the players agreed a draw, Kveinys-Rustemov,

Lubniewice 2005) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15. $\mathbb{E}d1\pm$ . The black minor pieces are not very well placed. The bishop on c6 obstructs the path of the c7-pawn, but it cannot retreat to b7 or a8, because it has to defend the pawn on b5. The queen's knight is stuck on its original square, because it must defend the bishop on c6. Finally, from a purely visual standpoint, the knight on d5 seems to stand quite well, but usually in this line, Black chooses to refrain from the move ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d5$ , so as not to close the long diagonal and walk into the pawn thrust e2-e4.

12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (I hope you remember this rule of thumb: as soon as Black's queen's knight goes to d7, we put the bishop on a5. Now Black needs to redeploy his queen somewhere. Two typical plans are ... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  and ... $\mathbb{W}e7$ , or ... $\mathbb{W}a8$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (13... $\mathbb{W}a8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.b4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  17.a4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18. $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , draw, E. Atalik-M. Bensdorp, Wijk aan Zee 2006) 14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}a8$  15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  16.b4 g6 17. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$  Tereick-Katov, Herceg Novi 2008) 15. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}a8$  (as we have already pointed out, Black would like to put his queen on e7, but he has to fight the threat of e2-e4) 16. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  17.b4 $\pm$ . We have already discussed an analogous situation: White's chances here are preferable. For example, 17... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e1!$ . Thanks to this small trick, White exchanges another pair of pieces and retains the advantage, because he controls the situation in the centre and on the queenside.

### 13.e3

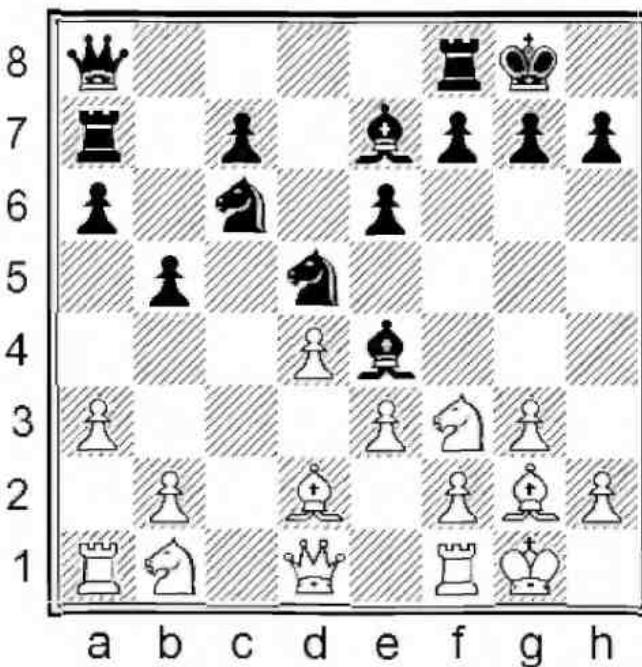
The pawn on d4 needs defending, and 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  does not help, because of 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15. $\mathbb{E}d1$  c5 16.b4  $\mathbb{E}d7\mp$ , and Black retains a material advantage.

### 13... $\mathbb{W}a8$

### 14. $\mathbb{W}d1$

White defends against the tactical threat ... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  and wants to transfer the queen to e2, and later bring the rooks to, say, c1 and d1, or double them on the c-file.

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



### 15. $\mathbb{W}e2$

I would recommend you to study the move 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ ? with the idea of 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ . White must permanently ask

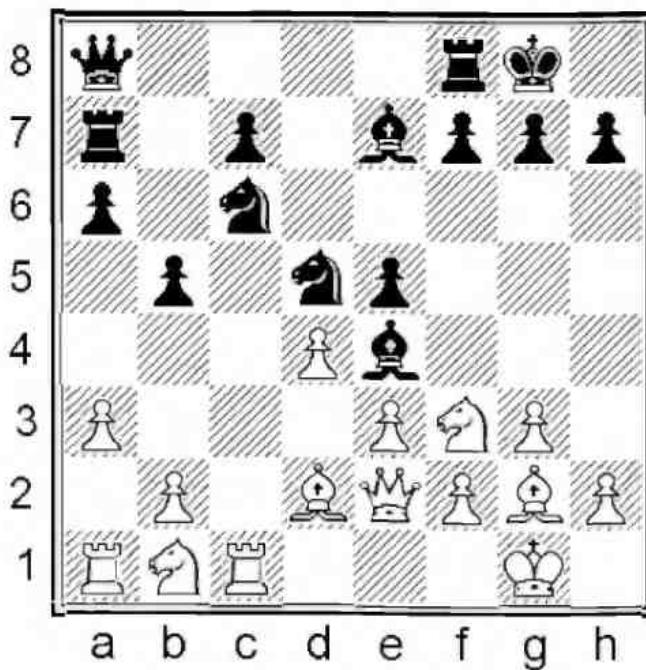
himself the question: can my opponent play ...c7-c5 or ...e6-e5? If not, all is well, and the situation is under control. 16...a5 (Black wants to seize space with ...b5-b4) 17.Qe1 ♖xg2 18.Qxg2 b4 19.Qd2±. The white position remains quite promising. As a first thing, he should put his heavy pieces on the c-file and then bring his knight via e1 to d3. In reply to ...e6-e5 White plays d4-d5 and then e3-e4, retaining pressure.

### 15...e5

As a rule, this break somewhat eases Black's defence.

### 16.Qc1

Kramnik, in this position, played what Nimzowitsch called 'a mysterious rook move', 16.Qe1, bringing the rook to a closed file. Naturally, he understood that the exchange on d4 is only a matter of time, when the file will be opened. His opponent, Dutch GM Jan Werle, could not restrain himself: 16...exd4 17.exd4 f5 18.Qc3 ♖xc3 19.Qxc3 ♖f6 20.d5! (an interesting pawn sacrifice, the idea of which is to exploit the fact that the move ...f7-f5 has significantly weakened the residence of the black king) 20...♖xc3 21.bxc3 ♖d8 22.Qad1 ♖xd5 23.Qg5 c6 (the only move; he loses quickly after 23...♖xg2? 24.Qh5 h6 25.Qe7 hxg5 26.Qdd7) 24.Qxd5+ cxd5 25.Qd3 h6 26.Qf3 with compensation 26...f4 27.Qh4 fxg3 28.hxg3 ♖f7 29.Qf5 ♖g5 30.Qe7+ ♖xe7 31.Qxe7 ♖f3+ 32.Qf1 d4 33.Qg6 ♖h2+ 34.Qe1 ♖f3+ 35.Qe2 ♖g1+ 36.Qf1 ♖xf2+ 37.Qh3+ 38.Qe1 and Black resigned, Kramnik-Werle, Enschede 2008.



### 16...Qd6

White is better after 16...exd4 17.exd4 f5 18.Qc3 ♖xc3 19.Qxc3±.

### 17.Qe1!

I think Black overlooked this fantastic resource.

### 17...exd4

### 18.Qbd2

An important intermediate move, forcing the bishop e4 to leave the long diagonal.

18... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

19. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $dxe3$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $hxg6$

21. $\mathbb{Q}f1$

White conducts the game brilliantly: not bothering about material, he increases the pressure on the opponent's position.

21... $\mathbb{Q}ce7$

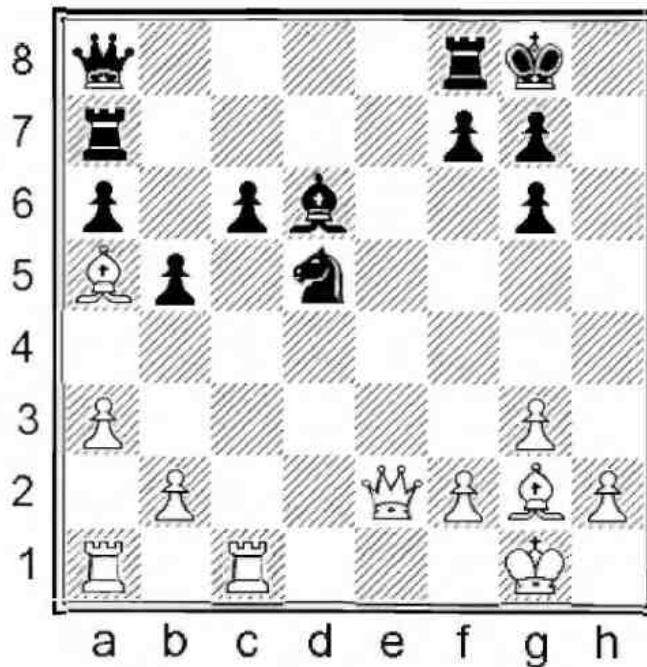
22. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $c6$

23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Shirov-Yakovenko, Kemer 2007. Here after

24. $\mathbb{Q}a5\pm$

(in the game, 24. $\mathbb{E}c2$  was played) Black would have had serious problems, as his pieces are uncoordinated and the c6-pawn, which holds his position together, is weak.



## Conclusion

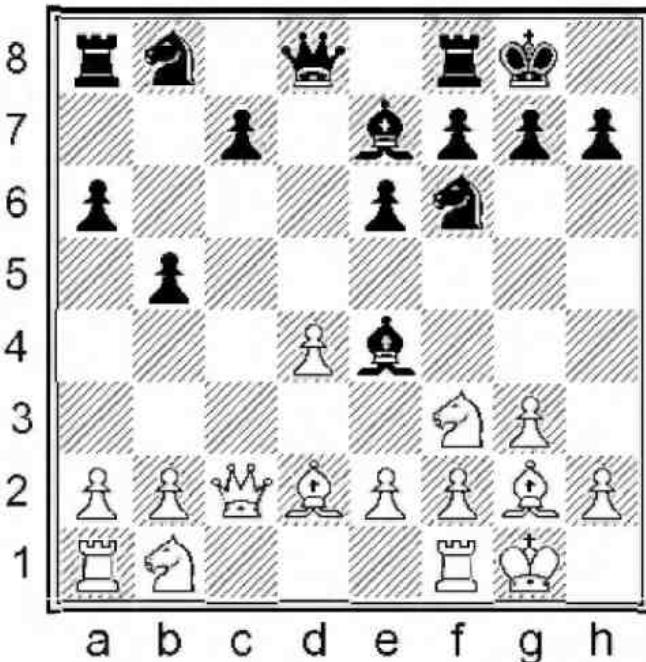
Thus, we have looked at a very interesting black plan, which I would name ‘the Grischuk variation’, because Alexander Grischuk is very fond of this set-up for Black. Here, a very concrete, tactical battle can develop very quickly. White should not panic, and after the prophylactic 11.a3 he can perfectly well keep the situation under control. If Black now plays his knight to d7, then the plan with  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  shows its best side (in reply to ... $\mathbb{W}a8$ , we can simply take on c7). If 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  12. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  we strengthen the central pawn with e2-e3 and then transfer the queen

to e2, and the rooks (or, at least one of them) go to the c-file. Having consolidated the position, White then goes over to a counterattack with  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  or  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ .

On the whole, White's chances are better in this variation, but he must react very accurately to his opponent's manoeuvres, especially in those cases where Black immediately tries to become active in the centre. In my opinion, the plan with 11.a3 seems very promising for White.

## Chapter 16 – Classical Variation 10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

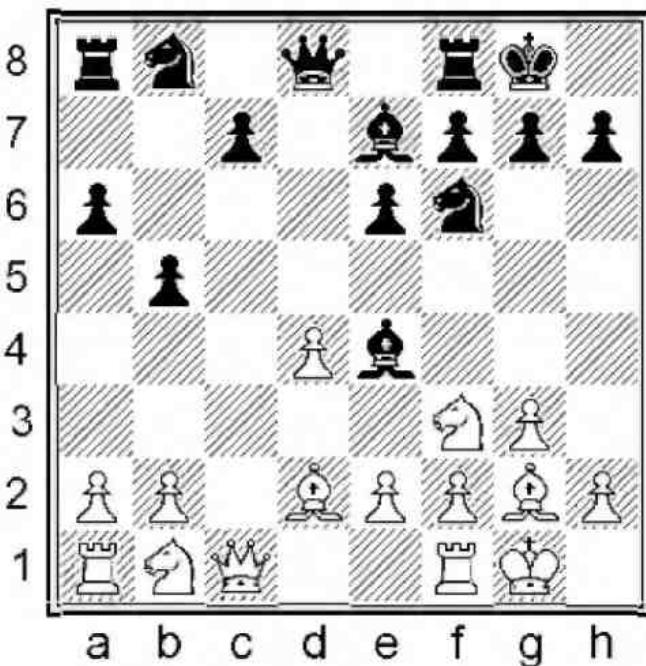
1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6.0-0 dx $c$ 4 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  b5 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$



Finally, we have reached Black's most popular continuation.

11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

The basic *tabiya* of the variation, the main moves in which are 11... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  and 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . But, as usual, we will begin by looking at less popular moves.



**A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**B) 11...b4**

**C) 11...c6**

**D) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

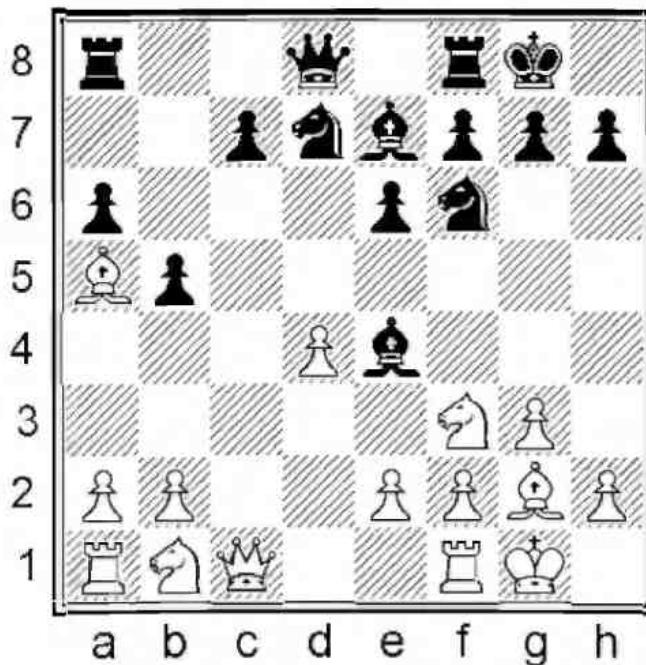
After 11... $\mathbb{Q}a7$ ! White, as well as 12.a4 b4 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , has another promising plan: 12. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (creating the threat of d4-d5) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16.a3 c5 17.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8\pm$ . 11... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  h6 Mchedlishvili-B. Arkhangelsky, Helsingor 2008, 15. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fe5\pm$ .

**A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

All as usual: Black completes his development and prepares ...c7-c5.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

The standard white reaction.



**A1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$**

**A2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$**

If 12... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , then 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15.e4, and White's advantage is not in doubt, for example: 15...e5 16.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8\pm$  Cebalo-Costantini, St Vincent 2001.

**A1) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a7$**

I would remind you that the idea of this move is to let the queen into a8, strengthening control of the long white diagonal, and then put the king's rook on c8 and finally advance ...c7-c5.

**A11) 13.♕e3****A12) 13.♘bd2**

**A11)** White has a promising plan, which Grischuk and Avrukh, for example, have used in their games. It consists in first improving the position of the queen and freeing the c1-square for the rook, and then dealing with the development of the queen's knight.

**13.♕e3**

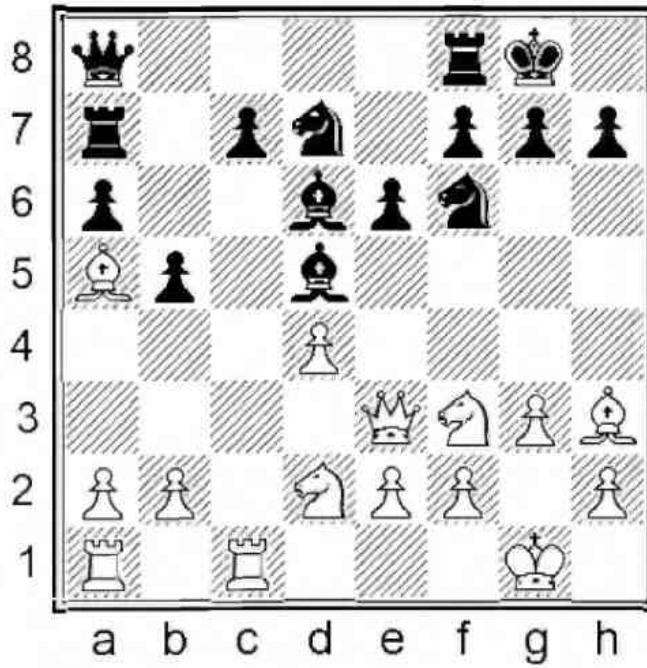
Not a bad square for the queen: here she ‘eyes up’ the bishop on e4 and the c5-square, although admittedly, now the central advance e2-e4 becomes difficult.

**13...♝a8**

**14.♘bd2 ♜d5**

**15.♝fc1 ♜d6**

**16.♘h3**



With his last move, Black prepared the push ...e6-e5, but by unpinning the knight on f3 White prevents this.

**16...♝c8**

Practice has also seen 16...♞e4, after which White achieves a stable advantage, by a series of intelligent exchanges: 17.♘xe4 ♜xe4 18.♗e1! – preparing the exchange of light-squared bishops – 18...♝b6 19.♗xb6 cxb6 20.♗g2 ♜xg2 21.♗xg2± Avrukh-Quezada, Beer-Sheva 2005. White has an extra pawn in the centre, and with pawn targets all over the board, the knight will not be inferior to the bishop.

**17.b4**

It is important to prevent ...c7-c5. White can afford to play this move here, because the black knight is a long way from c4 – as soon as it comes to b6, it will be exchanged off.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f8$

On 17... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  there is the very strong 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ? (transferring the bishop to c5 with 18. $\mathbb{Q}b6 \mathbb{B}b7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  removes the blockade from the a6-pawn, and Black obtains the chance to create play on the queenside: 19... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20.a3 a5 21.bxa5  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}xe5$  23.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ , draw, C. Bauer-A. Sokolov, Besancon 2006) 18... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{Q}xc6$  20.f3±. White prepares to seize the centre with e2-e4, and this is very hard to prevent.

18. $\mathbb{B}c2 \mathbb{Q}e4$

19. $\mathbb{B}ac1 \mathbb{Q}xd2$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  f5

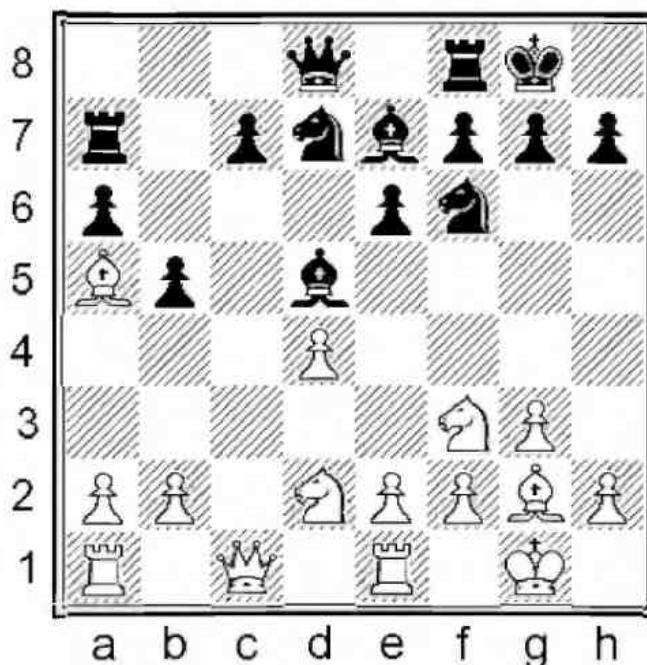
21. $\mathbb{Q}d3 \mathbb{Q}f6$

22.f3±

Grischuk-Zubov, Canada de Calatrava 2007. White will return the bishop to g2 and advance e2-e4. Among other things, the backward pawn on c7 is permanently in need of defence.

A12) 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2 \mathbb{Q}d5$

14. $\mathbb{B}e1$



By threatening the move e2-e4, White practically forces his opponent to occupy the central square with his knight. If 14.b4  $\mathbb{B}a8$  15. $\mathbb{B}b2 \mathbb{Q}e4$  Black has a more or less acceptable position.

14... $\mathbb{Q}e4$

On 14... $\mathbb{Q}a8$  there still follows 15.e4!, and it is unfavourable for Black to take the pawn: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16.b4  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$  Gerzhoy-E. Hansen, Guelph 2011) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  22. $\mathbb{Q}h1\pm$  Sadkowsky-Duhayon, Brasschaat 2007. In this position, the white bishop is clearly stronger than the opponent's three pawns.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

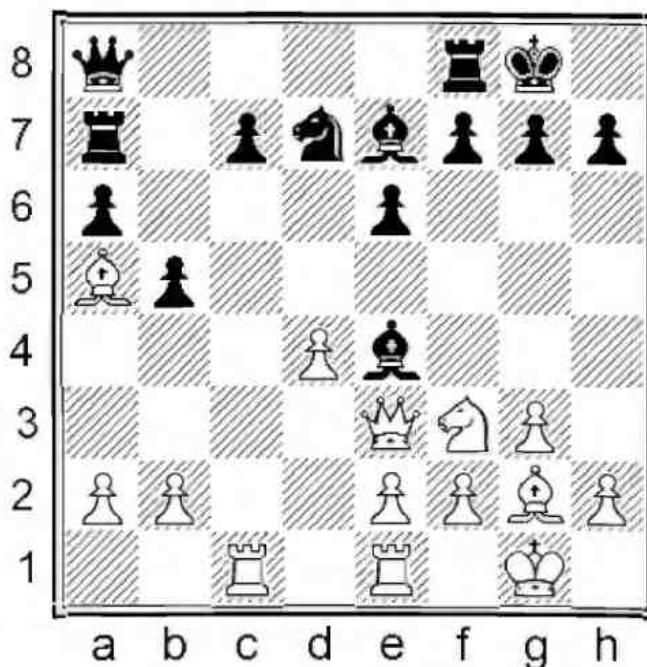
**16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

Remember – I have already said earlier that the queen stands well here.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}a8$**

**17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$**

White prevents ...c7-c5, and in addition, he now threatens to take on c7.



**17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$**

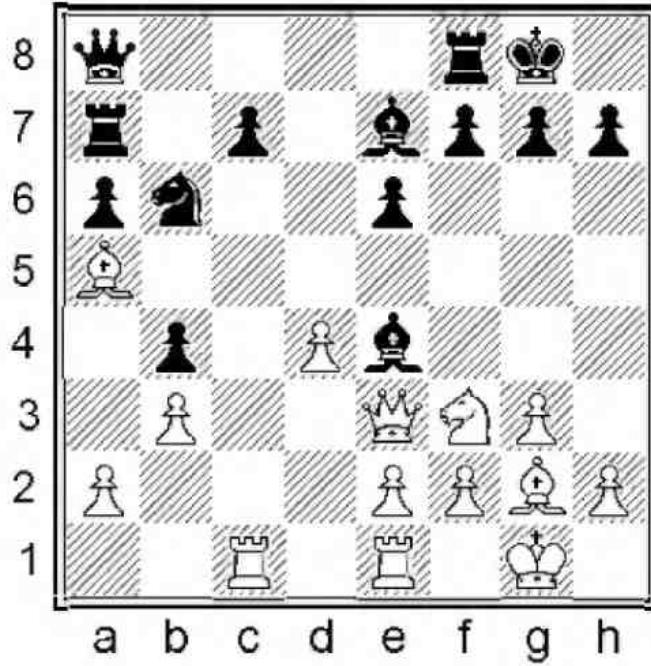
On 17... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  there is the very strong 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  (also possible is 18. $\mathbb{Q}ed1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21.a3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  22.b4 c6 23. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  – White is a little better, Ulibin-Bogosavljevic, Paracin 2011) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  21.b3 $\pm$  Gomez-Irwanto, Manila 2010. White firmly controls the dark squares in the opponent's camp, and will limit the opposing light-squared bishop with the moves b2-b3 and f2-f3.

**18.b3**

In time, White will most likely take on b6, but he wants to do this at the most favourable moment. For the moment, he limits the knight on b6.

**18... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

Or 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}ed1\pm$  (Avrukh).



**19.Bd1**

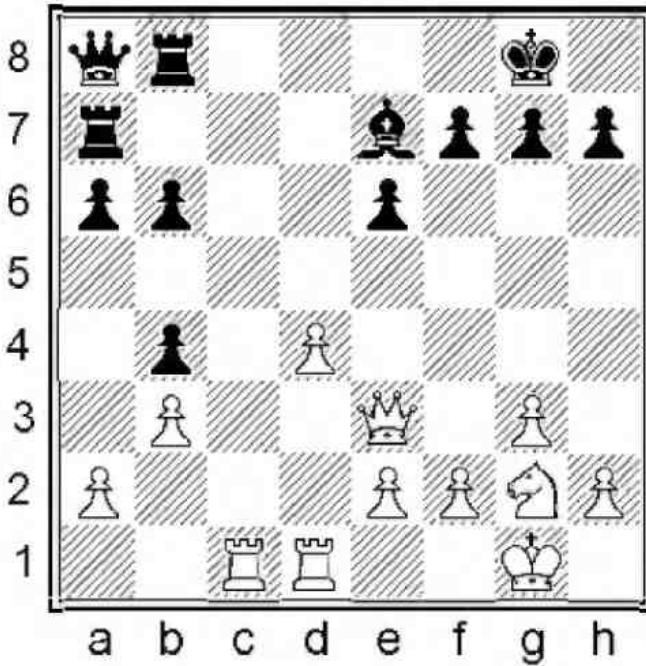
White does not wish to acquiesce in the destruction of his pawn formation: 19.Qf1 Qxf3 20.Qxf3 Qxf3 21.exf3 Bb8 (White is slightly better after 21...Qd5 22.Qc4 c6 23.Qxd5 cxd5 24.Qc6±. He controls the only open file, whilst Black has weak pawns on b4 and a6. White's only weakness, the pawn on d4, will be solidly defended against frontal attack, after the exchange on d5) 22.f4 (22.Qc2!?) 22...Qf8 (if 22...Qd5 23.Qg2 Qd6 White cannot exchange on d5, since after 24.Qxd5? exd5 25.Qc6 Qf8 the bishop on a5 turns out to be in trouble: the threat is Bb5, and sooner or later, Black will realise this threat) 23.Qg2 Qd6 24.Qc2 Qd5 25.Qec1 (the light-squared bishop must be preserved; probably, White will soon have to retreat it to f1, so as to cover the b5-square) 25...Bbb7→ Sammour Hasbun-Ippolito, Internet 2009.

**19...Bb8**

**20.Qxb6 cxb6**

**21.Qe1 Qxg2**

**22.Qxg2**



White's advantage is not great at the moment, but he has a clear plan to strengthen his position: he transfers the knight to f3, and then begins an advance in the centre (e2-e4) or on the kingside (h2-h4). Black has no counterplay and must watch developments passively. Play could continue:

**22...♝d7**

**23.♞e1 ♛f6**

**24.♞f3 h6**

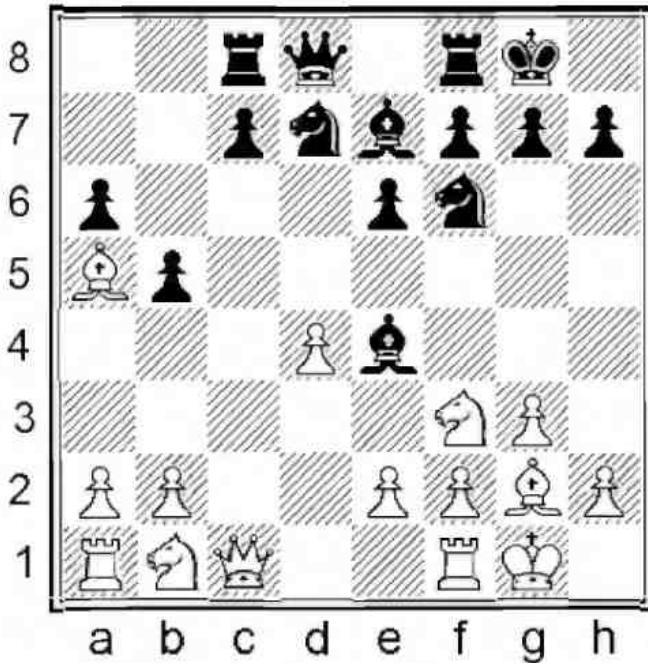
**25.♛f4 ♜bd8**

**26.h4 a5**

**27.♝d2±**

White is gradually building up the pressure.

**A2) 12...♝c8**



**A21) 13.♗c3**

**A21) 13.♗bd2**

**A21) On**

**13.♗c3**

there is the interesting 13...♝xf3!?, leading to exchanges favourable to Black. Retreating the bishop gives White more chances to fight for an advantage.

