

Christian Bauer

the Philidor files

detailed coverage of a dynamic opening



EVERYMAN CHESS

Christian Bauer

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Philidor files

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Gloucester Publishers plc www.everymanchess.com

First published in 2006 by Gloucester Publishers plc (formerly Everyman Publishers plc), Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 1 85744 4361

ISBN13: 978 1 85744 4360

Distributed in North America by The Globe Pequot Press, P.O Box 480,
246 Goose Lane, Guilford, CT 06437-0480.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
tel: 020 7253 7887 fax: 020 7490 3708
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com

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EVERYMAN CHESS SERIES (formerly Cadogan Chess)

Chief advisor: Byron Jacobs

Commissioning editor: John Emms

Assistant editor: Richard Palliser

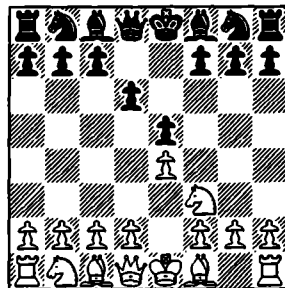
Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.

Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.

Production by Navigator Guides.

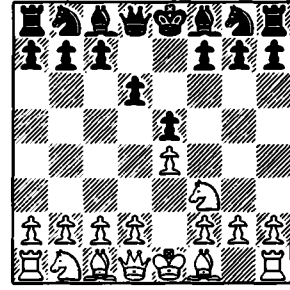
Printed and bound in the US by Versa Press.

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Introduction



In the 18th Century, chess strategy was at its very beginning. Direct attacks against the enemy king were common and romantic players didn't care about material, particularly about little pawns. The Italian school, whose most famous names are Ponziani and Lolli, excelled in this ultra-sharp style.

At that time, the young André Danican, known as Philidor, regularly played chess at the Café de la Régence, building his reputation around Paris. He soon became an established figure worldwide and, when around 1750 he exposed his new ideas, he provoked a real chess revolution.

The proverb we remember from him, 'Pawns are the soul of chess', reflects exactly his way of thinking: never neglect the positioning of the infantrymen and never sacrifice them rashly. In other words, a game can be valued on the basis of the pawn structure, and if this is unhealthy, the whole position can suffer.

We can recognize Philidor's princi-

ples in the defence named after him. At first sight this opening looks passive, but in fact it's very flexible and it can offer several different pawn structures. Unlike openings such as the Petroff, the Caro-Kann or the Scandinavian, the pawn structure is not set in stone from the beginning; it's potentially changeable. Therefore, it's important to study carefully these different structures which influence the rest of the game.

The Philidor Defence has an extensive history, but for a long time it fell into a period of obsolescence, supplanted by the numerous lines of the Spanish Opening which, in theory, promise more chances for Black to level the game.

Nevertheless, it is a solid opening rich in ideas. Maybe this is the reason why the Philidor has enjoyed a revival in recent years, being used notably by great names such as Azmaiparashvili, Beliavsky, Nisipeanu and Hamdouchi – the final Grandmaster even reaching a winning position against Shirov!

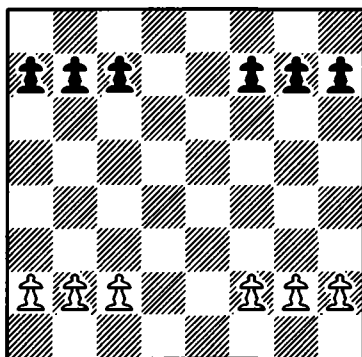
A Question of Move Order

If the Philidor is making a comeback, one of the reasons for this is the move order Black is employing. Indeed, the move order 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 (or 3...e5) has taken over little by little from the classical 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 (or 3...♘d7), which posed Black some problems. So the main variations that worried Black have disappeared, even if this has meant mastering new ones. I invite you to discover and to explore the particularities of the different move orders, as well as, of course, the main lines of this opening.

Frequent Pawn Structures

Here's a brief summary of the characteristic pawn structures arising in the Philidor Defence. Apart from structures 'A' and 'B', this is mainly related to Part 3 of the book.

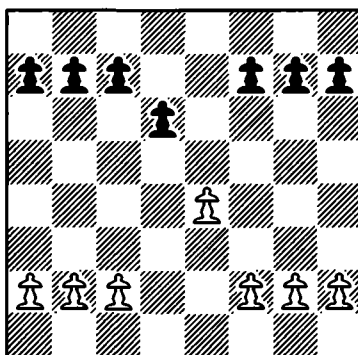
A) Symmetrical or quasi-symmetrical structure.



This structure appears almost exclusively from the variation 1 e4 e5 2

♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6. It is of course equal if the black c-pawn is still on its original square, but in the event of the common ...c6, the d6-square is weakened. The superior activity of the white pieces is often a major concern for Black.

B) Structure after a pawn exchange on d4.



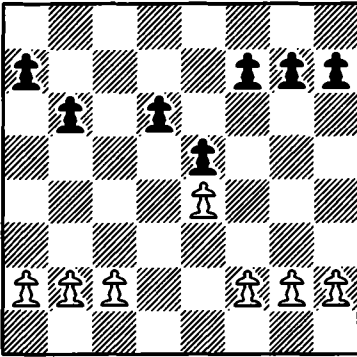
This structure occurs throughout the book. Black achieves counterplay by attacking the e4-pawn, while the b-, c- and d-pawns are mobile. This is true both in the event of opposite-side castling (as in the main line of the Larsen Variation, Chapter 2) and both sides castling short.

The ...d5 push, or even the pseudo-combination ...♘f6xe4; ♘c3xe4, ...d5, forking the knight on e4 and bishop on c4, sometimes allows Black to equalize in the centre. The dynamism of the pieces, as with structure 'A', will then decide whether White stands better or not.

White's attacking prospects are often based on ♘d4-f5, ♗d1-f3 etc. if both sides have castled short. This same ♘f5

is a thematic way to open the g-file if White has castled long in the Larsen Variation.

C) Sicilian structure arising from the main line of the Philidor Hanham, when White plays d4-d5 and the d-pawn is exchanged for Black's c-pawn.

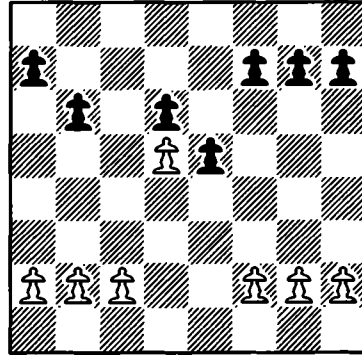


This structure means a weak pawn on d6 for Black, but counterplay linked with the c-file and the possibility of ...f5. The e4-pawn is also a target, and protecting it often slows White down in his quest for his strategic goal, the exploitation of the d5 outpost.

D) Structure arising from the previous example after a further exchange of one or two minor pieces on d5, with White recapturing with the e-pawn.

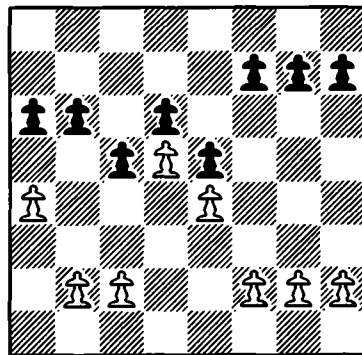
(see following diagram)

This structure favours Black: the weakness on d6 is masked, and Black's play on the kingside (with ...f5) is normally faster than White's on the other wing.



E) Closed structure after d5 and ...c5.

White has an outpost on c4 and tries to open lines on the queenside by arranging the advance b2-b4.

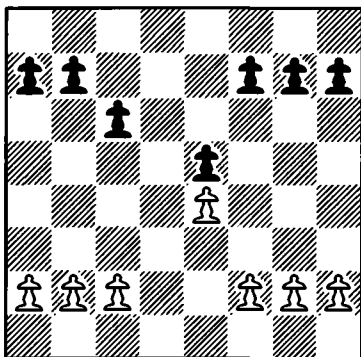


Possibilities of Black counterplay exist with the plan ...♘e8, ...g6 and ...f5 (but not ...f5 directly since White would then gain e4 for his knight after exf5) or, more rarely, on the queenside with ...♘f6-e8-c7 (and/or ...♞a8-b8) followed by ...b5.

F) Structure after dxe5, ...dxe5.

This structure offers equal chances unless something concrete is happening. In some cases Black may seize the

initiative on the queenside thanks to his mobile pawns. White, on the other hand, often gains the ascendancy if he succeeds in bringing his knight from f3 via h4 to f5.



An Early Encounter

As an appetizer, here's one of the first games featuring the Philidor Defence, admittedly under quite an unusual form. Playing Black was the great Philidor himself, who quickly seized the initiative as a consequence of his opponent's timid play.

Comte de Brühl-Philidor

London 1792

1 e4 e5 2 ♖c4

Even at this time some players were so scared they avoided the real Philidor Defence!

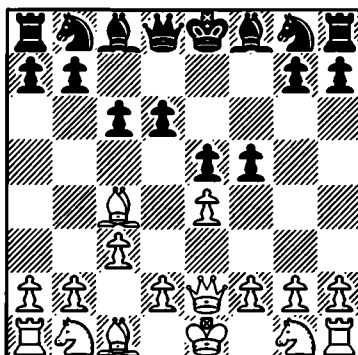
2...c6 3 ♜e2?!

3 ♜f3!, contesting the centre, was more appropriate.

3...d6 4 c3?! f5!

Philidor's original idea. If 2...d6 (or here 2...c6 followed by 3...d6) can be interpreted as the armament of the

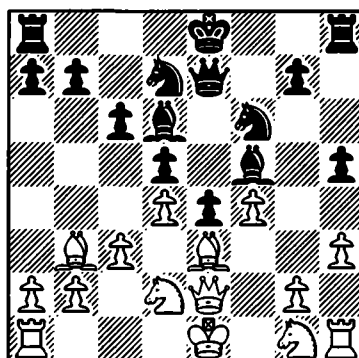
spring, then 4...f5 is the gremlin that jumps out of the hat!



5 d3 ♟f6 6 exf5 ♞xf5 7 d4 e4

White's insipid play has enabled his revolutionary rival to grab the centre. After five pawn moves out of seven, Black is already in the driving seat!

8 ♞g5 d5 9 ♞b3 ♞d6 10 ♟d2 ♟bd7 11 h3 h6 12 ♞e3 ♜e7 13 f4 h5!



Preventing any kind of counterplay based on g4. Black dominates the entire board.

14 c4 a6 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 ♜f2 0-0 17 ♟e2 b5 18 0-0 ♟b6 19 ♟g3 g6 20 ♜ac1 ♟c4 21 ♟xf5 gxf5 22 ♜g3+ ♜g7 23 ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 24 ♞xc4 bxc4 25 g3 ♜ab8

26 b3 ♖a3 27 ♜c2 cxb3 28 axb3 ♜fc8 29 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 30 ♜a1 ♖b4 31 ♜xa6 ♜c3 32 ♜f2 ♜d3 33 ♜a2 ♖xd2 34 ♜xd2 ♜xb3 35 ♜c2 h4!

Destroying White's structure before devouring the pawns.

36 ♜c7+ ♜g6 37 gxh4 ♜h5 38 ♜d7 ♜xf4 39 ♖xf4 ♜f3+ 40 ♜g2 ♜xf4 41 ♜xd5 ♜f3 42 ♜d8 ♜d3 43 d5 f4 44 d6 ♜d2+ 45 ♜f1 ♜f7 46 h5 e3 47 h6 f3 0-1

Black's ambitious play in the opening, initiated by 4...f5, was completely correct. What followed was a one-sided encounter in which White remained powerless while Black reinforced his position.

This particular form of the Philidor Defence worked very well for Black. In Chapter 1 we will come across a similar possibility involving ...f5 which is still quite virulent but certainly less sound.

The Philidor Defence enables Black to 'save energy' by playing his initial moves almost automatically, whereas White can more easily go wrong. Indeed, his space advantage and the apparent slowness of Black's counterplay may lull White into a false sense of security. Even though the Philidor leads to quieter positions than most other

openings, notably the Sicilian, this doesn't mean that White can be content with routine moves. To gain an advantage, he must take a certain amount of risk. Then the position becomes more lively and the Philidor can become quite bloodthirsty!

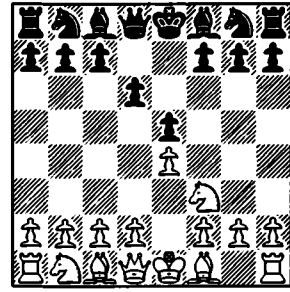
These arguments, along with the avoidance of long theoretical lines, encouraged me to employ this opening. Along with numerous other players, initially I wrongly considered the Philidor to be passive, but then I used it against very strong grandmasters (for example, versus Onischuk and Leko) and obtained dynamic and very playable games. True, I lost those two games in question, but this is quite a common phenomenon when the opponent is stronger! When the opposite is true, one can avoid a 'recital of theory' from one's opponent, and postpone the battle from the opening into the mid-game.

I hope you enjoy reading the book and have lots of success with your new weapon!

Christian Bauer
Montpellier, France
December 2006

Chapter One

Early Deviations



Third Move Alternatives for White

The subject of this section is the possible White divergences at move 3. As we will see, only 3 ♟c4 presents any real interest.

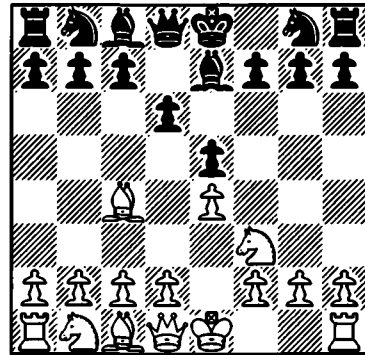
1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 d6 3 ♟c4

3 ♟c4 leads to positions similar to the ones arising from the Bishop's Opening (1 e4 e5 2 ♟c4) or the Italian Game (1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 ♞c6 3 ♟c4). The main point is to avoid 3 d4 exd4. Its drawback is that it hardly causes Black any opening problems, and that the second player has a wide range of playable set-ups.

Moves other than 3 ♟c4 and 3 d4 are legal, but all inferior. Indeed, basic chess principles tell us to occupy (or control) the centre. These very same principles also advise quick development. 3 ♞c3 obeys these two notions, but White can't delay the d4-push for long. 3 c4?! would already be faulty in my opinion, as 3...f5 gives Black an ex-

cellent version of the Latvian Gambit (imagine White answering 1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 f5 with 3 c4!!). 3...c5 would also be adequate, because Black prevents d2-d4 while keeping the option of ...f5. As for 3 c3, with the idea of building up a pawn centre after 4 d4, it's a very optimistic move! White's plan is indeed idealistic because of 3... ♞f6 , and, once again, the more 'Philidorian' ...f5.

3... ♟e7



This sometimes transposes into the variation 1 e4 e5 2 ♞f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4

♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♖e7, otherwise the position is similar to those that result from 3...♖g4.

Alternatively:

a) 3...♖e6?! 4 ♖xe6 fxe6 5 d4 exd4 6 ♗xd4 and White has the easier game, as he can try to implement the simple plan of f4-f5.

b) 3...♖g4!? is a perfectly valid alternative. Play traditionally continues 4 d3 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♗bd7 6 ♗bd2 ♖e7 7 ♖e1 c6 8 c3 0-0, which was equal in Howell-Barua, British Championship 1983. The attempt at refutation with 4 c3!? ♗c6 (4...c6 is also good) 5 ♗b3?! clearly backfires: 5...♗d7 6 ♖xf7+? (or 6 ♗g5 ♗d8 and everything is under control – and the invader on g5 will soon be repelled by ...h6) 6...♗xf7 7 ♗xb7 ♗d7 8 ♗xa8 ♖xf3 9 gxf3 ♗xf3 10 ♖f1 ♗xe4+ 11 ♗d1 ♗f3+ 12 ♗e1. Black already has a draw in the hand, but by continuing with 12...e4 (or 12...♗f6) he retains a strong initiative.

c) 3...f5?! 4 d4 transposes into 3 d4 f5 4 ♖c4, which is treated later on.

d) 3...♗f6?! 4 ♗g5 d5 5 exd5 h6 (5...♗xd5? 6 ♗f3 ♗xg5 7 ♖xd5 and the double hit on f7 and b7 costs Black a pawn) 6 ♗f3 e4 7 ♗e2 ♖e7 8 ♗e5 and White hangs on to his 'loot'.

e) 3...♗c6?! returns to an inferior line of the Italian Game (1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♖c4 d6) and is therefore outside the scope of this book.

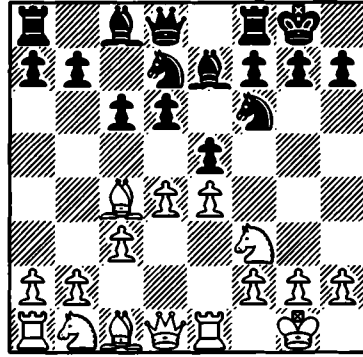
4 0-0 ♗f6 5 ♖e1

5 d3 doesn't promise more.

5...0-0 6 c3 ♗bd7 7 d4 c6

The presence of a pawn on c3 rather than a knight gives the position a more

quiet character. As a consequence Black has more latitude to manoeuvre and has no real worries.



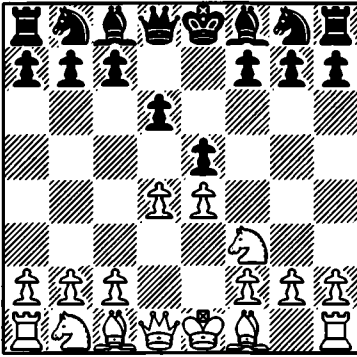
Third Move Alternatives for Black

1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4

We will now examine variations arising after 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4. This move order was for quite a while the only one used in order to reach the basic position of the Philidor Defence, commonly named the Philidor Hanham (see Part 3 of the book). Nowadays, however, lines of this chapter are considered to be of secondary importance. Indeed, White can profit from his opponent's move order and favourably avoid the position from Part 3. By so doing, White usually gains a risk-free advantage, like in the variation 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 ♗f6 4 dxe5, or he is drawn into favourable complications, as after 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 f5. The only other option for Black is releasing the central tension by 3...exd4, which is not to everyone's taste.

That said, even quiet lines require accuracy to maintain (and increase) the

white advantage, while the cluster of tactical variations are full of hidden traps.



We will look at:

- A: 3...d6?! (Note: original text has a typo 'c6')
- B: 3...g4?!
- C: 3...e7!?
- D: 3...d7?!
- E: 3...f5?!
- F: 3...f6

A) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 d6?!

This is a Scotch Game where Black would have contented himself with the too passive 3...d6. If there is no direct refutation to be found, 3...d6 is essentially condemnable because it gives White a pleasant choice between:

a) 4 b5 which transposes into the Steinitz Variation of the Ruy Lopez, reputedly solid but rather passive; this seems to be the 'normal' choice for 1 e4 players.

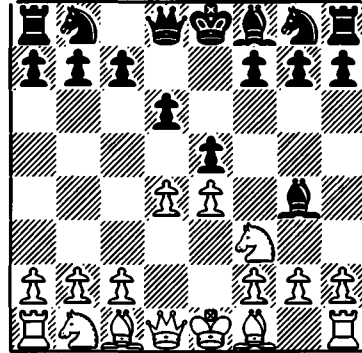
b) In the event of 4 d5 d6 5 c4 g6 6 d3 g7 7 e2 f6 8 0-0 0-0 play would reach a classical position from the King's Indian. However, it seems to

me that White can more easily deviate (after 5 c4 g6) than his opponent.

c) 4 dxe5 dxe5 (4...dxe5?! 5 Wxd8+ xd8 6 b5, with the idea of spoiling the black pawn structure by means of bxc6, confers White a pleasant edge) 5 e2 (5 dxe5 dxe5 6 Wxd8+ xd8 would be less annoying now that the c-pawn has recovered its freedom. In this eventuality White's advantage, if it exists, would be the tiniest. 5 d3 will transpose to 5 e2) 5...f6 6 d3 with a slight plus for White thanks to his spatial advantage.

To conclude, 3...d6 is playable, but it concedes an edge without fighting.

B) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 g4?!



4 dxe5 d7

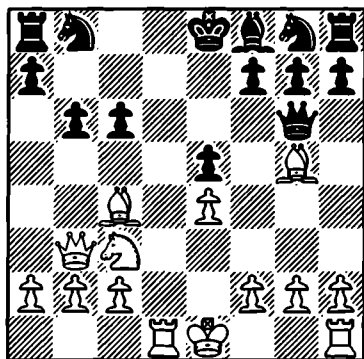
4...xf3?! cedes the pair of bishops for nothing, and after 5 Wxf3 dxe5 6 b4 Black has several continuations at his disposal, but none of them is particularly attractive:

a) 6...d7 (the queen will have to move again when a white rook appears on d1) 7 0-0 f6 8 g5! and there is no satisfactory answer to the threat of 9

xf6, as 8...Wg4 and 8...Le7 both fail to 9 Wb3!.

b) 6...d6? 7 Wb3.

c) 6...Wf6 7 Wb3 b6 8 d3 c6 9 Lg5! Wg6 (taking the bishop would of course have run into 10 Lxf7+ Qd8 11 Nd1+ and 12 Lxg8) 10 Nd1.



Nearly all of White's forces are out and he is about to score the point: 10...d6 11 Lxf6 gxf6; or 11...Wxf6 and now both 12 Nd3 and 12 d5! give White a clear plus.

7...Lc5 doesn't improve Black's situation: 8 0-0 b6 (or 8...Lb6 9 a4 a5 10 d3 d7 11 Le3 0-0 12 Nbd1 and Black finds it difficult to move without losing material! The second player also has to reckon with 8 Wxb7 Wxf2+ 9 Qd1, when it is unclear whether Black has enough play for the sacrificed rook) 9 d3 c6 (9...d7?! 10 Qb5!) 10 Le3 with a clear advantage.

4...d6 provides Black with extra possibilities in case his opponent reacts in the same manner as against 4...d7, but has got its own drawbacks. 5 exd6 Lxd6 6 Lb5! (the correct idea, as 6 d3 We7 7 Le2? [7 Lb5!]) 7...0-0-0 is fully

satisfactorily for Black) 6...d7 7 Le3 a6 8 Le2 and Black no longer has any compensation for the pawn, Kramnik-Molignier, Lyon (simul) 2001.

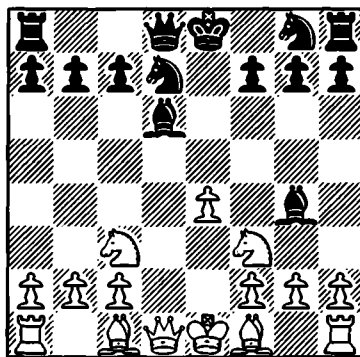
In comparison with 4...Lxf3, the knight move at least gives Black practical chances. The compensation for the pawn isn't sufficient, but play takes on a double-edged character.

5 exd6

5 Le2 sets a small trap: 5...dxe5?! 6 dxe5 and White snatches a pawn. However, after 5...Lxf3 6 Lxf3 dxe5 (or 6...dxe5) he has to be satisfied with the two bishops.

5...Lxd6 6 d3

6 Le2 d7 7 d3 is a more common move order, but it makes no difference. If Black speeds up long castling by playing 6...We7 7 d3 0-0-0, then the very same 8 d4 of the main line also yields White a clear edge.



6...d7 7 Le2 We7 8 d4!

Thanks to this move White enjoys a nice advantage.

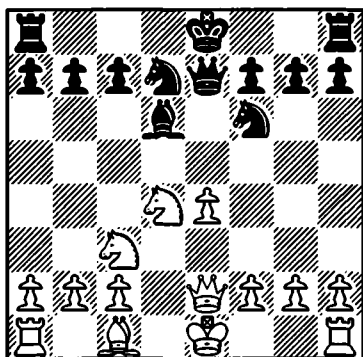
8 Lg5 h6! (after 8...0-0-0?! 9 d4 White has kept his extra pawn under favourable circumstances and his ad-

vantage is quite evident) 9 ♖h4 g5 10 ♖g3 and now 10...♗xg3 11 hxg3 0-0-0 isn't bad for Black. In return for the sacrificed pawn he enjoys a lead in development and direct threats, such as ...♗xe4 and ...♗c5. After the plausible 12 ♖d2, 12...♖e6 would follow, when the white pieces aren't too well coordinated.

8...♗xe2

8...♗xe2? 9 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 10 f3 is the tactical point that justifies White's 8th move. Things aren't as simple as they look, but after 10...♗e7 11 fxg4 ♖h4+ 12 ♖f1 too few black pieces can join the assault against the white king, so the extra piece should tell.

9 ♖xe2



...with a healthy extra pawn that White can support with f3, if needed. White can choose where to hide his king, depending on where the danger comes. Finally, Black has to deal with the immediate threat of the knight-jump to f5.

C) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 ♗e7!?

This move presents similarities to the line 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3.♖c4 ♖f6 4

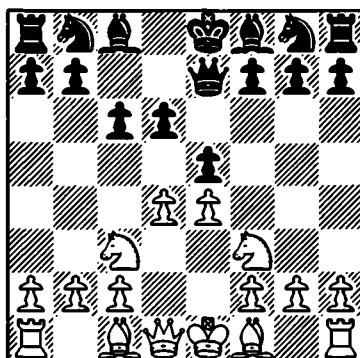
d3 h6 of the Italian Game. Indeed, in this variation Black's set-up usually consists of ...d6, ...♗e7, ...g6, ...♖g7, ...0-0 and so on. In our position White has managed the push d2-d4 in one go, but the possibility to play ...c7-c6 is a trump for Black.

This way of protecting the e-pawn is rather constraining for Black: it more or less implies that the dark-squared bishop will be fianchettoed. Black should also refrain from the swap ...exd4 in many cases, as then the queen could prove to be misplaced.

4 ♗c3

4 ♖c4!? is an alternative of a similar strength. White retains the possibility of a c3, ♗bd2 development, while he is ready to counter 4...c6 with the customary 5 a4.

4...c6



5 ♖g5

The beginning of a bad plan, even if the move by itself is not to blame. Alternatively:

a) 5 ♖c4?! b5 6 ♖b3 h6 (or 6...♖g4) when pushing the b-pawn 'with tempo' (contrary to the line 5 ♖e2 b5?!)

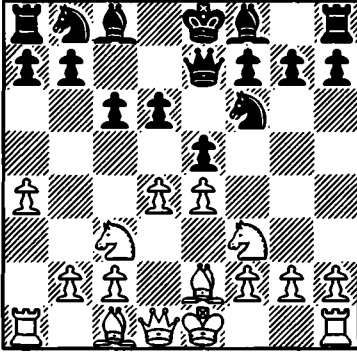
has given Black extra possibilities.

b) 5 a4 deserves attention. The idea is to develop the light-squared bishop on its best square, c4. The drawback of such a move is that a subsequent ...♗g4 will put indirect pressure on the d4 spot, inducing White to play the unfavourable swap dxе5.

c) 5 ♗e2 and now:

c1) With 5...b5?! Black is neither exerting any pressure on the e4-pawn, nor is he threatening ...b4. As a consequence this move is erroneous here. White could just ignore it, by 6 0-0 and ♖e1, but he has a stronger continuation at his disposal: 6 a4 b4 7 ♘b1 and the knight will bounce back on the first-class c4-square.

c2) 5...♘f6 6 a4.



Now that the enemy knight has appeared on f6, the ...b5-push makes sense. White has slightly the better position here. Indeed, he enjoys more space and after castling he can consider b3 and ♗a3, trying to profit from the awkward placement of the queen at e7. As for Black, he will probably try to finish his kingside development by

means of ...g6, ...♗g7, ...0-0, or even the more ambitious ...h6, ...g5, ...♗g7. In the latter case, though, the aforementioned manoeuvre b3, ♗a3 could prove quite fast and pretty nasty. Finally, one may note that 6...exd4? doesn't match the position's demands at all. White could then both recapture with his queen or gambit his e-pawn: 6...exd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘xe4 8 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 9 0-0 when Black's position is very suspicious, to say the least.

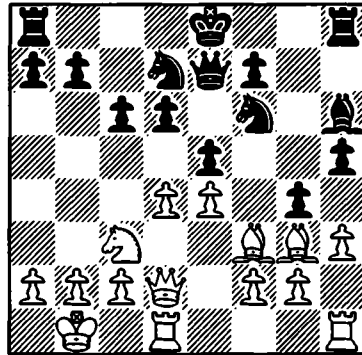
5...♘f6 6 ♗d2 ♗g4 7 ♗e2 ♘bd7 8 0-0-0?

8 h3 with a roughly equal game would have avoided the debacle that comes next.

8...h6 9 ♗h4 g5 10 ♗g3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3??

After 11 gxf3 White doesn't lose a piece, but the g3-bishop could well be entombed for a while.

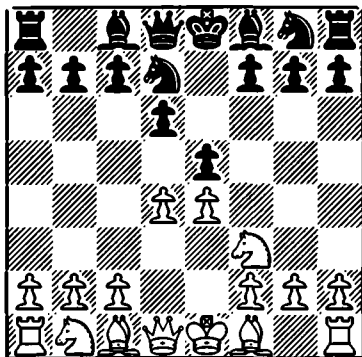
11...h5 12 h3 ♗h6 13 ♖b1 g4



...was Galdunts-Guseinov, Azov 1991. Why this game here? Because taken one by one White's moves seem natural to me. The other reason is that I also fell for this trap (at around the

same period, if my memory serves me) in a blitz game versus Jacques Elbilial!

D) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 ♘d7?!



3...♘d7 allows White to delay ♘b1-c3 in favour of stronger possibilities.

4 ♙c4

4 c4!? would most likely transpose into an 'Indian' Defence. After the moves 4...♗g6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♙e2 ♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 we have a King's Indian, while 5...c6 6 ♙e2 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 leads to the Old Indian Defence.

If 4 ♘c3 ♗g6 we are back to Part 3, whereas 4 c3?! and 4 dxe5?! both let the advantage slip. The former is too quiet, while the latter releases the central tension too early. As a consequence the f8-bishop is free to land on c5 or b4.

4...c6

There are many alternatives here:

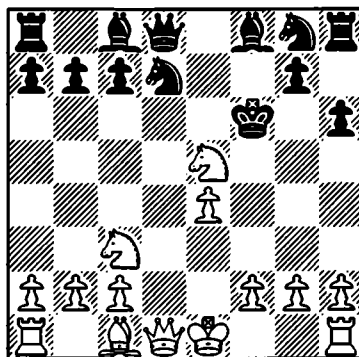
a) 4...♗g6? 5 ♗g5! forces ...d5 and thus wins a pawn.

b) Equally faulty would be 4...♙e7? 5 dxe5! ♘e5 (5...dxe5?? 6 ♗d5 is even worse as f7 can't be efficiently protected) 6 ♘xe5 dxe5 7 ♗h5 and the simultaneous attack of f7 and e5 picks

up a pawn.

c) After 4...♗e7!? Black has a worse version of 3...♗e7 since he has deprived himself of the possibility of ...♙g4.

d) 4...h6? is a radical way of preventing the intrusion of the white knight at g5. Unfortunately for Black, this little pawn move seriously weakens the g6-square and calls for a brutal refutation. Besides, if White calmly continues developing, ...h6 doesn't always fit Black's plans. 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 ♙xf7+! ♙xf7 7 ♘xe5+ ♙f6 (7...♙e8?! 8 ♗h5+, or 7...♙e7?! 8 ♗g6+ ♙f6 9 ♗f3+ would give White even fewer chances to go wrong) 8 ♘c3!



8...♙xe5?! 9 ♗d5+ ♙f6 10 ♗f5+ ♙e7 11 ♘d5+ ♙d6 12 ♙f4+ ♙c6 13 ♗e6+ ♙d6 14 ♘b4+ ♙b5 15 a4+ ♙a5 16 ♗c4 and it's mate in six - you can check it! A little help: on 16...c6, White continues 17 ♘d5!.

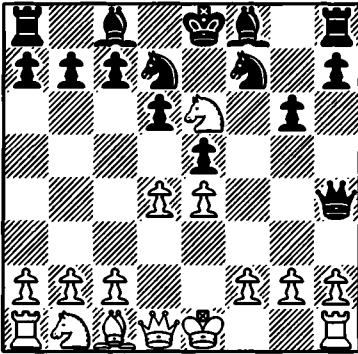
e) 4...♘b6?!. Even if not really bad, this move can't be recommended. Black repels the enemy bishop, but by doing so he misplaces his own knight. 5 ♙b3 exd4 6 ♗xd4 (6 ♘xd4?? c5 and 7...c4 is

the trap White must avoid). After 6 ♖xd4 her majesty is well posted, as she can't be efficiently removed. White enjoys more space and thus a lasting edge.

f) 4...exd4!? 5 ♟xd4 (5 ♖xd4 deserves the attention too, and also gives White the upper hand. In this case White can consider a plan involving long castling and a quick e5 if possible) 5...d3g6 (or 5...d6 6 ♟e2 d6 7 ♟c3 when the knight on b6 again stands badly and White has a spatial plus) 6 0-0 g6 7 ♟c3 ♟g7 8 ♟e1. White has more space, but his opponent's position is quite solid.

g) 4...g6 is provocative:

g1) 5 d3g5!? d6 6 ♟xf7+ ♟xf7 7 d6 ♖h4 and the counter-attack on e4 makes the position messy.



8 dxc7+ d8 9 dxa8 ♖xe4+ 10 ♖e2 with chances for both sides, or 8 d3 ♟b8 9 dxc7+ d8 when White has some compensation for the piece, with two pawns and the initiative, but not more.

g2) 5 d3 is a quiet continuation that yields White a slight plus: 5...h6 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♟e3 (7 ♖d5 ♖e7 8 d6b5? c6

and White simply loses a piece) when the pawn on h6 renders ...0-0 problematic; for instance 7...d3g6 8 h3 ♟g7 9 ♖d2.

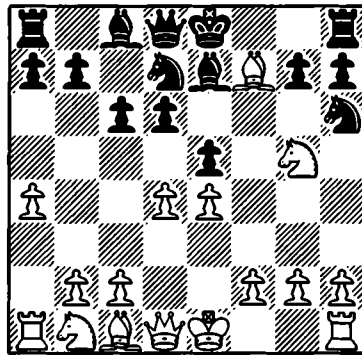
5...♟g7? is rudely refuted: 6 ♟xf7+! ♟xf7 7 d3g5+ ♟e8 8 d6 ♖e7 (8...♖h4 9 ♟g5 is even worse) 9 dxc7+ d8 10 d3d5 ♖f7 (here, too, 10...♖h4?! 11 ♟g5+ ♖xg5 12 d6+ loses more material) 11 dxa8 with a decisive material superiority.

5 0-0!

Or:

a) 5 d3g5!? is objectively not as good as 5 0-0, but a lot more efficient in practice! Rather than a pleasant endgame, White is looking for a direct KO: 5...d6 6 a4 (preventing the threat of ...b5 while in the same time setting a trap...) and now:

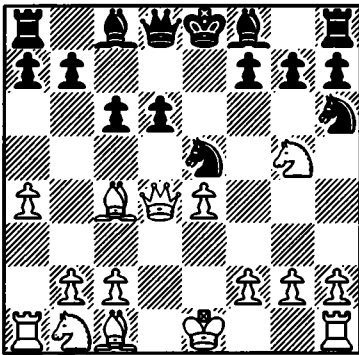
a1) 6...♟e7? 7 ♟xf7+!!



Showing the venom in White's previous move; the a-pawn will play a key role in the following sequence, enabling White to trap the enemy queen: 7...d3xf7 8 d6 ♖a5+ (8...♖b6 9 a5 ♖b4+ 10 c3 ♖c4 11 d7+ d8 12 b3 also traps the queen and gives a decisive advan-

tag e) 9 ♖d2 ♜b6 10 a5 ♜xb2 11 ♙c3 ♜xa1 12 ♙xa1 and White is winning.

a2) 6...exd4! is the correct reaction. After 7 ♜xd4 ♘e5 one may note a certain analogy with my game against Vaissier (see Chapter 9, Line A), though circumstances here are less bright for Black, because the e5-knight is not untouchable in the centre.



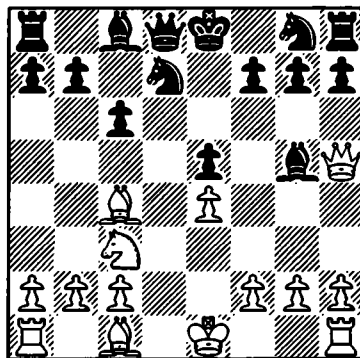
After 8 ♙a2 ♙e7 9 f4, taking on e5 may not be a threat, as g5 is also hanging. So Black can choose between 9...0-0 and 9...♘eg4 with a perfectly playable game: for example, 9...♘eg4 10 h3 (10 ♜xg7?? ♙f6 11 ♙xf7+ ♚e7 winning the queen) 10...♘f6 with ...d5 coming soon and an unclear position.

a3) 6...♜f6 is interesting, too, but probably less sound, as the queen is exposed to the opening of the f-file: 7 c3 (White naturally wishes to maintain a pawn on d4) 7...♙e7 8 0-0 ♘b6 (a useful move; the bishop's diagonal isn't shut anymore, and that can be of considerable importance in some cases) 9 ♙a2 ♜g6 with mutual chances in the game Leonhardt-Nimzowitsch, Hamburg (match) 1911. White can by now

follow up with either of the moves 10 a5 or 10 f4.

b) 5 dxe5?! dxe5 (5...♘xe5?? 6 ♘xe5 dxe5 7 ♙xf7+ wins a pawn while depriving Black of his castling rights) 6 ♘g5 ♘h6 suits Black more than the immediate 5 ♘g5, because the f8-bishop has a broader horizon: 7 0-0 ♙c5 is equal; not 7 ♙xf7+?? ♘xf7 8 ♘e6 ♜b6 and the extra piece will decide the game.

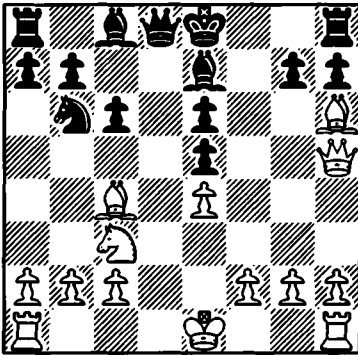
c) 5 ♘c3?! comes to roughly the same thing as 5 0-0, with some nuances that seem to be in Black's favour. Indeed, if White keeps the option of castling both sides, his knight may prove to be misplaced in some lines: 5...♙e7 (5...b5?! 6 ♙b3 ♙e7?! 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♘xb5! and the knight is taboo due to the reply 9 ♜d5, so White has snatched a pawn for nothing, Jarreton-Loukili, Massy 1993) 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♘g5 ♙xg5 8 ♜h5



8...♜e7 (the best; 8...g6 and 8...♜f6 give terrible endings with no prospects of counterplay, cf. 5 0-0) 9 ♜xg5 (9 ♙xg5?! ♘gf6 10 ♜h4 [or 10 ♜e2 b5 11 ♙d3 0-0, which is equal] 10...b5! 11

♙b3?! [if 11 ♙e2 ♜c5 followed by 12...b4 or 12...♜e6-d4] 11...♜c5 [threatening ...b4 and ...♜cxe4] 12 f3 a5 13 a4 b4 14 ♜b1 ♜xb3 15 cxb3 ♙a6 and Black even enjoyed some initiative in the game Magem Badals-Strikovic, Zaragoza 1994) 9...♞xg5 10 ♙xg5 with a small edge to White, though his knight would be better on d2, aiming at c4 and d6.

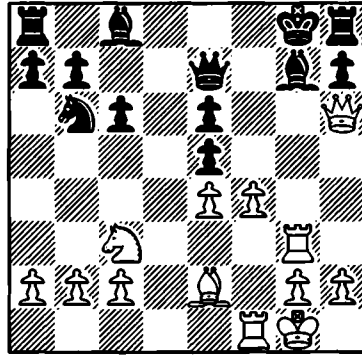
Instead of 7...♙xg5, 7...♜h6!? is playable this time. The reason is that White would need to open the f-file in some variations, in order to checkmate. With his rook still stuck on its initial square, however, the assault is not decisive. Play might continue 8 ♜e6 fxe6 9 ♙xh6 ♜b6 10 ♞h5+



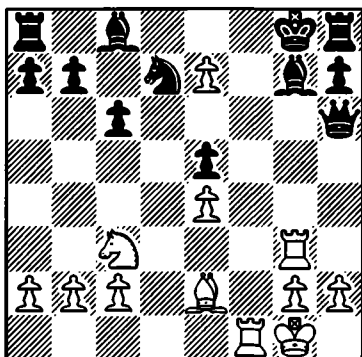
10...♜f8 (10...g6? 11 ♞e2 is better for White because of the black king's situation and the sad c8-bishop) 11 ♙e2 gxf6 12 ♜d1 ♙d7!. The following moves are compulsory: 13 ♞xh6+ ♜g8 14 ♜d3 ♙f6 15 ♜g3+ ♜f7 16 f4 ♜e7 (16...exf4? 17 ♙h5+ ♜e7 18 e5! and Black is in bad shape, as 18...♙xe5 runs into 19 ♞g5+ ♜d6 [or 19...♙f6 20 ♞c5 mate] 20 ♜e4+) 17 fxe5 ♙xe5 18 ♞g5+

♜d6 19 ♜d3+ ♜d5 and the position is unclear; Black's king doesn't feel too bad on d6, while the pair of bishops is important.

12...♞c7?! is suspicious but may be playable. The conclusion of Van der Wiel-Van Maarten, Rotterdam 1977, was quite fantastic: 13 ♞xh6+ ♜g8 14 ♜d3 ♙f8 15 ♜g3+ ♙g7 16 0-0 ♞e7 (Black's pieces are completely unable to rescue their monarch; 16...♜f8 17 ♞h4 and then f4 would come to the same thing) 17 f4



17...♜d7? (17...exf4? 18 ♜xf4 e5 [prevents 19 ♜fg4] 19 ♜ff3 with the double threat of 20 ♜xg7+ ♞xg7 21 ♜g3 and 20 ♜a4, in order to give a lethal check on c4; but 17...♙d7! would still be unclear: 18 fxe5 [18 f5? exf5 19 exf5 ♜f8 and Black remains a piece up, even if he must still take care over f6 and ♜e4] 18...♜f8 19 ♜f6 and now after 19...♙e8! 20 ♜xe6 ♞c5+ 21 ♜h1 ♙g6 White has three pawns for the piece, but the black king is now safely guarded) 18 f5 ♞f6 (what else?) 19 fxe6!! ♞xh6 20 e7 and mate in five thanks to the double threat of e8♞+ and ♙c4+.



d) 5 c3?! doesn't promise much: 5...d6! 6 ♖b3 (6 dxe5 ♘e4 [with the idea ...d5] 7 exd6 ♘xd6 is equal; as is 6 ♘g5?! d5) 6...♗e7 7 dxe5 ♘xe5 (7...dxe5? is punished by 8 ♘g5, when f7 can't be defended anymore) 8 ♘xe5 dxe5 was equal in Em.Lasker-Alekhine, Düsseldorf 1908. Black will continue either ...b5, ...♙e6 and so on or ...♗c7, ...♙c5, depending on what his opponent does.

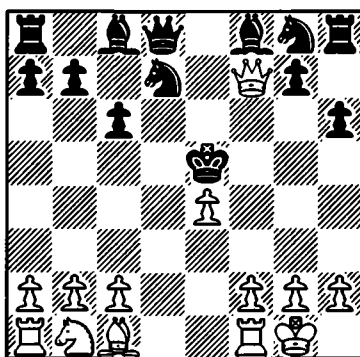
e) 5 a4?!. Black doesn't threaten ...b5 for the time being. Moreover, the text move deprives White of a key manoeuvre: 5...♙e7 6 dxe5?! dxe5 7 ♘g5? ♙xg5 8 ♗h5 ♗a5+ followed by 9...♙f6 when Black retains his extra piece. The best for White after 5...♙e7 is to permit a 'normal' Philidor by 6 ♘c3 ♘gf6 7 0-0 0-0, but in this case he hasn't gained the maximum benefit from Black's dubious move order.

5...♙e7

A natural move that, however, fails to solve all problems, but the alternatives fail too:

a) 5...h6? neglects development, and logically calls for a tactical refutation.

The insertion of the moves 5 0-0 and ...c6 favours White; it is true that the black king now has the c7-square at his disposal, but the king's rook coming into play is a major factor: 6 dxe5 dxe5 (6...♘xe5 7 ♘xe5 dxe5 8 ♙xf7+) 7 ♙xf7+! ♗xf7 8 ♘xe5+ ♗f6 9 ♗f3+ ♗xe5 10 ♗f7!!.