**A211) 13...♝b7**

**A212) 13...♝a8**

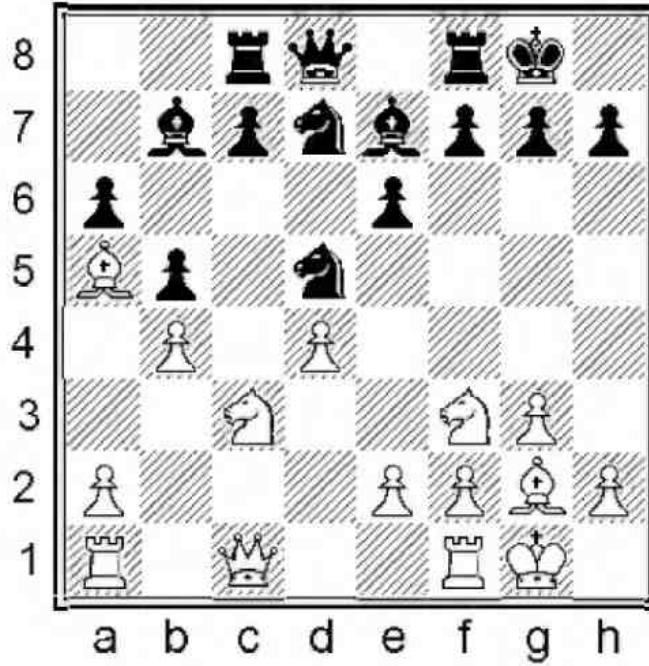
**A213) 13...♝xf3**

**A211) 13...♝b7**

**14.b4**

On 14.a4 Black replies 14...b4, showing his willingness to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative: 15.♕a2 ♜e8 16.♗xb4 (bad is 16.♗xb4?! c5 17.♗d3 cxd4 18.♗d2 ♜e4 19.♗d1 e5+) 16...c5 17.dxc5 ♜xc5 18.♗d1 ♜d8 19.♗c2 (the white queen comes under attack the whole time and thanks to this, Black is able to transfer his pieces to active squares, with tempo) 19...♜e4 20.♗c4 ♜d5 21.♗f4 ♜d6 22.♗e3 ♜b3 with compensation, Beliavsky-Speelman, Amsterdam 1989.

**14...♝d5**



**15.a3**

The break 15.a4 leads to simplification and equality: 15...bxa4 16.Qxa4 Q7b6 17.Qa1 Qc4 18.Qa4 Qxa5 19.bxa5 c5=.

**15...Q7b6**

**16.Qe5 Qxc3**

**17.Qxc3 Qxg2**

**18.Qxg2 Qd5+**

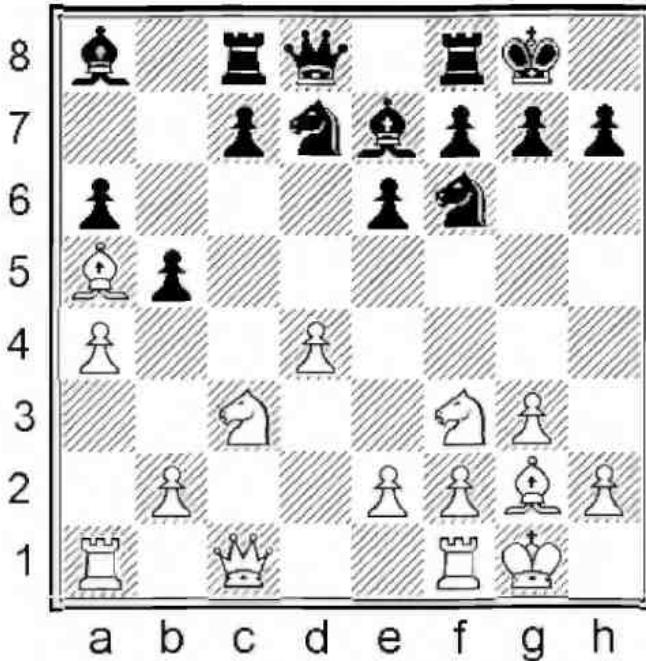
**19.f3 Qa4**

**20.Qc6!±**

A small tactical subtlety, allowing White to keep the situation under control. With or without queens, White will play e2-e4 and maintain the initiative.

**A212) 13...Qa8**

**14.a4**



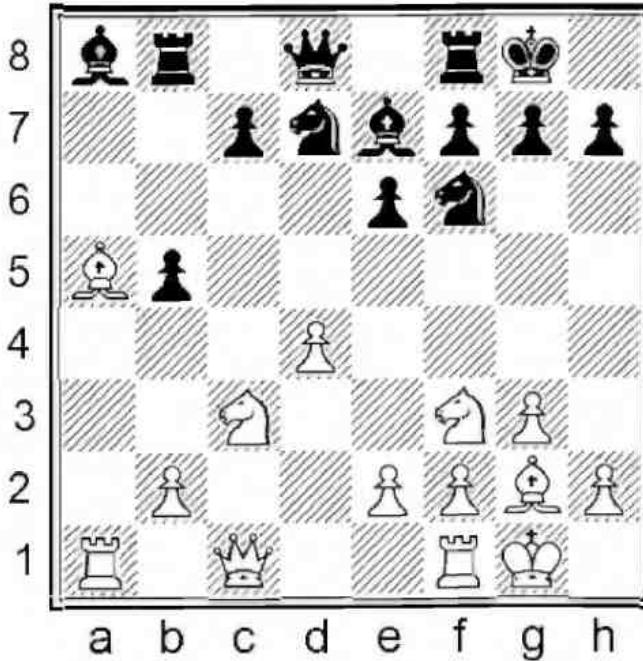
With the bishop on a8, instead of b7, this advance gains in strength. Why? Because in a number of variations, the black pawn on a6 will now hang.

#### **14...♝b8**

The pawn on b5 cannot be left to its fate: 14...♞e4 15.axb5 ♞xc3 16.♛xc3 axb5 (S. Savchenko-Klovans, Leningrad 1989) 17.♜fc1 ♜d6 18.♝d3 ♛e7 19.曹xb5±.

After 14...b4 15.♝a2 ♜d5 16.♛c4 we see the difference from the line with 13...♝b7: White gains a tempo by attacking a6. 16...♝5b6 (16...♝7b6 17.♛d3±; worse is 17.♛xa6?! ♜c6, and Black has excellent compensation for the pawn, at the very least) 17.♛xa6 (with the less active placement of the black knights, this gains significantly in strength. The explanation is simple: the pawn on b4 is now insufficiently defended) 17...♝d5!? (the other try is even less convincing: 17...♝c6 18.♝xb4 ♜xa4 19.♝xa4! ♜xa4 20.♝c6 ♜b8 21.♛xc8!, and White's position is close to winning) 18.♝xb4 ♜c4 19.♝xe7 ♜xe7 20.♛a5±.

#### **15.axb5 axb5**



**16.b4**

The other course, involving the exchange of dark-squared bishops, is also good: 16. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{B}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18. $\mathbb{B}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}a6$   $\mathbb{E}bc8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  (the knights on the c-file are placed symmetrically, but the black one can be driven away by a pawn, whilst the white one cannot) 21... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  23. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$  Harikrishna-Mishra, Nagpur 2002.

**16... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**17. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$**

**18. $\mathbb{E}ab1$  e5**

If he does not manage to play ...c7-c5, then Black often switches to this break instead. But here it is insufficient for equality, as White establishes his pawn on e4 and significantly reduces the scope of almost all the black pieces.

**19.e4 g6**

**20. $\mathbb{E}fe1$  c6**

So far Beliavsky-Vaganian, Bruxelles 1988.

**21. $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{E}bc8$**

**22. $\mathbb{W}d2$  exd4**

**23. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

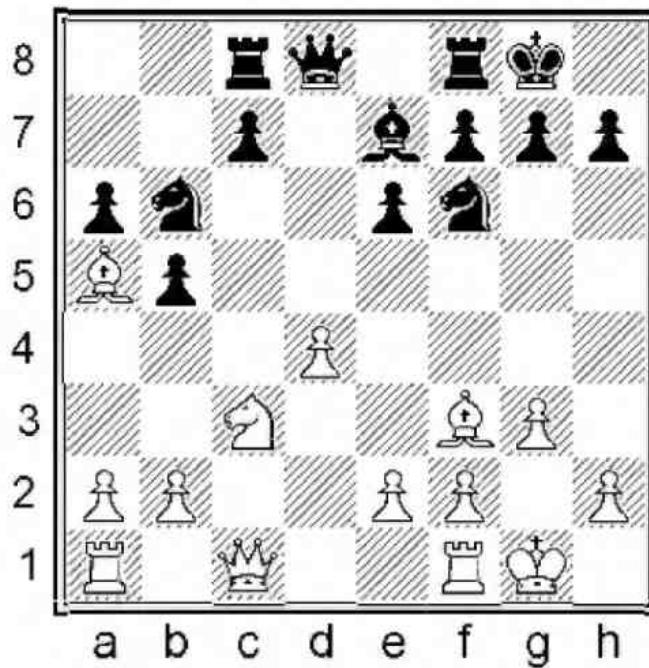
**24. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

**25. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$**

**26. $\mathbb{W}e3\pm$**

A213) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !?

14. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$



15.a4!?

After 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $cxb6$  it is hard for White to exploit his pawn superiority in the centre: 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $b4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ , Kasimdzhanov-Lutz, Batumi 2001, 17... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ =.

15... $bxa4$

16. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$

18. $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $c5$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $cxd4$

20. $e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

21. $exd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $e5$

23. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White has only a symbolic advantage. The game is most likely to end in a draw.

A22) 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$

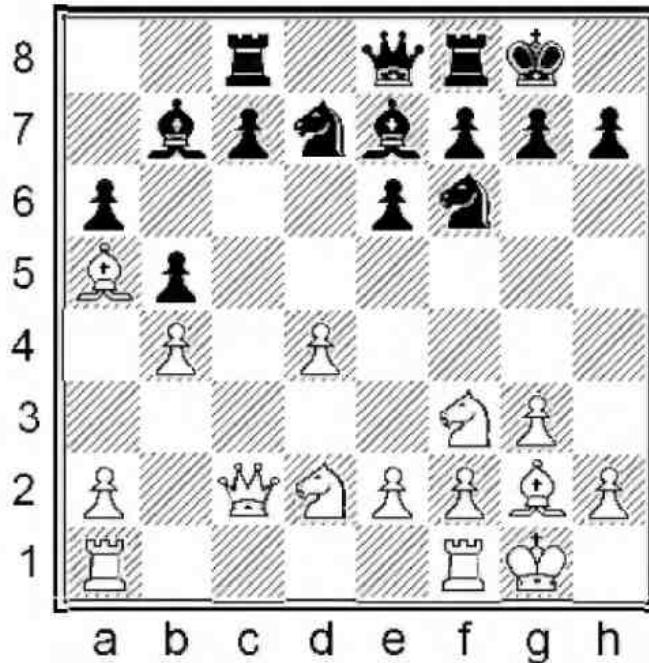
A221) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

## A222) 13... $\mathbb{Q}a8$

A221) 13... $\mathbb{Q}b7$

14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$

15.b4



We have already discussed this device.

15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$

15... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16.e4 (little is promised by 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  h6 18. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightleftharpoons$ ) 16...e5 17. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h3\pm$  White controls the centre and thanks to this, he enjoys a small advantage.

16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

So as to make it harder for the black knight to reach c6.

16... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

18. $\mathbb{Q}df3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

19.a3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

19...f6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$

20. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  f6

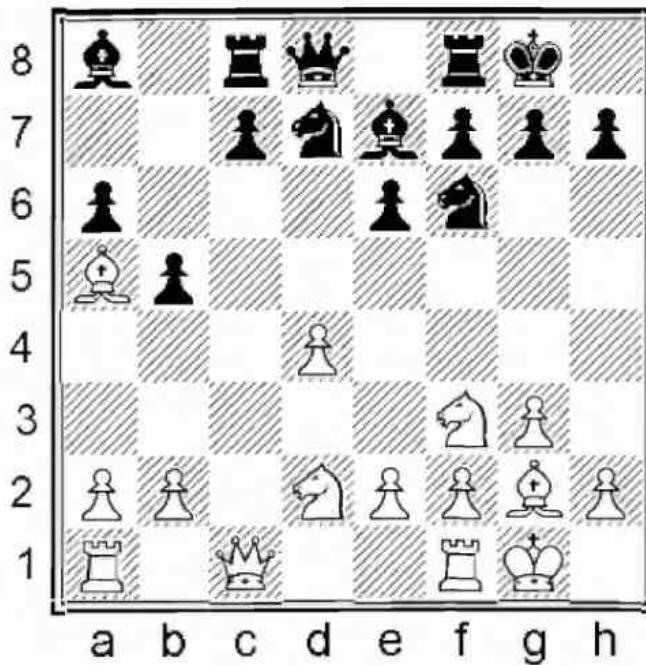
21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$

22.  $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathfrak{Q}de7$

23.  $\mathbb{E}fd1\pm$

Kornev-Akimov, St. Petersburg 2003. White has kept control of the situation in the centre and made the advance ...c7-c5 difficult.

A222) 13... $\mathfrak{Q}a8$



The point of this move is that now the bishop will not be hanging on the long diagonal, whilst after the hypothetical exchange on a5 ... $\mathfrak{Q}xa5 \mathfrak{Q}xa5$  he will not be attacked by the white knight on a5.

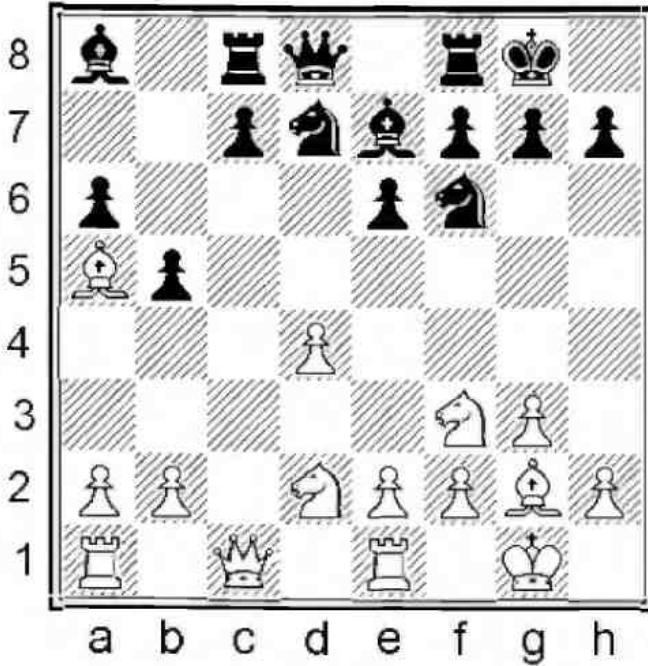
These are general considerations; now let us move over to concrete variations.

A2221) 14.  $\mathbb{E}e1$

A2222) 14.  $\mathbb{W}c2$

A2223) 14. a3

A2221) 14.  $\mathbb{E}e1$



Preparing to seize the centre.

#### **14...Qe8**

We will also consider other possibilities:

A) 14...Qb8 15.a3 Qe4 16.Qxe4 Qxe4 17.Qf4 f5 18.Qb4 (now we see the merit of the move a2-a3) 18...Qc6 19.Qxe7 Qxe7 20.Qac1 Qd6 21.e3 h6 22.h4± P.H.Nielsen-Yu Shaoteng, Cappelle la Grande 2001. Black's pawn structure is seriously weakened. As soon as the sharpness of the position diminishes, he will have to go over to a difficult defence;

B) 14...Qe4 15.Qxe4 Qxe4 16.Qe3 Qf6 17.Qec1 Qd6 18.a3 Qa8 (the break 18...c5 fails to 19.Qxc5! Qxc5 20.Qb4± Suba-Garcia Vicente, Las Palmas 1995) 19.Qb4 Qd8 20.Qxe7 Qxe7 21.Qe5 Qxg2 22.Qxg2 Qd5 23.Qf3 f6 24.Qc6 Qd6 25.Qc2± C. Bauer-Werle, La Roche-sur-Yon 2006. White has obtained almost everything he could want. He only needs to double rooks on the c-file and begin his offensive in the centre and on the queenside;

C) 14...Qb6!?. This manoeuvre has not been seen in this exact position, although it offers Black good chances of equalising, for instance 15.b4 Qe4 16.e3 Qxd2 17.Qxd2 Qxg2 18.Qxg2 Qd5+ 19.Qg1 e5±.

#### **15.b4 Qe4**

Both 15...Qb8 16.Qe5 Qxg2 17.Qxg2±, and 15...Qd6 16.e4 e5 17.Qh3!± are better for White.

#### **16.Qxe4 Qxe4**

#### **17.Qe3**

Here the queen is better placed than on f4, because it does not get hit with tempo: 17.Qf4 f5 18.Qac1 Qd6 19.Qe5 Qxg2 20.Qxg2 Qf6 21.Qf3 Qd5 22.a3, draw, Polugaevsky-Geller, Moscow 1985.

#### **17...Qf6**

#### **18.Qac1 Qd6**

#### **19.a3 Qe7**

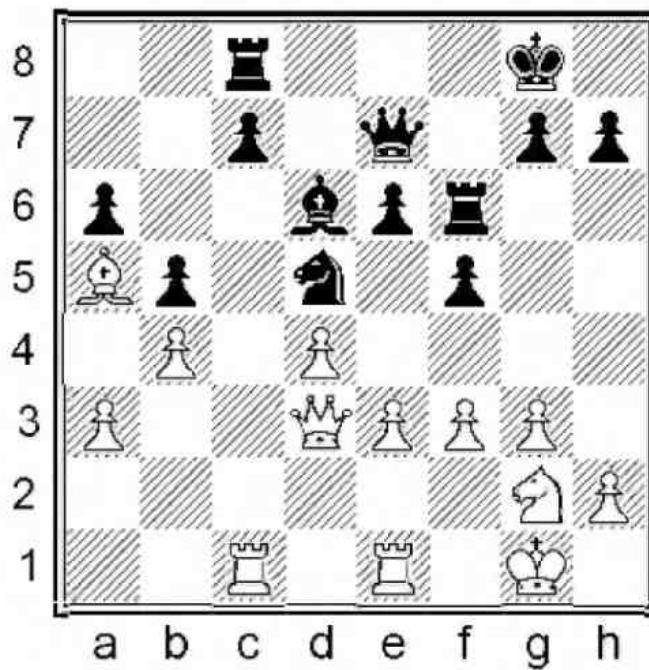
20.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

21.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  f5

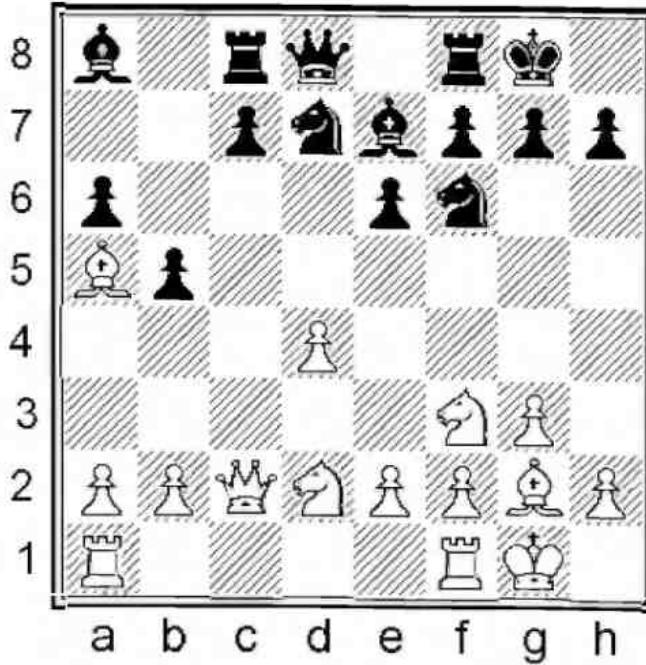
23. e3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$

24. f3±



Black has few chances to create counterplay on the kingside, whilst White, after a small amount of preparation, will be able to advance e3-e4 and begin an offensive in the centre.

A2222) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$



With the same idea – advancing e2-e4.

**14...e8**

The transfer of the knight to c6 should be tried here: 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  a5 17. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a4 18. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ . By drawing the fire upon himself, White has forced his opponent to fix the queenside pawn structure. Possible then is 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}a7$  – it is hardly possible to obtain satisfactory play with such an ugly and passive move – 19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  h6 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2\pm$ ) 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  c6 23. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c2\pm$  Prusikin-Lutz, Germany 2002/03.

**15.b4  $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

Sharp play of the type 15... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  16.a3 f5 fails to a decisive retort: 17. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  (the immediate 17.e4 is premature because of 17...fxe4 18. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$ , although here too, after 19. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  White retains a small advantage) 17... $\mathbb{Q}g6$  18.e4 fxe4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (White's advantage grows with the queens off) 19... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  (Gelfand-Lutz, Dortmund 2002) 21. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ . In this ending, Black will have a hard time defending his many pawn weaknesses.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

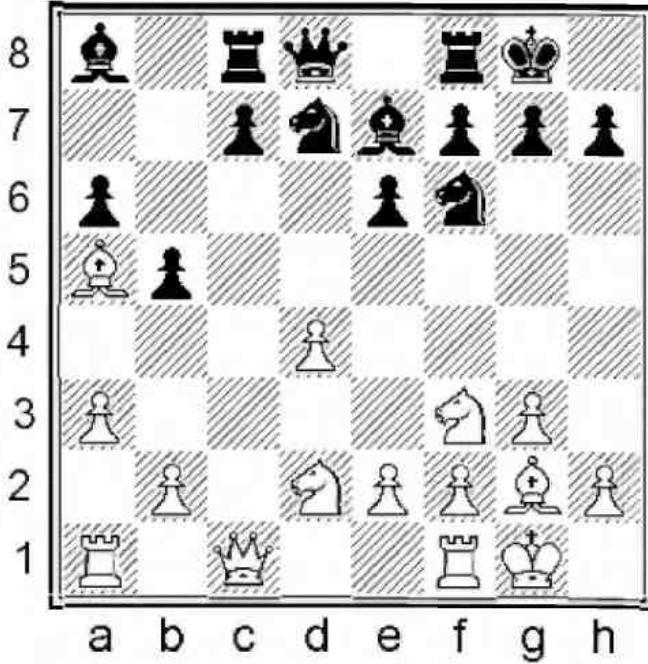
**17.a3 f6**

**18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$**

**19. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$**

White will centralise his rooks, advance e2-e4 and gradually increase the pressure.

**A2223) 14.a3!?**



White slightly modifies his plan: in some cases, he will not shut in his bishop with b2-b4, but instead preserves the option of  $\mathbb{Q}a5-b4!$ ?, and also prevents Black playing ...b5-b4, which would seize space on the queenside and shut in the bishop on a5.

### A22231) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

### A22232) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

Or 14... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  with very good control over the dark squares, for instance 18... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ± Ivanchuk-Gelfand, Monaco 2004.

### A22231) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$

**15. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

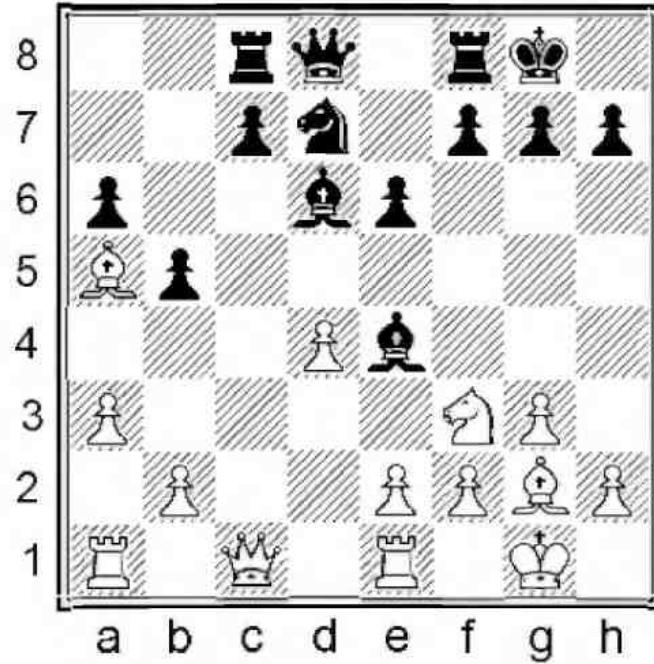
White should be ready to meet ...e6-e5 with the move e2-e4. If 15.b4 e5! 16.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ , the position significantly simplifies, and in all lines Black is OK, for example: 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  h6 22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c5 (now Black is fine) 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c4 24. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  with mutual chances.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**

16.a4!?

**16... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$**



**17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

White has carried out a typical manoeuvre: he lures the enemy knight to e4, exchanges it off, and now brings his queen to her favourite e3-square with tempo.

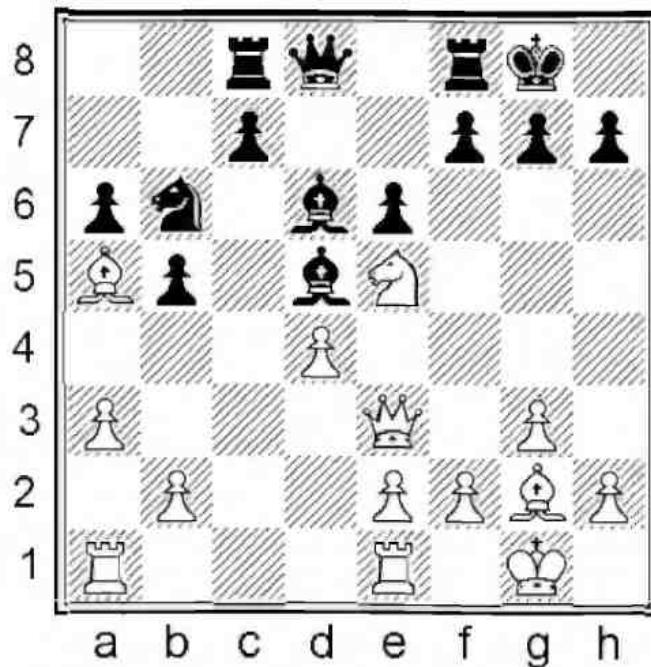
17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}xg2$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  is insufficient for an advantage because of 18...f5! 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c6 \mathbb{Q}b8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (20.  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$ ?) 20...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  c6  $\Rightarrow$ . The white queen is not ideally placed, and Black can try to create some sort of counter-threats on the kingside (or, at least, scare the opponent).

**17...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

Black also has problems after 17...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19. b4, and after 17...  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}xg2$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}xe5$  20. dx5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ , Sethuraman-Panchanathan, Paris 2011, 21.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  f5 (Black has no other convenient defence against e2-e4) 23. exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ .

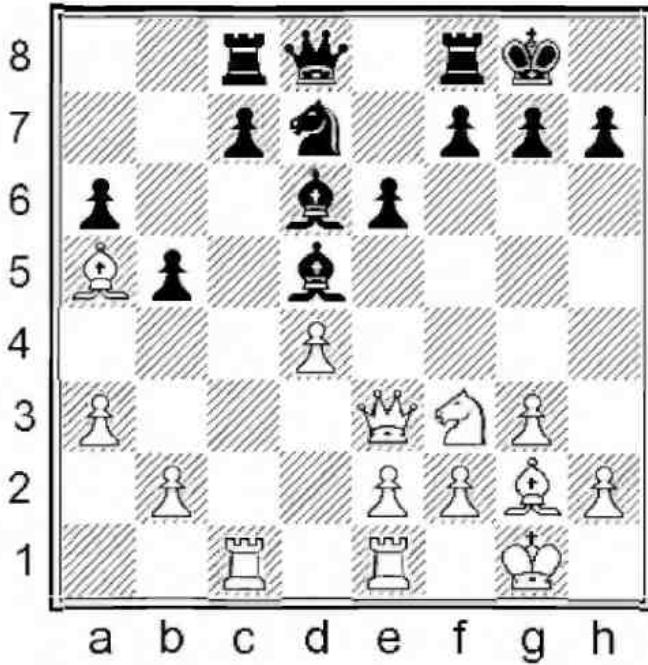
**18.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$**

The continuation 18.  $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}b6$  leads to a fairly significant simplification of the position, but even after all the exchanges, White retains some small pressure:



A) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5 \mathbb{Q}xd5$  20.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  (on 20.  $\mathbb{W}c1$  there follows 20...  $f5$ ) 20...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (worth consideration is 20...  $\mathbb{W}e8$  21.  $e4 \mathbb{Q}e7$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $c5$ , and Black is close to equality) 21.  $dxe5 \mathbb{W}g5$  22.  $e4 \mathbb{Q}b6$  23.  $f4$  (an interesting try is to restrict the knight on b6: 23.  $b3!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24.  $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{E}fd8$  25.  $\mathbb{W}c3 \mathbb{W}xc3$  26.  $\mathbb{E}xc3 \mathbb{Q}d7$  – the extra pawn cannot be held, but Black should try to return it in the most favourable possible way – 27.  $\mathbb{Q}f1 \mathbb{Q}f6$  28.  $f3 \mathbb{E}d2$  29.  $\mathbb{E}xc7 \mathbb{E}xc7$  30.  $\mathbb{E}xd2 \mathbb{E}c2$  31.  $\mathbb{E}c1 \mathbb{E}xc1+$  32.  $\mathbb{E}xc1 \mathbb{Q}d7$  33.  $\mathbb{Q}e2 \mathbb{Q}f8$  34.  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}e7$  – Black should hold this ending, although he needs to demonstrate accuracy) 23...  $\mathbb{W}d8$  24.  $\mathbb{W}xd8 \mathbb{E}fd8$  25.  $b3 \mathbb{E}d3$  26.  $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{Q}d7$  27.  $\mathbb{E}xc7\pm$ . With at least one pair of rooks on the board, it is easier for White to play for a win.

B) An even bigger clearout occurs after 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $cxb6$  20.  $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.  $dxe5 \mathbb{E}xg2$  22.  $\mathbb{E}xg2 \mathbb{W}d5+$  23.  $f3 \mathbb{E}c5$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  (of course, White does not want to take on c5 and thus straighten out the enemy pawns, so he temporarily sacrifices a pawn. A worse version of the same idea is 24.  $\mathbb{E}ed1 \mathbb{W}xe5$  25.  $\mathbb{W}xe5 \mathbb{E}xe5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}f2 \mathbb{E}c5=$ ) 24...  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  25.  $\mathbb{W}xe5 \mathbb{E}xe5$  26.  $\mathbb{E}c6\pm$ . Thanks to the activity of his rooks, White should regain the pawn, but it is another question how seriously he can pretend to an advantage.



**18...Qf6**

White is also a little better after both 18...f5 19.Qe5, and 18...Qb6 19.Qd2.

**19.Qc3**

19.b4 c6 20.Qd2 Qc4 21.Qg5 Qe7 22.Qe4 f5 23.Qxd6 Qxd6 24.Qf4 Qxf4 25.gxf4 Qf6 26.Qc2 Qd5 27.e3 Qf7 28.Qec1, draw, Lafuente-Van Riemsdijk, Sao Paulo 2009.

**19...Qe4**

Not 19...e5? because of 20.Qxe5 Qxg2 21.Qxd7.

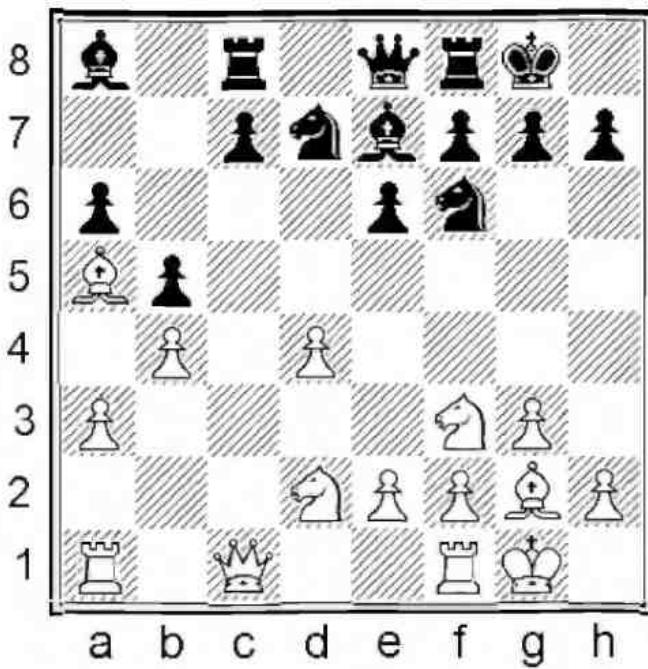
**20.Qd2±**

White forces the exchange of bishops, and thanks to his control of the important central squares e4 and c5, obtains the better game.

**A22232) 14...Qe8**

Black wants to play ...c7-c5 immediately. White has to stop this.

**15.b4**



**15...♝d6**

Black's only active idea now is ...e6-e5, somewhat freeing his game.

**16.♜e1**

White wants to meet the break ...e6-e5 with e2-e4, keeping the tension in the centre.

**16...♞e4**

**17.♜a2**

17.♝xe4 ♝xe4 18.♛e3 ♜d5 19.♝ac1 f5 20.♝e5 ♜f6 21.f3 ♜d7 22.♝c2 ♜b6 23.♝xb6 cxb6 24.♝ec1± Khuzman-Wells, Dresden 2007.

**17...f5**

17...♝xd2 18.♝xd2 ♜xg2 19.♝xg2 e5 20.dxe5 ♛xe5 21.♝f3 ♛d5 22.♝d2 ♛b7 23.♝g1 ♛b6 24.♝xb6 ♛xb6 25.♝d4±. Black has some problems, and has not managed to get rid of the backward c7-pawn.

**18.♝c2 ♜b6**

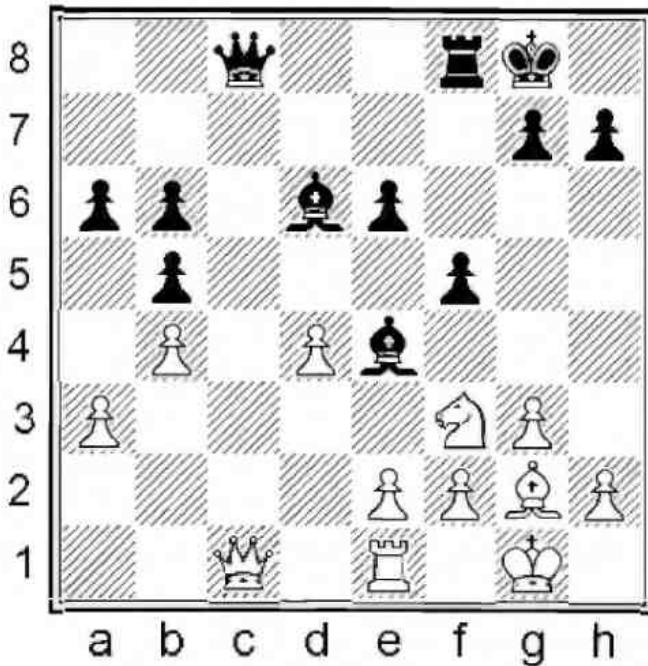
**19.♝xb6**

19.♛a1 ♜d5 20.♝ec1 ♛d7 21.♝xb6 cxb6 22.♝e5 ♜xe5 23.dxe5 ♜xc2 24.♝xc2 ♛c8 25.♛c1 ♜xc2 26.♛xc2± Beliavsky-G. Kovacs, Hungary 2002/03.

**19...cxb6**

**20.♝xc8 ♛xc8**

**21.♝xe4 ♜xe4**



**22.♗g5!?**

Boris Avrukh recommends another route to a small advantage: 22.♕e3 ♕c6 23.♖c1 ♕d5 24.♘e1 ♖xg2 25.♘xg2±.

**22...♝xg2**

**23.♔xg2 ♕b7+**

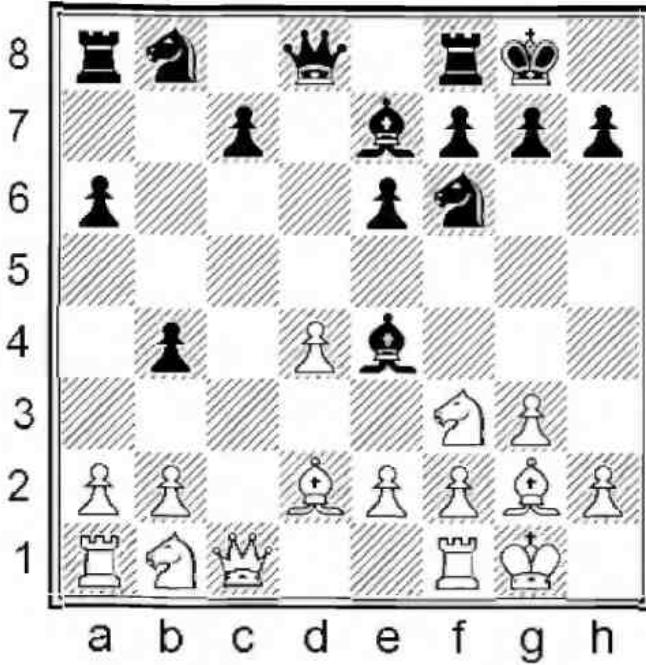
**24.e4 fxe4**

On 24...♜c8 the reply 25.♕e3 is unpleasant for Black.

**25.♕e3±**

White's chances are better: Black has many weaknesses, his queenside pawn majority is devalued because of the doubled pawn, and after the exchange of queens (which is very hard for Black to avoid), the knight will be stronger than the bishop.

**B) 11...b4!?**



Black prevents the unpleasant manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ , but in doing so, weakens the square c4, where the white knight will soon head. In my view, this is not the best idea for Black.

### **12...Bg5**

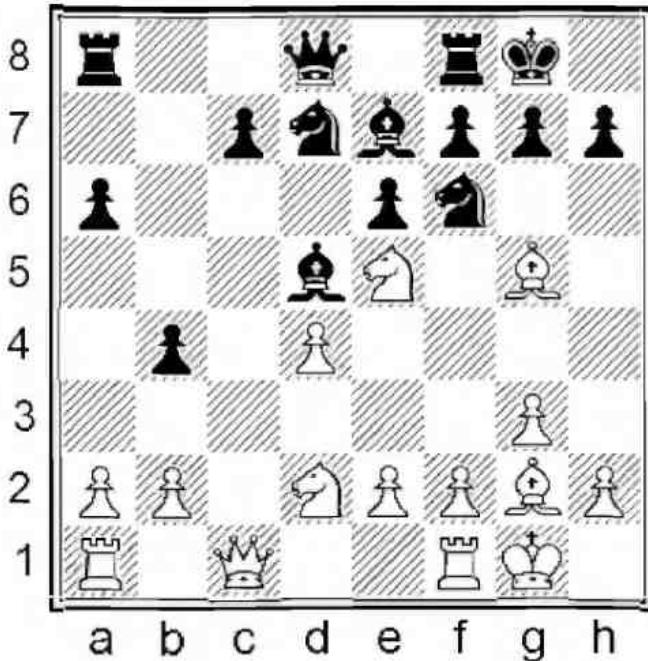
If 12... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !? Black should immediately take aim at the enemy bishop: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14. $gxf4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ !? or 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  19.e3± Mchedlishvili-Lobzhanidze, Tbilisi 2002.

### **12...Qbd7**

In reply to 12...h6 White happily gives up his bishop, so as then to concentrate his attention on the weak light squares in the black camp: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (play turns out clearly in White's favour after 14... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ±) 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  c5! 19.d5! (by way of contrast, here is an example of unsuccessful play by White: 19.dxc5?!  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  – Black re-establishes material equality and takes over the initiative, Sosonko-Karpov, Waddinxveen 1979) 19...exd5 20.exd5±.

### **13.Qbd2 Qd5**

### **14.Qe5**



**14...Qxg2**

14...c5 15.Qxd5 exd5 (15...Qxd5? 16.Qc6 Qe8 17.Qxe7+ Qxe7 18.dxc5 Qc8 19.Qe4±) 16.Qc6 Qe8 17.dxc5 Qc8 (17...Qxc5 18.Qxf6 Qc8 19.Qb3 Qxc6 20.Qd4, and Black cannot take the e2-pawn because of 20...Qxe2? 21.Qxc5±) 18.Qxe7+ Qxe7 19.Qd1 Qe5 20.Qe3±. White has obtained the better position, with his opponent having an isolated pawn.

14...Qxe5 15.dxe5 Qg4 16.Qxe7 Qxe7 17.Qf3 c5 (17...Qad8!? 18.Qf4 f5 19.exf6 Qxf6 20.a3±) 18.h3 Qh6 19.Qc2 Qac8 20.e4± Salov-Short, Amsterdam 1989.

**15.Qxg2 c5**

Or 15...Qxe5 16.dxe5 Qd5 17.Qxe7 Qxe7 18.e4 Qb6 19.Qb3± and White has managed to establish control of the c-file.

**16.Qc6 Qe8**

**17.dxc5 Qxc5**

**18.Qxe7+ Qxe7**

**19.Qxf6 gxf6**

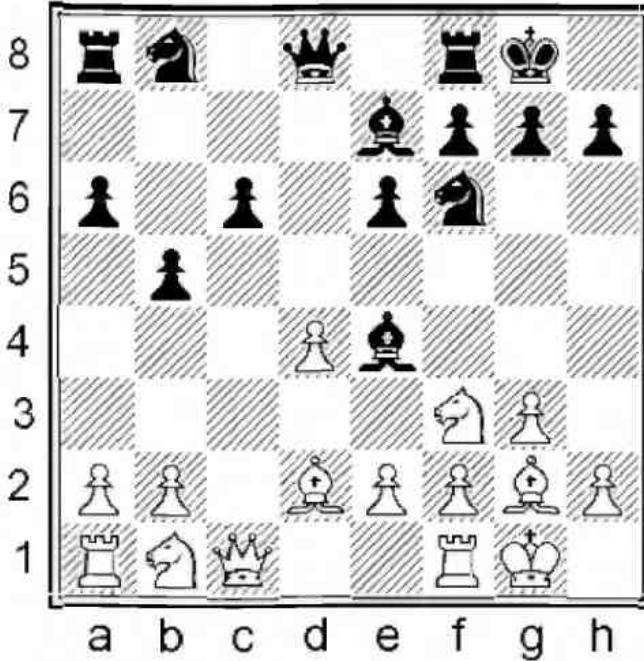
**20.Qc4 Qac8**

**21.Qf4±**

Combining threats on the kingside with play on the open c- and d-files assures White a small advantage.

**C) 11...c6**

In this way, Black prevents the move Qa5 and creates the threat of winning the d4-pawn (since, after taking on f3, the Qa8 will no longer be attacked). However, as we will see, White does not have to take this threat seriously.



In this position, I like the move 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , with which White offers a pawn for the initiative. But, of course, it is also possible not to sacrifice the pawn.

**C1) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

**C2) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

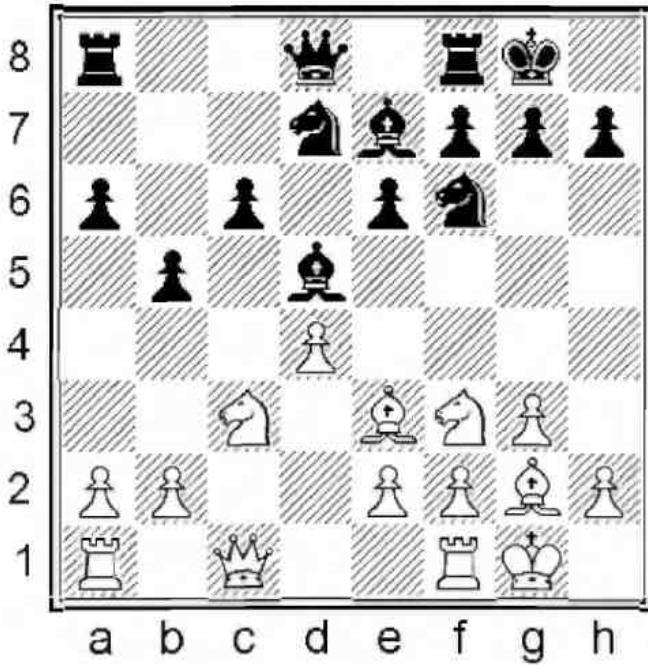
Another version of the gambit, although not so good, is 12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . After 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  14. a4  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  Black returns the pawn, but does not solve all his development problems.

**C1) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$**

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

13.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  has also been tried, but it does not bring White any special dividends, because the knight does not manage to reach either a5 or c5: 13...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a5 (also possible is 15...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5= Fiedler-Rozentalis, Toronto 1995) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  a4 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  19.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5= Stamenkov-Rozentalis, Athens 2003. The black bishop is very picturesquely posted on d5!

**13...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$**



**14.  $\mathbb{W}c2$**

Continuations involving taking on d5, straightening out Black's pawn structure for him, can hardly be expected to bring White any advantage, for example: 14.a4 b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 16. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  17. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}b6=$ ; or 14. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  15. $\mathbb{W}c2$  b4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$  is scarcely any better because of 16... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , and after the bishop on e3 moves, Black plays ...c7-c5) 16...cxd5 17. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  19.a3  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  20. $\mathbb{W}xd2$   $\mathbb{W}b5=$  Summermatter-Rozentalis, Chiasso 1991.

**14...  $\mathbb{E}c8$**

**15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$**

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  c5**

**17.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$**

**18.  $\mathbb{W}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$**

Black has got in ...c7-c5 and his queen has found an excellent post, so he should not have any problems equalising.

**19. a4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}fg4!?$**

The careless 20... $\mathbb{E}b8?!$  allowed White to obtain the advantage after 21.axb5 axb5 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ , Sakaev-Stefansson, Warsaw 2005. After all White has two long-range bishops!

**21.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$**

21.e3 b4 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  h6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  g5 24. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5=$ .

**21...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

22.h3  $\mathbb{Q}ge5$

23.axb5 axb5

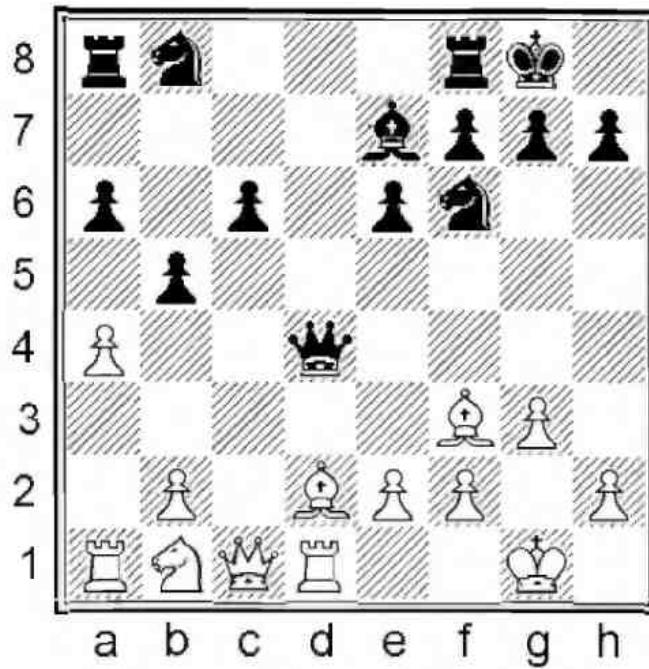
24. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{W}xc5=$

The bishop on g5 is misplaced, and will probably end up being exchanged for one of the knights. The Catalan bishop is not any great danger, on its empty diagonal, and it is hard for it to get at the only vulnerable black pawn on b5.

C2) 12. $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$

14.a4



14...bxa4

White has simple and easily understandable play after 14...b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f4!$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  (Black obviously has to exchange queens, but he still has problems in the ending) 17. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}a7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$ ) 19. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{E}fxb8$  21. $\mathbb{E}xc6$ . White has won a pawn and kept his opening initiative. Possible now is: 21... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Exd}5$  23.b3  $\mathbb{E}c8$  24. $\mathbb{E}b6$   $\mathbb{E}cb8$  25. $\mathbb{E}xb8+$   $\mathbb{E}xb8$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ .

15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

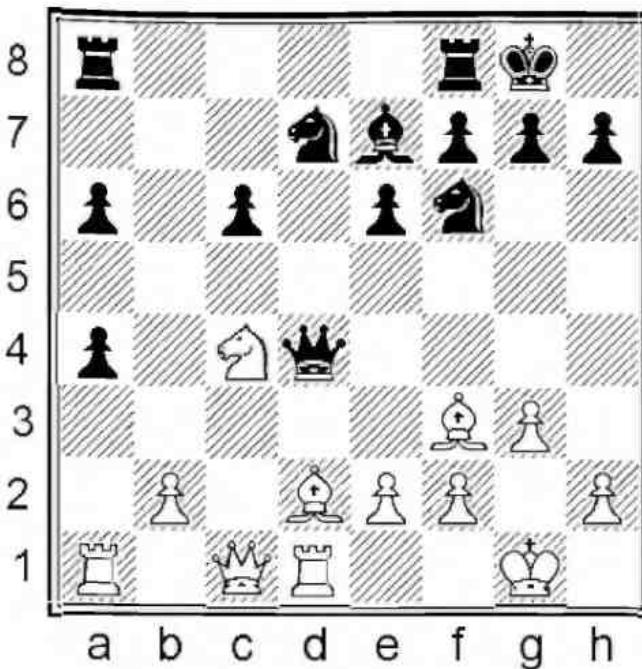
15. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ ? a3 16.bxa3  $\mathbb{W}c4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  with compensation.

15... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

16. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$

On this square, the knight is virtually ideally placed. White immediately regains one pawn and creates strong pressure on the a- and c-files. As an alternative, one can suggest an original plan, involving bringing the knight to the very

centre, on d4: 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (16...  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ ) 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xa4\pm$ . Later, White will defend the b2-pawn with his bishop and attack the pawn on a6.



16...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

16...  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6\pm$  Nybäck-Rozentalis, Germany 2007/08.

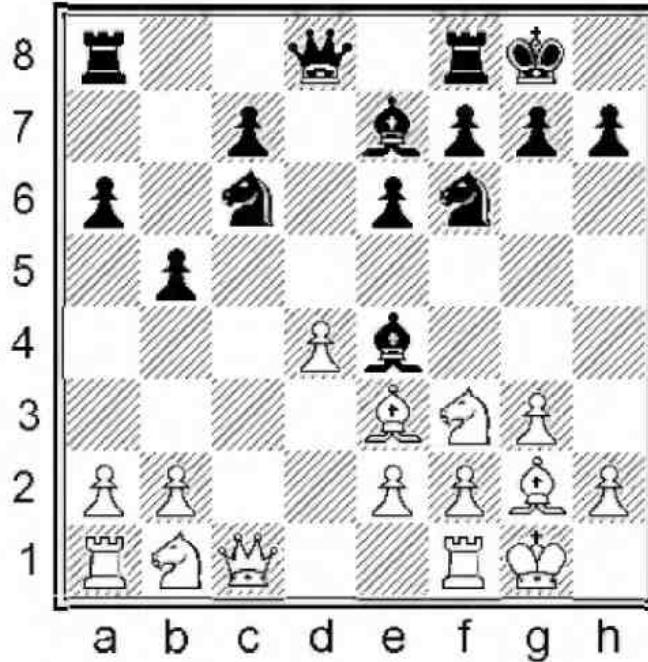
17.  $\mathbb{Q}xa4$

White's initiative more than compensates for the sacrificed pawn.

D) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$

Black is ahead in development and now, by attacking the d4-pawn, he gains another tempo. But we have already pointed out that, in such positions, the knight is not very well placed, because it obstructs the path of the pawn on c7. In addition, the knight cuts off its bishop's retreat from e4.

12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$



White defends the pawn and wants to play  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , exchanging the bishop on e4. White cannot permit such a weakening of his light squares.

**D1) 12... $\mathbb{E}c8$**

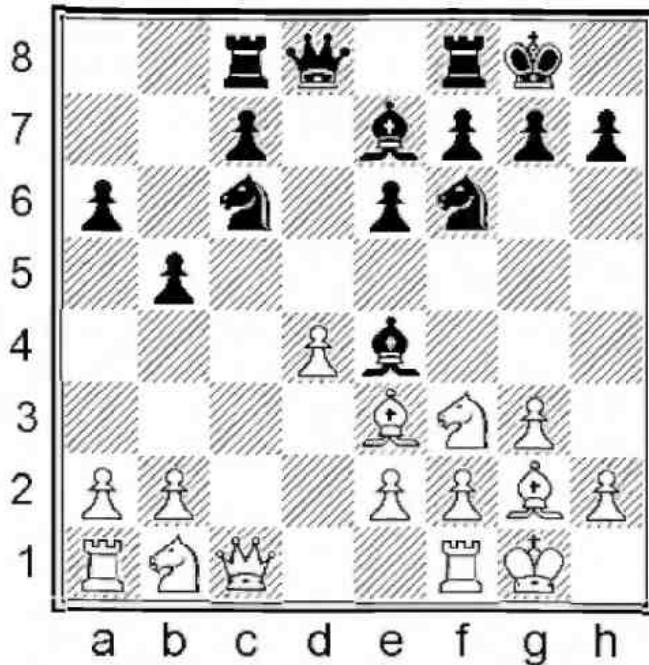
**D2) 12... $\mathbb{Q}a5$**

**D3) 12... $\mathbb{Q}b4$**

12... $b4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $h6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  17. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $a5$  18. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{W}b5$  21. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  22. $f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$  Andersson-Skembris, Bar 1997.

**D1)** In reply to

12... $\mathbb{E}c8$



White has an important choice between 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  and 13.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ .

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1!?$

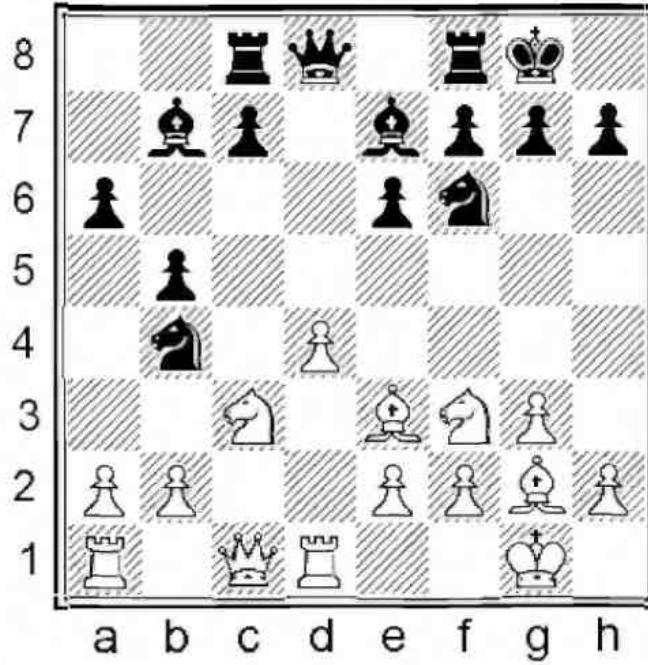
I think it is weaker to play 13.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $b4!$ ? 16.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\pm$  Smejkal-Gligoric, Vrsac 1983) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4!$ ? (15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2!$ ? (Agzamov-Gligoric, Vrsac 1983) 16...  $\mathbb{Q}xa2!$ ? 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}a8\infty$ ) 15...  $f5$  16.  $h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  19.  $a3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8$  20.  $e3$   $e5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $fxe4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5=\pm$  Suba-Damljanovic, Belgrade 1984.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$

13...  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15.  $a3$   $b4$  16.  $axb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $f6$  19.  $e4$   $fxg5$  20.  $exd5$   $c5$  21.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23.  $dxe6\pm$  Giri-Sanikidze, France 2011) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (P.H. Nielsen-Sanikidze, Germany 2011/12) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $b4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}a4\pm$ ) 15.  $b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}b2\pm$ . A typical position for the queen, often seen in Queen's Indian positions. The white pieces are better placed, in particular, his rooks are cooperating, unlike Black's.

### 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}b7$

14...  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  15.  $a4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (also good is 16.  $axb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17.  $fxe3$   $AXB5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5\pm$ ) 16...  $c5$  17.  $AXB5$   $AXB5$  18.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$  (Avrukh).



The black pieces have occupied outwardly active positions in the centre and on the queenside, however, his advances have come to nothing, and now these pieces are beginning to hang, whilst the pawn on b5 also needs defending.

**15.a4 c6**

**16.♗e5 ♗bd5**

**17.♗d3 ♗xe3**

**18.♕xe3 ♗d5**

**19.♗xd5 cxd5**

**20.axb5 axb5**

**21.♗c5 ♗xc5**

**22.dxc5 ♕a8**

**23.♕e5 ♕b8**

**24.♕c3 ♕c7**

**25.b4 ♘fd8**

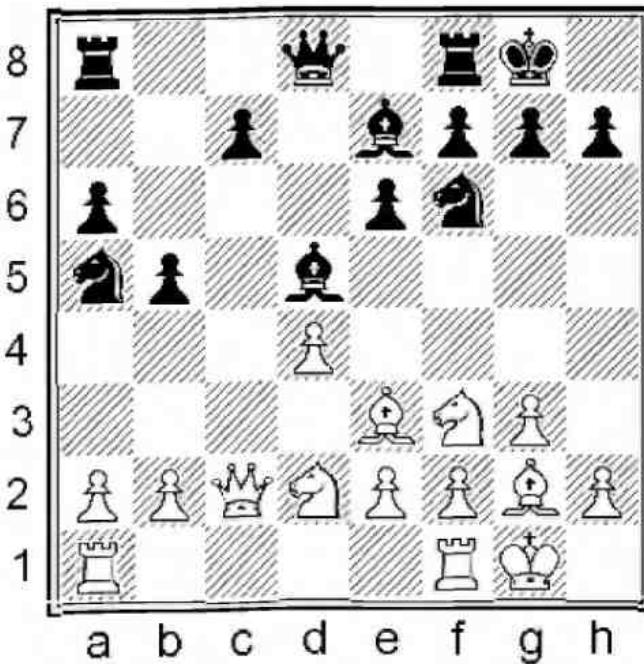
**26.e3±**

Dunis-Vallin, France 2005, White has the classic advantage of good bishop over bad.

**D2) 12...♗a5**

**13.♗bd2 ♗d5**

**14.♕c2**



The best square for the queen. Later, White can move his bishop from e3 (for instance to f4) and create the threat of e2-e4.

**14...♝c8**

**15.a3 ♐c4**

**16.♗xc4 bxc4**

Black has freed himself from the pressure on the c-file, but not for nothing – instead, at the cost of a worsening of his pawn structure.

**17.♕fd1 c5**

**18.♗e5!**

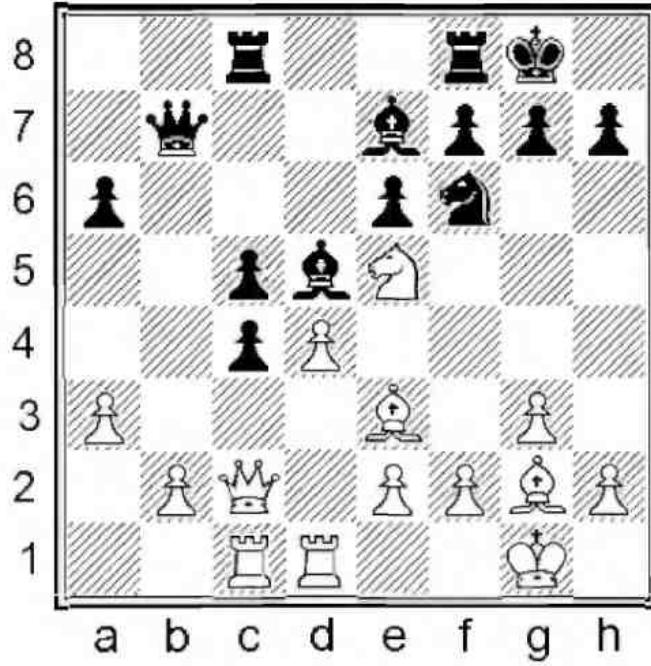
White offers the exchange of light-squared bishops, but wants this to take place on the square g2; in this case, the pawns on c4 and a6 will be weak. Naturally, Black declines this offer.

White is offered little by 18.dxc5 ♐xc5 19.♗xc5 ♘xc5 20.♗d4 (20.b4 ♘c8 21.♗g5 h6) 20...♗b6 21.e4 (draw, Khuzman-Döttling, Tel Aviv 2001) 21...♗a8 22.♗e2 ♘b5 23.♗ab1 ♘b8 24.♗d2 ♗g4 25.♗c3 ♘b3 with equal chances.

**18...♛c7**

18...♗d6 19.♗ac1 cxd4 20.♗xd4 ♛c7 21.♗f3 e5 22.♗c3 ♘fe8 23.♗g5±.