Rather than harassing the enemy king with a series of checks, White deprives it of the squares where it could have hidden. This example is all the more instructive, as White's two next moves also are quite calm. 10...d6! 11 ♙d1 ♙c5 12 ♘d2 ♙xf2+ 13 ♗xf2 ♘xe4+ 14 ♘xe4 ♙f8 15 ♙f4+ ♗xe4 16 ♙e1+ ♗d4 17 ♙e3+ ♗e5 18 ♙c5 mate, Kr.Georgiev-Pelitov, Pazardzhik 1974.

b) 5...d6! 6 dxe5! (on the hurried 6 ♘g5?! Black has the saving 6...d5) 6...♘xe5 (6...dxe5 7 ♘g5 and f7 is no longer defensible; 6...♘e4 is hardly better: 7 exd6 ♘b6 [after any recapture on d6 the same 8 ♙e1 is annoying] 8 ♙e1 with a clear advantage) 7 ♘xe5 dxe5 8 ♙xf7+ with a clear advantage.

c) 5...b5?!. A rare case where realizing this push with a gain of tempo is

erroneous. Indeed, Black's priority is to take care of his king's wing, and notably to deal with the threat of $\text{d}g5$. Therefore he won't be able to maintain a pawn on b5 without generating weaknesses when a timely a2-a4 comes: 6 $\text{b}b3$ $\text{e}e7$ (on 6... $\text{b}b7$, which aims to meet 7 a4 with 7...a6, the right way to proceed is 7 $\text{d}g5$ $\text{h}h6$ 8 c3 and White is visibly better: f4 is imminent, while the h6-knight makes a odd impression) 7 a4! b4 (the least of all evils; allowing axb5 cxb5 would weaken the d5 spot, while ...bxa4 would leave the a-pawn isolated) 8 dxe5 dxe5 9 $\text{d}g5$ and play transposes into the main line: 5... $\text{e}e7$ 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 $\text{d}g5$, except that the black queenside has already been damaged by the preceding moves. This fact should emphasize White's advantage.

d) 5... $\text{c}c7$!? is an acceptable move which avoids direct refutations based on $\text{d}g5$. Indeed, Black could meet this with ... $\text{h}h6$; for example 6 a4 $\text{e}e7$ 7 dxe5?! (7 $\text{c}c3$! - see Part 3) 7...dxe5 8 $\text{d}g5$ $\text{h}h6$ and the pseudo-combination 9 $\text{e}e6$?? fxe6 10 $\text{x}xh6$ gxh6 11 $\text{h}h5+$ $\text{d}d8+$ doesn't work. The drawback of the queen's move is that it can lead to a worse version of the Philidor Hanham.

6 dxe5!

This good move exploits the poor placement of the enemy pieces.

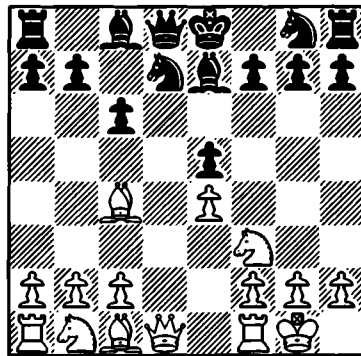
a) 6 $\text{c}c3$ $\text{d}g6$ 7 a4 transposes 'only' into a normal Philidor. The same goes for all of White's sensible alternatives: 6 $\text{e}e1$, 6 $\text{h}h2$ or 6 a4. These moves present no independent interest, since a transposition into the Philidor Hanham (Part 3) is virtually unavoidable. The

move 6 dxe5, on the other hand, guarantees White the pair of bishops, and the enduring advantage that is usually attached to it.

b) 6 $\text{c}c3$! $\text{d}g6$ 7 $\text{e}e1$ 0-0, with approximate equality, reaches a position discussed via 3 $\text{e}e4$.

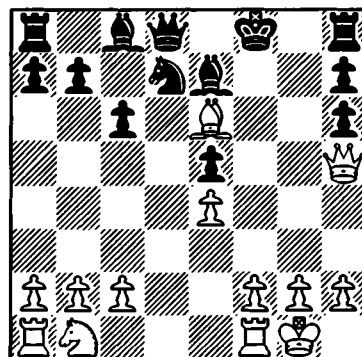
6...dxe5

6... $\text{d}d5$? 7 $\text{d}d5$ dxe5 8 $\text{h}h5$ wins a pawn for White.



7 d3 g5 e5

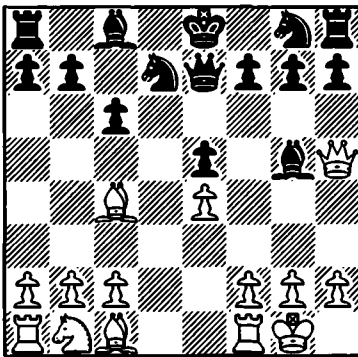
7... $\text{h}h6$? loses to 8 $\text{e}e6$! fxe6 9 $\text{x}xh6$ gxh6 (or 9... $\text{b}b6$ 10 $\text{h}h5+$ $\text{f}f8$ 11 f4 and Black's final moments are being counted) 10 $\text{h}h5+$ $\text{f}f8$ 11 $\text{x}xe6$ and it's mate next.



8 ♖h5 ♗e7

a) 8...g6?! accepts a little weakness. If Black can cope without it, why make such a concession? 9 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 10 ♙xg5 is an unpleasant endgame for Black. The assessment of the position oscillates between a slight and a clear edge for White, but in any case a lasting one.

b) 8...♗f6 9 ♙xg5 ♗g6 10 ♗h4 ♘g6 is a small plus for White. Or there's 10 ♗xg6!? hxg6. Having opened the h-file is of course an achievement for Black, but this doesn't bring anything tangible for the moment and the pair of bishops gives White the upper hand.



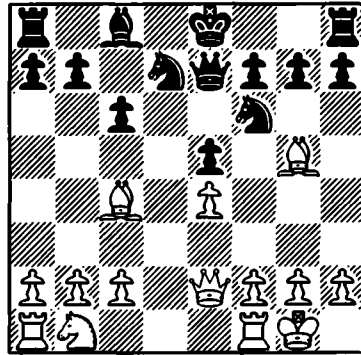
9 ♙xg5

Or 9 ♗xg5!? ♗xg5 10 ♙xg5 ♘g6 (or 10...♘c5 11 f3 ♙e6 12 ♙e2 ♘f6 13 ♘d2 with an edge, Anand-Ivanchuk, Monaco (rapid) 1996; a surprising choice by the Ukrainian who on this occasion managed to draw) 11 f3 with a small advantage. 11 ♘d2?! is inaccurate: 11...h6 12 ♙h4 (or 12 ♙e3 ♘g4) 12...g5 13 ♙g3 ♘h5.

9...♘g6 10 ♗e2

10 ♗h4!?! is less accurate: for ex-

ample, 10...h6 (or 10...♘f8 11 ♘d2 ♘g6 12 ♗g3 h6 13 ♙e3 ♘h5 [13...♘g4] 14 ♗f3 ♘hf4 and the black knights play an active role; or 10...0-0) 11 ♘d2 ♗h7 12 ♙xf6 is equal; or 12 ♙e3 g5 13 ♗g3 ♘f8, while 13...♘h5!? 14 ♗f3 ♘f4 is also worth consideration.

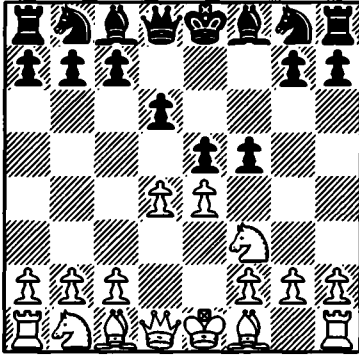


After 10 ♗e2 Black has ceded the two bishops for nothing in return. If he tries to capture one bishop back, by means of 10...h6 11 ♙d2 b5 12 ♙d3 ♘c5 13 b4 ♘xd3 14 cxd3 0-0 15 ♗c1 ♙b7 16 ♙e3 (as in Roos-Trevelyan, Cesenatico 2001) the position remains in White's favour. Both sides have backward pawns, at d3 and c6 respectively, but the white bishop is stronger than its counterpart. The white knight, too, has a potentially brighter future than the black one, as it can aim for c5 or a5.

E) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5?!

In the following section Black tries to seize the centre with the impulsive 3...f5. This approach constitutes the original idea of the great Philidor, as was seen in the introductory game by the master. This variation suits tacti-

cally-gifted players well but, as practice has shown, remains difficult to handle.



3...f5 appeared for the first time in the encounter Atwood-Brühl, London 1792: 4 dxe5 fxe4 5 ♘g5 d5 6 e6 ♘h6 7 g3 c6 8 ♙h3 ♘a6 9 0-0 ♘c7 10 f4 ♙c5+ 11 ♖g2 0-0 12 f5 ♗f6 13 c3 ♖h8 14 g4 ♘g8 15 ♙f4 ♘e8 16 ♘f7+ ♗xf7+ 17 exf7 ♗xf7+ 18 ♙e5 ♙d7 19 g5 ♗e7 20 ♙f4 ♘d6 21 ♙c1 ♗f8 22 f6 ♙xh3+ 23 ♖xh3 gxf6 24 gxf6 ♗e6+ 25 ♖g2 ♗xf6 26 ♙f4 ♗g6+ 27 ♙g3 ♘f5 28 ♗e1 ♘xg3 29 hxg3 ♙d6 and White resigned. I thought any comments here would be superfluous. One may just note that Count Brühl learned a great strategical lesson about the importance of the centre from his game against Philidor!

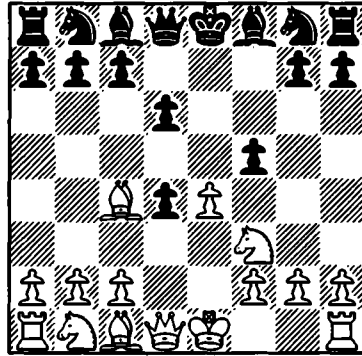
After Black's third move, his opponent has four sensible continuations:

- E1:** 4 ♙c4
- E2:** 4 dxe5
- E3:** 4 exf5
- E4:** 4 ♘c3!

E1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5 4 ♙c4

This continuation doesn't set Black serious problems, even if the ensuing positions remain sharp.

4...exd4



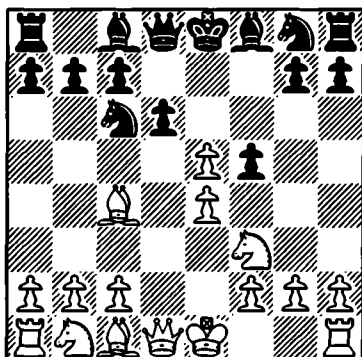
Or:

a) 4...fxe4? is a mistake because of 5 ♘xe5! d5 (5...dxe5 is even worse: 6 ♗h5+ ♖d7 7 ♗f5+ ♖c6 8 ♗xe5 and White's attack outweighs the sacrificed piece) 6 ♗h5+ g6 7 ♘xg6 ♘f6 8 ♗e5+ ♙e7 9 ♘xh8 dxc4 10 ♘c3 ♘c6 11 ♗g5 when an extra exchange, combined with the precarious situation of Black's monarch, makes the position clearly in White's favour.

b) 4...c6? is also wrong, since after 5 exf5 e4 (5...d5 6 ♘xe5! and the bishop is immune because of the devastating ♗h5+: 6...♙xf5 7 ♙d3 with a safe extra pawn) 6 ♘g5, the double threat of 7 ♘f7 and 7 ♗h5+ causes Black a headache.

c) 4...♘f6? 5 dxe5 ♘xe4 6 ♗d5 ♗e7 is mentioned in Line F, albeit by another move order. (7 0-0 c6 8 exd6 gives White a marked plus.)

d) Black can't keep the central tension by 4...♘c6? in view of 5 dxe5! and:



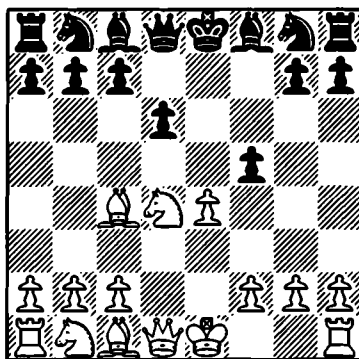
d1) 5...dxe5 6 dxe5 dxe5. White is at a crossroads: should he play for an attack by 7 f7+ e7 8 g5+ f6 9 h5, with the idea c3, d1 (or 0-0-0 if the move becomes legal) and scalp the enemy king, or choose the more positional approach 7 xd8+ xd8 8 g5+ (or 8 c3) e7 9 xe7+ e7 10 c3 - ? In the second case an isolani is likely to appear on e5, which should guarantee a small but stable edge. Myself, I would go for the first line, which is wild and a lot more fun to play.

d2) 5...fxe4? 6 wd5 wd7 (if 6...we7? 7 g5 and Black has to play 7...wd7 anyway) 7 we4 with an extra pawn and a lead in development for White, which means an already close-to-winning position! (7 e6? we6 exploits the fact that the f3-knight is en prise.)

d3) 5...dxe5 6 wd8+ xd8 (or 6...dx8?! 7 dxe5 fxe4 8 c3 and Black has a weak pawn, is behind in development and has to worry about his king – good luck!) 7 c3 when White will combine play against the enemy king and the future isolani on e5. If Black decides on closing the f-file by

playing 7...f4, then 8 g3 may embarrass him very quickly. In any case White enjoys a clear plus.

5 dx4



A rare guest in practice, but worth consideration. Others:

a) After the inaccurate 5 wd4?! Black is in the driving seat: 5...dc6 6 wd5 (other options aren't any better: 6 lb5 we7 followed by ...df6 or ...ld7; 6 we3 fxe4 7 we4+ dge7 with the ideas ...d5 and ...lf5, ...wd7, ...0-0-0) 6...we7. In all three cases Black can claim a slight edge as the e4-pawn is a concern for White.

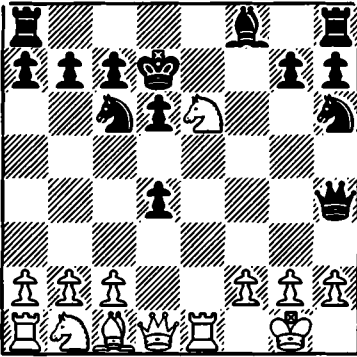
b) 5 dg5!? dh6 and now:

b1) 6 0-0 dc6 7 exf5 (if 7 de1 f4! – Black must keep the e-file closed at any cost – 8 lf4 wf6 when the game is unclear: Black is ready for ...ld7 and ...0-0-0 followed by a kingside assault) 7...lxf5 8 de1+ dd7 9 le6+ le6 10 dxe6 wh4 with mutual chances.

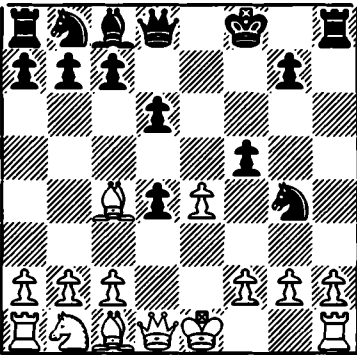
(see following diagram)

White will collect back the d4-pawn, thus restoring the material bal-

ance. The black king isn't in danger as it can't be attacked for the time being.



b2) 6 d4xh7?! is met by 6...d4! 7 d4xf8 d4xf8.



This position is unclear, as Black's inactive pieces will soon join the battle (...d6, ...h4 etc). Having lost the right to castle isn't a tragedy here. Indeed, White will certainly not castle short, and may not find time to hide his king on the other wing. The game Sorokin-Maljutin, USSR Championship 1991, finished abruptly: 8 d4xd4 d6c6 9 d5 d5e8 10 d3 d4f6 11 d1 d4xe4 12 d2e2? (12 0-0 d4xc3 13 bxc3 d5e5 14 h3 d4xc3 15 d5 d4d8 [or 15...d4f6 16 d4g5!])

16 d4d2 with an initiative for the sacrificed pawn was much better) 12...d4e5 13 d4d3 d4g4 14 d4xe4 fxe4 15 d4f4 d4g6 16 d4d2 d4d7 17 d4d4 d4g8 18 0-0-0 d4f8 19 h3? d4f7 20 g3 d4xa2 21 d4b3 d4f6 22 d4c3 d4e6 23 d4xc7? d4xb3 and White resigned as 24 cxb3 would be answered by ...d4h7!.

5...fxe4 6 d4c3

6 d4h5+ g6 7 d4d5 d4e7 8 d4g5 d4f6 9 d4xf6 d4xf6 is okay for Black because the queens won't stay on the board much longer: 10 d4xe4+ (10 d4c3 c6 11 d4xe4+ d4e7 would come to nearly the same) 10...d4e7 is equal.

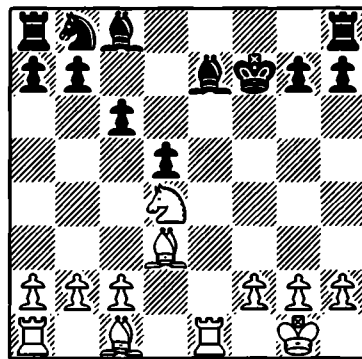
6...d4f6 7 d4e2!

7 d4g5?! c6 8 d4xe4 d4a5+ 9 d4d2 (forced, since 9 d4d2?? d4e5+ loses a piece) 9...d4xd2+ 10 d4xd2 d5 and Black has nothing to fear.

7...c6 8 d4xe4 d4xe4 9 d4xe4+ d4e7 10 d4xe7+ d4xe7 11 0-0 d5 12 d4e1! d4f7

12...d4xc4? 13 d4g5 0-0 14 d4xe7 with a nice advantage for White.

13 d4d3



d4f5 is coming, which means that Black may have to concede the two bishops.

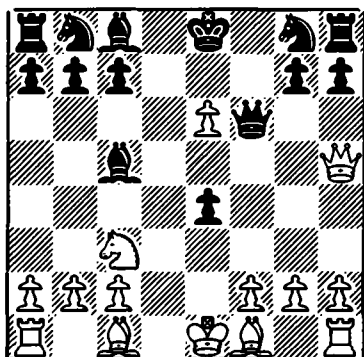
E2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 f5 4 dxe5

Ceding the centre in return for tactical motives: the e-pawn will be a nuisance in Black's camp.

4...fxe4 5 ♘g5 d5 6 e6 ♘f6!

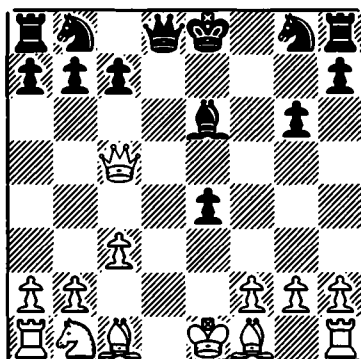
Or:

a) 6...♙c5?! 7 ♘c3 (apparently better than 7 ♘e4 dxe4 8 ♖h5+ g6 9 ♗xc5 ♙xe6 with an edge as Black has no good developing move at his disposal; or 7 ♘f7? ♗f6 8 ♙e3 [if 8 ♗d2?! ♙xe6 9 ♘xh8 ♘h6 with an initiative comparable to the one Black gets in certain lines of the Latvian Gambit] 8...d4 with unfathomable complications) 7...♗f6 (7...c6? 8 ♘f7! – one more white piece is developed and the picture is radically different! – 8...♗f6 9 ♙e3 d4 10 ♖h5 dxe3 11 ♘d6+ ♗d8 12 ♗e8+ wins) 8 ♘gxe4 dxe4 9 ♖h5+

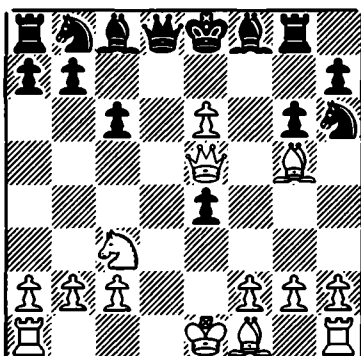


and here White's advantage is significant.

b) 6...♙b4+ is rather better than 6...♙c5 since it forces White to content himself with 7 c3 ♙c5 8 ♘xe4 dxe4 9 ♖h5+ g6 10 ♗xc5 ♙xe6 with a risk-free and lasting edge due to the pair of bishops and the weak e4-pawn.



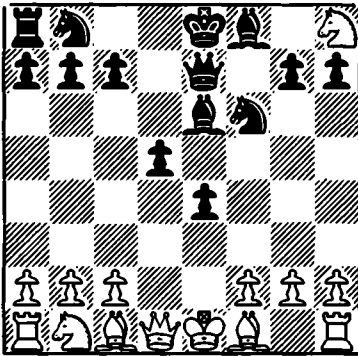
c) 6...♘h6?! 7 ♘c3 c6 8 ♘gxe4! dxe4 9 ♖h5+ g6 10 ♗e5 ♗g8 11 ♙g5...



...and now the struggle lasted 18 more moves in the game Wells-Henris, Antwerp 1995: 11...♙g7 (an improvement over 11...♗d6? 12 ♗d1! ♗xe6 13 ♙c4! and White won in Steinitz-Rainer, New York 1885; some people complain because they have to wait for several years to show their novelty...) 12 e7 ♗d5 (12...♗d7?! runs into the nasty 13 ♗f4 with the threat of ♗d1-d8+, when Black is probably forced to play 13...♗g4, giving back a piece as in the game) 13 ♗xd5 ♙xc3+ (once again the best try; 13...cxd5? 14 ♘xd5 and it is

difficult to come up with something clever against $\mathcal{D}c7+$ and $\mathcal{L}xh6$ followed by $\mathcal{D}f6+$) 14 $bxc3$ $cxd5$ 15 $\mathcal{L}xh6$ $\mathcal{W}xe7$ (the public enemy number one has vanished but the ensuing ending remains pleasant for White) 16 0-0-0 $\mathcal{L}e6$ 17 $c4$ $dx4$ 18 $\mathcal{N}d4$ $\mathcal{N}c8$ 19 $\mathcal{N}xe4$ $\mathcal{N}c5?$ (19... $\mathcal{D}d7!$ 20 $\mathcal{L}g5+$ $\mathcal{W}f7$ 21 $\mathcal{L}e2$ $\mathcal{N}c5$ gave better chances to survive) 20 $\mathcal{L}e3$ $\mathcal{N}c6$ 21 $\mathcal{L}g5+$ $\mathcal{W}f7$ 22 $\mathcal{L}e2$ $\mathcal{Q}a6$ 23 $\mathcal{L}f3$ $\mathcal{W}g7$ 24 $\mathcal{N}he1$ $\mathcal{N}e8$ 25 $\mathcal{N}h4$ $\mathcal{N}c7$ 26 $\mathcal{L}h6+$ $\mathcal{W}h8$ 27 $\mathcal{L}d5$ $\mathcal{L}f7$ 28 $\mathcal{N}xe8+$ $\mathcal{L}xe8$ 29 $\mathcal{N}f4$ and Black resigned.