**19.♗ac1 ♛b7**



**20.f3!**

White also does not want to exchange bishops, because in this case, his opponent will strengthen his pawn structure in the centre. But now White has the idea of retreating his bishop to f2 and playing e2-e4.

**20...♝b8**

**21.♗c3 ♛d6**

**22.♗f2 cxd4**

**23.♗xd4 ♜c5**

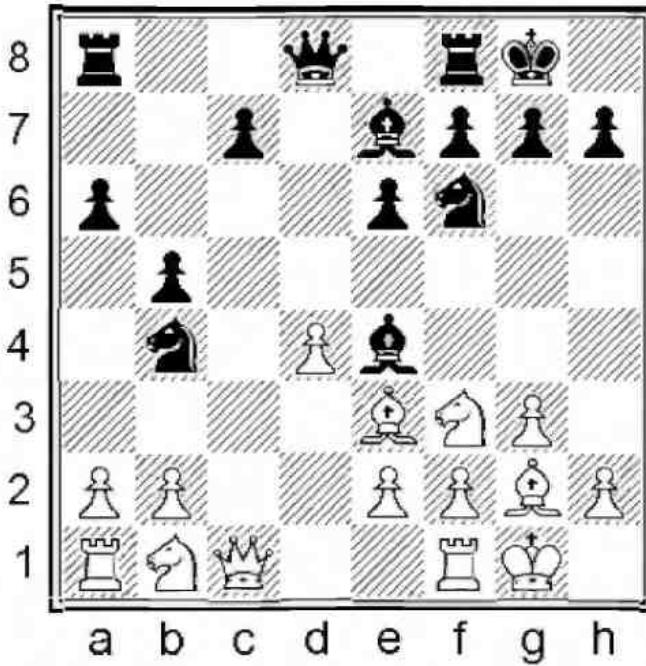
**24.♗xc5 ♜xc5**

**25.b4!±**

Kotsur-Bakre, Raipur 2002. White has a dream position, and has obtained a huge advantage. Black is deprived of counterplay and has a weak pawn on c4.

**D3) 12...♝b4**

Very enterprising play by Black: exploiting his lead in development, he immediately starts chasing the enemy pieces.



**D31) 13.♗bd2**

**D32) 13.♗c3**

**D31) More common is**

**13.♗bd2**

But this move, it seems to me, is rather slow, and Black has a reliable route to equality.

**13...♝b7**

Not very successful is 13...♝d5, since the square d5 should be reserved for the knight. After 14.a3 ♘c6 15.♕c3± White's chances are superior.

If the bishop retreats along the other diagonal, then White immediately goes after it, and at the right moment, he will exchange it off and obtain a clear advantage: 13...♝g6 14.♘e5 ♘fd5 15.♗b3!? (only by thus offering significantly to weaken his pawn structure can White fight for the advantage. In the event of 15.♗f4 ♗h5 the light-squared bishop remains 'among the living', and thanks to this, Black obtains sufficient counterplay: 16.a3 ♘xf4 17.gxf4 ♘d5 18.e3 ♘d6 19.♗e4 f6 20.♗f3 ♕e8 21.♕d2∞ Lastin-Kravtsiv, Minsk 2006) 15...♞h5 (15...♝xe3 16.fxe3±; the queen cannot be taken because of the fork on c2, but as we will soon see, the rather unaesthetic text is not so bad) 16.g4 f6 17.gxh5 fxe5 18.h6±. The king on g8 will soon start to feel uncomfortable, since a number of its defenders are stranded on the other side of the board.

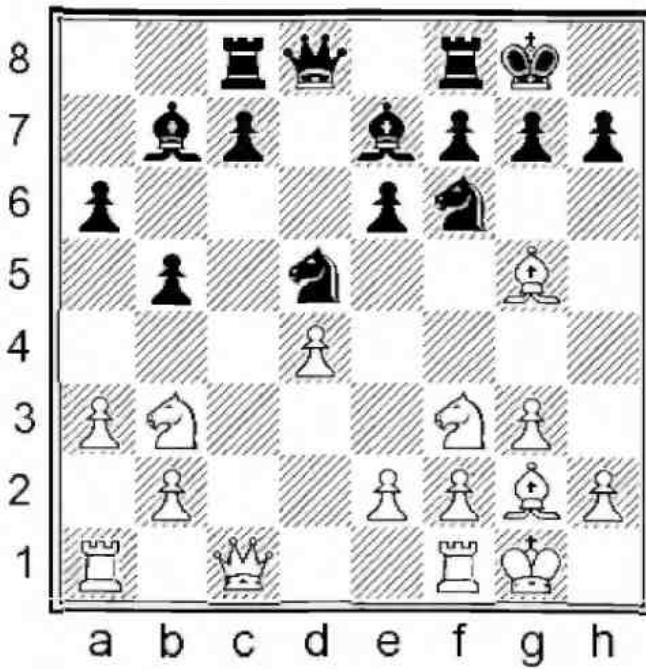
**14.♗g5 ♕c8**

**15.a3**

On 15.♗b3!? there can follow 15...♝d5, and White runs into a blind alley – he cannot play a2-a3 because his knight would be lost, whilst advancing the knight leaves the a2-pawn hanging.

**15...♝bd5**

**16.♗b3**



**16...h6!**

Just in time. Black asks the enemy bishop to declare his intentions. Weaker is 16...♝d7 17.♝xe7 ♜xe7 18.♝c5! ♜xc5 19.dxс5±. White seizes space on the queenside, threatening c5-c6, burying the bishop on b7.

**17.♝a5**

In the line 17.♝xf6 ♜xf6 18.♝c5 ♜xc5 19.♝xc5 ♜d7 White can chase after a pawn, but then his queen turns out to be out of play: 20.♛a7?! ♜d5! 21.♛xa6 c6 with compensation.

**17...♝a8**

**18.♝c6**

After 18.♝xf6 ♜xf6! White must already settle for equality with 19.♝b3!, since the incautious 19.b4 runs into the unexpected blow 19...c5!±.

**18...♜xc6**

**19.♝xf6 ♜b7!**

He should retain the light-squared bishop, since White has a noticeable advantage after 19...♝xf6 20.♝xc6 ♜d6 21.♝ac1±.

**20.♝xe7 ♜xe7=**

Kortchnoi-Kasparov, London 1983.

**D32) 13.♝c3!? ♜b7**

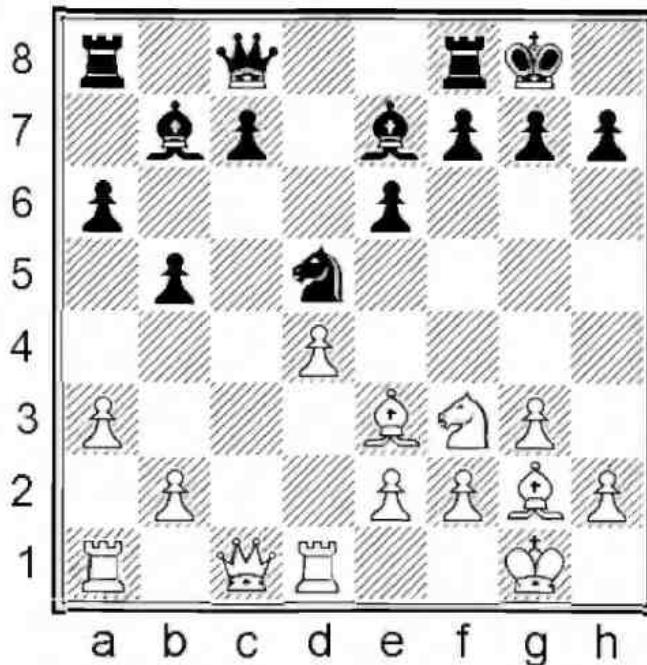
**14.♗d1**

The attempt to undermine the enemy queenside pawn structure with 14.a4 is refuted by a few accurate moves:  
 14...♝bd5 15.♝xd5 ♜xd5!? (15...♝xd5 is bad because of 16.♗g5 ♛f6 17.♗d1 ♜c8 18.♗e5 ♜xg2 19.♗xg2 c5 20.dxc5 ♜xc5 21.♗xf6 gxf6 22.♗d7+— Dunis-Rombaldoni, La Roche-sur-Yon 2006) 16.♗g5 (16.♗d1 bxa4!?) 16...h6 17.♗xf6 ♜xf6 18.e3 ♜b8=.

**14...♛c8**

**15.a3 ♘bd5**

**16.♝xd5 ♜xd5**



**17.♗g5**

The exchange of dark-squared bishops is unfavourable for Black, because then the weakness of the square c5 becomes catastrophic.

Consequently, White practically forces the opponent's reply, after which the e6-pawn is weakened.

**17...f6**

**18.♗d2 a5**

On 18...c5 there is the unpleasant 19.♗a5 c4 20.e4 ♘c7 21.♗e3 ♘e8 22.♗h3 (22.♗d2 f5) 22...f5 23.d5 ♜c5 24.♗f4 ♘d6 25.♗g5±.

**19.♛c2 ♘b6**

**20.♝ac1 ♘c4**

Of course, Black would like to close the c-file, but this attempt is resolutely repulsed.

21.a4  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

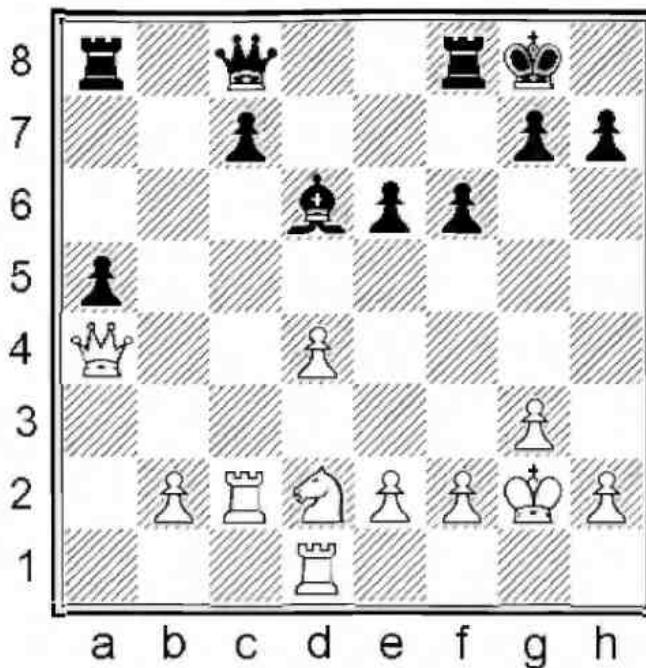
22. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  bxa4

24. $\mathbb{W}xa4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$

So far the game Grischuk-Solomon, Tripoli 2004. Now White can obtain a slight edge with:

25. $\mathbb{E}c2\pm$



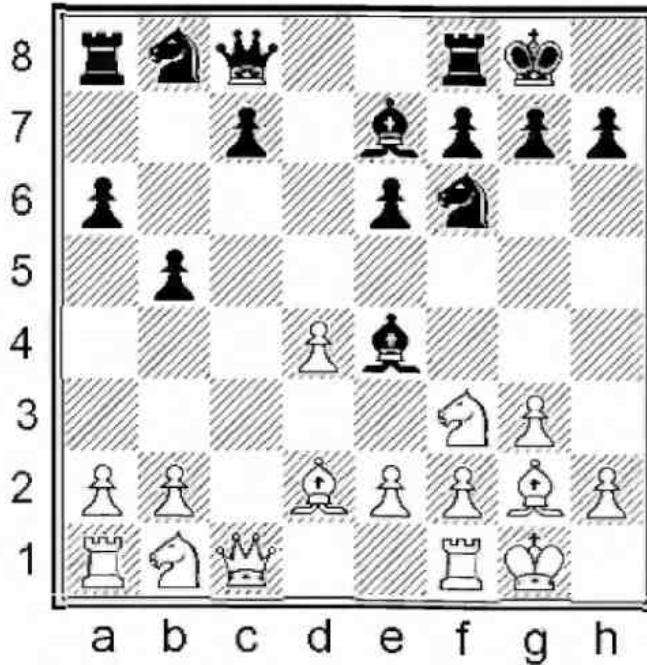
### Conclusion

As in the lines examined earlier, White in the first instance fights to stop ...c7-c5, which would allow Black to equalise. Practice shows that White has enough resources to prevent his opponent's main idea. Many of the devices are already known to us, and here they also work, for example, on ... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  we play  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ; in reply to ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , we bring the bishop to e3 and then try to drive the enemy bishop from e4 with the help of  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  or  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ . The move 11...b4 also fails to pose White any particular problems: we transfer the bishop to g5 and the queen's knight via d2 to the weakened square c4.

In my opinion, none of the black 11th moves we have so far examined promises him equality. Much stronger are the two alternatives 11... $\mathbb{W}c8$  and 11... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ . These moves will be examined in the last two chapters.

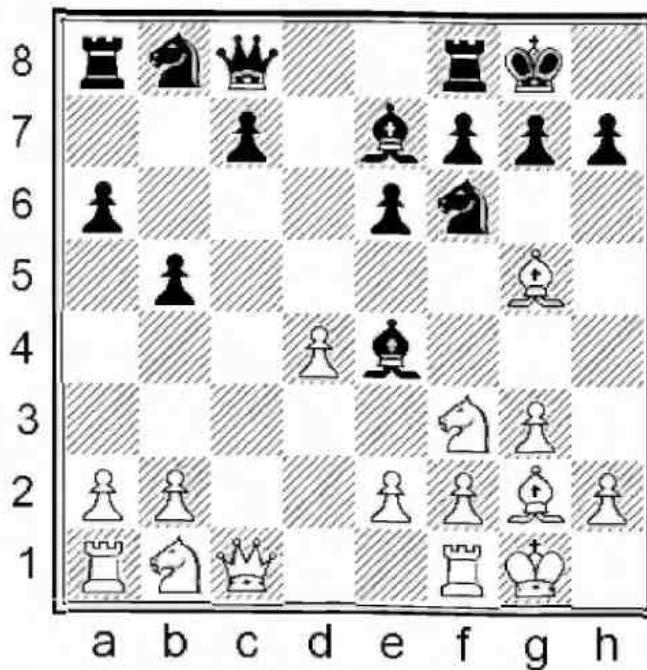
## Chapter 17 – Classical Variation 11... $\mathbb{W}c8$

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6.0-0 dx $c$ 4 7. $\mathbb{W}c2$  a6 8. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5 9. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $\mathbb{W}c8!$ ?



This move has been played several times by Peter Leko. Black prepares the usual thrust ...c7-c5, and now the move  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  is no longer a threat, because the c7-pawn will not be pinned.

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$



**A) 12...c5**

**B) 12...Qbd7**

12...h6 13.Qxf6 (13.Qf4 c5 14.dxc5 Qxc5 15.Qbd2 Qb7 16.Qb3 Qb6 17.Qd6 Qe8=) 13...Qxf6 14.Qf4! Qb7 15.Qc1±. All as usual: if Black does not manage to get in ...c7-c5 fairly quickly, then White will stand better.

**A) 12...c5!?**

**13.Qbd2 Qb7**

13...Qd5 is bad because of 14.e4.

But now it seems that Black is fine, as he has already achieved ...c7-c5. Even so, he is slightly behind in development (for absolute contentment, he would like to have the move ...Qbd7 in) and White can exploit this circumstance. First and foremost, he fights for the c-file, but there is also another factor to which I would like to draw your attention. The fact is that after the exchange of light-squared bishops, Black will have a very weak square on c6, at which one of White's pieces (either rook or knight) can aim.

**14.dxc5 Qxc5**

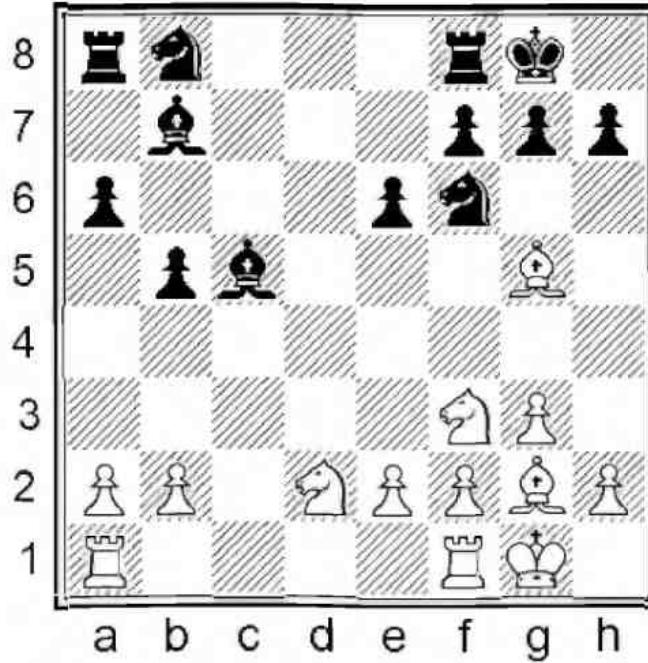
**15.Qxc5**

White also has a perfectly good alternative in 15.Qb3:

A) 15...Qc8!? 16.Qe3 Qd5 17.Qe4 Qf6 18.Qf4 (step by step, the queen moves over to the kingside, where she will pose threats to the enemy king) 18...h6 (18...Qd5 19.Qh4 f6 20.Qd2=) 19.Qxf6 Qxf6 20.Qac1 Qe8 (Suba-Prandstetter, Prague 1985) 21.Qc7 Qd5 22.Qe5±;

B) 15...Qb6 16.Qe3 (or 16.Qd1 Qd5 17.Qe3 Qd8 18.Qfd4± Aronian-Asrian, Stepanakert 2005) 16...Qd8 17.Qd1 Qd5 18.Qe5 Qc8 19.Qxc8 Qxc8 20.Qac1±. Thanks to his lead in development and control of the square c6, White stands better.

**15...Qxc5**



**A1) 16.♗xf6**

**A2) 16.♖fc1**

**A1)** There is no need to hurry with

**16.♗xf6 gxf6**

**17.♖fc1**

In reply to 17.♗b3 the bishop also retreats to b6: Black covers all the entry squares on the c-file and gradually regroups his forces, for instance: 17...♗b6 18.♖fd1 ♗a7 19.♖ac1 ♗d5 20.♗fd2 ♗xg2 21.♗xg2 ♖d8 22.♗e4 ♖xd1 23.♖xd1 f5 24.♗ec5 ♗g7 25.♖d6 ♗c7 26.♖d1 ♗b6 ½-½ Khuzman-Rychagov, Montreal 2007. White clearly must repeat moves, otherwise the rook comes to c7 and already Black will have the initiative.

**17...♗b6**

Black must play very accurately; in the variation 17...♗d7 18.♗b3 ♗b6 19.♗fd4 ♗xg2 20.♗xg2 ♖fc8 21.♗c6 White retains slightly the better chances.

**18.♗e1**

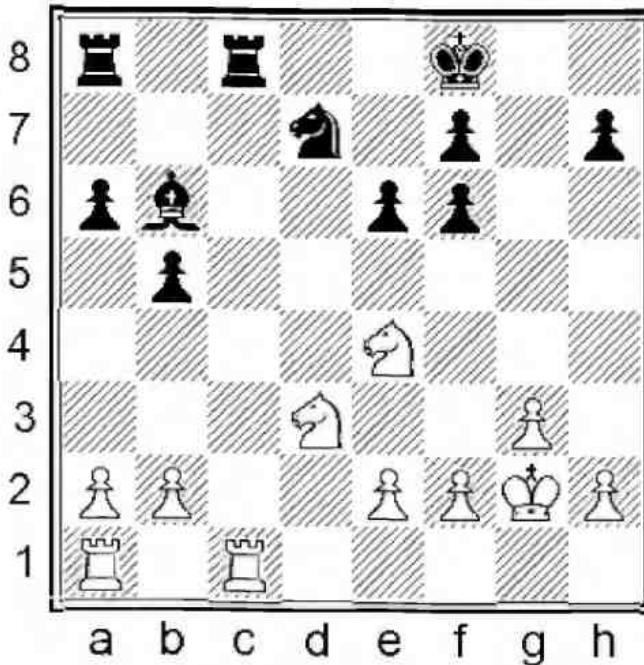
By exchanging the light-squared bishops, White weakens the square c6, but he will not succeed in exploiting it.

**18...♗xg2**

**19.♗xg2 ♖d7**

**20.♗d3 ♖fc8**

**21.♗e4 ♗f8**



**22.g4**

In this way, White fixes the weak black pawn on f6; he gets no advantage from 22.Qd6 Bc7 23.a4 Qe7 24.Bxc7 Bxc7 25.Qe4 f5 26.Qd2 bxa4 27.Bxa4 Qe5 28.Qxe5 Bxe5 29.Qc4 Bc7=.

**22...Qe7**

**23.Qf3 Qd4**

**24.Bxc8 Bxc8**

**25.a4 Qe5+**

An accurate move, allowing Black to exchange all the queenside pawns. He still has definite problems after 25...Bc2 26.axb5 axb5 27.Ba5 Qe5+ 28.Qxe5 Bxe5 29.b4 Bxh2 30.Bxb5± GelfandGrischuk, Bastia 2003.

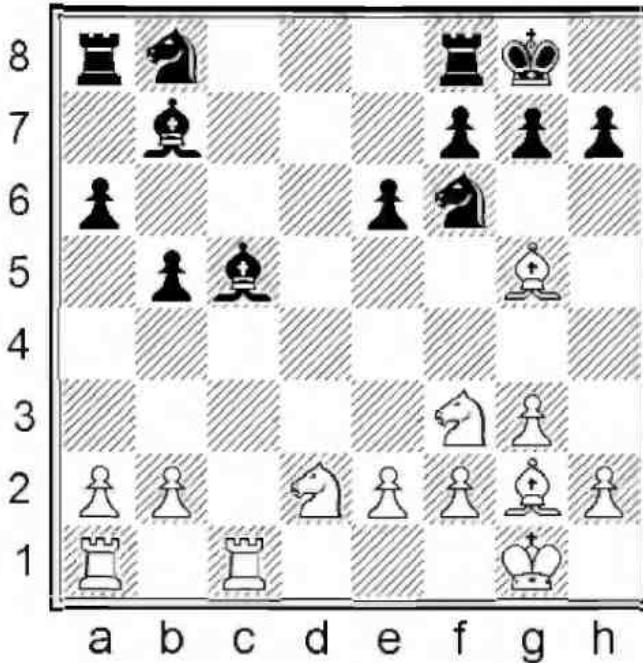
**26.Qxe5 Bxh2**

**27.Bb1 Qxe5**

**28.axb5 axb5**

**29.Bxb5 Bxh2=**

**A2) 16.Bfc1**



**16...Bg6**

If 16...Bd6, then 17.Bxf6 gxf6 18.Qe1!. Remember this manoeuvre: after the exchange of light-squared bishops, the knight will be very well placed on d3, especially if the enemy bishop is on d6. The second white knight will come via e4 (gaining a tempo by attacking the bishop), on its way to c5.

18...Bxg2 19.Bxg2 Bb4, Avrukh-Jenni, Biel 2006, and here White should simply have played 20.Qdf3, practically forcing the opponent to exchange bishop for knight – 20...Bxe1. After 21.Qxe1 Qd7 22.Qc7± White has a dream position: he controls the c-file, his pieces are more active and his opponent's pawn structure is weakened on both flanks.

**17.a4**

This motif is also a useful one to remember: now it is unfavourable for Black to take on a4, because in this case, the emergence of the knight on c4 is very unpleasant. But if he does not take, White plays a4-a5 and it will not be so easy for the bishop to find a good square.

**17...Bbd7**

**18.a5**

18.Bxf6!? gxf6 19.a5 Bc5 20.Bb3 Bd6 21.Bd1 Bc5 22.Bxd6 Bxb3 23.Ba3 Bc5 24.b4 Be4 25.Bb6 Bd5 26.Qe1±.

**18...Bd8**

**19.Bb3 Be4**

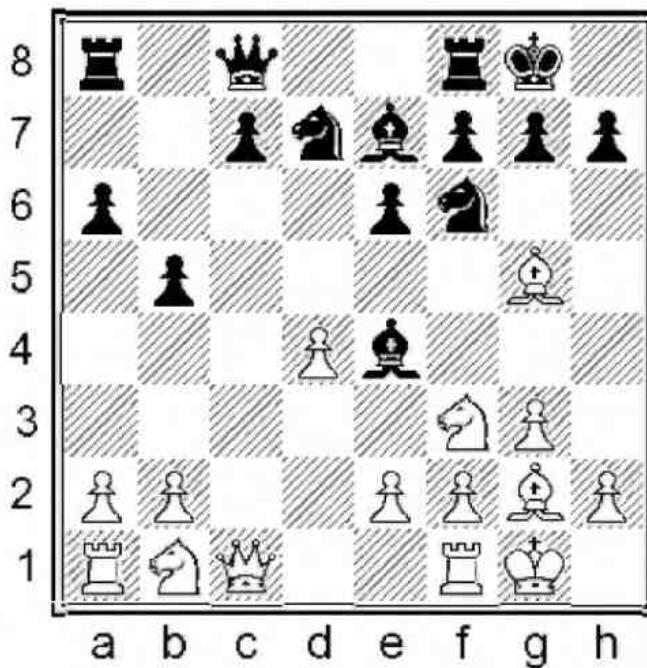
**20.Bfd4 Bxg2**

**21.Qxg2±**

White controls the c-file and in particular, the c6-square, and his knight is very actively-placed; White has an obvious

advantage.

B) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



The main continuation. Here I suggest you arm yourself with two plans for White: one standard, the other quite rare, which is only just acquiring popularity.

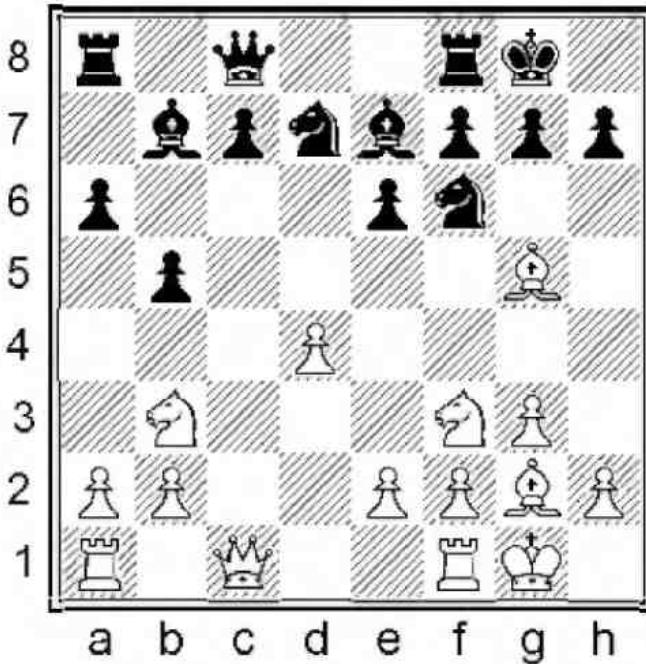
**B1) 13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$**

**B2) 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

**B1)** Quite a popular *tabiya* arises after

13. $\mathbb{Q}bd2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$



White does not actually prevent the advance ...c7-c5, which is in principle possible here, but the consequences for Black are not terribly pleasant.

**B21) 14...c5**

**B22) 14...a5**

14...h6 15.Qxf6 Qxf6 16.Qa5 Qd5, Gossmann-Modniewski, Germany 1986, 17.Qe5 Qd6 18.Qac6±.

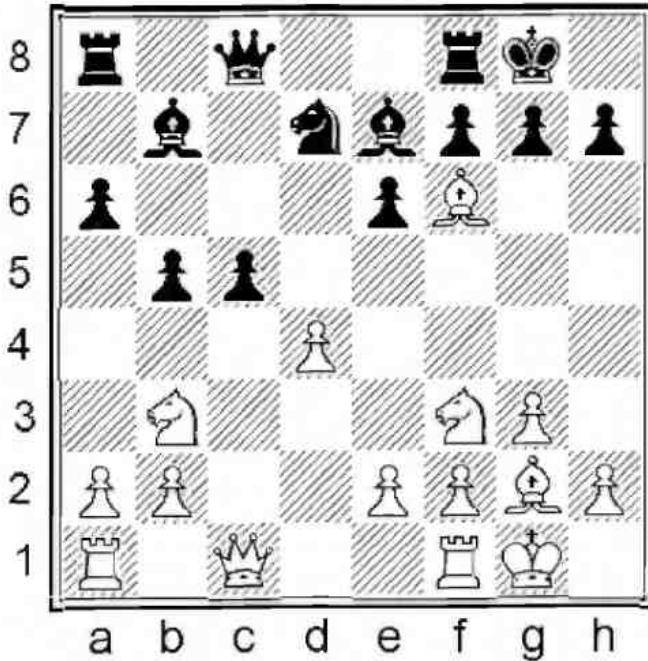
**B21) 14...c5?!**

This move is bad for two reasons.

**B211) 15.Qxf6**

**B212) 15.dxc5**

**B211) 15.Qxf6!?**



**B2111) 15...♝xf6**

**B2112) 15...gxsf6**

**B2111) Black can give up a pawn by means of the move**

**15...♝xf6!?**

counting on the sacrifice being only temporary. However, it can happen that the pawn proves not to be so easy to regain:

**16.♞xc5**

He must take with the knight, so as to have the possibility of the move b2-b4 when necessary.

**16...♝xc5**

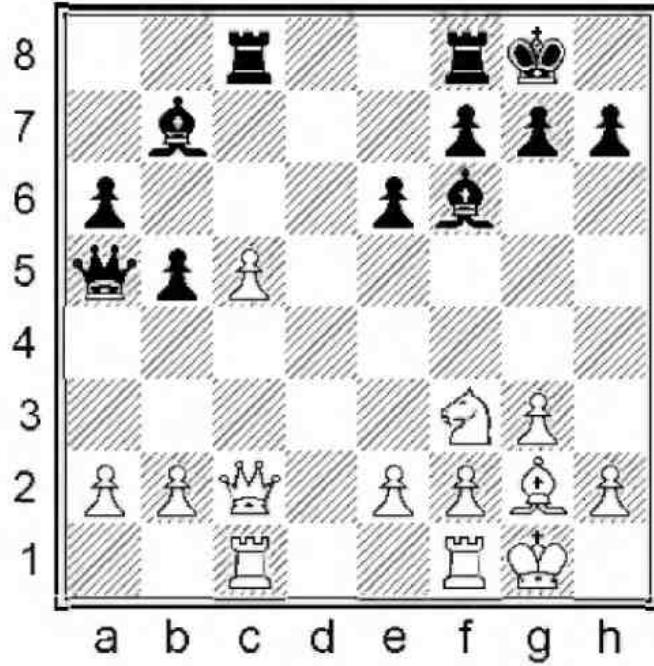
**17.dxe5 ♜c7**

On 17...♝e7 there follows 18.b4. Now Black can hit the rook on a1 a couple of times, but he does not win the exchange, because the rook on a8 is also not ideally placed: 18...♝f6 19.♜b1 ♜e4 (on 19...a5 there follows 20.a4!?) 20.♜b3 (the same idea can be executed slightly differently: 20.♞d2!? ♜xb1 21.♜xa8 ♜xa2 22.♜e4 ♜d5 23.♜xd5 exd5 24.♞b3 ♜g4 25.♛d2±). Material is equal, but White has a powerful protected passed pawn, and Black has a weak pawn at d5) 20...a5 21.a3 ♜d5 22.♞d2 ♜xb3 23.♜xa8 ♜xa8 24.♜xb3 axb4 25.axb4 ♜a4 26.♜e3 ♜xb4 27.♞c1± Gelfand-Onischuk, Beer-Sheva 2005.

**18.♛c2 ♜ac8**

**19.♞ac1 ♜a5**

It is important to prevent the move b2-b4; in the event of 19...♝fd8 20.b4 a5 21.a3 ♜xf3 22.♜xf3± Wang Yue-Ji Dan, China 2010, White keeps a healthy extra pawn.



**20.♕g5**

A typical idea in such positions, thanks to which White keeps the initiative.

**20...♝xg5**

**21.♝xb7 ♜c7**

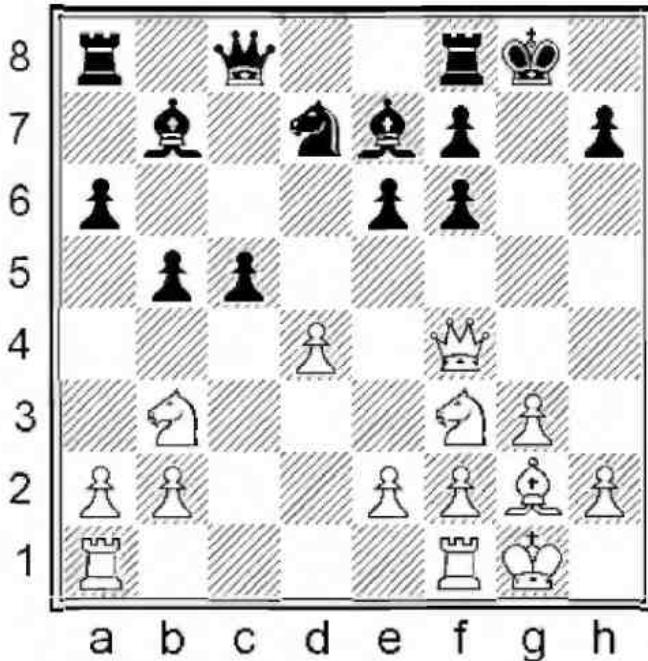
**22.f4 ♜xf4**

**23.♜xf4 ♜xb7**

**24.♜d4±**

**B2112) 15...gx f6**

**16.♛f4**

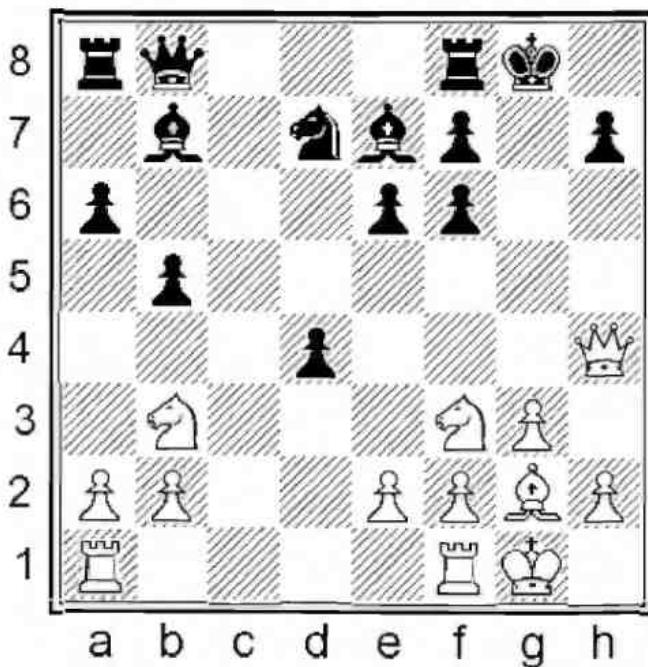


**16... $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

Black has to take an interest in what is happening on the kingside, otherwise he can end up in an unpleasant situation: 16...c4 17. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ . As is well-known, opposite-coloured bishops serve to strengthen an attack, and this is a case in point.

**17. $\mathbb{Q}g4+!?$**

It seems that this check has not been seen in practice; usually, White plays the queen to h4 at once, which is also not bad: 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  cxd4



18. $\mathbb{Q}a5!$  (it may appear that White is looking towards the enemy king, but this move shows that he has not forgotten

about the square c6, either. Too ‘academic’ is 18.♗ad1 ♘a7 19.♗xd4 (an approximately equal position arises after both 19.♗fxd4 ♗xg2 20.♗xg2 ♗e5 and 19.♗bx d4 ♘d8) 19...♗xf3 20.exf3 (taking with the bishop gives Black an important tempo: 20.♗xf3 ♗e5 21.♗g2 f5 22.♗h6 a5!? 23.♗fd1 a4∞) 20...♗e5 21.♗h6 f5= Grischuk-Bologan, Poikovsky 2005; in the variation 18.♗fxd4 ♗xg2 19.♗xg2 ♘b6 20.♗ac1 ♘ac8 21.♗fd1 the black king is not threatened, and he can begin counterplay on the opposite wing: 21...♗e5 22.♗e4 ♗c4 23.♗c2 f5†) 18...♗d5 19.♗xd4 ♗xg2 20.♗xg2±. The activity of the white cavalry ensures him the advantage.

**17...♗h8**

**18.♗h4!**

The inclusion of the moves 17.♗g4+ ♗h8 makes definite sense: for example, in a hypothetical endgame, the black king will be further from the centre.

Less good is 18.♗a5 f5 19.♗h5 ♗e4.

**18...cxd4**

White is clearly better after 18...c4 19.♗a5 ♘d5 20.e4.

**19.♗a5 ♘d5**

**20.♗xd4 ♗xg2**

**21.♗xg2 ♘c7**

**22.♗ac6 ♘c5**

**23.♗ac1 ♘d6**

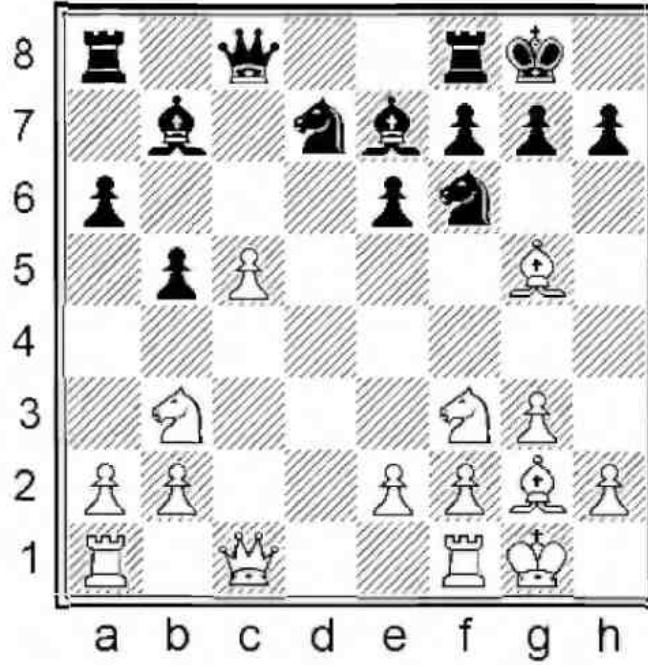
**24.♗fd1 e5**

**25.♗f5! ♘xc6+**

**26.e4**

and White obtains a decisive advantage. Now, as well as b2-b4, he also threatens 27.♗xd7 ♘xd7 28.♗xf6+.

**B212) 15.dxc5**



**15...Qxc5**

15...Qd5 16.Qxf6 Qxf6 17.Qfd2 Qxg2 18.Qxg2 a5 19.Qe4 a4 20.Qxf6+ Qxf6 21.Qd4±.

**16.Qxf6**

First of all, White doubles the opponent's pawns.

**16...gxf6**

**17.Qa5**

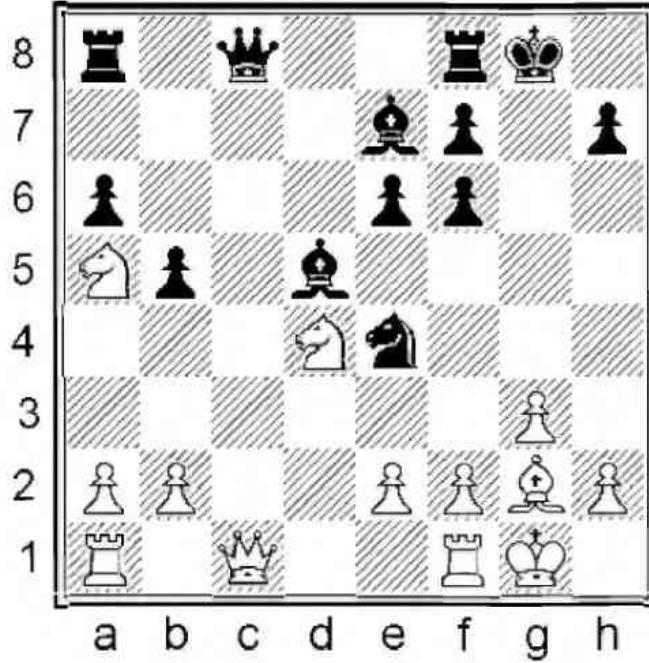
And now he moves the knight away from the exchange, attacking the bishop on b7.

**17...Qd5**

**18.Qd4±**

White establishes control over the crucial square c6, and this ensures him the advantage.

**18...Qe4**



Black wants to preserve his light-squared bishop from exchange.

**19.  $\mathbb{Q}ac6$**

This is a new and, in my opinion, quite promising idea for White. Previously practice has seen 19.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $f5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21.  $\mathbb{E}c7$  (this all happened in the game Medvegy-Boriss, Germany 2006/07. White can try giving up the bishop pair with 21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (21...  $fxe4$  22.  $\mathbb{E}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}ac6$ ) 22.  $\mathbb{E}cd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  23.  $\mathbb{E}d3$ , but Black has the important defence 23...  $\mathbb{Q}d8!$  24.  $b4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ , forcing White to exchange queens: 25.  $\mathbb{W}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2=$ ) and now he should simply have moved the queen to d8: 21...  $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ ? 22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!$  (an important *zwischenzug*) 23.  $\mathbb{W}h6$   $fxe4$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}ac6$   $\mathbb{W}xc7$  25.  $\mathbb{W}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  26.  $\mathbb{W}f6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27.  $\mathbb{W}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  28.  $\mathbb{W}f6+$  with perpetual check.

**19...  $\mathbb{W}b7$**

**20.  $\mathbb{E}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$**

**21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$**

**22.  $\mathbb{W}e3$**

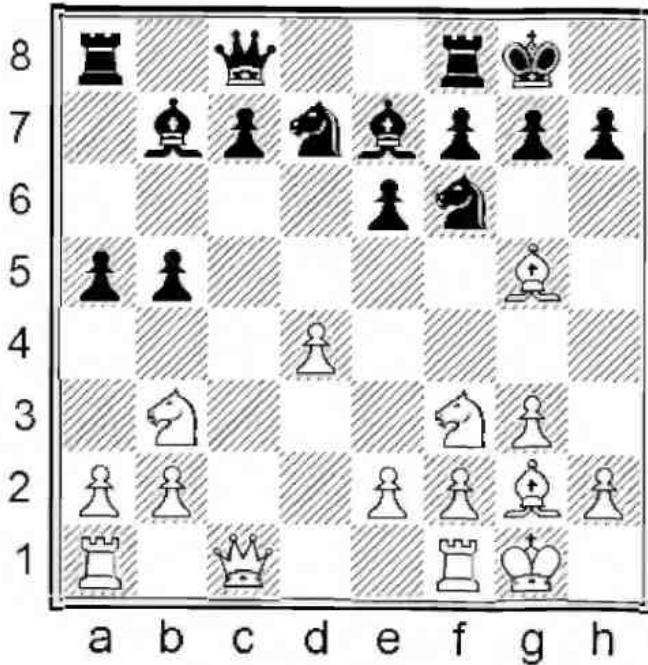
The queen's favourite square in this line.

**22...  $\mathbb{W}b7$**

**23.  $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$**

It is obvious that Black still has problems: his king is exposed, his pawns doubled, and it is also not clear what should be done with the knight on e4.

**B22) 14...a5**



**15.♕d1!?**

After 15.♕xf6 ♕xf6 (the knight must control c5; less good is 15...♕xf6 16.♕c5 ♕d5 17.♕e5 ♕xg2 18.♕xg2 c6 19.♕cd3 ♘a6 20.♗e3 ♘d5 21.♗f3± Shirov-Onischuk, Foros 2007) 16.♕c5 ♕d5 (it is also possible to exchange on c5 at once: 16...♘xc5 17.♗xc5 ♕d8 18.♗ac1 ♕xf3 19.♕xf3 ♕xd4 20.♗xb5 ♘b8 21.♗c4 ♘a7 22.b3 ♘b4 23.♗fd1 ♘xc4 24.bxc4 ♕d6 25.♗b1 g6, draw, Pelletier-Onischuk, Biel 2007; also interesting is 16...♕d5!?) 17.e4 ♘c4 18.♗xd7 ♘xd7 19.♗e1 (on 19.♗d1 there follows 19...♕e2 20.e5 – after 20.♗d2? ♕xf3 21.♕xf3 ♕g5 White loses the exchange – 20...♕e7 21.♗e1 ♘c4 22.♗d2 ♕d5, and there is no question of White having any advantage here) 19...♕xd4 20.♗d1 c5 21.♗c2 e5 (the threat was b2-b3, trapping the light-squared bishop) 22.♗xe5, draw, Aronian-Kramnik, Mexico City 2007.

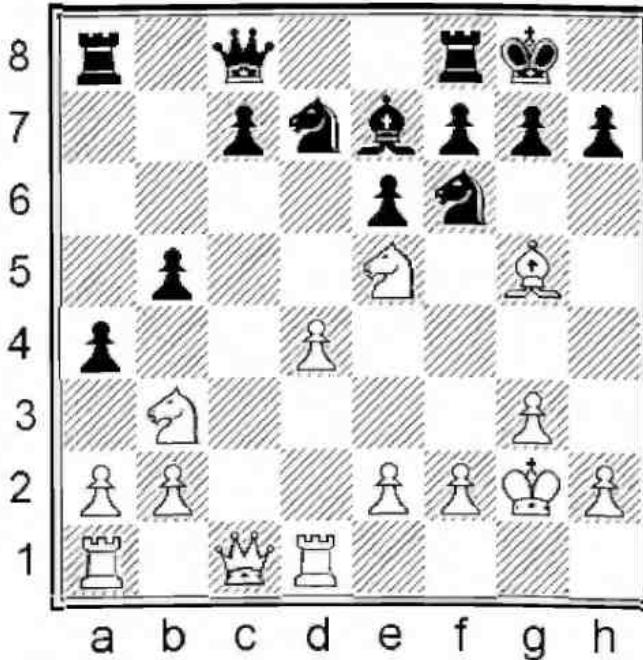
In reply to the break 15.a4 Black has a reliable retort: 15...♘d5 16.♗bd2 ♘b7 17.e4 (if 17.axb5 h6 18.♕xf6 ♕xf6 Black prevents e2-e4, and will easily regain the pawn) 17...♗xe4 (this is not a piece sacrifice, but an accurately-calculated exchanging operation) 18.♗xe7 ♘xd2 19.♗xd2 ♘fe8 20.♗g5 ♕xf3 21.♗xf3 ♘xf3 22.axb5 ♘b6= Milchev-I. Petrov, Sunny Beach 2007.

**15...♘d5**

On 15...♗d8 there is the unpleasant reply 16.♕e5.

**16.♕e5 ♕xg2**

**17.♕xg2 a4**



Here White must play very accurately, move by move, so as to preserve his opening advantage.

**18.♕xf6!?**

First, White should exchange on f6; it is very important to remember this.

However, he can also count on a small advantage after 18.♘c5 ♜xc5 19.♕xf6 ♜b6 20.♗e7 (20.♗g5 ♘xe5 21.dxe5 h6 22.♗xh6 gxh6 23.♗xh6 ♜d8 24.♗g5+, draw, Gelfand-Leko, Mexico City 2007) 20...♜e8 21.♘c6 ♜b8 22.♗xb8 ♜xb8 23.♘c5 ♜b7+ 24.f3 ♜ed8±.

**18...♝xf6**

The intermediate check 18...♝b7+ gives nothing in view of 19.f3 ♘xf6 20.♘c5±.

On 18...gxh6 there follows 19.♘c6! (an important *zwischenzug*) 19...♝b7 20.♗a5! ♜xa5 21.d5± with a double attack on the rook on a5 and bishop on e7.

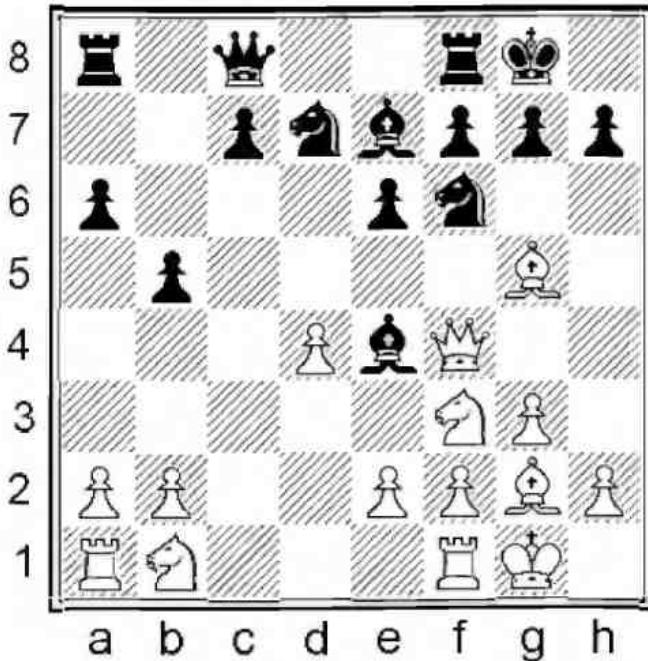
**19.♘xd7 ♜xd7**

**20.♘c5 ♜c6+**

**21.f3±**

White has obtained a favourable ending with knight against bishop, plus complete control of the c-file and a superiority in the centre.

**B2) 13.♗f4!?**



An unusual, but quite strong move, introduced into practice by Kramnik in the 2007 World Championship event in Mexico City, against Leko. Kramnik managed to win that game, although to my mind his position after the opening inspired some concern. However, I have managed to improve White's play.

**13...Qb7**

After 13...c5 14.Qc1 Black cannot resolve the tension in the centre. He should push the pawn with 14...c4, but then White can attack it again: 15.b3 cxb3 (15...Qxb1 16.Qaxb1 Qd5 17.Qg4 f5 18.Qh4 Qa3 19.bxc4 bxc4 20.Qc2± Swinkels-Agopov, Germany 2010/11) 16.axb3 Qb8 17.Qxb8 Qfxb8 18.Qbd2 Qb7 19.Qe5± Nybäck-Agopov, Jyväskylä 2008. The white pieces are not only more aggressively posted, but also more harmoniously, and he retains his opening initiative.

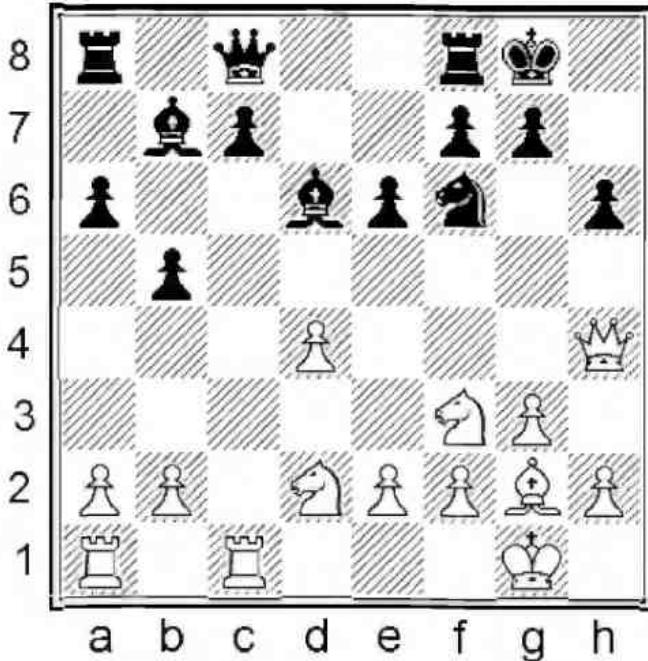
**14.Qc1 Qd6**

**15.Qh4 h6**

15...Qe4 16.Qbd2 Qxd2 17.Qxd2 Qf6, Brunello-G. Kovacs, Kallithea 2008, 18.Qg5 Qd7 19.Qf4±.

**16.Qxf6 Qxf6**

**17.Qbd2**



White controls the c-file and the important central square e4. His only problem is the somewhat poorly placed queen on h4.

#### **17...♝e8**

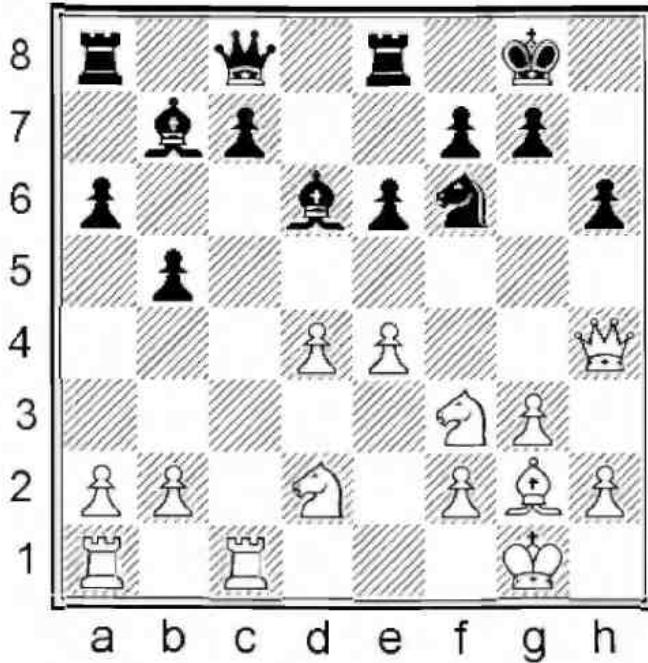
17...♝d8 18.♛b3 (18.♛e5 leads to a series of mass exchanges, which plays into Black's hands: 18...♜xg2 19.♝xg2 ♜xe5 20.dxe5 ♜xd2 21.exf6 ♜xe2 22.fxg7 ♜xg7 23.♜xc7 ♜ac8 24.♜ac1 ♜xc7 25.♜xc7 ♜xb2 26.♝g4+ ♜h8 27.♜f4 ♜g7 with a probable draw) 18...♝d5 19.♛c5 ♜e8 20.e4± (thanks to the tactical peculiarities of the position, this move proves possible, and White obtains some advantage) 20...♜xc5 21.exd5 ♜b6 22.dxe6 ♜xe6 23.♛e5, and Black must already give up the exchange.

#### **B21) 18.e4**

#### **B22) 18.♛b3!?**

18.♜c2 is slow. After the planned 18...e5 19.dxe5 ♜xe5 20.♛xe5 ♜xg2 21.♝xg2 ♜xe5 22.♛f3 ♜h5 23.♜f4 c5 play becomes double-edged.

#### **B21) 18.e4**



In my opinion, this move is too optimistic.

**18...Qd7**

**19.Qb3 a5**

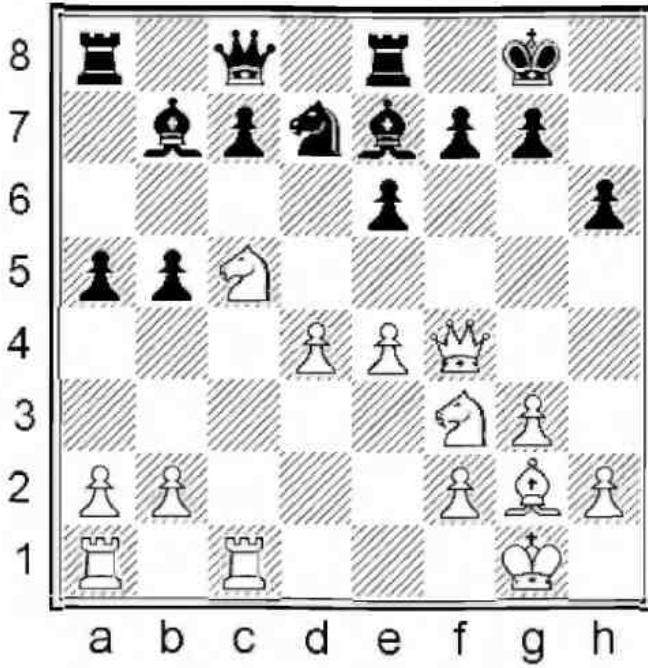
Here White already has definite problems.

**20.Qc5**

On 20.a4 Black temporarily sacrifices a pawn: 20...bxa4 21.Qxa4 Qb8 (Ruck-Prohaszka, Szeged 2009) 22.Qxa5, in order then to regain it with complete simplification of the position: 22...c5! 23.b3 cxd4 (23...Qe7 24.Qf4 Qxf4 25.gxf4 Qxe4 26.Qe5 Qxg2 27.Qxd7 Qd5 28.Qb6 cxd4 29.Qxa8 Qxa8 30.Qxd4±) 24.Qxb7 Qxb7 25.Qxd4 Qc5 26.Qd2 Qe7 27.Qf4 Qc5=.

**20...Qe7**

**21.Qf4**



Kramnik-Leko, Mexico City 2007. Here Leko played the correct advance ...e6-e5 in an incorrect form. He should first have taken on c5:

**21...dxc5**

**22.dxc5**

and only then played

**22...e5!**

**23.Qe3**

23.Qxe5 Qf6 24.c6 Qxe5 25.cxb7 Qxb7 26.Qd2 a4† with initiative to Black.

**23...Qc6**

**24.Qxe5 Qg5**

**25.f4 Qxe5†**

Thanks to this clever tactic, Black obtains the advantage.

**B22) 18.Qb3!? e5!?**

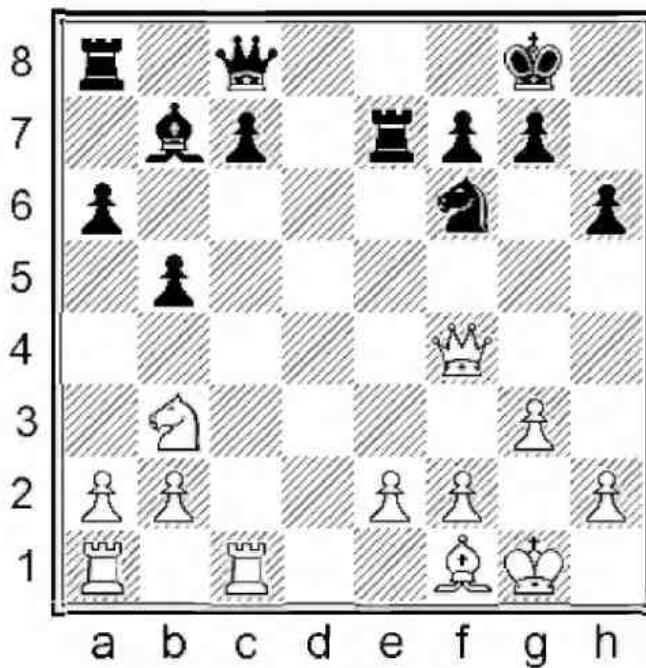
After quiet play by 18...Qd5 White occupies c5 – 19.Qc5, and if now 19...e5, then 20.dxe5 Qxe5 21.e4 Qc4 22.Qxe5 Qxe5 23.b3 Qxc5 24.bxc4. White's knight is stronger than its opposite number, although Black has realistic drawing chances.

**19.dxe5 Qxe5**

**20.Qxe5 Qxe5**

21.  $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{B}e7$

22.  $\mathbb{Q}f1! \pm$



A very subtle move, the idea of which is to avoid the exchange of light-squared bishops. Later we will close the long diagonal with f2-f3 and e2-e4, and place the knight on c5, after which we can create pressure on the c-file. Black will experience serious problems, because of his restricted bishop on b7 and the weakness of c5.