7 $\mathcal{D}f7$ $\mathcal{W}e7$ 8 $\mathcal{D}xh8$ $\mathcal{L}xe6$



Black has a lead in development and a strong centre in exchange for his material deficit. This line hasn't been tested much in practice and needs further investigations. The game Novak-Janousek, Czech League 1995, continued...

9 $c3$ $\mathcal{D}c6$ 10 $\mathcal{L}b5$ $\mathcal{L}d7?!$ 11 $\mathcal{L}f4$ 0-0-0 12 $\mathcal{D}d2$ $g6$ 13 $\mathcal{D}b3$

...and bit by bit Black's compensation for the exchange disappeared. 10...0-0-0, 10... $\mathcal{D}g4$ and 10... $\mathcal{W}c5$ are three possible improvements on Black's play.

E3) 1 e4 e5 2 $\mathcal{D}f3$ d6 3 d4 f5 4 $exf5$

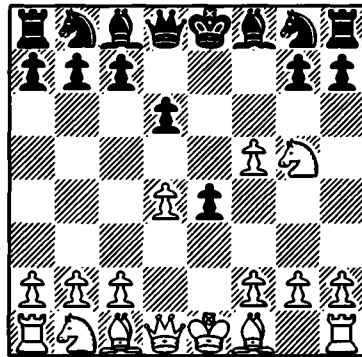
Together with 4 $\mathcal{L}c4$, this move could well justify Black's risky strategy. It seems, however, that the edge remains White's.

4...e4 5 $\mathcal{D}g5$

Other continuations aren't dangerous for Black:

a) 5 $\mathcal{D}fd2$ $\mathcal{L}xf5$ 6 $\mathcal{D}c4$ $\mathcal{D}f6$ 7 $\mathcal{D}e3$ $\mathcal{L}g6$ is no problem for Black.

b) 5 $\mathcal{W}e2$ (targeting e4 and also b5 in some cases) 5... $\mathcal{W}e7$ (5... $d5?!$ 6 $\mathcal{D}e5!$) 6 $\mathcal{D}g5$ $\mathcal{D}f6$ (6... $\mathcal{L}xf5?$ 7 $\mathcal{W}b5+$) 7 $\mathcal{D}c3$ $d5$ 8 $\mathcal{D}e6$ $\mathcal{L}xe6$ 9 $fxe6$ $\mathcal{W}xe6$ 10 $\mathcal{W}b5+$ $\mathcal{W}c6$ was equal in A.Ivanov-Belokoskov, Russia 2001. 7... $\mathcal{D}c6?!$ is more dynamic but also less sound: 8 $d5$ $\mathcal{D}d4$ 9 $\mathcal{W}d1$ $\mathcal{D}xf5$ 10 $\mathcal{L}b5+$ $\mathcal{W}d8$ (10... $\mathcal{L}d7?!$ allows the g5-knight to penetrate e6) 11 0-0 $a6$ 12 $\mathcal{L}d3!!$ profits from the poor position of Black's royal couple: 12... $exd3$ 13 $\mathcal{N}e1$ $dx2$ 14 $\mathcal{W}d2$ with a clear advantage, Vujovic-Destrebecq, La Grande-Motte 1981.



5... $\mathcal{L}xf5$

Black has seized the centre. The evaluation of this position depends on White's capacity to undermine the cen-

tre with f3. If White succeeds in favourable circumstances, he will stand better, otherwise his opponent will equalize.

Instead: 5...♟f6 6 f3 ♚e7 (6...♟xf5 7 fxe4 ♟xe4 8 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 9 ♟c3 is better for White too) 7 ♟e2 exf3? 8 ♟xf3 ♟xf5 9 0-0 ♚d7 10 d5 ♟e7 11 ♟d4 ♟g4 and here two games deviate:

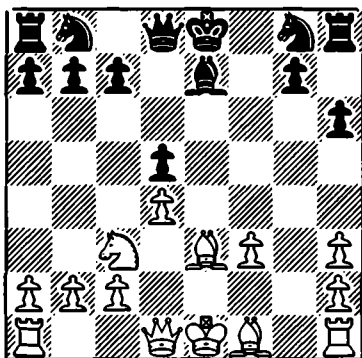
a) 12 ♟xf6 ♟xe2 13 ♚xe2 gxf6 14 ♚h5+ ♟d8 15 ♟e6+ ♟c8 with great play for the invested exchange in Vitolinsh-Arkhipkin, USSR 1975.

b) 12 c4 ♟xe2 13 ♚xe2 0-0 14 ♟c3 with a clear edge to White due to the imminent invasion of e6 in Dvoirys-West, New York 2000.

White's 12th move saw two different concepts. Should one sacrifice the exchange or not? Black is suffering anyway (and there was – is – no beauty prize awarded at the New York Open), so Dvoirys decided on the negative.

6 f3

Kosten only discussed 6 ♟c3 d5 7 f3 e3!?, estimating that after 8 ♟xe3 h6 9 ♟h3 (9 g4 hxg5 10 gxf5 ♟d6) 9...♟xh3 10 gxh3 ♟e7...



...Black's game is acceptable. This is

partially true. While Black's position is playable, White nevertheless has an edge owing to his pair of bishops and extra pawn.

6...♟f6

6...♚e7!? is tricky:

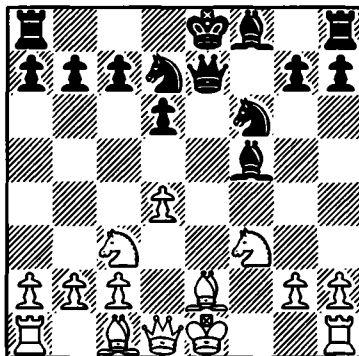
a) 7 fxe4?! ♟f6! followed by either ...h6 or ...♟xe4 (7...h6? is the correct idea but executed too hastily: 8 ♚h5+ g6 9 ♚e2 and White hangs on to his goodies).

b) 7 ♟c3! (difficult to find!) 7...♟f6 reaches the main text. 7...e3? simply loses a pawn after 8 ♟ge4; while 7...exf3? is far too risky: 8 ♟f2 with the threats of 9 ♟b5+ and ♟e1, as well as 9 ♚xf3 when White's advantage is already close to decisive.

7 ♟c3 ♚e7

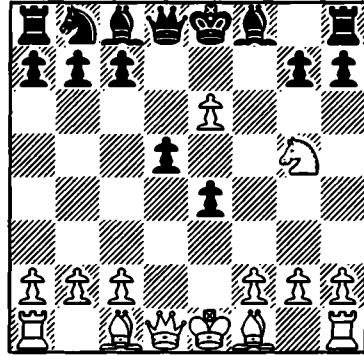
Now a logical continuation seems to be...

8 ♟e2 exf3 9 ♟xf3 ♟bd7



...when White's edge has been kept to bearable proportions. White will more easily finish his development, while his king is likely to be safer on the kingside than its counterpart on the other wing.

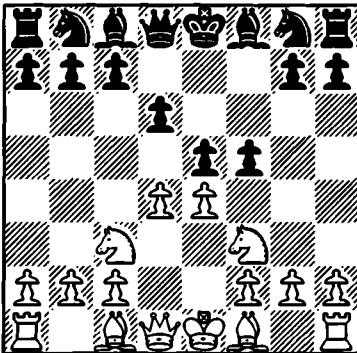
9...♘c6?! is less good: 10 0-0 0-0-0 (10...♘b4 11 ♖b5+ ♔d8 – else ♚e1 leads to heavy material losses – 12 ♖a4 and Black also finds himself in trouble) 11 d5 ♘b4 (11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♚xe5 13 ♖f4 ♚e8 14 ♖g5! ♚g6 15 ♖xf6 ♖h3 [the obvious threat was ♚xf5!]) 16 ♚f2 gxf6 17 ♖d3 ♚g7 18 ♚f3 and 19 ♚xf6 snatches a pawn) 12 ♘e1 ♖d7 13 ♖g5 h6 14 ♖xf6 gxf6 15 a3 ♘a6 16 ♖xa6 bxa6 17 ♚d4. Black's pawn structure is damaged and the manoeuvre ♘d3-b4-c6 will prove pretty unpleasant.



This diminishes Black's aggressive potential in the main line of the above-mentioned variation. And as secondary lines of 4 dxe5 are not improved by the absence of the two knights, the present position should be assessed as clearly in White's favour.

E4) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 f5 4 ♘c3!

This is the most critical test regarding the viability of 3...f5.

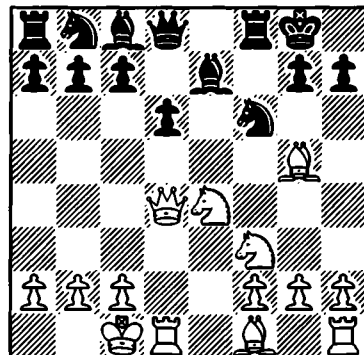


b) 4...exd4 is not attractive either: for example, 5 ♚xd4 (5 ♘xd4 is good too; after 5...exd4 fxe4 6 ♘xe4 White enjoys an indisputable advantage: he has a lead in development and can contemplate possibilities such as ♘g5, ♖g5, and ♚h5+, or simply move his f1-bishop and castle) 5...fxe4?! 6 ♖g5 ♘f6 7 ♘xe4 ♖e7 8 0-0-0 0-0.

4...fxe4

Black lacks decent alternatives:

a) 4...♘f6 5 dxe5 ♘xe4 6 ♘xe4 fxe4 7 ♘g5 d5 (if 7...♖f5?!, 8 ♚d5 is cunning: White simultaneously threatens mate, while attacking both b7 and e4; there is no satisfactory defence) 8 e6 and play has transposed into a position similar to one arising in the 4 dxe5 line, with the difference that both the b1- and g8-knights have vanished.

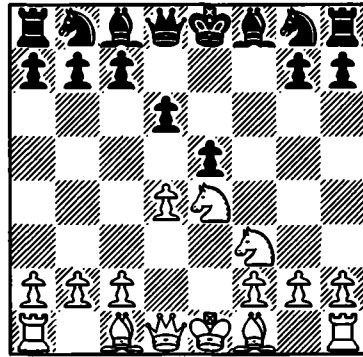


Black is ready to repel the centralized queen by means of ... Qc6 , now that the knight can't be pinned anymore. This will, however, prove to be too slow, as events now develop with an astonishing rapidity: 9 Qxf6+ Kxf6 10 Kc4+ Kh8 11 Kxf6 Wxf6 (swapping queens eases Black's defence, as it considerably slows down White's attack; on 11... Wxf6 , 12 Qg5 would be nasty) 12 Wxf6 gxf6 (directed against the invasion of the seventh rank by White's rooks) 13 Qd4 (having in mind Qb5 , which would force ... Qa6 and thus paralyze Black) 13... Kd7 14 Nhe1 Qc6 15 Qxc6 Kxc6 16 Ne7 (White's play is simple but efficient, and his edge continues to grow) 16... Kxg2?! (accelerating defeat; the passive 16... Kac8 was more stubborn) 17 Ng1 (White is about to double his rooks on the seventh rank, and the rest needs no comment) 17... d5 18 Kd3 Ke4 19 Kxe4 dxe4 20 Ngg7 Nfe8 21 Nhx7+ Kg8 22 Ngg7+ Kf8 23 Nxc7 1-0, Tsheskovsky-Inkirov, Minsk 1982. From a pleasant endgame White scored a flashy victory. After move 13, Black's prospects already looked pretty grim!

Black has also tried the immediate 5... Qc6 6 Kb5 Qf6 7 e5 dxe5 8 Kxc6+ bxc6 9 Wxd8+ Kxd8 10 Qxe5 Ke8 11 Kg5 Kd6 12 Kxf6 gxf6 13 Qd3 , when Boris Spassky himself couldn't defeat Destrebecq in their encounter in Lyon, 1983. Black's position looks ruined – all his pawns are isolated and weak – but the pair of bishops provides counter-chances. The two opponents shared the point some 13 moves later, after White obviously missed his chances. I doubt

that 5... Qc6 could totally rehabilitate the line for Black.

5 Qxe4



5... d5?!

An attempt to improve on the game Tsheskovsky-Inkirov.

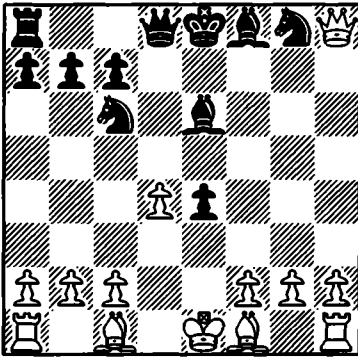
We've already seen that 5... exd4 , doesn't solve Black's problems. White can quickly mobilize his forces, and any recapture on d4 is good for him.

If 5... Qf6?! 6 Qxf6+! (6 Kg5?! Ke7 7 Kxf6 gxf6 is unclear) 6... gxf6 (after 6... Wxf6 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 Kg5 Wd6 9 Kc4 Black lags behind in development and suffers from an isolani at e5) 7 Kd3 . The area surrounding the black king is weakened and White's plan (0-0, Qh4-f5 , Wh5) is clear. As a consequence White has an obvious plus.

6 Qeg5!

a) 6 Qxe5?! only offers Black what he wished for: a wild tactical skirmish! 6... dxe4 7 Wh5+ g6 8 Qxg6 hxg6! (not 8... Qf6? 9 We5+ Kf7 10 Kc4+ [10 Qhx8+? Kg8] 10... Kg7 11 Kh6+ Kxh6 12 Qxh8 Kb4+ 13 c3 Wxh8 14 cxb4 when the rook and two pawns plus the 'naked' black king should outweigh the

enemy knights) 9 ♖xg6+ ♜d7 10 ♗f5+ ♜e8 11 ♗e5+ (11 ♗g6+ is a draw by perpetual check if White wants it) 11...♙e6! 12 ♗xh8 (12 ♗xe6+!? ♚e7 13 ♗e5 ♜g8 14 ♙c4 ♚bc6 15 ♗h5+ ♜g6 16 ♙e3 kept some initiative and three pawns for the piece in Zelcic-Doric, Pula 1995) 12...♚c6.



The material balance clearly favours White, but Black has dynamic compensation, with ...0-0-0 next on his agenda. White's prospects seem better to me, but I also think that Black's activity shouldn't be underestimated.

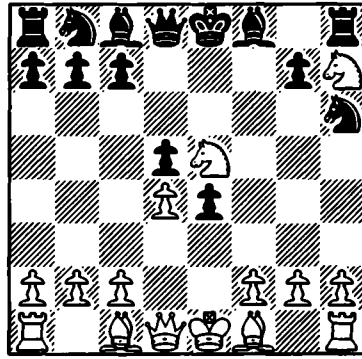
b) 6 ♘g3?! leads to a game with better prospects for White, but his edge is reduced in comparison with 6 ♘eg5. After 6...e4 7 ♘e5 ♘f6 8 f3! (8 ♙g5?! ♙d6 9 f3 0-0 10 fxe4 c5 led to chaos in Bezemer-Kamstra, Enschede 1993) 8...♙d6 9 fxe4 0-0 and here, instead of 10 ♙g5 transposing into Bezemer-Kamstra, White could claim an edge by 10 exd5 (but not 10 ♙e2?! ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 dxe4 12 ♙c4+ ♜h8 13 ♘f7+? ♜xf7 14 ♙xf7 ♗h4+ and Black seizes the upper hand) 10...♚bd7 11 ♘f3 (or 11 ♘c4). Black will regain one pawn, but it is

uncertain whether he has enough for the other one he sacrificed.

The text move, on the other hand, 'softly' refutes the dubious idea initiated by Black's 3rd move.

6...h6

6...e4 7 ♘e5 ♘h6 8 ♘xh7! highlights the weakness of g6 in another way.



8...♘g4 9 ♘xf8 ♘xe5 10 dxe5 ♜xf8 11 c4 d4 12 ♗d2 and White won only 9 moves later, after destroying Black's pride: his centre! (Hautot-Stork, Belgian Team Ch. 1997)

7 ♘f7! ♜xf7 8 ♘xe5+

All White needs now is accuracy in the conversion of his clear advantage.

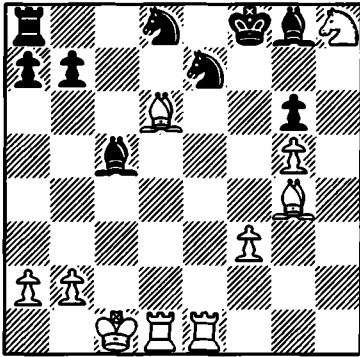
8...♜e6 9 ♗g4+ ♜e7 10 ♘g6+ ♜e8 11 ♗e2+ ♘e7 12 ♘xh8

The h8-knight will escape, despite all of Black's efforts to prevent it.

12...♙f5 13 g4 ♙e4 14 f3 ♙h7 15 g5 hxg5 16 ♙h3 ♚bc6 17 c3 ♗d6 18 ♗e6 ♗xe6+ 19 ♙xe6 ♘d8 20 ♙g4 g6

Black is at last ready to 'pluck' the knight, but...

21 h4 ♙g7 22 hxg5 ♙g8 23 ♙f4 c5 24 dxc5 d4 25 cxd4 ♙xd4 26 0-0-0 ♙xc5 27 ♜he1 ♜f8 28 ♙d6

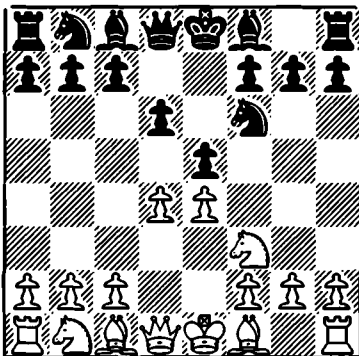


...and White wins.

200 years after Philidor's brilliant victory over Count Brühl, opening theory seems to have evolved, and followers of the French pioneer are now having a hard time of things.

The following section shows how to deal with the characteristics of 3...d6. A recurring theme here is the greater activity of White's pieces, which often leads to either the capture of the two bishops or material gain.

F) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 d6



4 dxe5 dxe4

4...dxe5?? would obviously be a bad error: 5 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 6 ♘xe5 with a safe extra pawn.

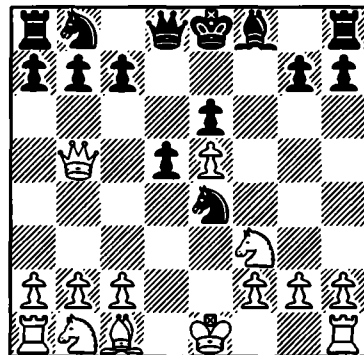
5 ♗d5

After other moves Black experiences no problems; for example:

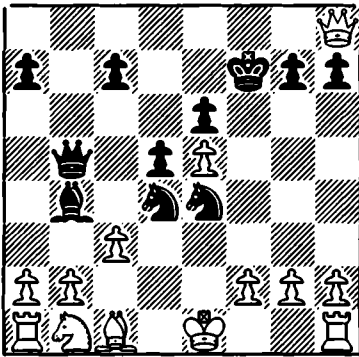
a) 5 ♘bd2 ♘xd2 6 ♙xd2 ♙e7 is equal. The pawn structure is symmetrical and White's slight lead in development will evaporate. As a consequence, this position has quite a drawish character.

b) 5 ♙c4 (threatening 6 ♗d5 and 6 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 7 ♗d5+) 5...c6 (with the idea ...d5) 6 0-0 d5 7 ♙d3 ♘c5 and Black isn't facing any problems, while 6 exd6 ♘xd6 (or 6...♙xd6) equalizes without difficulty.

5...♙e6?! is much less healthy. After 6 ♙xe6 fxe6 Bernstein found the refutation of Black's opening in his game against Tartakower, Paris 1937. He then unfortunately (for him, not for us!) erred, to suffer an undeserved miniature: 7 ♗e2! d5 (7...♘c5 8 exd6! aiming at isolating the e6-pawn; 8...cxd6 9 b4! ♗f6 10 bxc5 ♗xa1 11 ♗xe6+ is very dangerous) 8 ♗b5+!.



Going pawn-fishing so early is seldom advisable. It was not too late for a natural development, by 0-0 and ♘bd2, but paradoxically White's move is excellent! A rare exception to one of the fundamental principles. The game continued 8...♘c6 9 ♘d4? (9 ♗xb7! represented the right implementation of White's brilliant strategy: after the logical sequence 9...♘b4 10 ♗b5+ c6 11 ♗e2 Black's compensation for the pawn is illusory) 9...♗d7?! (the stronger 9...a6! 10 ♘xc6 axb5 11 ♘xd8 ♗xd8, with an excellent game for Black, would have deprived us of the beautiful conclusion that now arises) 10 ♗xb7? (overstepping the point of no return; 10 ♘xc6 still gave mutual chances) 10...♗b4+ 11 c3 (11 ♘c3, 11 ♘d2, or even 11 ♖f1 would run into the same thing) 11...♘xd4! 12 ♗xa8+ ♖f7 13 ♗xh8 ♗b5



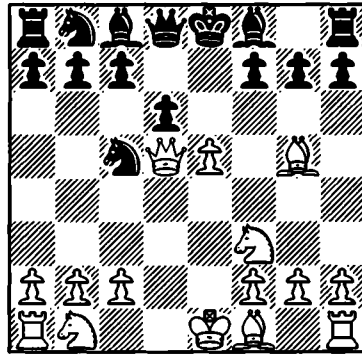
and White resigned as mate in four is unavoidable. In spite of the reciprocal mistakes, quite an interesting 'little evergreen'!

5...♘c5

5...f5!? contains the idea of ...c6, and ...d5. If Black succeeds in cementing his

knight on e4 without risking his king's security too much, he will get a very comfortable game. 6 ♗c4 ♗e7 7 0-0 c6 sees Black trying to implement the plan. As White's purpose is to open the position by exd6, there is nothing stronger here than 8 exd6! when White retains his advantage. Indeed, he has a quantitatively and qualitatively superior development. Furthermore, Black's king will find it difficult to find a safe place. 8...♗xd6 (8...♘xd6 9 ♗d4 and ♗e1 is coming soon) 9 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 10 ♘bd2 with an edge: the e4-knight must either exchange itself or retreat, which will leave Black behind in development and with an exposed monarch.

6 ♗g5



Now Black has:

F1: 6...♗d7

F2: 6...♗e7

6...f6?! (or !?) is ugly, but maybe not as bad as it looks. 7 exf6 gxf6 8 ♗e3 was De la Riva-Campora, Canete 1994, and the damaged black pawn structure insures White of an edge.

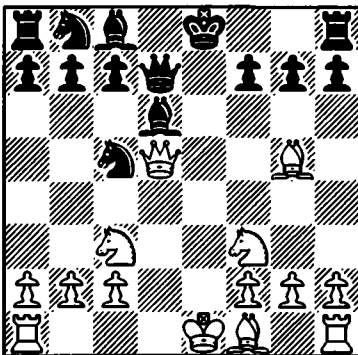
F1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 dxе5 ♘xe4 5 ♚d5 ♘c5 6 ♙g5 ♚d7

This odd move temporarily blocks the c8-bishop's diagonal. Black, however, still tries to carry out the plan of ...c6 and ...d5, and can quickly remove his queen. This variation aims at recapturing on d6 directly with the bishop and, unlike 6...♙e7, doesn't imply a trade of queens.

7 exd6

Else ...c6 and ...d5 is okay. White must open the game to emphasize his superior development.

7...♙xd6 8 ♘c3



...and now:

F11: 8...♚e6+

F12: 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 ♘c6?

F13: 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 a6!

F11) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 dxе5 ♘xe4 5 ♚d5 ♘c5 6 ♙g5 ♚d7 7 exd6 ♙xd6 8 ♘c3 ♚e6+ 9 ♙e3 ♚xd5 10 ♘xd5

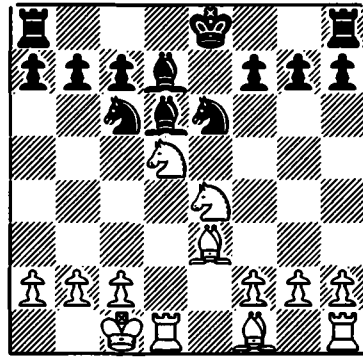
Threatening both ♘xc7+ and ♙xc5, which explains Black's next. The following moves also seem sensible, and I

don't see where Black could have deviated before the position after the 13th move.

10...♘e6

10...♘ba6?! would parry the double threat, but placing the knight on the edge isn't a smart choice.

11 0-0-0 ♘c6 12 ♘d2! ♙d7 13 ♘e4



We are following the game **Chandler-Gulko, Reykjavik 1991**. The pawn structure is symmetrical and White has the more active pieces. In such a situation, one's edge can either vanish, after the swap of pieces, or increase. As exchanges which would ease Black's position are impossible here, we find ourselves in the latter case.

13...♙e7 14 ♙e2

With the idea of ♙he1 and f2-f4, further increasing White's space advantage.

14...0-0-0

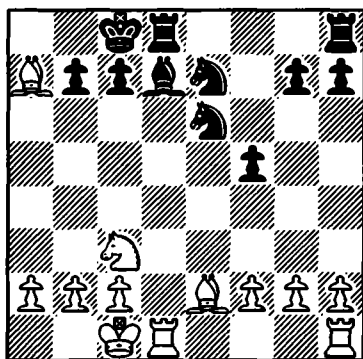
Losing a pawn, but Black had no valid alternative: if 14...a6 15 f4! or 14...♙d8 15 ♙he1 and the difference in activity between the two camps speaks for itself; while after 14...f5 15 ♙h5+ g6 16 ♘df6+ ♙xf6 17 ♘xf6+ ♙e7 18 ♘xd7

gxh5 19 ♖he1, the damaged pawn structure and exposed king render Black's situation undesirable.

15 ♖xa7! f5

If 15...b6? 16 ♖a6 mate; or 15...♗xa7 16 ♖xe7+ and White remains a safe pawn up.

16 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 17 ♖c3



The game now enters the technical phase and Chandler's resolve proves to be excellent.

17...♖f4

Or 17...♖c6!? 18 ♖e3 f4 19 ♖d2 and with a good extra pawn and the two bishops, White is winning.

18 ♖d4 ♖xe2+ 19 ♖xe2 ♖hg8 20 ♖f4 ♖c6 21 f3 ♖d7 22 ♖he1 ♖d5 23 ♖d3 ♖e7 24 c4 ♖xe1 25 ♖xe1 ♖d8 26 ♖f2

26 ♖xg7?! ♖b6 27 ♖e5 ♖g8 would allow some counterplay.

26...♖f6 27 ♖c2 h6 28 ♖e5 ♖e8 29 ♖c3 ♖f7 30 ♖a5 ♖e8 31 ♖xf5 ♖g6 32 ♖e5 ♖d8 33 ♖f4 ♖b1 34 a3 ♖d1 35 ♖e1 ♖xe1 36 ♖xe1 ♖d7 37 ♖d4 ♖c2 38 b4 ♖e8 39 ♖d3 ♖d6 40 ♖c5+ ♖c8 41 ♖e6 ♖f5+ 42 ♖c3 ♖d1 43 ♖d3 h5 44 h4 b6 45 ♖f4 1-0

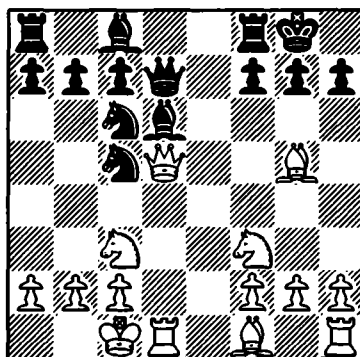
A very strong performance by

Chandler, who gave his opponent not the slightest chance of survival.

F12) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 ♖f6 4 dxe5 ♖xe4 5 ♖d5 ♖c5 6 ♖g5 ♖d7 7 exd6 ♖xd6 8 ♖c3 0-0 9 0-0-0 ♖c6?

After 9...h6!? 10 ♖e3 ♖e7 Black's position is obviously inferior, but it remains very defensible. If he were to move, Black would likely continue ...♖e6 or ...♖c6, so 11 ♖d4 is logical for White. Then 11...♖c6!? (anyway!) looks interesting to me, in order to accelerate development and get the b-file semi-open, in the event of 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 ♖xc6 ♖b7 14 ♖b5 ♖ab8.

Another less sharp continuation is 12 ♖f5 ♖xf5 13 ♖xf5 when White certainly has slightly better prospects. In this latter case, however, Black's development is finished and his position remains solid.



10 ♖b5!

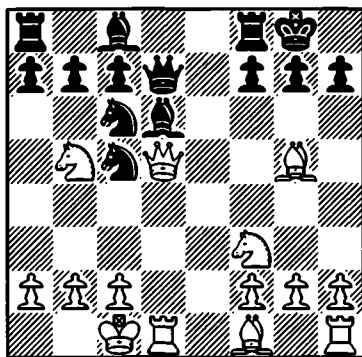
A theoretical novelty according to Tiviakov, but the move had in fact already been tested before! Liberzon-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1979, had seen 10...♖g4 11 ♖xd6 cxd6 12 ♖c4? ♖e4 13

h3 ♖f5 14 ♙e3 ♙e6 15 ♗b5 d5 16 ♙d3 ♜fc8 17 ♖b1 ♗f6 18 ♙xe4 and the two grandmasters signed peace agreements.

Alternatively:

a) 10 ♙b5?! a6 11 ♙xc6 bxc6 12 ♗d2 ♜b8 with enough counterplay, Palac-Kosten, Amantea 1992.

b) 10 ♙e3?! ♘e7 11 ♗d4 (11 ♗xc5?? ♙xc5 12 ♜xd7 ♙xe3+ [check!] and an exchange is gone) 11...b6 12 ♘e4 ♘xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♗c6 14 ♙d3 ♗xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♜b8 when White's edge, linked with pieces being better placed, is only symbolic. Black will follow up with ...♙f5 or ...♙b7, preceded by the prophylactic ...a6 in the event of 16 ♘d4.



10...♗g4

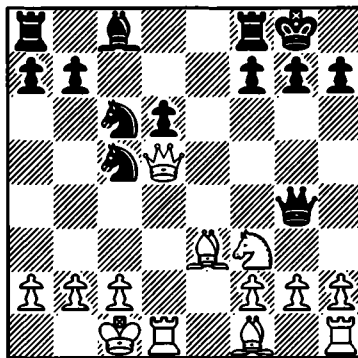
Strange looking, but motivated by seeking counterplay. For this purpose, Black would like to bring the c8-bishop out and shift a rook in its place.

Retreating from the knight's aggression wasn't a solution either, as the following variation witnesses: 10...♙e7 11 ♗xd7 ♙xd7 12 ♘xc7 ♙xg5+ (or 12...♜ac8 13 ♙f4!? with a safe extra pawn) 13 ♘xg5 ♜ac8 14 ♗d5 b6 15 ♘a6

and White's extra pawn prevails over his unusual piece placement.

11 ♘xd6 cxd6 12 ♙e3!

12 ♗xd6? is met by 12...♘e4!



The outcome of the opening is that White has obtained the pair of bishops and created an isolated pawn on d6. If he 'only' had the edge of the bishops, with the pawn structure being symmetrical White's plus would be clear. Here, the imbalance due to the d6-pawn gives Black attacking chances along the c-file, as well as a strongpoint for his knight on c5. In the present case this is insufficient compensation, but in general 'collecting' pluses can be double-edged. We now follow the game **Tiviakov-Barbero, Imperia 1993**.

12...♙e6?!

This accelerates the end by desperately trying to generate some play. Other continuations were more tenacious, but equally hopeless in the long run:

a) 12...♘b4 13 ♗c4.

b) 12...♘e4 13 ♙d3!?, or 13 h3 and ♙d3 next, with a clear plus.

c) 12...♗a4 13 ♗c4! ♗xc4 (forced; if

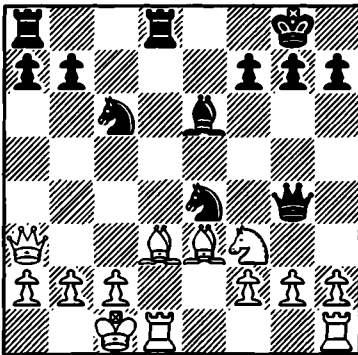
13...♖a5 14 ♜xd6, or 13...♟b4 14 a3 with a decisive advantage in both cases) 14 ♜xc4. Without queens the strength of the bishops is easier to emphasize, while the handicap of the weak d-pawn becomes greater.

d) 12...♞d8 13 ♘g5 (13 ♘d4!? also suffices) 13...♞e6 (or 13...♟e6 14 h3 with the idea 14...♗a4 15 ♙b5 and the harassed queen doesn't have a good square at its disposal; after running away to h4, White can safely cash in by taking twice on c6) 14 ♘xe6 fxe6 15 ♗c4. The pair of bishops and the fewer pawn islands promises White a clear advantage.

13 ♗xd6 ♟e4 14 ♗a3 ♞fd8

If 14...a5 (to counter 15 ♙d3 with ...♟b4) 15 ♘d4! threatens a fork with f3 and maintains a significant plus.

15 ♙d3



White has finished his development and has kept his extra pawn. The rest is rather easy...

15...♟f6

15...a5 16 h3 ♗g6 (16...♗f5 17 ♘g5 ♙d5 18 f3 is winning for White) 17 ♘h4 ♗f6 18 ♙xe4 ♗xh4 with a clear advantage.

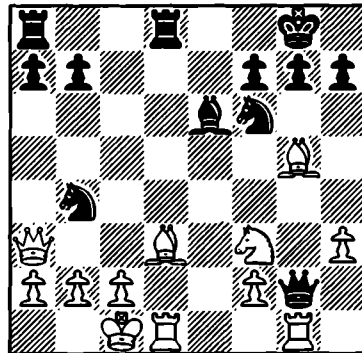
16 ♙g5! ♟b4?!

After 16...♙d5! 17 ♙xf6 (17 h3? ♗xg2 18 ♙xf6 ♗xf3 19 ♙xd8 ♗f4+ 20 ♟b1 ♙xh1 is messy) 17...♗f4+ 18 ♟b1 ♗xf6 19 ♙e2 Black can still fight with 19...a5, having in mind 20...♟b4. White, however, seems to have a better reply to his rival's 16th move, namely the aesthetic (and cybernetic!) 17 ♞hg1, keeping all the pluses of the position.

17 h3! ♗xg2?!

Suicide. Black's last chance was 17...♟xd3+ 18 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 19 ♗xd3 ♗a4 (19...♗xg2?? would lose a piece to 20 ♞g1 and ♙xf6) 20 a3 and White has an extra pawn for nothing.

18 ♞hg1



18...♗xf2

None of the other captures would change the outcome of the game: 18...♗xf3 19 ♙xh7+ ♟xh7 20 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 21 ♗xf3 ♟xa2+ 22 ♟b1 ♘g5 23 ♞xg5 and d1 is controlled; 18...♟xd3+ 19 ♜xd3 and ♙xf6 strangely reminds me of 17...♟xd3+; and finally 18...♜xd3 19 ♜xd3!.

19 ♙xf6 ♗e3+ 20 ♟b1 ♙xa2+ 21 ♟a1 ♗b6 22 ♞xg7+ ♟f8 23 ♞xh7 1-0

F13) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 dxe5 ♘xe4 5 ♚d5 ♘c5 6 ♙g5 ♚d7 7 exd6 ♙xd6 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 0-0-0 a6! 10 ♙e3 ♚c6 11 ♚h5

White wisely declines the trade of queens and instead starts an attack against the enemy king.

11...♘bd7

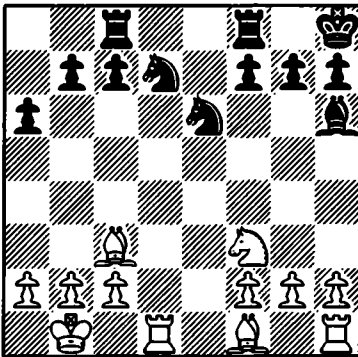
Reinforcements arrive!

12 ♙d4 ♙f4+ 13 ♚b1 ♚h6

A decision guided by good sense: the white queen is too threatening and Black must therefore eliminate it.

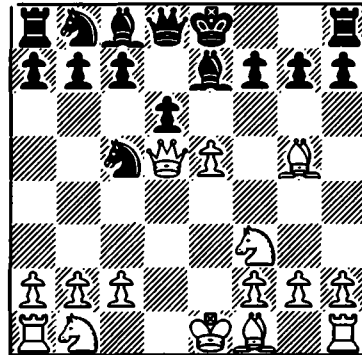
14 ♚hx6 ♙hx6 15 ♘d5 ♘e6 16 ♘e7+ ♚h8 17 ♘xc8 ♙axc8 18 ♙c3

18 ♙c3?! was Van der Werf-Cifuentes Parada, Wijk aan Zee 1993. This move is a tacit draw offer (and in fact the game did stop here), as after the obvious 18...♘xd4 the position is dead equal.



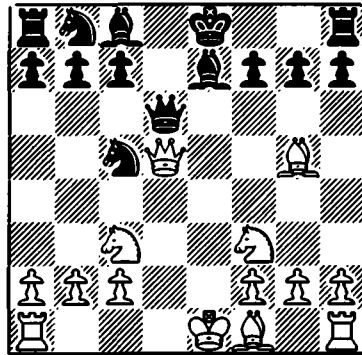
After the superior 18 ♙c3, White has the pair of bishops and the slight edge that is usually associated with it. Black's task is to activate his knights while trying at the same time to swap one enemy bishop. Thus 18...♘dc5 seems to perfectly fulfil this demand.

F2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6 4 dxe5 ♘xe4 5 ♚d5 ♘c5 6 ♙g5 ♙e7



The alternative to 6...♚d7. Unfortunately for Black, this variation doesn't bring him more success.

7 exd6 ♚xd6 8 ♘c3



Developing with gain of time. Now we will consider:

F21: 8...♚e6+

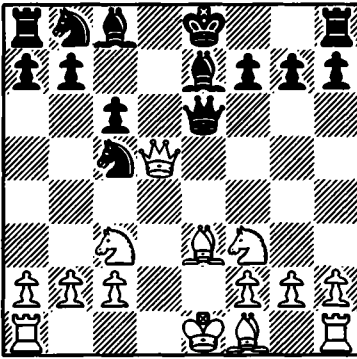
F22: 8...♘e6

F23: 8...others

Even though White keeps the possibility of ♘b5 in the line 8 ♚xd6 ♙xd6 9 ♘c3, the move 8 ♚xd6 helps Black finish his development. The game

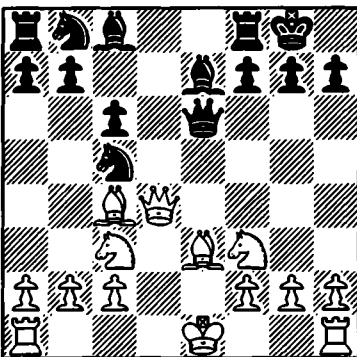
Korneev-Yandemirov, Moscow 1996, continued 9...d6 10 d2 d6 11 0-0-0 d7 12 b5 e7 13 e3 a6 14 d3 0-0-0 and the position was gradually levelled.

F21) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 f6 4 dx5 dxe4 5 d5 d5 6 g5 e7 7 exd6 dxc3 8 d3 e6+ 9 e3 c6



The alternative 9...d5? would considerably ease White's task. After 10 dxd5 d6 11 dxe7 ex7 12 0-0-0 White has gained the two bishops, and the king on e7 might soon feel uncomfortable.

10 d4 0-0 11 e4



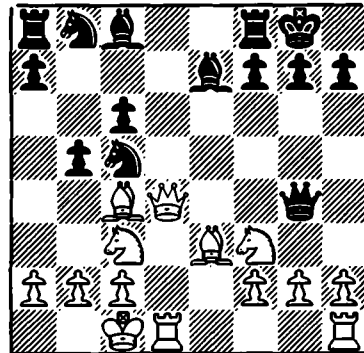
11...g4

Or 11...g6 12 0-0-0 with the idea of d5.

12 0-0-0 b5

The whole white army is out, while Black's queenside is still stuck at home. No wonder then that the ensuing tactical complications favour the first player.

After 12...xd4 13 dxd4 ba6 14 h1 e6 15 xc5 dxc5 16 xe6 Black must either allow the rook to access 'seventh heaven', or accept a weak pawn on e6. In the latter case, nothing prevents White from continuing 16...fxe6 17 b4 a6 18 a3 threatening both xe6 and d7.



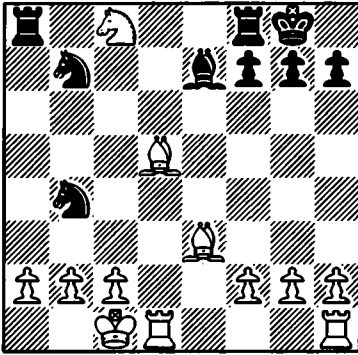
13 e5!

This centralization is a very strong move.

13 dxb5? was tempting but the following tactical ramifications demonstrate that Black is then very much alive: 13...cxb5 14 d5 dxd4 15 dxd4 (15 dxd4 d7 16 h1 f6! 17 xf6 gx6 18 e7 a5! 19 xb7 a7 and White loses an exchange, after which the game is rather balanced) 15...d7 16

♖xb5 ♕a6 17 ♕xa7 ♖b4! (the saving counter-attack!) 18 ♙xb7 ♙xb7 19 ♜d7 ♕xa2+ 20 ♖b1 ♕c3+ 21 bxc3 ♙xg2 22 ♜g1 ♜fb8+ 23 ♖c1 ♜b7 24 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 25 ♜xg2 ♜xe3 26 fxe3 ♜xa7 and this rook ending should result in a draw.

Going back, 18 ♕xc8? would turn the tables completely:



18...♜xc8 19 ♙xb7 ♜xc2+ 20 ♖b1 ♜xa2 21 ♙d4 ♙f6 22 ♜he1 ♜xb2+! 23 ♖c1 (23 ♙xb2? ♜xb2+ and mate follows) 23...♙g5+ 24 f4! (necessary in order to lure the bishop onto a square from where it doesn't control d8 anymore; instead 24 ♙e3? ♜c2+ 25 ♖b1 ♜ab2+ 26 ♖a1 ♜b3 and the combination of threats ...♜a2 mate and ...♙f6+ leads to a mate in three) 24...♙xf4+ 25 ♙e3 ♙xe3+ 26 ♜xe3 g6 and Black stands much better thanks to his rooks doubled on the second rank, and of course his extra pawn.

13...♜xc4?!

Keeping the defensive bishop would not have saved Black: 13...♕e6 14 ♙d3!? ♕d7 15 ♜e4 ♕f6 16 ♜xc6 ♙d7 17 ♜a6 ♜xg2 18 ♕e5 when White is clearly more active. He threatens at once to win a piece with 19 ♕xd7 ♕xd7

20 ♙e4. Also the b5-pawn is en prise, while an offensive down the g-file is looming. A logical and rather forced follow-up would be 18...♕c5 19 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 20 ♕xd7 ♕xd7 21 ♙e4 ♜g5+ 22 ♖b1 ♜ad8 23 ♜d5 and ♜xb5.

14 ♜xe7 ♕b7

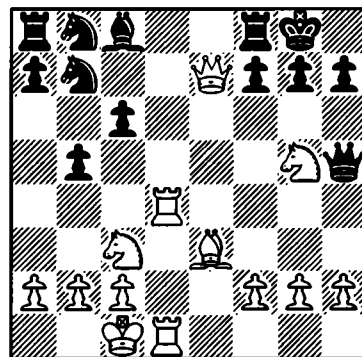
Or 14...♕bd7 15 ♙xc5 ♕xc5 (15...♜xc5 16 ♜xd7 wins a piece and the game) 16 ♜d4 and after the likely retreat of her majesty to e6, the horse remains unprotected.

Running away with 14...♕cd7 would leave Black with a terrible end-game after 15 ♜d4 ♜e6 (15...♜c5?? 16 ♜xd7) 16 ♜xe6 fxe6 17 ♜hd1. All the white forces are well developed, whereas their counterparts are still on the starting blocks. The pawns on e6 and c6 are weak, as well as their surrounding squares (d6, e5, c5).

15 ♕g5!

With the idea of ♕xh7! (or 15...h6 16 ♕h7), so Black's next move is forced.