### Conclusion

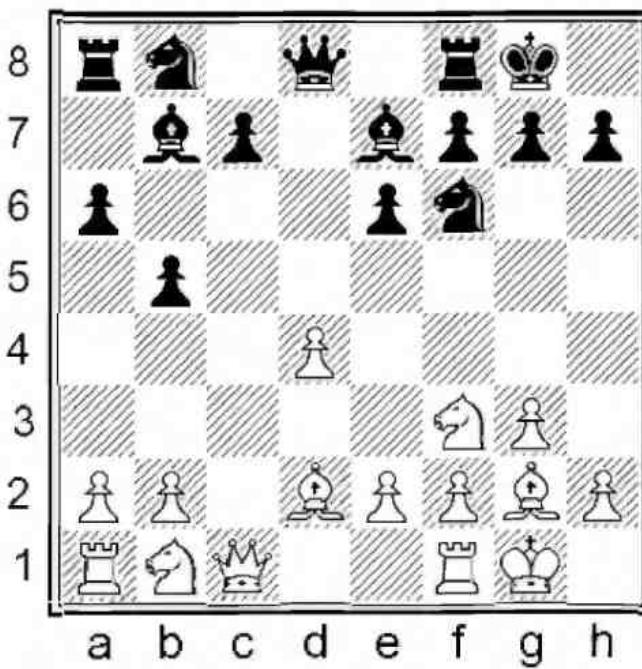
What conclusions can we draw? This is one of the main lines for Black, and the plan with  $\mathbb{B}e4$  and  $\mathbb{W}c8$  is quite unpleasant for White to face. It is important to remember that after  $\mathbb{W}c8$ , White plays  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , although in all the other lines he reacts differently. We are prepared to exchange the bishop, and we allow the opponent to play ...c7-c5, but in return, we double his pawns on the kingside and establish control over the c-file, and, especially, the weakened square c6.

After 12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  White even has a choice of how to attack the bishop on e4 – with the knight from d2 (so as later to bring the knight to b3 and then c5 or a5) or with the queen from f4, strengthening control over the centre. Both plans promise White a small advantage.

## Chapter 18 – Classical Variation 11...♝b7

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 ♜e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 dxс4 7.♕c2 a6 8.♕xc4 b5 9.♕c2 ♜b7 10.♗d2 ♜e4 11.♕c1 ♜b7

Finally, we have reached the main Catalan *tabiya*.



The ‘shuttle’ manoeuvre ...♝b7-e4-b7 looks somewhat strange, and may appear to be a loss of time, but this is not so. Firstly, after ♘c3 or ♘bd2, the bishop will be attacked and will have to move away anyway. And with the bishop on b7, Black has two reliable plans – after ...♝bd7 and ...c7-c5, or ...♞c6, attacking the pawn on d4.

**12.♗f4!?**

Exploiting the fact that Black cannot play ...c7-c5, White attacks the c7-pawn.

Of course, with the move 12.♕c2 White can offer a draw by repetition; one can find many such draws in the database.

**A) 12...♘d5**

**B) 12...♞d6**

Sometimes 12...♞c6 is also played, but this is not the best continuation: Black’s slight initiative is soon neutralised, whilst the knight is not so great on c6. For example: 13.♖d1 ♘d5 14.♗g5 ♘b6 15.♗xe7 ♛xe7 16.♗e5 ♘xe5 17.♗xb7 ♛a7 18.♗g2 ♘ed7 (Kachiani-Zdebskaja, Kusadasi 2006) 19.♗c3 (19.a4 ♘xa4 20.b3 ♘ab6 21.♗c3 c6 22.♗xc6 ♛c7=) 19...h6 (19...c5 20.dxc5 ♘xc5 21.b3±) 20.a4 b4 21.♗e4±. Black has weaknesses on the queenside and the rook on a7 is rather badly placed.

**A) 12...♘d5**

**13.♘c3**

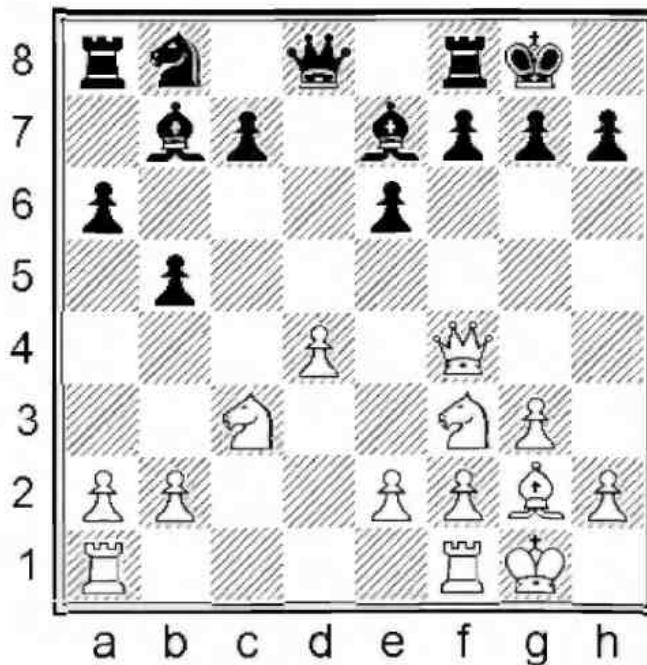
Not fearing the exchange on f4 (as we have seen in previous variations, White does not usually object to exchanging his

bishop for the knight), White immediately challenges the enemy's centralised knight. The text practically forces Black to take on f4, after which White places his pieces in the centre and tries at a convenient moment to carry out the break d4-d5.

One of the main Catalan specialists, Vladimir Kramnik, in his Candidates' match against Radjabov, tried 13... $\mathbb{Q}d1$ . After 13... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  the position had greatly simplified, although White retains a small initiative all the same. There followed: 17... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{E}fd8$  19. $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $c5$ , Kramnik-Radjabov, Kazan 2011, and here the fight for an advantage could be continued by 21.d5!?

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$**

**14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$**



**A1) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**A2) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**A3) 14... $c5$**

**A4) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

**A1) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$**

Also good is 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (Black cannot exploit the pin with ...f7-f6, because the white queen moves to e4 or f3 with tempo) 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  20.f3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  25.b3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  26. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 27. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm$  Jurek-Zier, Marianske Lazne 2011) 17...f5 (White provokes his opponent into playing 17...f6, after which there follows 18. $\mathbb{Q}c6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd8$  20.gxf4 with the better chances) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  exd6 19. $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$ .

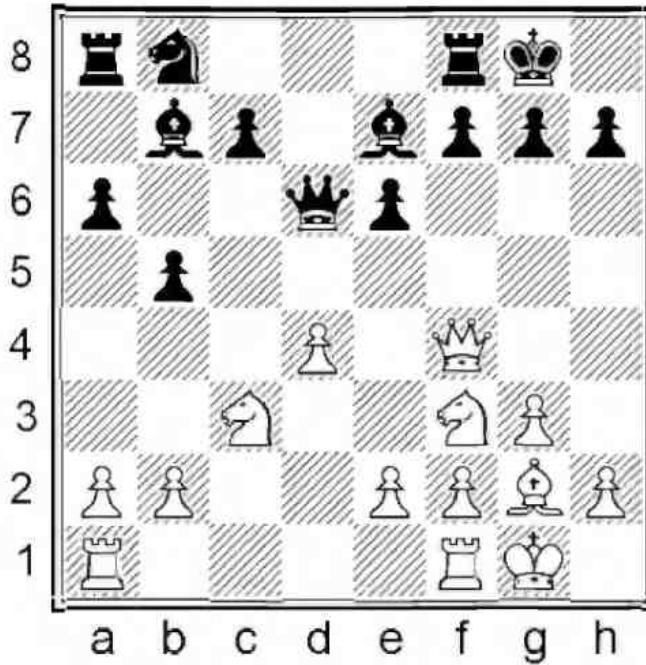
**15... $\mathbb{Q}d7$**

In reply to 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  White again has a pleasant choice: 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$  (16. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$  – I think this exchange is a mistake – 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{E}a7$  18.a4 bxa4 19. $\mathbb{Q}xa4 \mathbb{Q}d7$  20. $\mathbb{E}fa1 \mathbb{E}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c2 \mathbb{E}b6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d2 \mathbb{Q}b8$  23. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$  Gupta-A. Rychagov, Kavala 2010) 16...c5 17.a4 b4 18. $\mathbb{Q}e4 cxd4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd4 \mathbb{Q}xe4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4 \mathbb{E}a7$  21. $\mathbb{E}ac1\pm$  Romanishin-Ivanovic, Stara Pazova 1988.

## 16. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

transposing into a position examined below.

### A2) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$



### A21) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

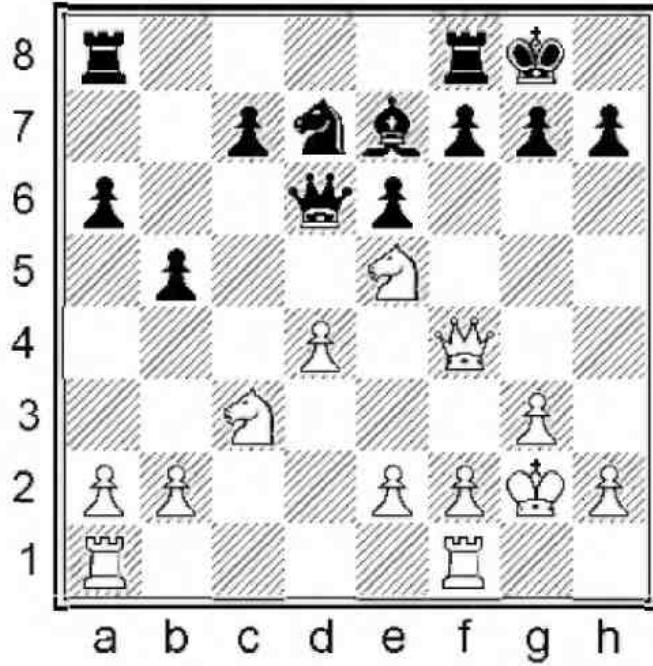
### A22) 15. $\mathbb{E}fd1$

**A21)** Black still has definite problems after

15. $\mathbb{Q}e5 \mathbb{Q}xg2$

16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2 \mathbb{Q}d7$

Premature is 16...c5, since White, by exploiting the exposed position of the queen on d6, transfers his pieces to threatening positions with tempo: 17. $\mathbb{E}fd1 \mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e4 \mathbb{Q}c7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc6 \mathbb{Q}xc6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (defending against ...f7-f5 and, in his turn, threatening  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$ ) 20... $\mathbb{E}ac8$  (the incautious retreat 20... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  could lead Black into great difficulties: 21.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22. $\mathbb{E}d7 \mathbb{E}ad8?$  23. $\mathbb{E}b7\pm$ ) 21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5 \mathbb{Q}xf3+$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xf3 \mathbb{Q}xc5$  23.dxc5  $\mathbb{E}xc5$  24. $\mathbb{E}ac1$  (because of the weakness of the 8th rank, Black cannot play 24... $\mathbb{E}fc8$ , and this means he must concede control of the c-file to his opponent) 24... $\mathbb{E}f5+$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  b4 26. $\mathbb{E}c4 \mathbb{E}a5$  27. $\mathbb{E}xb4 \mathbb{E}xa2$  28. $\mathbb{E}d7 a5$  29. $\mathbb{E}b5\pm$ . Of course, rook endings always contain considerable drawing tendencies, but even so, Black still has to fight to secure the draw here.



**17.♘xd7**

The best try for advantage.

Black is not caused great difficulties by 17.a4 ♜ad8 18.axb5 axb5 19.♗fd1 ♜b6=.

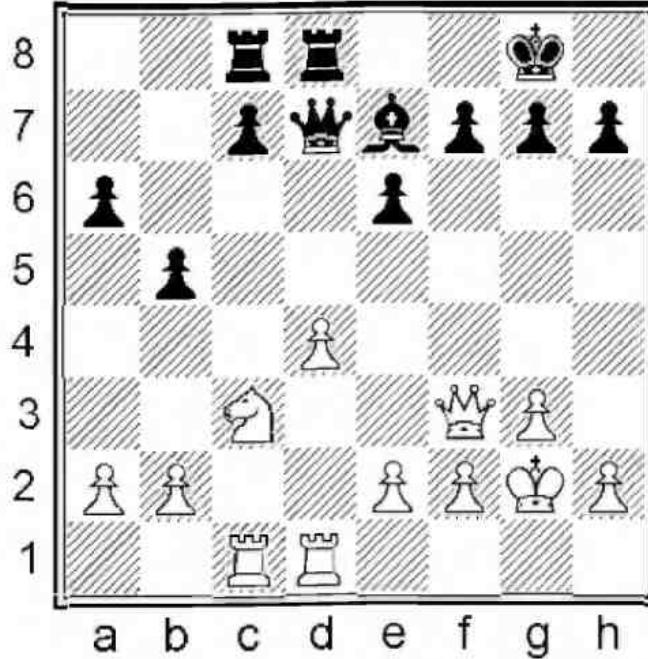
Practice has also seen 17.♗ac1 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♜b6 19.♘e4 ♜ad8 20.♗fd1 c5 21.♘d6 c4. Of course, the knight on d6 is excellently placed, but by itself it does not bring White any particular dividends, whilst the other pieces do not support it very well. At the same time, Black has a pawn majority on the queenside, and he can gradually advance these pawns. 22.b3 cxb3 23.axb3 a5 24.♗d3 a4 25.bxa4 bxa4 26.♗xa4 ♘xd6 27.♗b3. White wins the queen, but Black sets up an unbreakable fortress: 27...♜xb3 28.♗xb3 ♘xe5 29.h4 g6 30.h5 ♘g7= Le Quang Liem-Kramnik, Dortmund 2010.

**17...♜xd7**

**18.♗fd1 ♜ac8**

**19.♗f3 ♜fd8**

**20.♗ac1**



**20...h6**

Dominguez-Carlsen, Nice 2010.

The silicon beast suggests 20...f5, so as not to allow the white knight into e4 and then c5.

**21.♘e4 ♜d5**

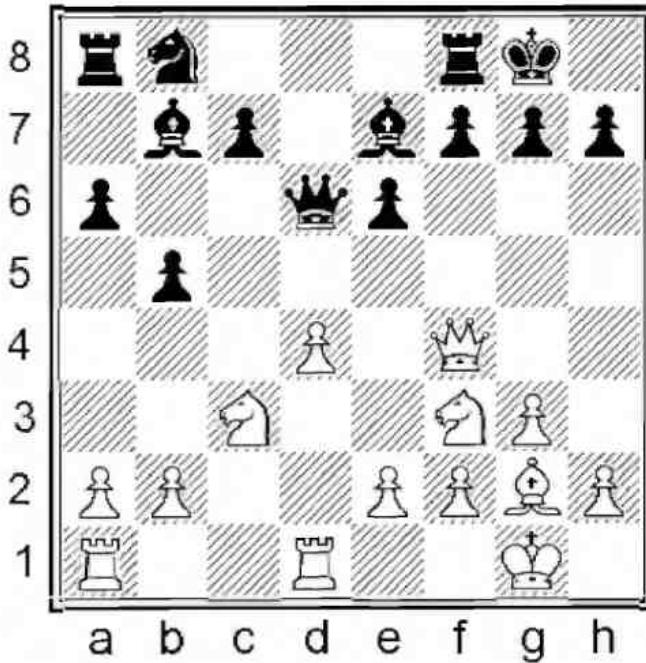
**22.a3 e5**

**23.dxe5 ♜xe5**

**24.b4±**

White has managed to hold the pawn back on c7 after all. Admittedly, the position has been noticeably simplified, and Black has no bad pieces, whilst his bishop could later prove stronger than the white knight. Even so, Black still has some slight problems.

**A22) 15.♗fd1!?**



A relatively fresh idea – White does not fear doubled f-pawns.

**A221) 15...Qd7**

**A222) 15...e5**

If 15...Qxf4 16.gxf4 Qd7, then 17.Qe5±. White has realised his main idea – he has created a very strong piece and pawn centre. After the exchanges on g2 and e5, White's position will be further strengthened.

**A221) 15...Qd7**

**16.d5!?**

16.Qac1±.

**16...Qxf4!**

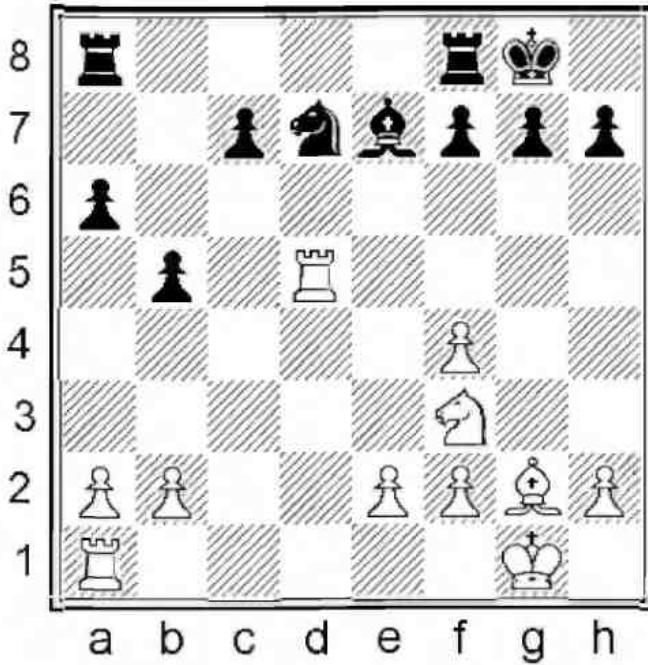
16...exd5 17.Qxd5±.

16...e5 17.Qxe5! Qxe5 (17...Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.d6±) 18.Qe4 (exploiting the geometrical motifs, White regains the piece) 18...Qg6 (18...g5 19.Qf5±) 19.Qxd6 Qxf4 20.Qxb7 Qxg2 21.Qxg2±, and White remains with a healthy extra pawn.

**17.gxf4 exd5**

**18.Qxd5 Qxd5**

**19.Qxd5**



A new type of position has arisen – with opposite-coloured bishops. The light squares are weakened in the black camp, whilst the dark-squared bishop will be restricted by the white pawns on e3 and f4. Sooner or later, White will transfer his knight to d4 and c6, and will be able to dictate terms.

**19...♝b6!**

**20.♝dd1 ♞f6**

**21.♝ac1!**

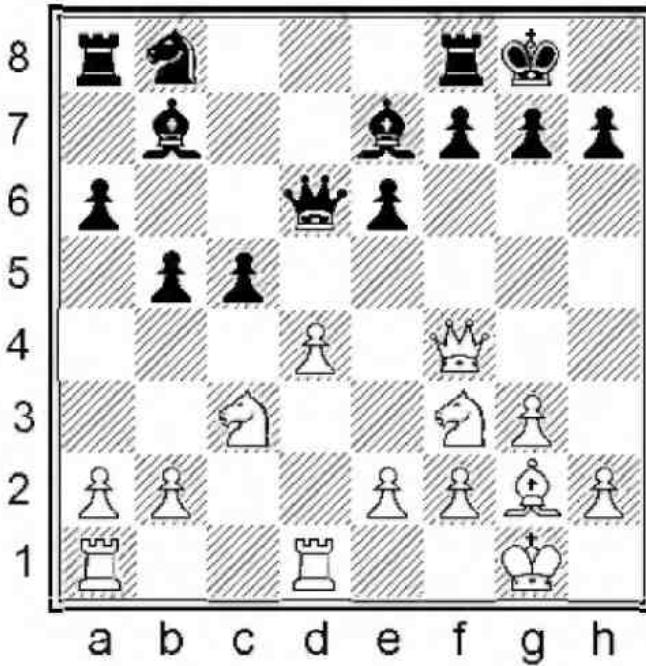
The initiative is more important than anything! White agrees to exchange the pawn on b2 for the weak pawn on c7. Little is promised by either 21.♝d4 ♜ad8 or 21.♝e5 ♜ae8.

**21...♝xb2**

**22.♝xc7±**

Romanishin-Dzhandzhava, Simferopol 1988. White has good objects of attack in the knight on f6 and pawn on a6, whilst the pawn on f7 will also become a target, once White transfers his bishop to d5.

**A222) 15...c5**



A logical move, but it is not a panacea for all Black's problems.

**16.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6 \mathbb{Q}xd6$**

**17.  $dxc5 \mathbb{Q}xc5$**

**18.  $\mathbb{E}ac1 \mathbb{Q}e7$**

**19.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

Once again, just as in variations we have examined earlier, Black has problems on the c-file, and especially with the square c6.

**19...  $\mathbb{E}a7$**

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7 \mathbb{E}xb7$**

**21.  $\mathbb{Q}e4 f6$**

**22.  $\mathbb{Q}c6 e5$**

**23.  $\mathbb{Q}a5 \mathbb{E}a7$**

**24.  $a3 \mathbb{Q}f7$**

**25.  $\mathbb{Q}d6+ \mathbb{Q}xd6$**

**26.  $\mathbb{E}xd6\pm$**

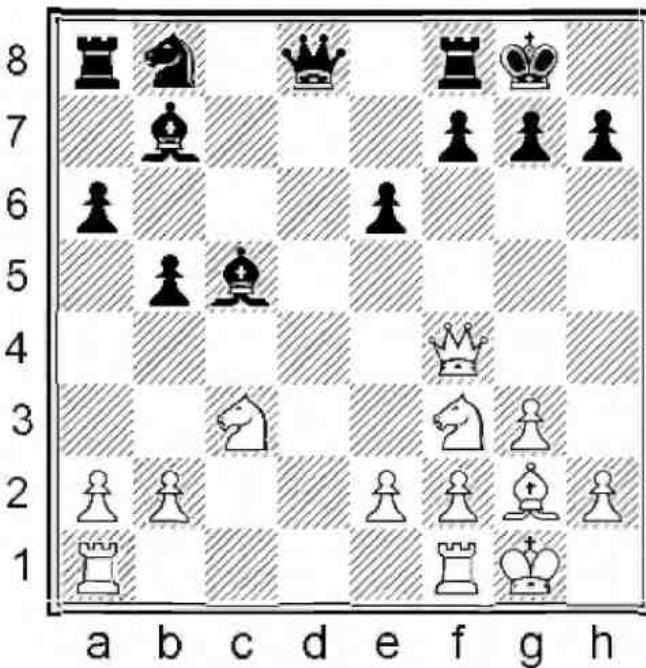
Kengis-Sammalvuo, Calvia 2004. The difference in piece activity marks some advantage for White.

**A3) 14...c5**

## 15.dxc5

Also good is 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd1$  – thanks to his development advantage, White retains some pressure, for example: 15...cxd4 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19. $\mathbb{W}e4$  (as often happens, the advantage in development will be most noticeable in the ending) 19... $\mathbb{W}xe4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c7\pm$  A. Zhigalko-Podolchenko, Minsk 2011.

## 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$



## 16. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$

Piket played 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  against Karpov and obtained the advantage, but for some reason, nobody has followed his example: 16... $\mathbb{W}e7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  19. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20.b4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{Q}xc7$  22.h4± Piket-Karpov, Dortmund 1995.

## 16... $\mathbb{W}b6$

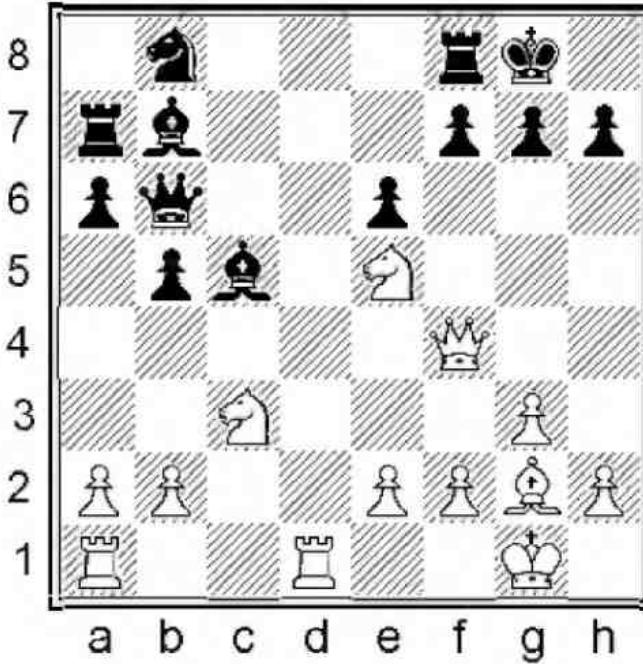
The position of the queen on e7 also has its minuses: 16... $\mathbb{W}e7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  18.a4 (exploiting the queen's distance from the queenside, White starts to probe on that flank. Less is promised by 18. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  21. $\mathbb{W}f3$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  23.e3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$  Shipov-Shneider, St Petersburg 1993) 18...b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  20. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  21.e3± Lastin-M.Novikov, Tomsk 2004. Black still has to develop his knight, and his queenside pawns are quite vulnerable.

## 17. $\mathbb{Q}e5$

Keeping the enemy knight on b8; after 17.e3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8=$  Chetverik-Kaposzta, Harkany 1996, Black is fine.

## 17... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

After 17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  his powerful centralisation gives White some advantage.



**18.Qxb7!**

Another promising plan is 18.Bac1! Qxg2 19.Qxg2 Qd6 20.e3 h6 21.Qe4 Qc7 22.Qc5 Qd6 23.Wd4 Qxe5 24.Wxe5 We8 25.Ed6± Vaganian-Andersson, Leningrad 1987.

**18...Bxb7**

**19.Bac1!?**

Also good is 19.Qe4 Qe7 20.Bac1± as was seen in Polugaevsky-Andersson, Haninge 1988.

**19...Qd6**

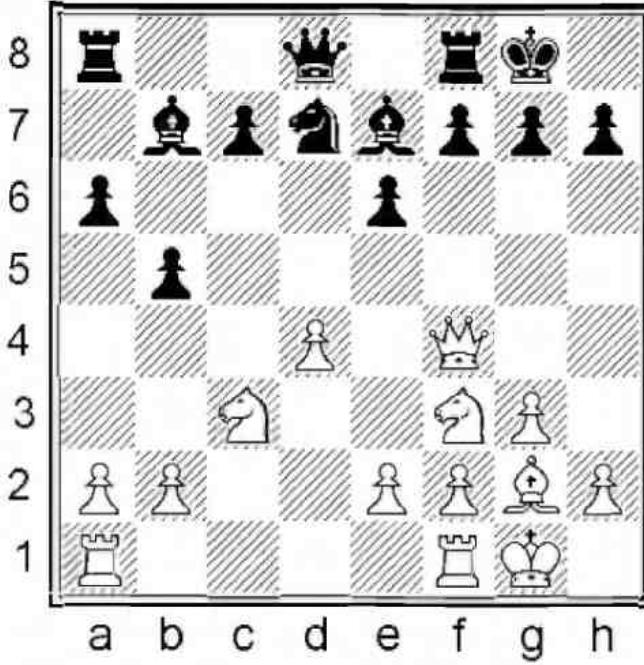
19...Bc7 20.Qe4 Qe7 21.Qg6+–;

19...f6!? 20.Qd3 Qd4 21.Qe4±.

**20.Qe4 Qc7**

**21.Qc5±**

**A4) 14...Qd7**



**A41) 15.♕e4**

**A42) 15.♖ac1**

**A43) 15.♗fd1**

**A41) 15.♕e4 c5**

**16.dxc5 ♕xc5**

**17.♗fd1 ♜b6**

Black has played ...c7-c5, and found a convenient square for his queen. Admittedly, White has a small advantage in development and is strongly centralised. Black needs to find 1-2 accurate moves, to equalise completely.

**18.♕e5**

Completely harmless is 18.♕xc5 ♕xc5 19.♕e5 ♜xg2 20.♗xg2 ♜d6 21.♗e4 ♜xe5 22.♗xe5 ♜ad8=.

**18...♝xe4**

**19.♝xe4 ♜ac8**

Black has surrendered the bishop pair, in return for completing his development and covering the square c6.

**20.♝f3 a5**

**21.♜ac1 ♜c7**

**22.♗g2 h6**

**23.h4 ♜f6=**

So-Onischuk, Lubbock 2010.

**A42)** It is worth having a closer look at Dmitry Andreikin's move

**15.♗ac1**

This is how his game went:

**15...♝d6**

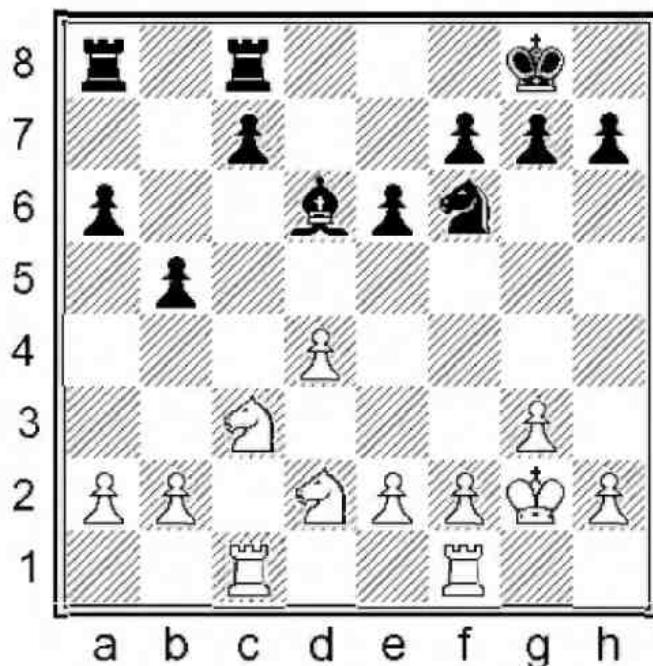
**16.♛h4 ♛xh4**

**17.♕xh4 ♜xg2**

**18.♝xg2 ♔f6**

**19.♕f3 ♜fc8**

**20.♕d2**



Now 20...c5 is impossible because of 21.♘ce4, winning a pawn. Black carries out another pawn break – even so, some difficulties remain.

**20...e5**

**21.d5!**

By temporarily sacrificing a pawn, White prevents his opponent activating his bishop.

**21...b4**

**22.♘ce4 ♜xd5**

**23.♕xd6 cxd6**

**24.♕e4 f6**

The pawn cannot be held anyway, therefore Black strengthens his position and opens a path to the centre for his king.