15...♜h4 16 ♜d4 ♜h5 17 ♜hd1



White pieces are perfectly coordinated to take part in the final assault.

17...♕d7

If 17...h6?! 18 d7! and White cashes an exchange, gaining a decisive plus.

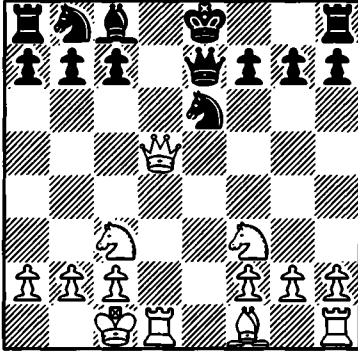
18 Nxd7 Qxd7 19 Wxd7

White now enjoys a stable material advantage and the rest is easy: 19...b4 20 g4!? Wxh2 21 Qce4 Qa5 22 Wf5 Qc4 23 Qc5 Nbd8 24 Wxf7+! Qh8 25 Qxf8 1-0, Rublevsky-Abramovic, Yugoslav Team Ch. 1996. This game had a much wilder character than Chandler-Gulko, but was still in White's favour.

F22) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 Qf6 4 dxe5 Qxe4 5 Wd5 Qc5 6 Qg5 Qe7 7 exd6 Wxd6 8 Qc3 Qe6

Letting White keep the queens on the board, which surely helps him to maintain the initiative.

9 Qxe7 Wxe7 10 0-0-0

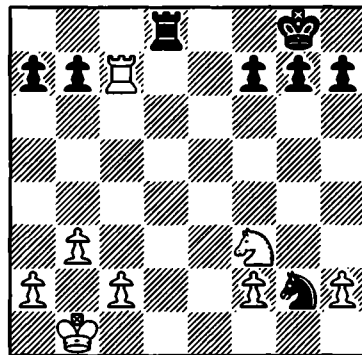


10...0-0

10...Qc6!? led to a flashy White victory in the game Ionov-Yandemirov, Russian Championship 1994, which followed some analysis of Moiseev's: 11 We4 Wb4 12 Qc4 0-0 13 Qd5 Wc5 14 Wh4 Nd8? (a serious mistake; 14...b5 15 Qd3 f5 with an unclear position was better) 15 Nhe1 b5 16 Qb3 Qb7?

(16...a5? would have given birth to pretty tactical possibilities: 17 Qe5! Qxe5 [17...a4 18 Qxc6 axb3 19 Wxd8+! Qxd8 20 Ne8+ Wf8 21 Qce7+ Qh8 22 Nxf8 mate] 18 Nxe5 Wf8 19 Qe7+ Qh8 20 Wxh7+!! Qxh7 21 Nh5 mate; 16...Qd7, though sad, was necessary). After 16...Qb7 White finished things off with panache: 17 Nxe6! a5 (17...fxe6 18 Qg5 h6 19 Qxe6 is decisive) 18 Qg5 h6 19 Nxe6 and Black threw in the towel.

11 We4 Wf6 12 Qd5 Wh6+ 13 Qb1 Qd7 14 Qc4 Qf6 15 Qxf6+ Wxf6 16 Nhe1 Qf4 17 We7 Wxe7 18 Nxe7 Qe6 19 Nxc7 Nbd8 20 Nxd8 Nxd8 21 b3 Qxc4 22 Nxc4 Qxg2 23 Nc7



...and White brought the point home on move 55 (Pap-Markus, Subotica 2001). Black can probably defend better, but my feeling is that White has a persistent initiative.

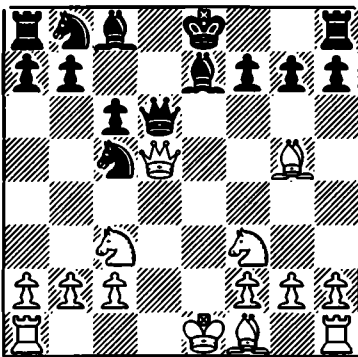
F23) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 Qf6 4 dxe5 Qxe4 5 Wd5 Qc5 6 Qg5 Qe7 7 exd6 Wxd6 8 Qc3 c6

Weakening the d6 spot while depriving the b8-knight of its natural square.

If 8...h6 9 ♖e3 keeps an edge, for instance 9...c6 (conceding the pair of bishops by 9...♗xd5 10 ♜xd5 ♜e6 11 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 12 ♜d4 ♞e8 13 0-0-0 ♜xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♜f8 may give better chances to hold) 10 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 11 0-0-0 ♖e7 12 ♖c4 ♜ba6 13 ♞he1 ♖e6 14 ♖xe6 ♜xe6 15 ♜d4 and White is pressing.

In Rublevsky's game above, Black tried not to cede the two bishops and to avoid creating weaknesses. The price to pay for this is a considerable loss of time.

Here follows a game, **Davis-Buck, correspondence 1938**, which is quite typical for this line:



9 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 10 0-0-0 ♖c7

10...♖e7?! 11 ♖c4 ♖e6 12 ♞he1 and Black's prospects look grim: his opponent will likely create a weak pawn, by means of ♖xe7 ♜xe7, ♖xe6 (or ♜d4 directly) ...♜xe6, ♜d4 and ♜xe6. Generally speaking, one may note that all White's pieces are efficiently placed, which gives the first player a virtual lead of three tempi.

11 ♖c4?!

11 ♖e3!, with the idea 11...♜e6 12

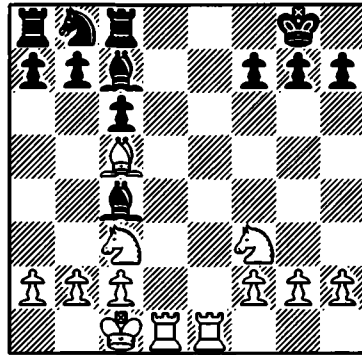
♜e4 and ♜d6, is interesting and probably critical. The same goes for 11 ♜d2, aiming to jump to c4 (or e4) and then d6. These two plans underline the main drawback of 8...c6.

The text move, although quite normal, doesn't cause too much trouble in the long run.

11...♖e6

On 11...♜e6?! White can advantageously (and very temporarily!) concede the bishop pair by playing 12 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 13 ♜d4, when Black is left with no choice but to allow the capture on e6, as retreating the bishop would allow the crushing ♞he1+.

12 ♞he1 0-0 13 ♖e7 ♖xc4 14 ♖xc5 ♞c8



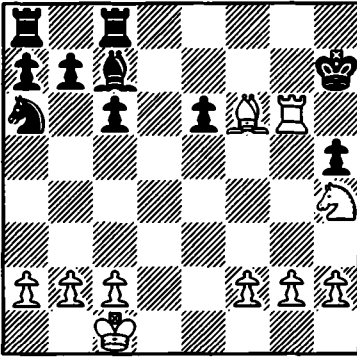
The only move; but now if White doesn't act quickly he won't manage to draw any benefit from the strange configuration of his opponent's pieces.

15 ♞d4

15 ♞e7 is a double-edged move, since a subsequent ...♖e6 will keep the rook locked in. Here's a sample variation: 15...♜a6 16 ♖d6 ♖e6 17 ♜g5 ♖xd6 18 ♞xd6 ♜c5 19 ♜ce4 ♜f8 20 ♜xe6+ fx6 21 ♞xg7 ♜xg7 (21...♜xe4?!

22 ♜dd7 is dangerous for Black) 22 ♖xc5. A second pawn is bound to fall, when material parity will be restored.

15...♗a6 16 ♖e4 ♙d5 17 ♖f6+ gxf6 18 ♜g4+ ♖h8 19 ♙d4 h5 20 ♙xf6+ ♖h7 21 ♜g7+ ♖h6 22 ♖h4 ♙e6 23 ♜xe6 fxe6 24 ♜g6+ ♖h7 ½-½



...and White had to content himself

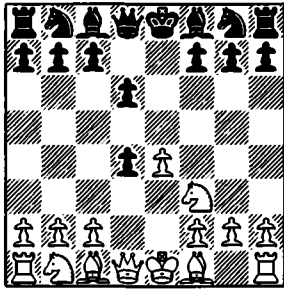
with perpetual check.

Conclusion

Nearly all the variations studied in this chapter lead to difficult positions for Black. Some options are practically losing, or at least dubious (3...f5?! and 3...♙g4?!, for instance). Others, like 3...♖f6 4 dxe5 ♖xe4, result in terrible endings for Black (but ones that can probably be held if the second player defends accurately).

We have realized through numerous examples that Black has a really tough task equalizing in the line 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♖f6 4 dxe5 ♖xe4 5 ♗d5. This surely explains why so few players are keen on defending the Black cause here and instead look for new horizons.

Chapter Two



3 d4 exd4: Introduction and Larsen's Variation

1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4

With Black experiencing many difficulties with 3...d6, Philidor advocates have turned to an alternative line in 3...exd4 to rescue Black's hopes. This natural capture actually came before 3...d6 in practice and has never been totally abandoned.

White's two main moves are:

A: 4 ♖xd4

B: 4 ♘xd4

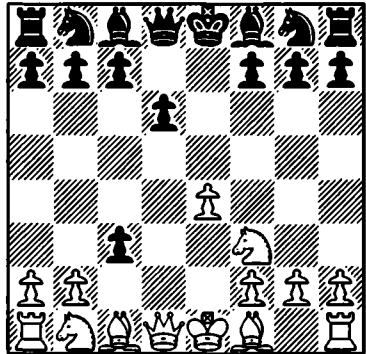
Before examining the two possible recaptures, let's take a brief look at White's other attempts.

4 ♗c4

4 c3?! is a sacrifice analogous to the Scotch Gambit, 1 e4 e5 2 d4 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3, with the nuance that the safest line for Black now is 4...d6 rather than 4...d5. In the Scotch Gambit this reply would be erroneous in view of 5 e5, which is senseless here. In fact 4...d6 is annoying for White. Carrying

on playing in gambit-style with 5 ♗d3 isn't great, because after 5...dxc3 6 dxc3 etc. the bishop would be better posted at c4. If White plays differently with 5 ♗g5 (5 ♖xd4 d6 is equal as the c3-pawn occupies the knight's place) 5...♗e7 6 ♗xf6 (or 6 ♖xd4 d6) 6...♗xf6 7 cxd4 0-0 then next up is ...c5 and/or ...♗g4 with good counterplay for Black.

Accepting the offer by playing 4...dxc3 is of course possible too, but not without risks:

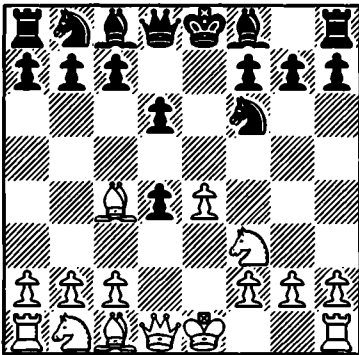


a) 5 dxc3 d6 (5...d6 would this

time really transpose into a theoretical position of the Scotch Gambit) 6 ♖c4 ♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 and White has compensation for the pawn, but not more.

b) 5 ♖c4!? is in the spirit of the Danish Gambit, 1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 c3 dxc3. Black can once more be greedy (but the danger increases!) or wiser. Thus if he calmly continues his development with 5...♘c6 followed by ...♘f6, ...♙e7 etc., he will virtually force White to recapture the pawn by ♘xc3.

4...♘f6!



a) 4...♘c6?! gives White a chance to extract an opening advantage with 5 ♘xd4, reaching an excellent version of the Scotch Game.

b) 4...♙g4?! allows 5 c3! with the ideas 6 ♗b3 and of course 6 cxd4. In this event White gets an advantage, for example 5...dxc3 6 ♗b3 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6 8 ♗xe6+ ♙e7 9 ♘xc3 with better development for White and a black king which is a bit airy.

c) 4...♙e7 5 ♗xd4 (5 c3?! ♘f6 presents White with similar problems to 4 c3 ♘f6; while 5 ♘xd4 ♘f6 6 ♘c3 is Chapter 3) 5...♘f6 followed by ...♘c6,

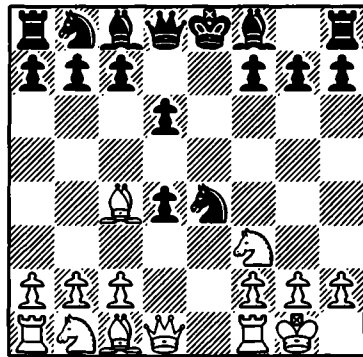
...0-0 etc., reaches an equal position.

5 0-0

5 e5?! yields nothing but a pawn deficit: 5...dxe5 (5...d5!?) 6 ♘xe5 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6 followed by ...♗d5, ...♙d6 and ...0-0, and Black stands better.

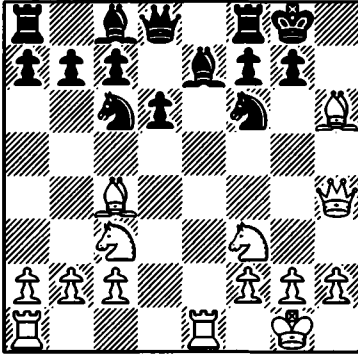
5...♙e7

Naturally, 5...♘xe4?! is a perilous continuation:



a) 6 ♖e1 f5 (not 6...d5? 7 ♙xd5 ♗xd5 8 ♘c3 ♗d8 9 ♖xe4+ ♙e7 10 ♖xd4 and the imminent pin along the d-file will cause Black problems) 7 ♘g5 d5 8 ♗xd4 dxc4! (other moves don't complicate, and they leave White with a clear edge) 9 ♗xd8+ ♘xd8 10 ♘f7+ ♘e8 11 ♘xh8. The h8-knight is in trouble, but so is the black one - the situation is unclear.

b) 6 ♗xd4 banks on a lead in development rather than on the knight's pin: 6...♘f6 7 ♖e1+ ♙e7 8 ♙g5 0-0 9 ♘c3 ♘c6 10 ♗h4 with good compensation for a mere pawn. The threats are ♖xe7 and, above all, ♙d3. On the provocative 10...h6, there could follow 11 ♙xh6 (11 ♖xe7? is too much! 11...hxg5 12 ♘xg5 ♘xe7 13 ♘ce4 ♙f5 wins)

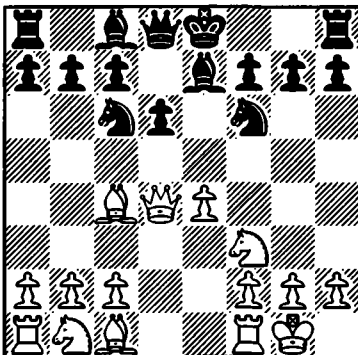


11...d5! (11...gxh6? 12 ♖xh6 and the black kingside is decisively weakened) 12 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 13 ♜g5+ ♜h8 with perpetual check, or else excellent compensation for the piece after the brave 14 ♜h6+ ♜h7 15 ♜xd5 ♜d6 16 ♜h5.

6 ♜xd4

6 ♜xd4?! 0-0?! 7 ♜c3 transposes to the line 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♙e7; in this case White has avoided 4...g6, but has had to choose the c4-square for his bishop. However, instead of 6...0-0, Black can seize the upper hand without much risk by playing 6...♜c6.

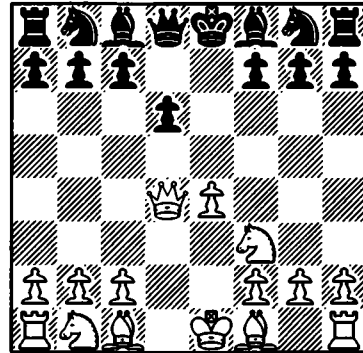
6...♜c6



White has nothing from the opening. The position after 6...♜c6 could also have arisen from 4 ♜xd4, with White following up with solid but insipid play.

As a conclusion we can state that attempts other than 4 ♜xd4 and 4 ♜xd4 don't promise any opening edge. Black equalizes easily by means of 4...♜f6 followed by classical development with ...♙e7, ...0-0 and ...♜c6.

A) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4



These days 4 ♜xd4 is a rare guest in tournament practice. White tries to maintain his queen in the centre and accelerate 0-0-0, often at the price of the two bishops.

An early queen sortie is usually not advisable. In the present case, however, two important factors speak in White's favour: her majesty can't be easily dislodged, and the white pieces can be brought out quite quickly.

We will now study:

A1: 4...♜f6

A2: 4...a6!?

First, a quick look at alternatives:

4...♗c6

Or:

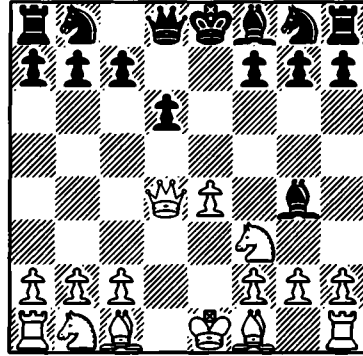
a) 4...♗d7 5 ♖g5 ♗c6 6 ♛e3 is very slightly better for White. 6 ♛d2!? is similar to 6 ♛e3 albeit with one or two differences: on e3 the queen vacates the d-file and following ♗c3 and 0-0-0 White's rook and Black's queen are face to face on the same file – a situation favourable to White; on d2, on the other hand, the queen isn't subject to an attack by the knight sally ...♗f6-g4.

5 ♖f4 and 5 ♖e3 are playable alternatives but don't fundamentally alter the character of the position. The latter is less logical, though, since it doesn't help to prepare the e4-e5 push. Furthermore, Black can gain a tempo by the attack ...♗f6-g4 in certain cases. Curiously, I couldn't find any game played later than 1954 with that move!

As for 5 ♖c4 and 5 c4, they more or less imply short castling. After Black's traditional development for this kind of position, ...♗c6, ...♗f6, ...♖e7, the game is balanced.

b) 4...c5? is a serious strategic error. Black accepts chronic weaknesses at d6 and d5 just to chase the enemy queen from its dominant outpost. After 5 ♛d1 followed by ♗c3, ♖c4, 0-0, White enjoys a clear superiority.

c) 4...♖g4!? doesn't really threaten ...♖xf3, as there would be several arguments in White's favour: the pair of bishops; mobile e- and f-pawns; the semi-open g-file that would suit the white rook in the eventuality of Black castling short.

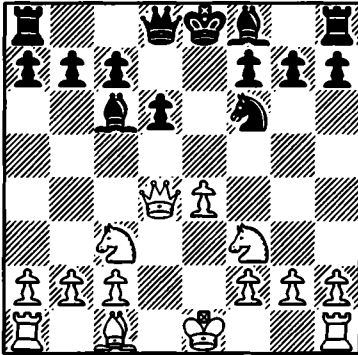


4...♖g4 should in fact be considered as a useful developing move. Black keeps the option of exchanging on f3 if the circumstances make this swap favourable, but this isn't a priority: 5 ♗c3 (5 ♖g5 only 'seems' to gain time; after 5...♛d7 Black is ready to repel the white queen and continue with ...♖e7) and now on 5...♗f6 (the most logical, isn't it?) 6 e5 dxe5 7 ♛xd8+ ♖xd8 8 ♗xe5 ♖e6 White has won a whole tempo in comparison with 4...♗f6 5 e5 etc., which is, in my opinion, only of psychological relevance! Black will hide his king on c8 in the event of 0-0-0, and try to dry up the position by means of exchanges (...♗bd7). This ending resembles a slightly better version (for White) of those that result from 4...♗f6, but White's supremacy is still only symbolic.

5 ♖b5

It's worth noting that this is in fact a transposition to the Steinitz Variation of the Ruy Lopez usually reached via 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♖b5 d6 4 d4 exd4 5 ♛xd4.

5...♖d7 6 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 7 ♗c3 ♗f6



8 ♙g5

8 0-0 is equally playable, as in the famous game that follows: 8...♙e7 9 ♘d5 ♙xd5 10 exd5 0-0 11 ♙g5 c6 12 c4 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♞e8 14 ♞fe1 a5 15 ♞e2 ♞c8? 16 ♞ae1 ♚d7 17 ♙xf6! ♙xf6 18 ♚g4! ♚b5 19 ♚c4!! ♚d7 20 ♚c7!! ♚b5 21 a4! (21 ♚xb7? ♚xe2 22 ♞xe2 ♞c1+) 21...♙xa4 22 ♞e4 ♚b5 23 ♚xb7! 1-0 E.Adams-Torre Repetto, New Orleans 1920. A great example of the themes of deflection and back rank mate!

8...♙e7 9 0-0-0

White has been allowed to achieve his goals and he is left with the easier position.

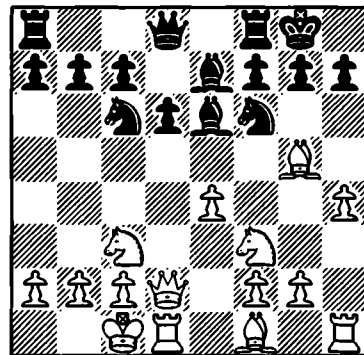
A1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♚xd4 ♘f6

A playable move that, however, permits the e5 push if White wishes to play it. In that case Black must be ready to enter a dull endgame. All the same, 5 e5 dxe5 6 ♚xd8+ ♘xd8 7 ♘xe5 ♙e6 is just equal. The fact that Black has lost the right to castle isn't enough for his opponent to claim an edge.

5 ♘c3 ♙e7

This line gives mutual chances. The game should roughly follow the footsteps of Kotronias-Skembris (see Line A2): White will develop his queen's bishop on e3, f4 or even g5; he will then castle long and retreat his queen to d2 or e3 when it is attacked by ...♘c6. Black will castle short and finish his development by means of ...♘c6, ...♙e6 or ...♙g4, and ...♞e8. Even though the position is in equilibrium, it nevertheless remains complicated and requires accurate handling. Here's a rather recent illustration of this system:

6 ♙g5 0-0 7 0-0-0 ♘c6 8 ♚d2 ♙e6 9 h4



9...♞e8?!

An inaccuracy which bears heavy consequences. 9...a6, preparing ...b5 while preventing White's next move, was better.

10 ♙b5! a6 11 ♙xc6 bxc6 12 ♘d4

Now White's plan becomes crystal clear: f3-g4 and a kingside attack.

12...♙d7

12...c5 13 ♘xe6 fxe6 14 e5 obviously wasn't to Black's taste: 14...dxe5 15 ♚e3 with a clear plus.

13 f3 h6?!

Again a dubious decision since this move will create the eventuality of a lever (g4-g5). 13...♞b8, with the idea ...♞b4 (or ...♞b6) and ...♞ab8 was preferable and possibly holdable for Black.

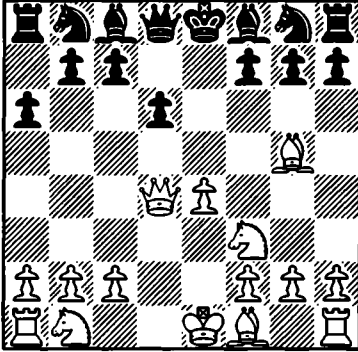
14 ♖e3 d5 15 exd5 ♘xd5

Or 15...cxd5 16 ♘b3 when White will combine play on the dark-squared complex d4/c5 with his kingside assault.

16 ♘xc6! ♖xc6 17 ♘d5 ♖xd5 18 ♞xd5 ♖xh4 19 ♞xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♖f4

...was Rozentalis-Glek, Budapest 1996. White has a nice edge due to his opponent's dislocated pawns on the queenside.

A2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♞xd4 a6!? 5 ♖g5



5 ♖f4 is less aggressive than 5 ♖g5 but follows the same goal: if the queen retreats, its natural square is d2. From there it will neither disturb the b1-knight (bound for c3), nor a1-rook (bound for d1), nor finally the c1-bishop if this has already left its initial home. After 5...♘c6 6 ♞d2 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♖e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 the chances are level. In

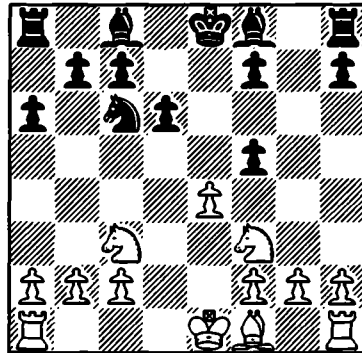
this final position one may note that the queen would stand better on e3, as e4-e5 would then exploit the ♞d1/♞d8 connection. If it had previously withdrawn to that square, however, White would have had to take into account the possibilities of ...♘g4 or ...♘h5.

5 ♖c4 once again doesn't cause trouble to Black's development. In contrast to 4...♖d7 5 ♖c4, the second player can even move his bishop to e6 or g4 without losing a tempo. After 5...♘c6 6 ♞d3 ♘f6 7 h3 ♖e7 was equal in Z.Almasi-Nevednichy, European Championship, Ohrid 2001.

5...♘c6 6 ♞e3!?

Or:

a) 6 ♞c3 ♘f6 7 ♘bd2 ♖e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 is equal; the formation of White's pieces is too artificial for the first player to claim an advantage. Also, after 7 ♖xf6 ♞xf6 8 ♞xf6 gxf6 9 ♘c3 f5...



...White must take care in this ending, as the black bishops could soon dictate events.

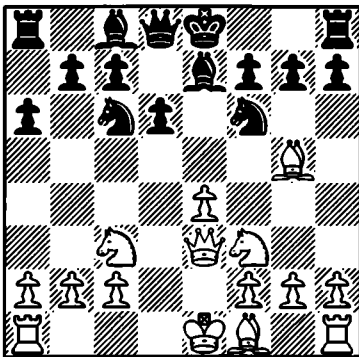
b) For 6 ♞d2 see my comments after 4...♖d7 5 ♖g5 ♘c6 6 ♞d2. The a-pawn is general better placed on a6 than on

a7, whereas the c8-bishop can be more ambitiously deployed than on d7. This means that 4...a6 should be a trifle stronger than 4...♙d7.

c) 6 ♙xd8 ♜xd4 7 ♜xd4 ♝xd8 8 ♙c4 ♜h6 (8...♝e8? 9 ♜c3 ♜f6 10 0-0-0 and the plan of ♞he1 followed by e5 is difficult to meet) 9 ♜c3 c6 10 f3. The two bishops should guarantee Black an easy life in this endgame. Even though the encounter Rozentalis-Agdestein, Groningen 1993, ended with a White victory, I don't believe Black has anything to fear here after 10...♝c7; he may even have an edge.

6...♙e7 7 ♜c3 ♜f6

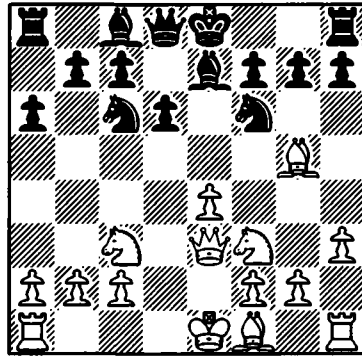
The game I've chosen to follow is **Kotronias-Skembris, Agios Nikolaos 1995**. 7...♙xg5!? is equal according to Kotronias, an opinion I share; swapping pieces is generally desirable for the side who has less space, as with Black in the present situation. The continuation chosen by Skembris, however, is not inferior and keeps the game more complex.



8 h3!

Not 8 0-0-0?! ♜g4 and the queen is

overloaded – the drawback of placing the queen on e3.



8...♙e6!

Precise timing is important. On the routine move 8...0-0?! then 9 0-0-0 with the idea e5 is strong. The following game convincingly illustrates this idea: 9...♙e6 10 e5 ♜e8 11 h4 ♝c8 12 ♙d3 f6 13 ♝e4 f5 14 ♝e2 dxe5 15 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 16 ♙xe7 ♜xd3+ 17 ♞xd3 ♙c4 18 ♙xf8 ♝xf8 19 ♞e1 ♝g8 20 ♜d5 ♙xd3 21 ♝xd3 ♝h8 22 ♜e7 ♝d8 23 ♝xf5 ♜d6 24 ♝e5 ♝f8 25 f3 ♝f7 26 b3 ♞d8 27 h5 ♞f8 28 c4 b6 29 ♝c2 a5 30 ♝d5 ♝f4 31 ♞h1 ♜f7 32 ♞d1 ♝f6 33 ♞e1 ♜d6 34 ♝e6 ♝g5 35 g4 ♞xf3 36 ♝g8 mate, L.Langner-I.Novak, Marianske Lazne 1989.

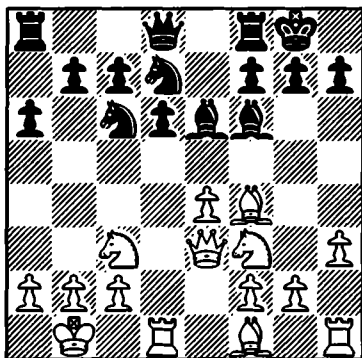
9 0-0-0 ♜d7 10 ♙f4!?

Both players seem to tacitly agree to keep a maximum number of pieces on the board, and thus a maximum complexity to the game. 10 ♙xe7 ♝xe7 (with the idea of ...0-0-0) 11 ♜d5!?! was also worth consideration according to Kotronias, and I agree.

10...0-0 11 ♝b1

11 ♜d5!?! was still a valid option.

11...♗f6!?

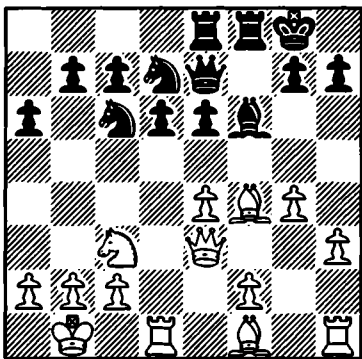


12 ♘g5?!

Going for the e6-bishop is mistaken. The swap will provide Black with a semi-open f-file for kingside operations and ♘d5 will be prevented forever.

Thus 12 g4!? with the idea of g5, h4-h5 etc., was more to the point. In that event Black would have had to look for counterplay on the queenside or on the centre without much hesitation.

12...♞e7 13 g4 ♜ae8 14 ♘xc6 fx6



Covering the d5-square with a pawn while opening the f-file. This will be more useful to Black than the e-file was before.

15 ♗g3

Freeing the path for the f-pawn, while at the same time parrying the threat of ...♗xc3.

15...♘c5! 16 ♘e2

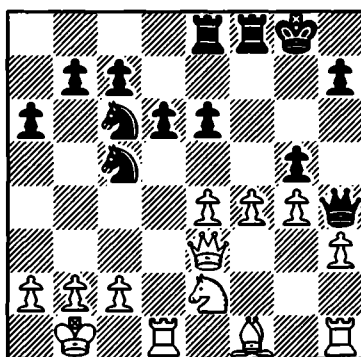
If 16 f3, 16...♗xc3!? 17 ♞xc3 e5 and Black plays against the weakness on f3.

16...♗h4!? 17 ♗xh4?!

After this move White will cede important squares for nothing in return.

17 f4!? was the best choice. The strategy Black uses in the game would backfire: 17...♗xg3 18 ♘xg3 g5? (18...♞f7 is balanced) 19 fxg5 ♘e5 20 ♗e2 and ♘h5-f6+ leads to a disaster for Black.

17...♞xh4 18 f4 g5!



A fantastic hammer-blow. Black takes control of the vital e5-square, while the weakening of his king is very relative. Indeed, none of the white pieces can approach the enemy monarch, which is anyway surrounded by its whole army.

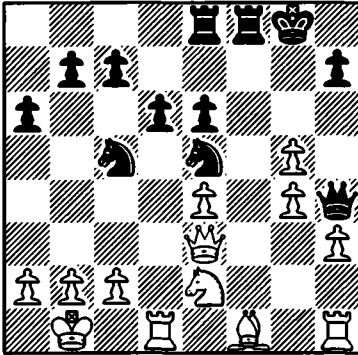
19 fxg5?!

19 f5? loses after 19...exf5 20 gxh5 ♞xe4.

19 ♗g2 was correct. A possible follow-up is 19...gxf4 20 ♘xf4 ♞g5 21

♖hf1 e5 22 ♖d5 ♗xe3 23 ♜xe3 ♜d4 and ♜e6-f4, when I believe the position is slightly in Black's favour.

19...♜e5



20 ♜d4?

20 ♜c3?! would also turn out badly for White after 20...♜xg4 21 hxg4 ♗xh1 22 ♖b5 ♗xd1+ 23 ♜xd1 axb5, when the two rooks are stronger than the queen. Moreover, the white pawns on e4, g4 and g5 are easy targets.

20 ♗g3! was forced: 20...♗xg5 21 ♖g2 ♜c4 gives Black an edge since the g2-bishop looks silly and the dark squares in White's camp are weak.

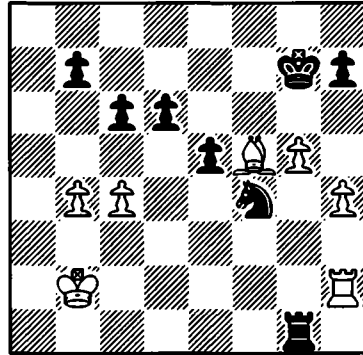
20...♜xg4 21 ♗e1

The only move. Now 21...♜f2 22 ♖h2 ♗xe4?? loses to 23 ♖xf2.

21...♗xe1 22 ♖xe1 ♜f2 23 ♖h2 ♜fxe4 24 h4 e5 25 ♜b3 ♖f4 26 ♜xc5 ♜xc5 27 b3 ♜g7 28 ♜b2 a5 29 a3 ♖ef8 30 ♖c4 ♖g4 31 ♖e3 ♖ff4 32 ♖eh3 c6?!

32...h6!? would have increased Black's advantage, for the reason given after move 39.

33 ♖e2 ♖g1 34 c4 ♜e6 35 b4 ♖d4 36 ♖d3 ♖xd3 37 ♖xd3 ♜f4 38 ♖f5 axb4 39 axb4



39...♜d5?!

The pawn duo had to be dislocated with 39...h6 in order to deprive White of any kind of counter-chances, something that he now cleverly finds.

40 cxd5 cxd5 41 ♖c2 ♖g2

Or else the rook invades the 7th rank.

42 ♖xg2 ♜xg2 43 h5 h6

Black's winning chances do not increase much after 43...♜e3 44 h6+ ♜h8 45 ♖c8 b6 46 ♜c3 ♜g2 47 ♜d2 ♜f4 48 ♜e3 – the king is out of play, and if the knight moves then ♖e6 forces the d-pawn's advance, leaving Black's central duo vulnerable.

44 g6

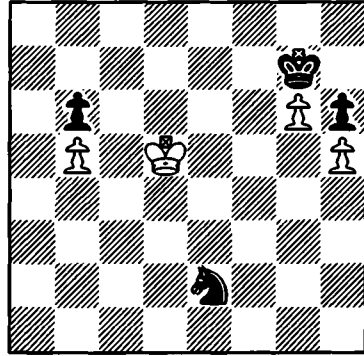
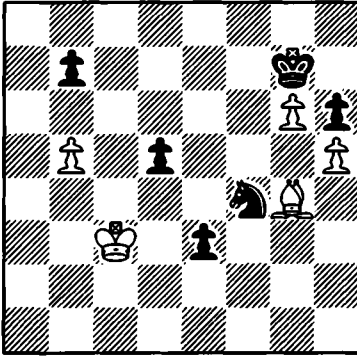
Forced.

44...♜f4 45 ♖g4 e4 46 ♜c3 e3

This is played with the idea of ...d4, winning.

47 b5!

This move keeps White out of danger. Not 47 ♜d4?? e2 48 ♖xe2 ♜xe2+ 49 ♜xd5 ♜f4+ 50 ♜c5 ♜xh5 51 ♜b6 ♜f6 52 ♜xb7 ♜d5 53 b5 ♜c3 54 b6 ♜a4 55 ♜c6 ♜xb6 56 ♜xb6 h5 and the pawn promotes.



47...b6

47...e2?? is obviously bad due to 48 ♖d2, while after 47...d4?! 48 ♖xd4 e2 49 ♙xe2 ♜xe2+ 50 ♖c5 White has enough counterplay to save half a point.

The best winning attempt is 47...♗f6! and now:

a) 48 ♖c2?? d4 and Black wins.

b) 48 b6? ♗e7! 49 g7 (or 49 ♙c8 d4+ and wins) 49...♗f7 50 ♖d4 e2 51 ♙xe2 ♜xe2+ 52 ♖xd5 ♜c1!! 53 ♖d6 ♜b3 54 ♖c7 ♜a5 wins.

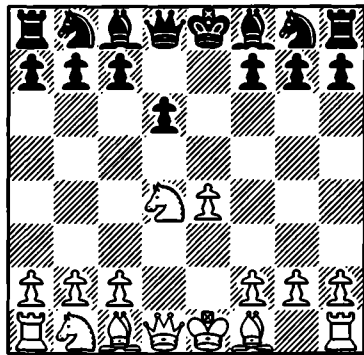
c) 48 ♖d4!. The white king must play an active role in the ending, even if White has to sacrifice his bishop for the two black pawns. The reason Black can't win this endgame is that his king has to deal with the passed g-pawn and cannot become active. After 48...e2 49 ♙xe2 ♜xe2+ 50 ♖xd5 the most probable outcome is a draw.

48 ♖d4! e2 49 ♙xe2 ♜xe2+ 50 ♖xd5 ½-½

The players agreed on peace due to the possible lines 50...♜c3+ 51 ♖c6 ♜a4 52 ♖c7, and 50...♜f4+ 51 ♖c6 ♜xg6 52 hxg6.

An instructive strategic lesson from Skembris, unfortunately spoiled by some inaccuracies. His dark-squared concept, even at the cost of some minor weakening, should have brought him victory, if only he had found the break 32...h6 or 39...h6.

B) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4



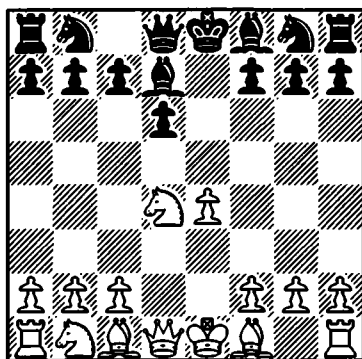
Now we will concentrate on the more natural recapture on d4 with the knight. Black has a choice between a development including a fianchettoed dark-squared bishop and the more modest ...♙e7.

4...g6

This variation, named after Danish Grandmaster Bent Larsen who promoted it in the late 1960s, has almost disappeared from practice. The position reached after the bishop has been fianchettoed is similar to the Sicilian Dragon, 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 g6. The difference lies in the fact that the e-file is semi-open rather than the c-file. This seems to greatly favour White, who doesn't need to fear an attack along the c-file once he has castled long. However, Black, in return, can use his c-pawn for the assault against the enemy king.

Before studying 4...g6 in depth, let's take a look at Black's marginal attempts to deviate at move 4. These secondary lines can't be 'refuted', but some common sense shows us they are inferior:

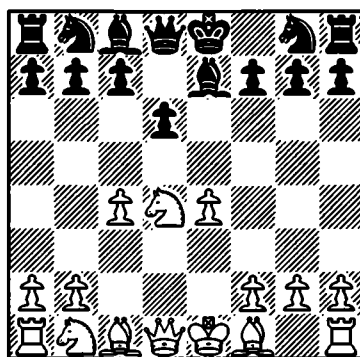
a) 4...♗d7?! prepares 4...♗c6 without allowing the pawns to be doubled after 5 ♗xc6.



The drawback of such a move is the waste of time to parry a threat that isn't really a threat! Indeed, the doubled c-pawns would control the centre well

and wouldn't constitute a real handicap. The half-open b-file could also benefit Black, who would exert nasty pressure on b2 after ...♞b8.

b) In comparison with the line 4...♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♗e7, which we will discuss later on, 4...♗e7?! permits the insertion of 5 c4.

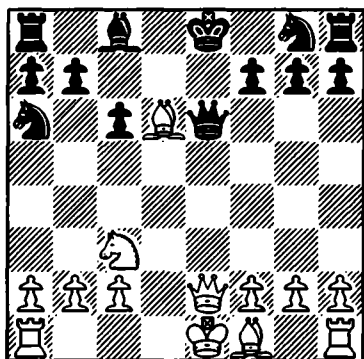


The resulting position is similar to the Old Indian (1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 d6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 e4 e5 5 ♗f3 ♗e7), where Black has prematurely exchanged on d4. As a consequence White has a larger spatial advantage than with the pawn on c2. In return, one might argue that Black has gained the option of 5...♗f6 and 6...♗e7, but such a scheme of development seems somewhat artificial to me.

c) 4...d5?! tries to equalize in the centre, but such a move can't work! After 5 exd5 ♞xd5 6 ♞e2+! (6 ♗c3 ♗b4 doesn't yield anything tangible) 6...♗e7 7 ♗b5 ♗a6 8 ♗1c3 ♞e6 9 ♗f4 c6 10 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 11 ♗xd6...

(see following diagram)

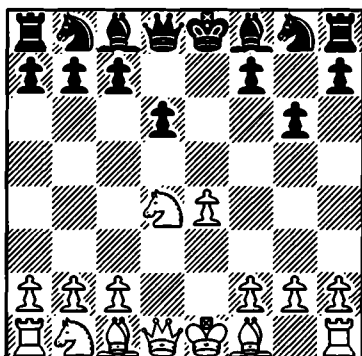
...White has a clear advantage due to the pair of bishops and the knight on a6 being out of play.



d) 4...♘c6 transposes to the Scotch where Black would have chosen 4...d6. It is, however, unanimously assumed that the developing moves 4...♗c5 and 4...♘f6 are more active and stronger in the Scotch Game. Here, 5 ♘c3, 5 c4 and, finally, 5 ♗c4 are all in White's favour.

In conclusion, tries other than 4...g6 or 4...♘f6 give White an easy plus. Black increases his opponent's options by playing 4...♗d7, 4...♗e7 or 4...♘c6, allowing, for instance, 5 c4. The problem with 4...d5?! is of another nature: Black is under-developed and badly prepared for this 'central equalization'.

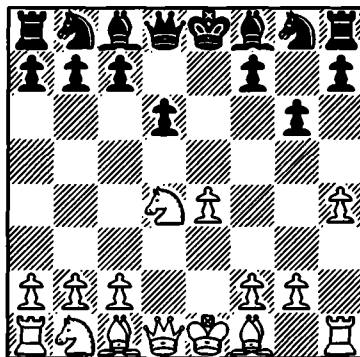
Back to 4...g6.



5 ♘c3

This is the main continuation, but let's see how White can deviate from 5 ♘c3 as there are many possibilities:

a) 5 h4?!/!?.



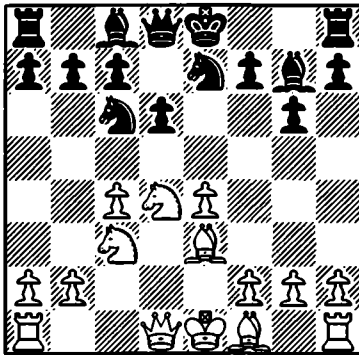
The choice of the coffeehouse player. The exchange sacrifice after 5...♘f6 6 ♘c3 ♗g7 7 h5 ♘h5 8 ♗xh5 gxh5 is a bit optimistic, but I don't really see how to continue after Black's 6th move.

On the other hand, after the insertion of 5 ♘c3 ♘h6!? (eccentric, but Black wishes to answer ♗e3 with ...♘g4, while leaving his f-pawn unblocked) the move 6 h4 would be entirely justified.

b) 5 ♗c4 initiates a quieter plan than the one based on queenside castling. Black can finish his development without hindrance: 5...♗g7 6 0-0 ♘c6 (or 6...♘f6, or even 6...♘e7 with mutual prospects; every way White deals with the question of his centralized knight leads to a comfortable game for Black) 7 ♘xc6 (7 ♗e3 ♘f6 finishes development while attacking e4 and threatening 8...♘g4; while 7 c3 takes the natural

square from the b1-knight and Black just needs to avoid 7...♘f6?! 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 e5 by playing 7...♘ge7) 7...bxc6 gives Black good prospects of counterplay along the b-file.

c) 5 c4!? (the c2-c4 push constitutes the major alternative to 5 ♘c3) 5...♙g7 6 ♘c3 ♘c6 7 ♙e3 ♘ge7 would transpose to a position that normally arises from a King's Indian, with the knight on e7 rather than f6.



This system gives Black counterplay based on a quick ...f5, but it's objectively inferior to the classical development and is thus much less common.

Here's a brief example that illustrates a positional trap it contains: 8 ♙e2 (8 h4! is the strongest continuation according to theory) 8...0-0 9 0-0 f5 10 exf5?! (10 ♗d2!) 10...♙xd4! 11 ♙xd4 ♘xf5 12 ♙e3 ♘xe3 13 fxе3 ♗xf1+ 14 ♗xf1 ♙e6 and Black was slightly better in Tal-Azmaiparashvili, Albena 1984.