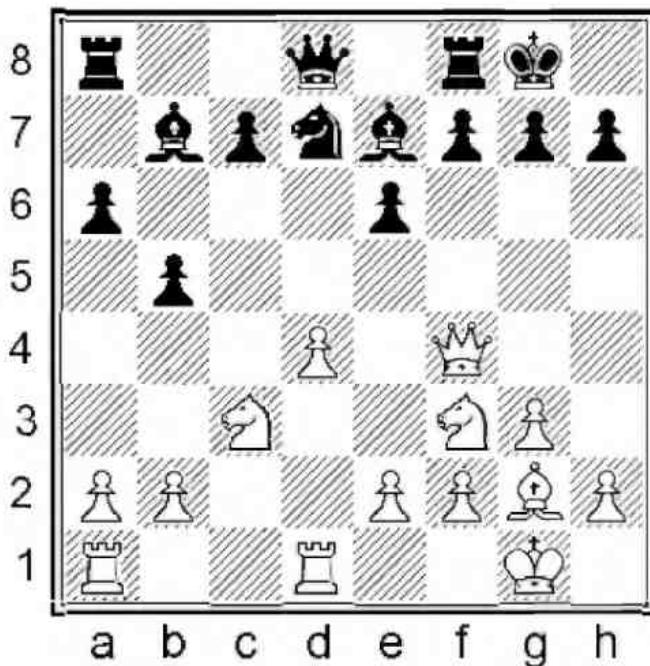
**25.♕xd6 ♜d8**

**26.♕b7 ♜dc8**

**27.♔f3±**

Andreikin-Bruzon, Havana 2011.

**A43) 15.♖fd1**



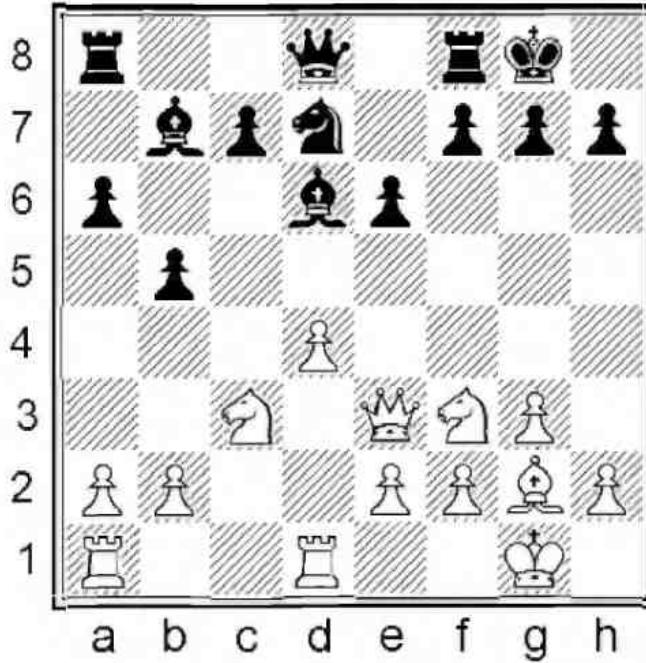
**15...♝d6**

It is worth considering 15...♝b8!?, getting the queen away from the enemy rook on d1 and preparing ...c7-c5. Play could continue: 16.♗e3 (in order to answer ...c7-c5 with d4-d5) 16...♝a7 17.♜ac1 ♜f6 18.♕e5 ♜xg2 19.♕xg2 c5 20.dxc5 (on 20.d5 Black would probably reply 20...♝b6) 20...♜xc5 21.♗f3 ♜ac8 22.♗e4 ♜xe4 23.♝xe4± Smejkal-Hakki, Bahrain 1990. Thanks to his superior control of the centre, White retains quite strong pressure.

**16.♗e3**

White places his forces in the centre and wants to continue with either ♜e5 or ♜e4.

Practice has also seen 16.♗h4 ♜e7, M. Muzychuk-Hou Yifan, Mardin 2011 (White has more chances after 16...♜f6 17.a3 ♜d5 (17...♝b8 18.g4 ♜d8 19.♜ac1 ♜e7 20.g5 ♜d7 21.d5 ♜f8 22.♗e5± Aronian-Ivanchuk, Monaco 2007) 18.♜ac1 ♜xc3 19.♜xc3 ♜xf3 20.♝xd8 ♜fxd8 21.♜xf3±) 17.♗h3 (of course, White can begin to repeat moves: 17.♗f4 ♜d6 18.♗h4 etc.) 17...c6! (17...c5 immediately would be premature, so Black first gets his queen off the d-file, to b6 or c7) 18.♜ac1 ♜b6. Later Black plays ...c6-c5 and obtains satisfactory play.



**A431) 16...♝b6**

**A432) 16...♛e7**

**A431) 16...♝b6**

and here White has a pleasant choice:

**17.♝e1**

White simply wants to exchange light-squared bishops and strengthen control over the squares c5 and e5.

Also good is 17.a4 ♐c4 (after the exchange on a4, White establishes the classical advantage of knight over bishop: 17...♝xa4 18.♝xa4 bxa4 19.♝xa4 ♕b8 20.b3 ♘d5 21.♝d2± Laznicka-Onischuk, Poikovsky 2011) 18.♛c1 b4 19.♝e4 (with the help of this tactical motif, White wants to exchange knights and retain pressure on the c-file) 19...♝xb2 20.♝xd6 ♕xf3 21.♝xf3 ♘xd1 22.♝b7 ♛xd4 23.♝xd1 ♛xd1+ 24.♝xd1 a5 25.♝c1 ♕a7 26.♝f1 c6 27.♝c5 ♕c8 28.♝e1 with somewhat better chances for White.

**17...♝xg2**

**18.♝xg2**

The king should take, since the knight is heading for d3.

**18...♚e7**

18...b4 19.♝e4 ♘d5 (Maletin-Kravtsiv, Delhi 2010) 20.♛c1 f5 21.♝c5±.

**19.♝d3**

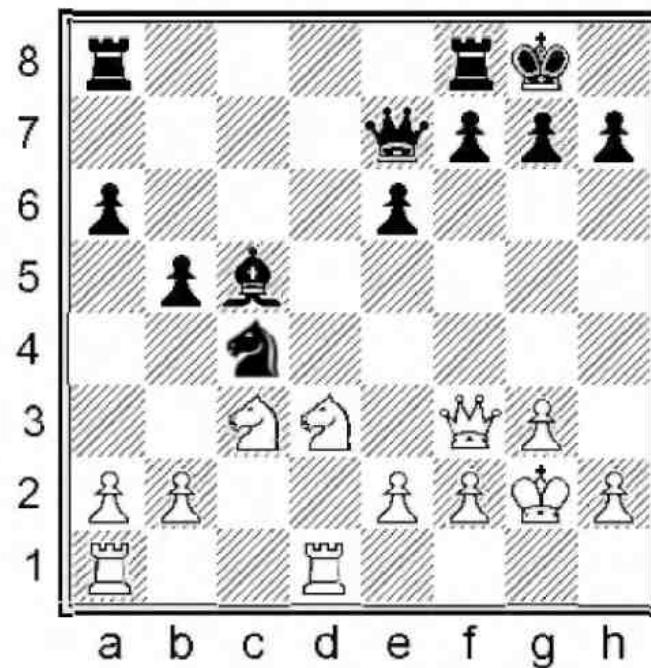
It may make sense to draw the fire on oneself with 19.a4 with the idea of weakening Black's queenside: 19...b4 20.♝e4 f5 21.♝d2±.

**19...♝c4**

19...f5 20.♝ac1 b4 21.♝b1 ♝d5 22.♛f3± (Avrukh).

**20.♛f3 c5**

**21.dxe5 ♞xc5**



Laznicka-Hou Yifan, New Delhi 2011. Here White should have continued

**22.b3 ♘d4**

**23.♝ac1 ♘b6**

**24.e3 ♞xc3**

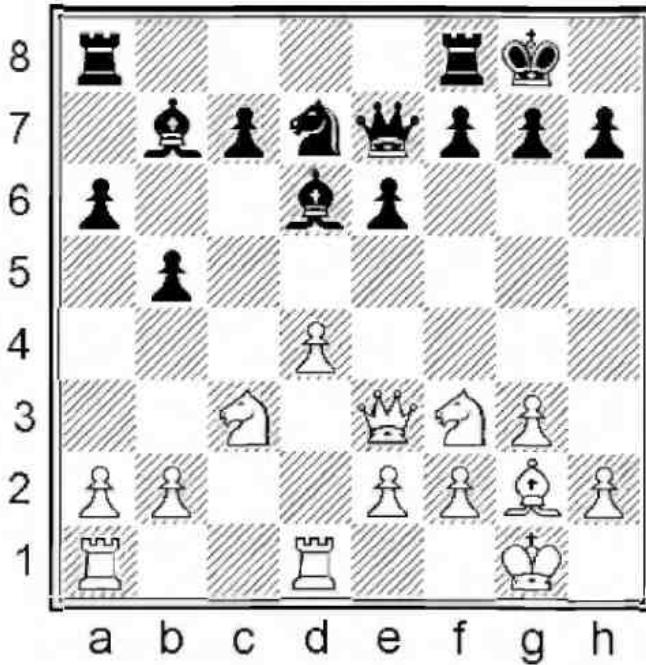
**25.♝xc3 ♘d5**

**26.♝c2 ♜ac8**

**27.♝dc1 ♜xc2**

**28.♝xc2±**

A432) 16...♛e7



**17.♕e4**

The immediate attack on the pawn formation also preserves a small advantage: 17.a4 bxa4 (17...b4 18.♕e4±) 18.♕xa4 ♜ab8 19.♕e5 ♜xg2 20.♗xg2 ♜xe5 21.dxe5 ♜b5 22.♕c3 ♜b6 (also better for White is 22...♜xb2 23.♗d4! ♜b3 24.♗c4 ♜b7 25.♗c6 ♜b3 26.♗xc7±) 23.♗ac1 ♜fb8 24.♗a4 ♜b7 25.♗d4± Fressinet-Gustafsson, Oberhof 2011.

On the other hand, White gets nothing from 17.♕e5 ♜xg2 18.♗xd7 ♜xd7 19.♗xg2 because of the typical device in such positions, 19...f5! (by threatening ...f5-f4, Black controls the e4-square with tempo) 20.f4 b4 21.♗b1 (Leko-Karpov, Moscow 2009) 21...♗c6+! 22.♗f2 ♜d5 followed by ...c7-c5, and Black has fully-fledged play.

**17...♝d5**

**18.♜ac1 ♜b6**

**19.b3**

A typical move to restrict two black pieces.

**19...a5**

**20.♗d3 b4**

Now that a breach has appeared in the black queenside, White is perfectly able to take on d6.

**21.♗xd6**

21.♗eg5 f5 22.e4 fxe4 23.♗xe4 (Kaidanov-Rozentalis, Lvov 1987) 23...a4 with counterplay.

**21...cxsd6**

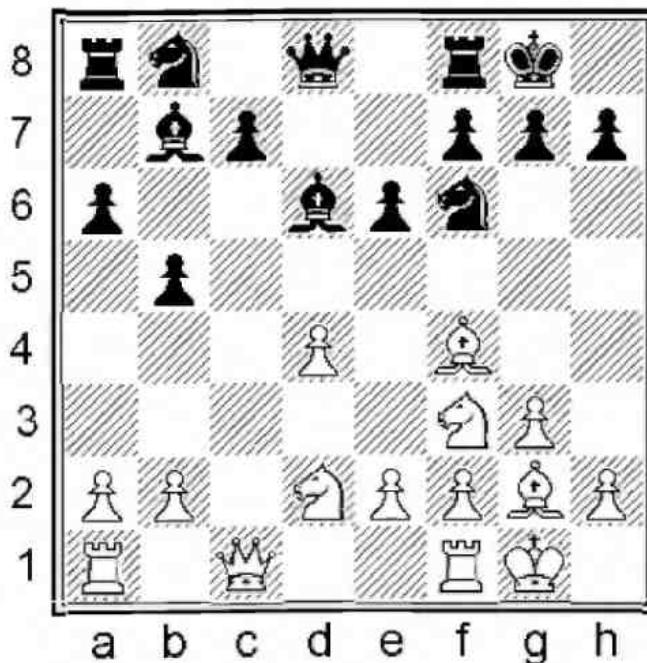
**22.e4 ♜b7**

23.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$

24.  $\mathbb{E}e1\pm$

B) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$

13.  $\mathbb{Q}bd2$



Again White does not object to the exchange on f4, but it is not good for Black to make this trade, as the pawn g3 moves closer to the centre, which in turn gives White greater control over the square e5. It is not very realistic to hope to exploit the slight weakening of the king on g1.

B1) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

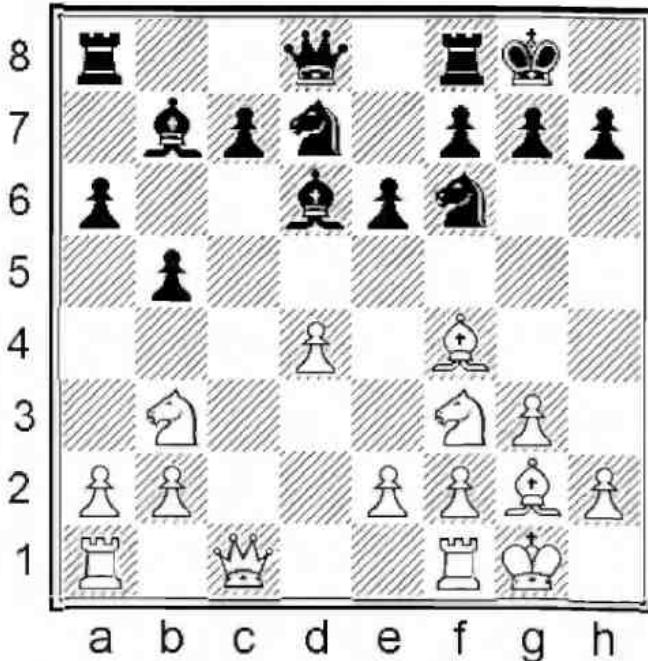
B2) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$

13...  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14.  $gxf4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19.  $\mathbb{E}fd1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (Laznicka-Beliavsky, Aix les Bains 2011) 21.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$   $\mathbb{E}c8$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  24.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h4$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}f3\pm$ .

B1) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$

But 14.  $\mathbb{E}e1$   $\mathbb{E}c8!=$ .



The standard manoeuvring around the c5-square begins, although the knight can also go to a5, in some circumstances.

**B11) 14...♝c8**

**B12) 14...♞d5**

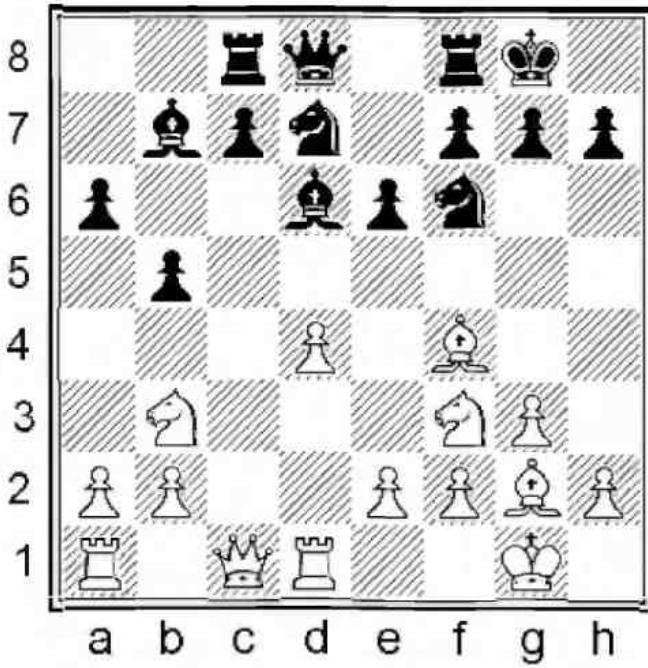
On 14...♛e7 White establishes control over c6 after 15.♘a5 (15.♘e5!?) 15...♞d5 16.♘c6 ♛e8 17.♘fe5±.

**B11) 14...♝c8!?**

**15.♞d1**

If White ‘seals up’ the hole on c5 with 15.♘c5 ♘xc5 16.dxc5, then after 16...♜xf4 17.♜xf4 Black sets up an impenetrable blockade: 17...♛e7 (less accurate is 17...♞d5 in view of 18.♝fd1 – 18.♘e5 ♛e7 19.♝ac1 ♜xg2 transposes into the Gelfand-Svidler game seen below – 18...♛e7 19.♘e5 ♜xc5 20.♝ac1 ♛e7 21.♘c6±) 18.♝ac1 ♜d5 19.♘e5 ♜xg2 20.♝xg2 c6 21.♝fd1 ♜d5 22.♝d2 ♛c7 23.♝d3, draw, Gelfand-Svidler, Moscow 2001.

On a5, the knight will be unstable: 15.♘a5 ♜xf4 (also good is 15...♞d5 16.♘c6 ♘xc6 17.♝xc6 ♜b8 18.♝c3 (18.♝b7 ♜xf4 19.gxsf4 c5±) 18...♞d5 19.♝d2 ♜xf4 20.gxf4 ♛f6 21.e3 c5=) 16.♝xf4 (16.gxf4?!, ♜xf3 17.♝xf3 c5 18.♘c6 ♛e8 19.dxc5 ♜d5, and Black takes over the initiative) 16...♞d5 17.b4 c5!±. After 18.dxc5 ♘xc5 it is not good for White to take again on c5 because he loses the knight on a5, so Black solves all his opening problems satisfactorily.



**15...Qd5!?**

If 15...Qxf4, then 16.Qxf4 Qe7 17.Qac1 (Dydyshko-Dobrowolski, Lubniewice 2003) 17...Qd5 (it looks as though Black is already prepared to carry out the advance 17...c5, but after 18.dxc5 Qxc5 there is the very unpleasant pin 19.Qb4! Qfe4 20.Qe5 – the black pieces are tied hand and foot) 18.Qe5 (grabbing the pawn is unfavourable: 18.Qxc7 Qxb3 19.Qxc8 (19.axb3? Qd5) 19...Qxd1 20.Qxf8+ Qxf8 21.Qd2 Qxe2+) 18...Qxg2 19.Qxd7 Qxd7 20.Qxg2 c5 21.Qxc5 Qxc5 22.dxc5 Qxc5 23.Qxc5 Qxc5 24.Qd6 a5 25.f3 b4. White has a symbolic advantage, but objectively, the position is close to a draw.

I suggest an improvement at move 18: 18.Qa5! Now if Black plays ...c7-c5, then after the opening of the c-file, White will try to utilise the weakness of the c6-square: 18...Qb4 (White is better after 18...c5 19.dxc5 Qxc5 20.Qd4) 19.Qd2 Qd6 20.Qe5 (20.b4!?) 20...Qxe5 21.dxe5 Qxe5 22.Qc6 Qxc6 23.Qxc6±.

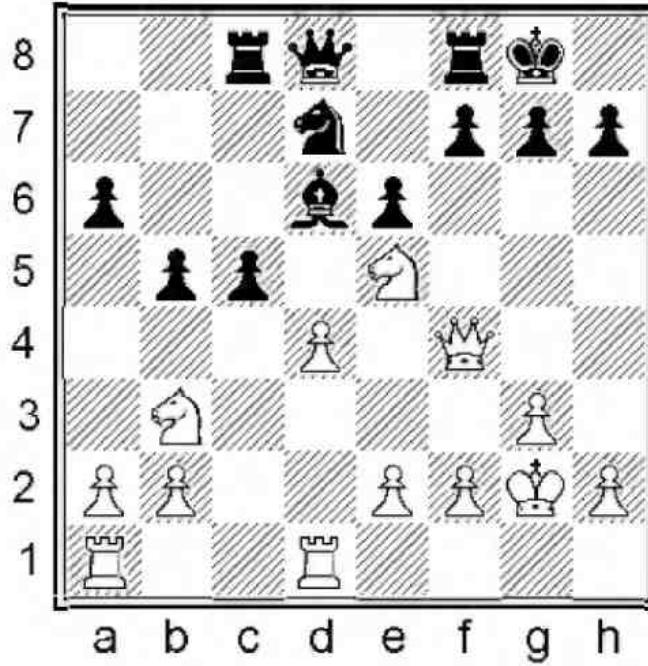
**16.Qe5 Qxf4**

**17.Qxf4 Qxg2**

**18.Qxg2 c5**

The exchanging operation 18...f6 19.Qc6 Qxf4 20.Qxd8 Qfxd8 21.gxf4 leaves White with a small advantage: 21...Qb6 22.Qc5±.

Also insufficient for equality is 18...Qe8 19.Qe3 Qb6 20.Qac1±.



**19.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$**

**20.  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}cxd8$**

**21.  $gxf4$**

A gale has swept the board clean. At first sight, it may appear that Black is fine (he will regain the pawn without any problem), but in reality, the situation is not so simple for him.

**21...  $c4$**

**22.  $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$**

**23.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{B}xd1$**

**23...  $\mathbb{B}c8!?$  24.  $b4$   $\mathbb{B}xf4$  25.  $f3\pm$**

**24.  $\mathbb{B}xd1$   $\mathbb{B}c8$**

**25.  $a3$   $\mathbb{B}xc5$**

**26.  $\mathbb{B}d6$   $a5$**

**27.  $\mathbb{B}xe6$   $b4$**

**28.  $axb4$   $axb4$**

**29.  $\mathbb{B}d6$   $b3$**

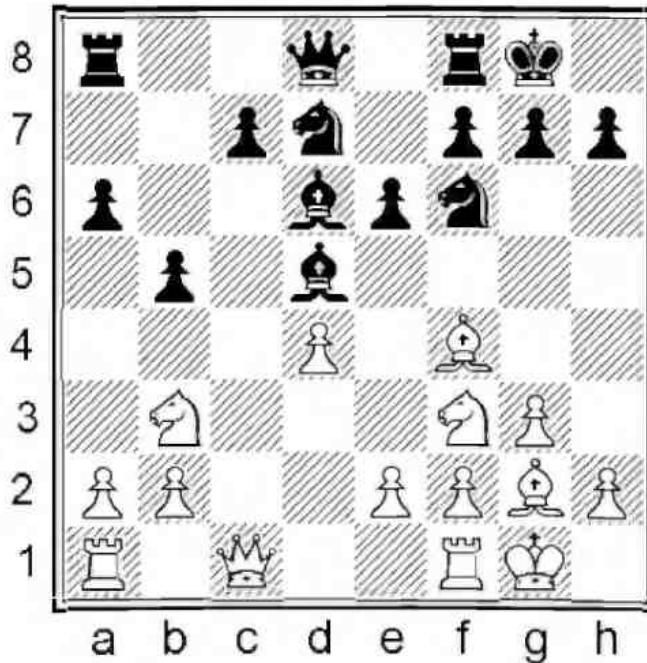
**30.  $h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$**

**31.  $e4$   $c3$**

32.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

33. $\mathbb{Q}d7+\pm$

B12) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d5$



B121) 15.Qe1

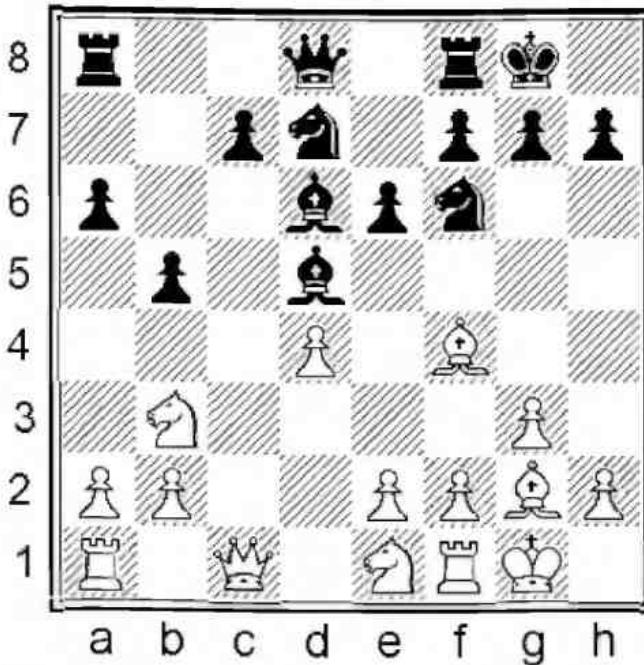
B122) 15.Qd1

In playing the active move 15.Qe5?!, White should take account of the fact that his opponent can win a pawn: 15... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?! (worse is 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  because of 18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  19.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  20.f4  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c5 23. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f6 24.exf6 gxf6 25. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$  Damljanovic-Perunovic, Belgrade 2007) 17.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 18.Qd1  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  19.Qxf4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20.Qac1  $\mathbb{Q}d5=$ ) 19.Qc6  $\mathbb{Q}d5\mp$ . White has lost a pawn and is not regaining it without some effort. In other words, it is already White who must fight for equality here.

B121) The relatively uninvestigated move

15.Qe1?!

is an interesting try.



**B1211) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

**B1212) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

15...e5 16.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  21.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  22.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d4+$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  24. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  with a large advantage to White.

The attempt to stir up queenside counterplay does not really disturb White's plans: 15...a5 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  a4 18. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5+$  21.f3  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22.e4±

**B1211) 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7$**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$**

**17. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$**

**18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$**

**19. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$**

19... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  (if 20.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  White cannot take either the knight or the pawn: 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ , and it turns out that the queen is trapped; Black is better after 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  c6 22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$ ) 20... $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  21.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  f5 25. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  26.e3±. White has strengthened his centre and retained control over c5, to where he will direct his knight in the very near future (while the enemy's will be driven from c4 with the move b2-b3).

**20. $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$**

**21. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$**

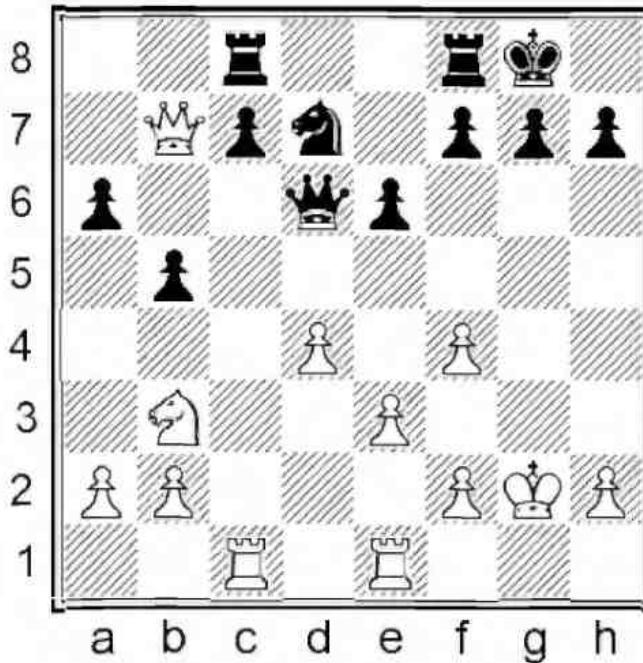
**22.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}d6$**

**23.e3**

Less good is 23.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  24.  $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  25.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$  c5= Avrukh-Solomon, Calvia 2004.

23...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

24.  $\mathbb{E}ac1$



24...c5

If he does not play this now, then White will prevent it. But even here, Black still has definite problems, thanks to his lag in development.

25.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

26.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{E}xc5$

27.  $\mathbb{E}ed1$   $\mathbb{E}d5$

The queen on d6 has no retreat square, so Black must agree to an isolated pawn.

28.  $\mathbb{E}xd5$   $exd5$

29.  $\mathbb{W}c6$

It might seem that 29.  $\mathbb{E}c6$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  30.  $\mathbb{E}xa6$  is very strong, but then there is 30...  $\mathbb{W}e4+!$  (30...  $\mathbb{W}xb2?$  31.  $\mathbb{W}xd5\pm$ ) 31.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h5 32. h3 h4+ 33.  $\mathbb{Q}xh4$   $\mathbb{W}f3$  and Black has sufficient counterplay for a draw.

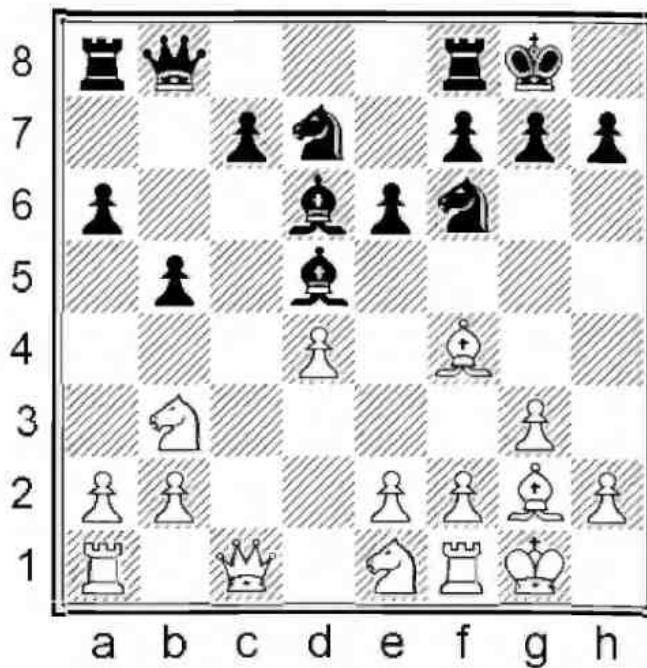
29...  $\mathbb{W}b4$

30.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$

31.  $\mathbb{E}c6\pm$

Black's pieces are passive and he faces a fight for a draw.

B1212) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$



A somewhat unusual, but apparently quite good reply: the queen heads to the square b6, where, as I have already commented several times, she is very well placed.

16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

Also good is the immediate 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  19. $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7+$  21. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$  Harikrishna-Yu Shaoteng, Khanty-Mansiysk 2005.

17. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$

Weaker is 17... $\mathbb{Q}b7+$  18. $f3\pm$ .

In this position, there is no way to outfox Black, for example:

18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$

18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (or 18... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ) 19. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  a5 20. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  22. $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ .

18...a5

19. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  a4

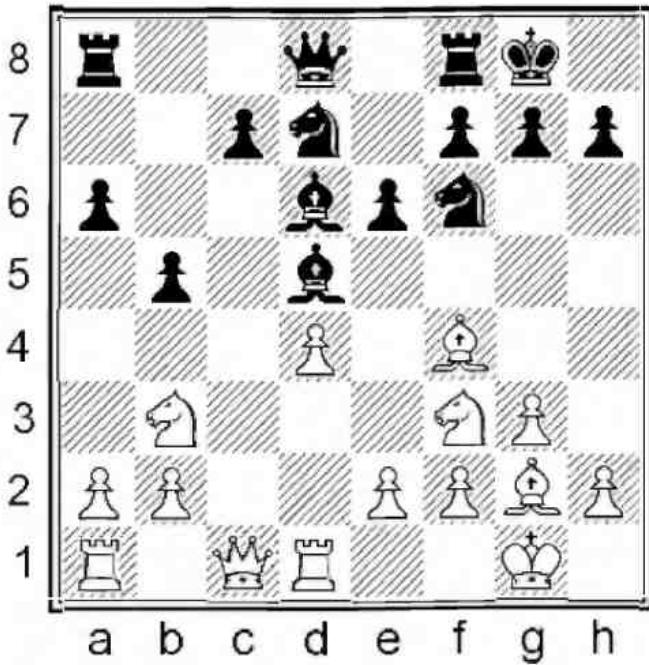
20. $\mathbb{Q}bc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

21. $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6+$

22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

23. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8=$

## B122) 15.♕d1



**B1221) 15...♛b8**

**B1222) 15...♜c8**

**B1223) 15...♛e7**

**B1221)** Here too we must check

**15...♛b8**

**16.♘e5**

16.♗e5 ♛b6! 17.♗f4 ♘e4 18.♗xd6 cxd6 19.♘e1 (Bareev-Lalic, Sochi 1987) 19...f5!? – Black is at least no worse here; 16.♘c5 ♘xc5 (16...♘xc5 17.dxc5 ♛b7?) 17.dxe5 ♗xf4 18.♗xf4 ♛b7 19.♗d3 (19.a3?; 19.b3 a5?) 19...♗fe8!? (artificial attempts to take over the initiative do not work: 19...e5 20.♗xe5 ♗fe8 21.♗g5!? (21.♗c3?! ♗xe2?) 21...♗xe2 22.♗d4! ♗xg2 (22...♗xb2? 23.♗f5+) 23.♗xe2 ♗h1 24.♗f4 (there is no mate, whilst White already has an extra exchange) 24...♗e8 25.c6 (White loses almost all of his advantage after 25.♗f1 h6 26.♗h4 ♗f3!) 25...♗xc6 26.♗c3 ♛a8 (26...♗b7 27.♗c5±) 27.♗xc7 ♛e4 28.h4 ♗f3 29.♗f1±) 20.♗e5 a5 21.♗ad1 ♛a7 22.♗e3 ♛b7 and Black has fully-fledged play.

**16...♝xg2**

**17.♞xg2**

17.♗xd7 ♘xd7 18.♗xg2 ♛b7+ 19.♔g1 a5 20.♔d2 ♛e4 21.♔xa5 ♛xe2 22.♔d2 ♛e4 23.♔c2 ♛d5= A. Fominykh-And. Nikitin, Samara 2002.

**17...♛b6**

Neither 17...a5 18.♕c6, nor 17...♗b7+ 18.♕c6 solve all the problems.

**18.♕c2**

If 18.♕c6 ♜xe5 19.♗xb6 cxb6 20.dxe5 ♖d5, Gelfand-Anand, Monaco 2004, White has only a symbolic edge.

**18...a5**

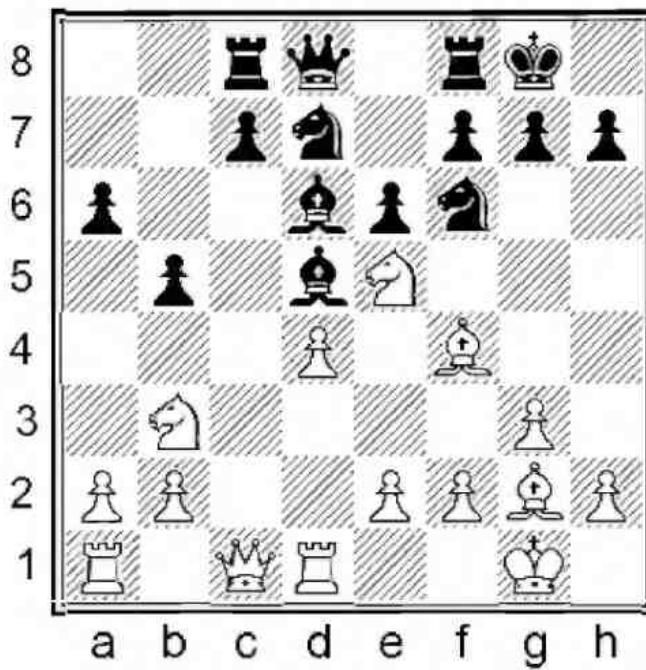
**19.♖ac1 a4**

**20.♘c5±**

White has managed to regroup in time and keep control of the square c5.

**B1222) 15...♝c8**

**16.♘e5**



The standard reaction to Black's manoeuvres.

Or 16.♘c5 ♜xc5 17.dxc5 ♜xf4 18.♗xf4 ♛e7 19.♘e5? (19.b4!?) 19...♜xc5 (19...♜xg2 20.♗xg2 ♜xc5 21.♖ac1 ♜b6 22.♘c6) 20.♖ac1 ♜e7 21.♘c6 ♜xc6 22.♖xc6 ♜fd8 23.♖dc1 (P.H. Nielsen-A. Goldin, Moscow 2001) 23...♘d5! (23...h6 24.a3) 24.♖xd5 ♜xd5 25.♖xc7 ♜xc7 26.♖xc7 g5! with fully adequate play for Black.

**16...♜xg2**

16...♛e8 17.♘xd7 ♜xd7 18.e4 ♜xf4 19.♗xf4 ♜a8 20.♖ac1 e5 21.dxe5 ♜xe5 22.♘c5± Blomqvist-Vernersson, Sweden 2011.

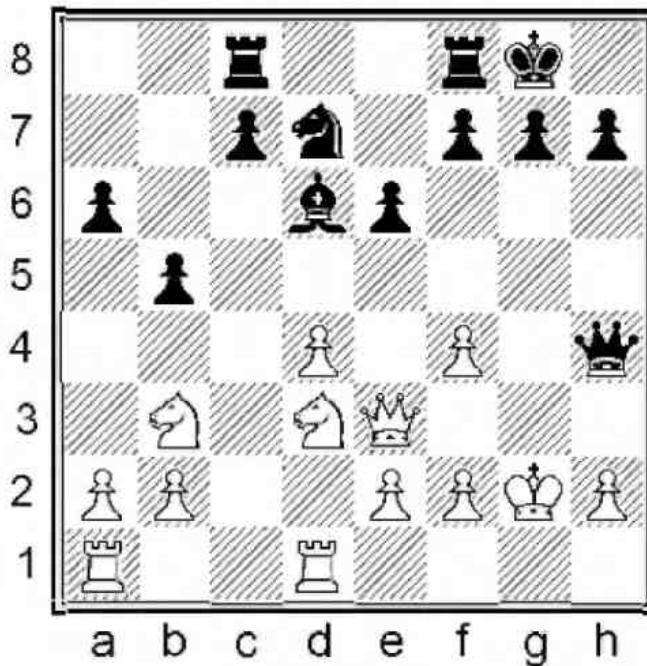
**17.♖xg2 ♘d5**

17...♜xe5 18.dxe5 ♘d5 19.♗g5!. A simple, but at the same time very effective move. If Black now plays 19...f6, then White exchanges, weakening the opponent's kingside pawn structure: 19...♛e8 20.♕c6 or 20.e4!?

18.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$

19. gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}h4$

20.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$



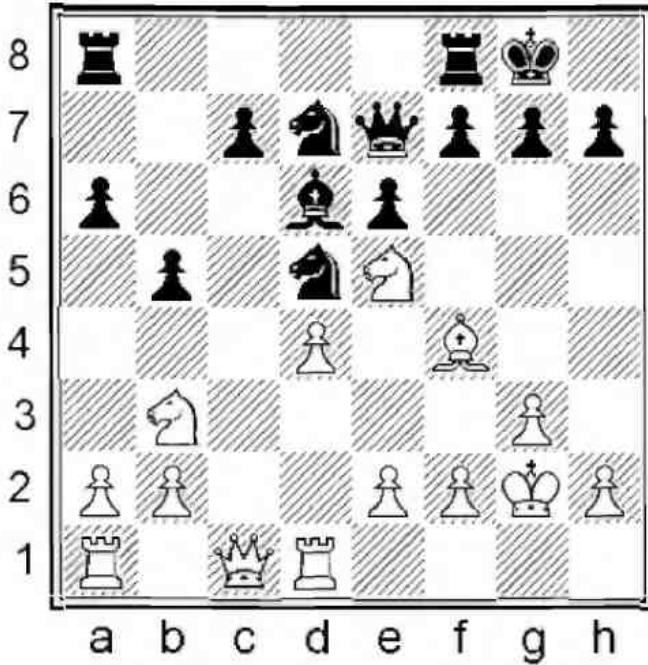
B1223) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$

16.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2$

After 16...  $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  the white pieces take a firm grip on the square c6: 17.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}ba5\pm$ .

17.  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$

White is better after 17...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ .



### 18. $\mathbb{Q}a5!?$

With this move, White invites his opponent to decide where, and with what, to capture.

There is probably no need to hurry to occupy c6 with 18.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ . Admittedly, White is then better after 18...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $cxd6$  20.  $e4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}ba5\pm$ . He can also fight for an advantage after 18...  $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (the best square for the queen in this position. From there, she controls the extremely important square c6) 20...  $e5$  ('behind the scenes' there remains the interesting try 20...  $f5!$  with the idea of provoking some kind of confrontation in the centre, but here too, White obtains the advantage by means of 21.  $e3$   $g5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $g4$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ ) 21.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}ae8$  24.  $e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$  Kasparov-Kramnik, London 2000.

However, in reply to 18.  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , 18...  $\mathbb{Q}e8!$  is very strong. Now White does not want to take on d6, whilst after 19.  $e4$  there could follow 19...  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  20.  $gxf4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6\uparrow$  and then ...  $f7-f5!?$ , probing the weak white pawns.

### 18... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

On 18...  $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  there follows the paradoxical 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  (stepping into the pin) 19...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (19...  $f6$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}ec6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $f5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $f4$  23.  $g4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  25.  $dxe5\pm$ ) 20.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (20...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21.  $dxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}b3\pm$ ) 21.  $dxe5$   $f6$  22.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  23.  $f3$ , and Black faces an unpleasant defence of his weak pawns.

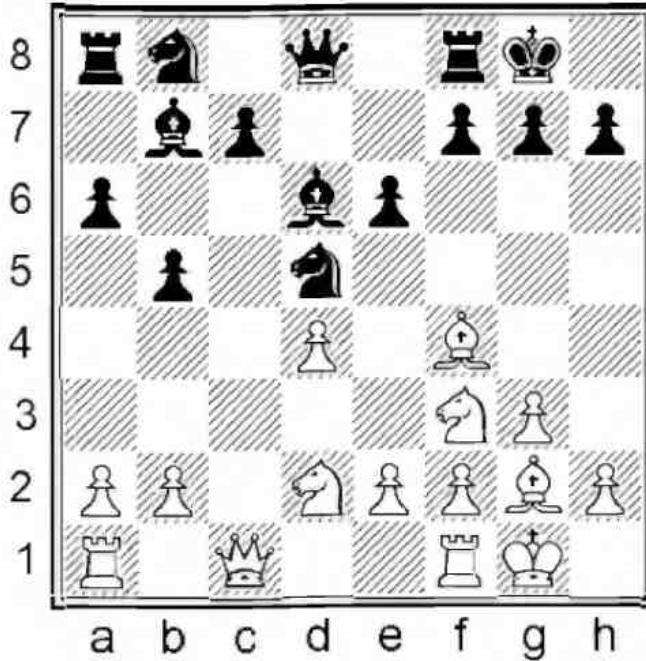
### 19. $dxe5$ $\mathbb{Q}b4$

Also better for White is 19...  $c5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $f6$  21.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  22.  $f3$ .

### 20. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$

White has achieved the main thing – maintaining control over the centre, and now, thanks to his rooks, he has obtained the advantage.

### B2) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d5$

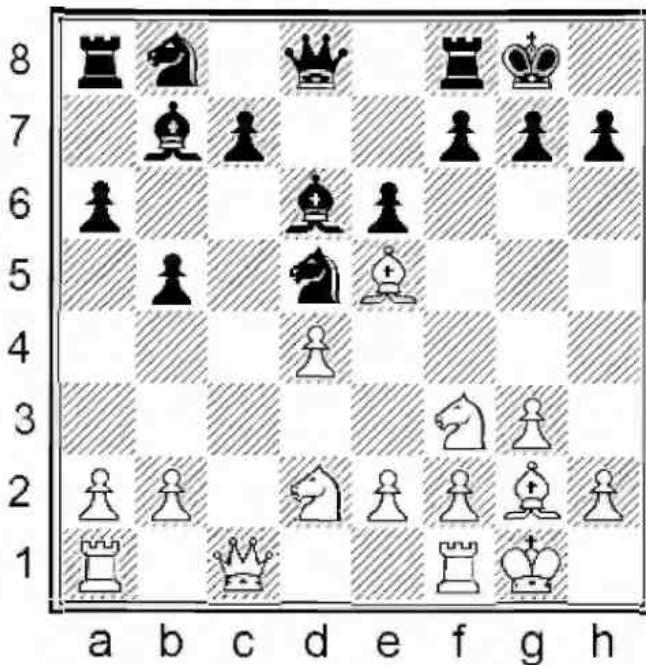


A very important move. Now it is unfavourable for White to capture on d6, because after ...cxd6 Black gets a very good structure and will solidly control the central squares.

#### 14.Qe5!?

A very interesting idea. White provokes his opponent either to take on e5 (and then after ...Qxe5 he obtains a solid advantage) or to weaken his pawn structure with ...f7-f6.

He can try to take control of c5 with 14.Qb3, but in the position reached after 14...Qxf4 15.gxf4 the pawn structure allows Black to get a comfortable game, for instance: 15...Qd7 16.e3 Qc8 17.Qd1 c5 18.dxc5 Qxc5 19.Qxc5 Qxc5 20.Qxc5 Qxc5 21.Qxd8 Qxd8 22.Qe5 Qxg2 23.Qxg2 Qf8= Aronian-Beliavsky, Heraklion 2007.



#### 14...Qd7

Or 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (it is hard for Black to simultaneously maintain control over both e5 and c5, because two of his minor pieces, the  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ , do not take part in the battle for these key squares) 15...f6 16.e4!? (White relies on tactical solutions. Less is promised by 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 17.e4 (17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fc1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7\infty$ ; 17. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 19.e3  $\mathbb{W}d7\infty$ ) 17... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  19. $\mathbb{W}e3$  f5 with mutual chances) 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  18. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{W}c1\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  19.gxf4) 19. $\mathbb{Q}fd2\pm$ . Again, we invite the opponent to take on f4, so as to allow us to strengthen our control over the centre.

If 14...f6, then 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  cxd6 16.e4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  (White immediately attacks the pawn on e6, which has been made weak by the move ...f7-f6) 17... $\mathbb{E}e8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  19.b3  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  (19... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  20. $\mathbb{W}d1$  d5 21.a3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  with slightly better chances for White) 20.d5 (having waited for the move ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$ , only now does White play d4-d5. If Black had not placed his rook on c8, then he would have lost control of the c-file) 20... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  21. $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  23.dxe6  $\mathbb{W}e7$  24.a4 $\pm$ .

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

White carries out his standard plan – directing his knight to c5.

### 15...a5

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}c5$ $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

### 17.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}a6$

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$

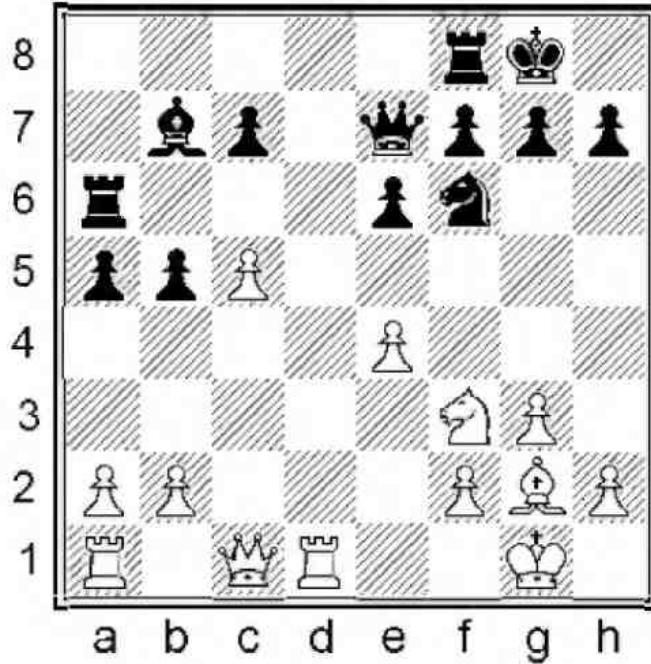
### 19.e4

Another resource for White. Now the black knight must retreat from the centre.

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

### 20. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{Q}xf6$

P.H. Nielsen-Hou Yifan, Amsterdam 2009.



**21.e5!**

A typical Catalan pawn sacrifice. In compensation, White gets strong pressure on the c-file. This move is a strong novelty.

**21...♝d7**

**22.♛e3 ♛xc5**

**23.♝ac1 ♛a4**

Black has no great choice. Thus, it is obviously bad to play 23...♝e4? 24.♝d4.

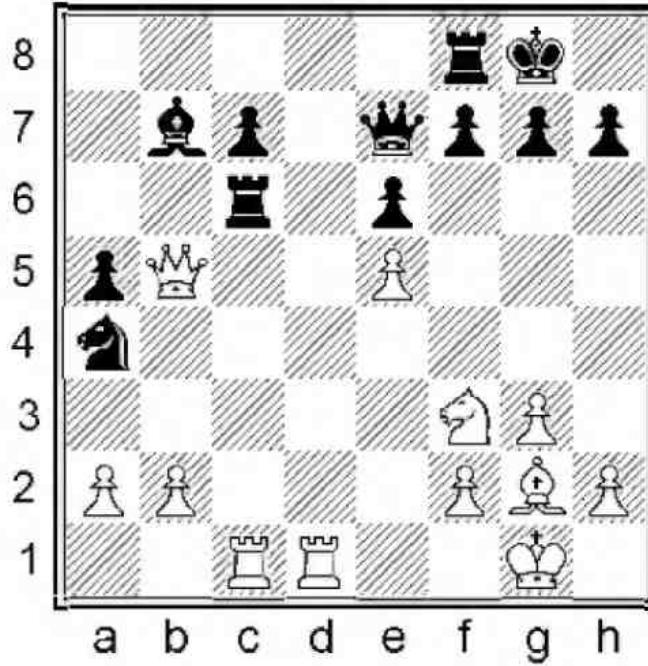
**24.♛e2**

Defending his pawn and attacking the opponent's.

**24...♜c6**

Black tries to solve his problems by tactical means.

**25.♛xb5**



**25... ♕b4**

Now play goes by force into an ending favourable for White. This game perfectly illustrates the connection in modern chess between the opening and ending. From the first moves, White has fought for the centre, trying to create pressure on the open lines and occupy the weak squares in the enemy camp. Pieces get exchanged, but these factors continue to play an important role in the ending.

**26. ♕xb4 axb4**

**27. ♔e1**

The knight treads the well-beaten path to the square d3.

**27... ♕xc1**

**28. ♕xc1 ♔xg2**

**29. ♔xg2 c5**

**30. ♔d3 ♕d8**

**31. ♔xc5 ♕c8**

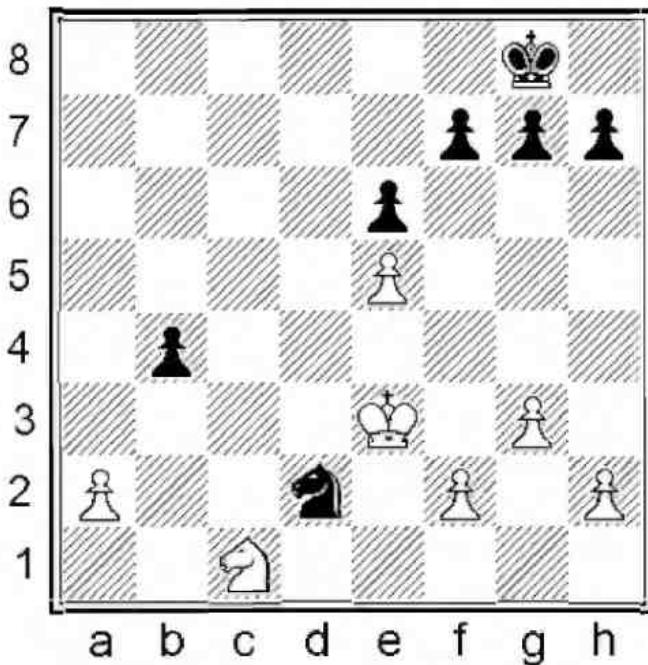
**32. ♔d3 ♕xc1**

**33. ♔xc1 ♔xb2**

**34. ♔f3 ♔c4**

**35. ♔e4 ♔d2+**

**36. ♔e3±**



White has effectively an extra king in the ending, and the pawn on b4 is weak. I think Black's position is close to lost. This is a highly instructive example of White's strategy: having achieved a small advantage in the opening, he has not only not lost it, but has managed to increase it, despite numerous exchanges.

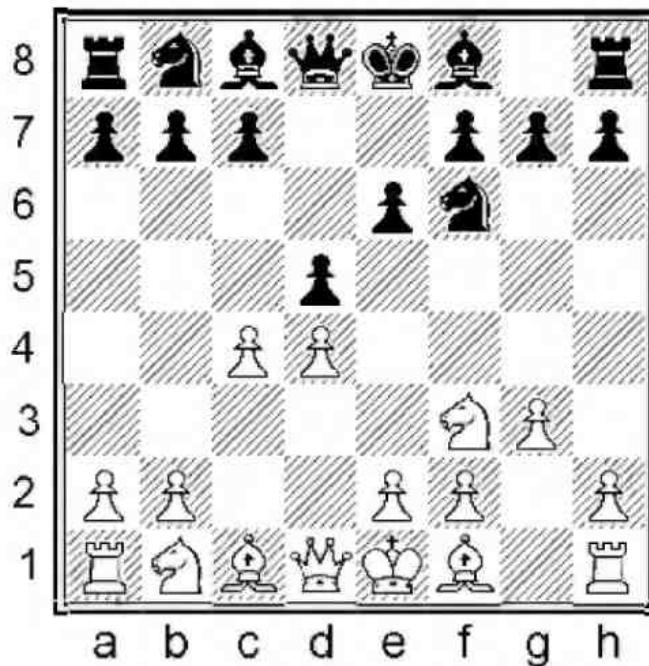
### Conclusion

As we have seen, in many variations of this line, it is hard for White to gain even a small advantage. In order to use it successfully in practice, you will need to do some independent work on it. But overall, it seems to me, White has sufficient reserves of ideas to maintain the tension favourable to him in the position. The majority of these ideas are already familiar to us from previous chapters: the transfer of the knights to e5, c5 and sometimes a5, control of the c-file, and the timely exchange of light-squared bishops.

I think that in our day this line is the best defensive attempt for Black, but even here, White can play for a win. However, it is important to note that this play is largely without risk for White, which is a typical feature of the Catalan in general.

## Index of Variations

1.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2.c4 e6 3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 4.g3

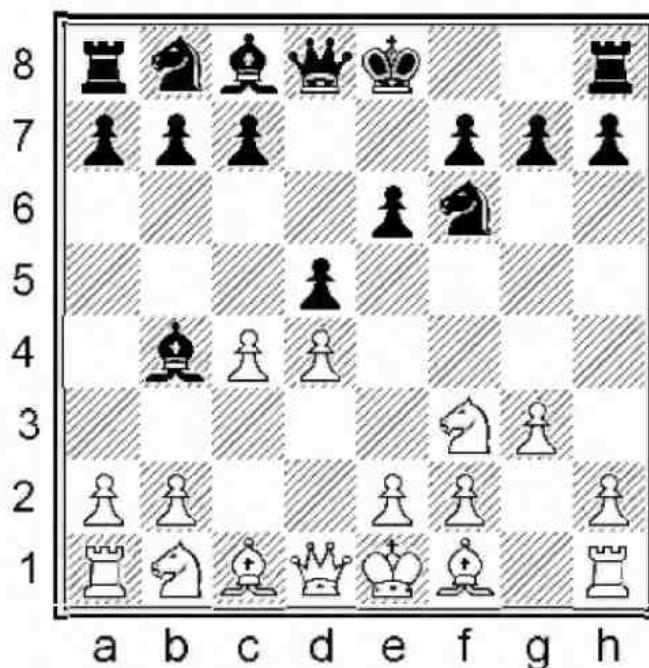


4...b6

4...c5

4...c6

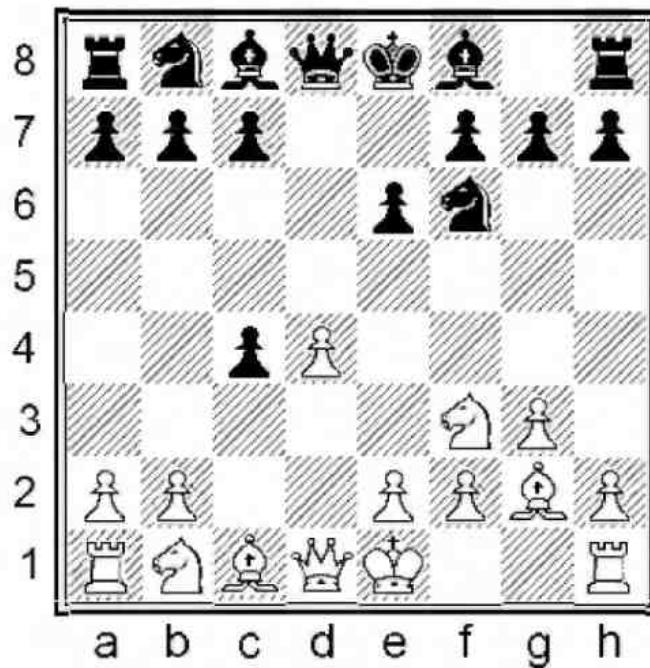
4... $\mathbb{Q}b4+$



5.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$

5.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{R}e7$

4...  $dxc4$  5.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$



5...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$

5... b5

5... c6

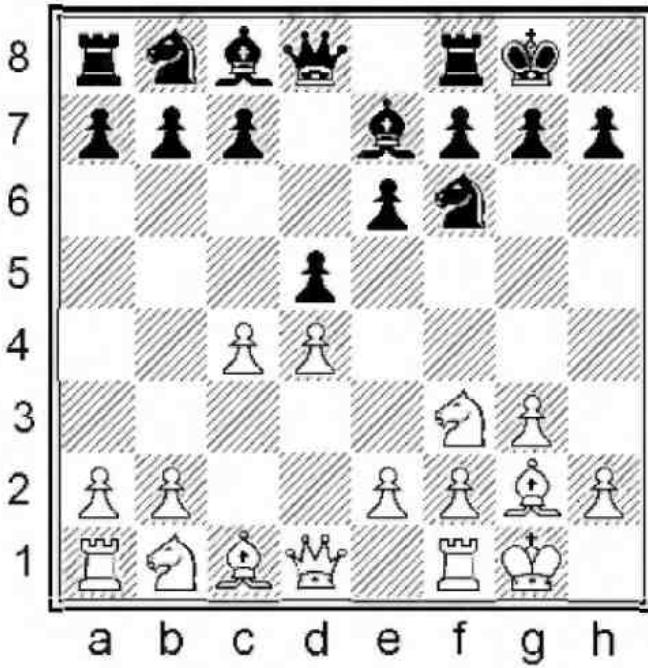
5... c5

5... a6

5...  $\mathbb{B}b4+$

5...  $\mathbb{D}c6$

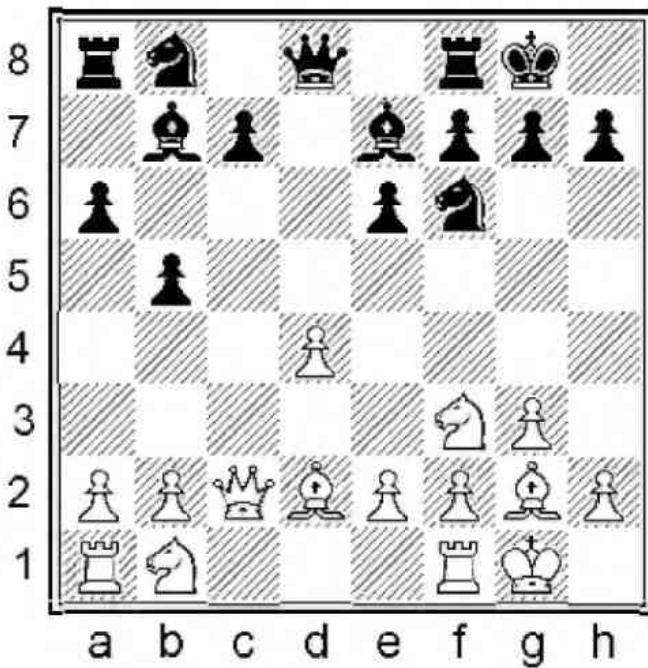
4...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  5.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6.0-0



6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$

6...dxc4

6...dxc4 7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  b5 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$



10... $\mathbb{Q}a7$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$

10... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$

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