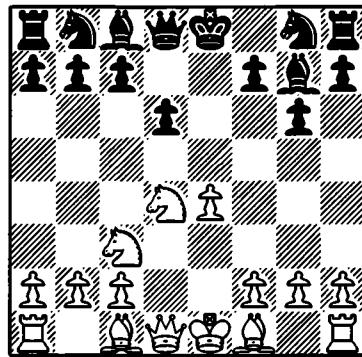
It should be noted, however, that for those who find 5 c4 annoying, there is no disadvantage in starting with 4...♘f6 5 ♘c3 and only then 5...g6!.

d) 5 g3 will transpose, after 5...♙g7

6 ♙g2 ♘f6, into a Pirc Defence with a white kingside fianchetto, something that Black has to bear in mind when playing 4...g6.

Other 5th moves for White are possible, but they restrict his future options and have no real interest. This is true for 5 c3, which makes no sense right now, or for 5 ♙e2 and 5 ♙d3, this final move placing the bishop on an inferior square.

5...♙g7



We will now look at:

B1: 6 ♙f4!?

B2: 6 ♙e3

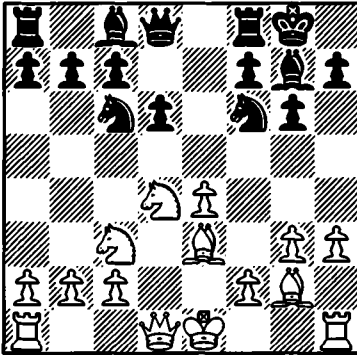
Firstly, a brief summary of the alternatives:

6 ♙c4

An inferior, but quite playable way to avoid 6 ♙e3. White decides to castle short and places his bishop on its most active square. As for Black, he has two satisfactory ways to react: the aggressive 6...♘c6 and the more restrained 6...♘f6.

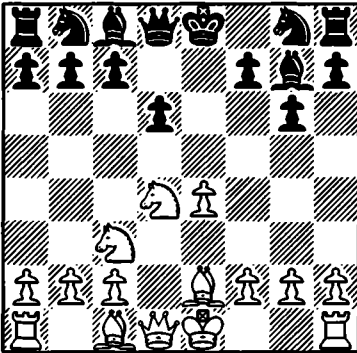
Or:

a) 6 g3 ♖c6 7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 h3 0-0 (not ♗f3 ♘d7... 8...d5?! 9 ♗b5!) 9 ♗g2...

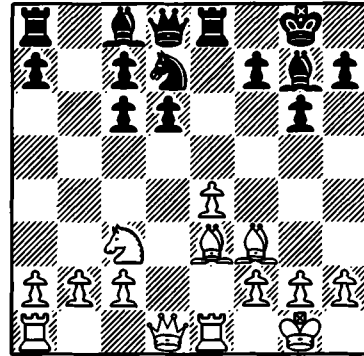


...leads to a Pirc Defence that promises reciprocal chances.

b) 6 ♗e2?! is too mild to keep the initiative:



6...♖c6 7 ♗e3 ♘f6 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♗e1 (on 9 ♗d2, 9...♗e8 10 f3 d5 should equalize, while 9 f4?! allows the pseudo-sacrifice 9...♗xe4 10 ♗xe4 ♗e7 when, thanks to the traffic-jam along the e-file, only Black can stand better: 11 ♗f3 f5 12 ♗d3 fxe4 13 ♗xe4 ♖b4 14 ♗b3+ ♗h8 15 ♗f3 c5 with an edge for Black, Yu Shaoteng-Ye Rongguang, Beijing 1995) 9...♗e8 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11



...was equal in Karpov-Keene, Bad Lauterberg 1977.

c) For 6 h4?! ♘f6 see note 'a' to White's fifth move.

6...♖c6

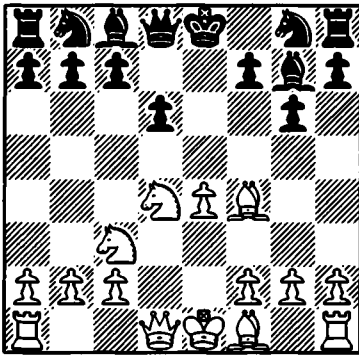
White must either retreat or consent to opening the b-file. The third option, 7 ♗e3, reaches 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♗c4, which tends to equality.

The alternative, 6...♘f6, speeds up Black's castling process before initiating more active operations (6...♗e7?! seems less good; true, the f-pawn remains free, but the knight - and often a concealed ...♗e8 - doesn't exert pressure on e4). After 6...♘f6 play usually goes this way: 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗g5 ♖c6 (Meijers-Glek, German League 2001) or 8...h6 9 ♗h4 c6 (Blees-Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 1998) with mutual chances in either case. It's worth noting that the insertion of the moves ...h6 and ♗h4 is 'neutral'. It doesn't favour either side, and as the bishop's retreat at h4 is 'automatic', it can be executed at any moment.

7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 0-0

Here Black has three moves at his disposal (to avoid 8...♘f6? 9 e5! dxe5 10 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 11 ♙xf7 when his pawn-structure is ruined). These are 8...♗e7, 8...♞b8, and the less ordinary 8...♞h4. In all cases chances are shared equally.

B1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 g6 5 ♗c3 ♙g7 6 ♙f4!?



This secondary line contains an interesting idea which is revealed if Black treats the position like the main line (B2). On the other hand, the bishop doesn't defend its colleague on d4, so 6...♗c6 becomes critical.

6...♗c6!

6...♗f6!? 7 ♖d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♞e8 9 f3 ♗c6 (threatening ...♗xe4) 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 e5 is the above-mentioned nuance. As the capture is forbidden and 11...♗h5?! 12 ♙g5 not very appetizing, there only remains 11...♗d5 12 ♗xd5 cxd5, which is double-edged. Black will use the b-file for his attack, while after the e-pawn has vanished, the long diagonal is cleared for the beast on g7. Black is probably going to have to invest a pawn or two, but he will gain

decent compensation.

7 ♗xc6

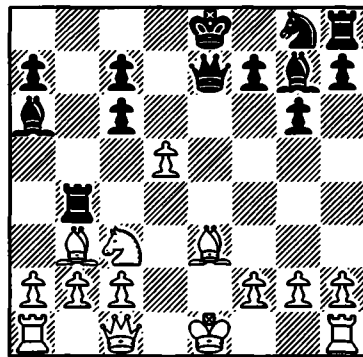
Consistent, but compromising. The doubled pawns will be no handicap because they are mobile and control the neighbouring squares well. The opening of the b-file clearly benefits Black, and the following example shows how to best utilize this:

7...bxc6 8 ♙c4 ♞b8 9 ♖c1?!

9 ♙b3 was better.

9...d5 10 exd5 ♞b4 11 ♙b3 ♖e7+ 12 ♙e3 ♙a6

Preventing 0-0. In return for his pawn(s), Black can firmly seize command.



13 ♖d2?

This accelerates the debacle by losing two tempi. A better test of Black's gambit consisted of 13 dxc6 ♗f6 14 ♖d1, with the idea of ♖f3 and 0-0-0, or ♞d1 if the second enemy rook appears on d8.

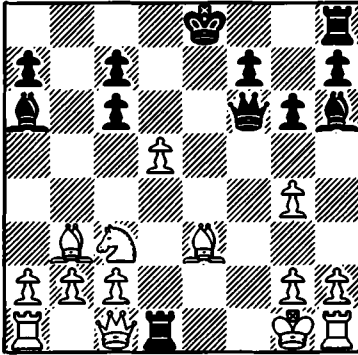
13...♞d4 14 ♖c1 ♗f6 15 f3?!

Losing, but good advice is expensive here.

15...♙h6 16 ♜f2 ♗g4+ 17 fxg4 ♖f6+ 18 ♜g1

18 ♔e1 ♚e5 19 ♜d1 ♞e4 doesn't change anything.

18...♞d1+!!

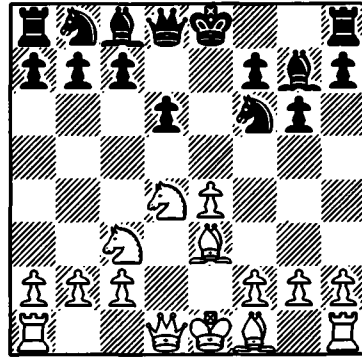


...and mate follows (Hazai-Sax, Hungary 1971).

B2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 g6 5 ♜c3 ♙g7 6 ♙e3 ♜f6

a) 6...♜e7?! invites and strengthens the h4-advance in the event of opposite-side castling. Black isn't ready for ...d5 or ...f5, and doesn't exert pressure on the e4 spot, as we have already seen before: 7 ♚d2 ♜bc6 (not 7...d5? 8 0-0-0 dxe4 [or 8...c6 9 exd5 ♜xd5 10 ♜db5! followed by the capture on d5] 9 ♜xe4 0-0 10 ♜b5 and White will soon gain material on the queenside) 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 h4 with a solid White edge, Ivkov-Fallone, Moscow Olympiad 1956.

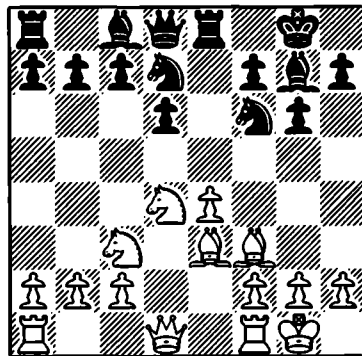
b) 6...♜c6 most often transposes to the main line with 6...♜f6. For purists, since I don't see any real drawback to 6...♜f6, I would say that 6...♜c6 is less precise. Indeed, Black loses the possibility of playing with ...c6 in some (rare) cases, whereas ...♜f6 is almost compulsory.



7 ♚d2

a) 7 ♙c4?! is dubious because Black will then gain several tempi by attacking the bishop, especially in the event of White castling long. One should also bear in mind the simplifying threat of ...♜xe4 followed by ...d5, as well as the immediate 7...♜g4.

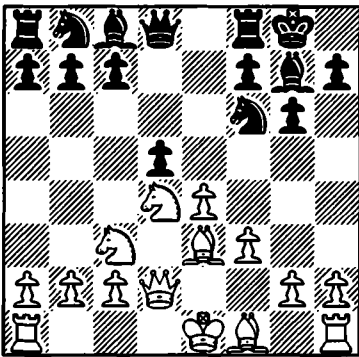
b) 7 ♙e2?! suffers from a serious lack of ambition: 7...0-0 8 0-0 (8 ♚d2?! ♞e8 9 f3 d5 is at least equal for Black) 8...♞e8 9 ♙f3 (or 9 f3?! d5 when the double threat of ...c5/...d4 and ...dxe4 already gives Black the upper hand) 9...♜bd7.



Black is fully equal here: White's

light-squared bishop occupies an uncomfortable square, while Black enjoys free piece play and will continue with either ... $\text{d}c5$ or ... $\text{d}e5$.

c) 7 f3?! often transposes to the main line, but although f2-f3 is compulsory, the timing of it is important and Black can profit from the inversion of moves: 7...0-0 8 $\text{W}d2$ (8 $\text{d}c4$ $\text{d}c6$ – or 8...c6 – is pleasant for Black; the bishop is going to be harassed by Black's foot soldiers, which as a consequence will speed up his counterplay) 8...d5! (obviously the routine moves 8... $\text{d}c6$ and 8... $\text{d}e8$ lead us back to the 'right track', for White that is!).



Had White already castled long, he would have been able to answer 9...d5 with 9 $\text{d}b3$, gaining a big advantage. Clearly this is no longer the case, and instead White must choose 9 e5 (if 9 exd5 $\text{d}xd5$ 10 $\text{d}xd5$ $\text{W}xd5$ with an edge for Black; or 9 0-0-0 dxe4 10 fxe4 c6 11 h3 $\text{d}bd7$ and again Black is slightly better, Renet-A.David, Clichy 1995) 9... $\text{d}fd7$ (threatening the fork ...c5, ...d4) and then:

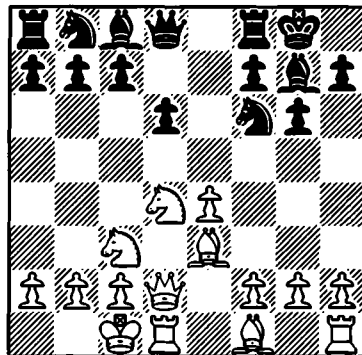
a) 10 $\text{d}xd5$ $\text{d}xe5$ 11 $\text{d}b5?$ (11 $\text{d}c3!$

is almost Ciocaltea-Keene, below) 11...c6 12 $\text{d}dc7$ $\text{W}h4+$ 13 $\text{d}f2$ $\text{W}e7$ 14 0-0-0 cxb5 15 $\text{d}xa8$ $\text{d}bc6$ was clearly better for Black in Jacek-Bakalarz, Ceske Budejovice 1995. 13 $\text{W}f2$ would have been stronger, as although the horse remains imprisoned after 13... $\text{W}e7$ 14 $\text{d}xa8$ cxb5 15 0-0-0 b6, at least it will sell its skin for a higher price! Even so, Black's position should still be preferable.

b) 10 e6 $\text{d}e5$ 11 e7 $\text{W}xe7$ 12 $\text{d}xd5$ $\text{W}h4+$ 13 $\text{d}f2$ $\text{W}d8$ 14 $\text{d}c3$ was equal in Ciocaltea-Keene, Wijk aan Zee 1974. I was rather recently confronted by 13 $\text{W}f2?$ $\text{W}d8$ 14 $\text{d}c3$ c5 15 $\text{d}b3$ b6 16 $\text{d}d1$ (Tirard-Bauer, French League 2002). Here, instead of 16... $\text{d}bd7?$! 17 $\text{d}e2$ when White stood a bit better, 16... $\text{W}c7$ or 16... $\text{W}e7$ was to be preferred. The knight sally to d5 doesn't bring much due to ... $\text{W}b7$, and Black will roll on with ... $\text{d}bc6$, ... $\text{d}e6$ and ... $\text{d}ad8$ with a comfortable game.

7...0-0 8 0-0-0

For 8 f3?! see 7 f3.



After 8 0-0-0 Black's only two real options are:

B21: 8... $\text{d}\text{c}6$

B22: 8... $\text{e}8$

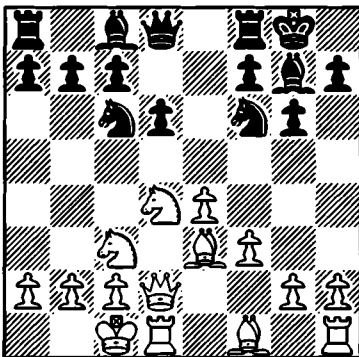
In contrast with a comparable position in the Sicilian Dragon, 8... $\text{d}\text{g}4$?! would be wrong here on account of 9 $\text{g}5$, when all of Black's replies are unsatisfactory.

B21) 1 e4 e5 2 $\text{d}\text{f}3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\text{d}\text{xd}4$ g6 5 $\text{d}\text{c}3$ $\text{g}7$ 6 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}\text{f}6$ 7 $\text{w}\text{d}2$ 0-0 8 0-0-0 $\text{d}\text{c}6$

The aim of the text move, in comparison with the richer 8... $\text{e}8$ which we will examine later on, is to simplify the position with a knight swap. Black plans ... $\text{d}\text{xd}4$, generally followed by ...c5 and ... $\text{w}\text{a}5$.

9 f3

Not 9 $\text{d}\text{xc}6$?! (why open the b-file?) 9...bxc6 10 $\text{e}h6$ $\text{e}\text{hx}6$ 11 $\text{w}\text{hx}6$ $\text{b}8$ 12 f3 $\text{w}\text{e}7$ 13 h4 d5! 14 h5 $\text{w}\text{b}4$ (or 14... $\text{b}2$?! 15 $\text{c}\text{xb}2$ $\text{w}\text{b}4+$ 16 $\text{c}1$ $\text{w}\text{xc}3$ with sufficient counterplay for Black) 15 e5 was Filipenko-Vorotnikov, Yurmala 1980, and here 15... $\text{w}\text{xb}2+$ 16 $\text{c}2$ $\text{e}f5$! would have led to an unclear position.



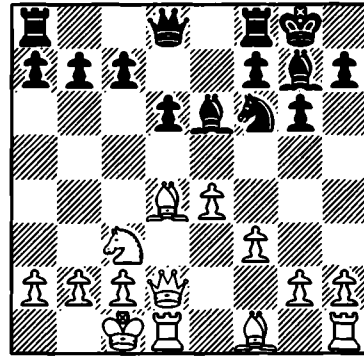
9... $\text{d}\text{xd}4$

Black can also transpose to Line B22 with 9... $\text{e}8$.

10 $\text{e}\text{xd}4$

The bishop has replaced the knight at d4. From here it neutralizes the g7-bishop and all White needs to do is to push his kingside pawns.

10... $\text{e}6$



Played both in order to prevent $\text{e}c4$ and to be ready to trade this bishop for White's knight if it appears on d5. White should, at present, either parry his opponent's plan by playing 11 $\text{e}3$, or decide which pawns to advance:

B211: 11 $\text{e}3$

B212: 11 h4?!

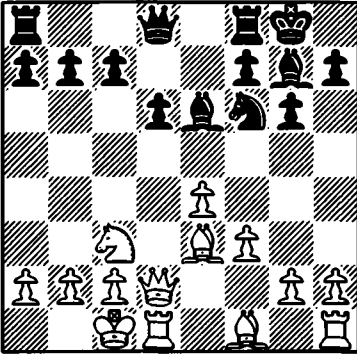
B213: 11 $\text{c}\text{b}1$

B214: 11 g4

B211) 1 e4 e5 2 $\text{d}\text{f}3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\text{d}\text{xd}4$ g6 5 $\text{d}\text{c}3$ $\text{g}7$ 6 $\text{e}3$ $\text{d}\text{f}6$ 7 $\text{w}\text{d}2$ 0-0 8 0-0-0 $\text{d}\text{c}6$ 9 f3 $\text{d}\text{xd}4$ 10 $\text{e}\text{xd}4$ $\text{e}6$ 11 $\text{e}3$

Much less popular than the three alternatives, this follow-up nevertheless

contains some venom. Black must play accurately in order to survive.



11...Re8

To keep the fianchettoed bishop, but in order to do this Black must make some concessions. Alternatively:

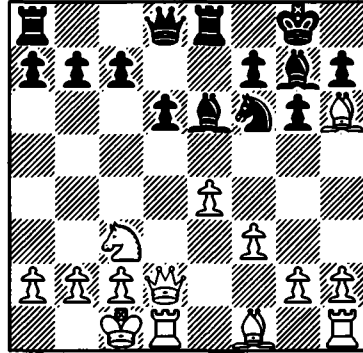
a) 11...a6 12 e6 e6xe6 13 e6xe6 e6e7 14 h4 d7 with an edge for White, V.Gurevich-Klovans, German League 1996. Black is ready to meet h5 with ...g5; his position, albeit a bit inferior, remains quite defensible.

b) 11...c6!? is a little suspicious, but the consequences of 12 e6xe6 e6a5 13 e6c5 b5 deserve a more thorough examination. One may note that had Black pushed his c-pawn one square further, this would have vanished! The game A.David-Pachow, Pardubice 1999, quickly ended after 14 a3 d7 15 e6xc6 f8c8 16 e6xb5 e6c7 17 e6a4 a8ab8 18 e6a6, when peace was agreed even though 18...f8xb2 would have been decisive.

Maybe 17 e6d4 was a better way to consolidate the material advantage: 17...f8ab8 18 e6d3 e6b7 19 b4 (19 b3? loses to 19...e6xb3 20 e6xg7 d6c5 21 e6d6

e6xc2) 19...e6xd4 20 e6xd4 e6c7 21 e6a6 (protecting the knight by 21 e6b2 or 21 e6d2 inspires less confidence) 21...e6xc3 22 e6xc8 e6xc8 although Black still has compensation (but not 22...e6xa3+? 23 e6d2! e6xc8 24 e6a1 and White wins).

12 e6h6



12...e6h6!

After the alternative 12...e6h8, 13 e6g5! threatens e5, a general trade on d8, and d6e4 which would win an exchange. Then 13...e6c8 (13...e6d7!?) 14 g4 a6 15 h4 b5 16 h5 and White's attack was faster in the game Isupov-Vorotnikov, Vladivostok 1990.

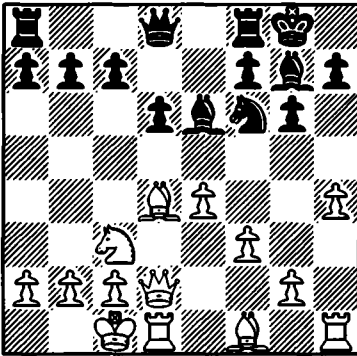
13 e6xh6 e6e7 14 h4 e6f8 15 e6g5 e6g7 16 g4 a6

(Pedzich-Klovans, Pardubice 1995). Black's queen defends well and carrying on the attack for White isn't an easy job. The position is roughly equal.

B212) 1 e4 e5 2 d4f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 d4xd4 g6 5 d6c3 e6g7 6 e6e3 d6f6 7 e6d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 d6c6 9 f3 d4xd4 10 e6xd4 e6e6 11 h4?!

It's a random choice at first sight, but the advances of the g- and h-pawns

both have their pros and cons. Pushing the h-pawn weakens the g3-square and allows ...h5. Moving the g-pawn leaves f3 vulnerable. This wouldn't matter so much if many variations weren't leading to endings after a continuation such as ...♖a5, ♘d5 ...♗xd2, ♜xd2. After a queen trade a wild attack is out of the question and weaknesses such as this might gain in relevance.



The main continuation – as well as the sub-variations – of the illustrative game **Nicht-Van de Weijer, correspondence 1991**, tend to demonstrate that 11 g4 is more precise.

11...c5

Conceding a target on d6 for the sake of chasing the d4-bishop from its ideal outpost. This seemingly suicidal move is motivated by emergency: if Black couldn't dislodge the dominant bishop at once, the white attack would be much quicker than Black's.

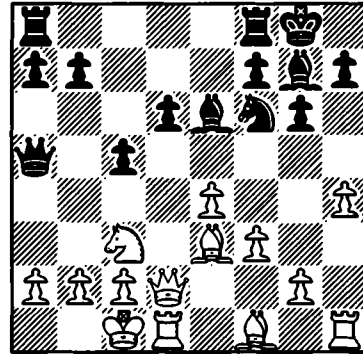
11...h5 would probably call for the reply 12 ♘d5 ♞e8, after which White is going to prepare the break g4, while if 12...♙xd5 13 exd5 then the second white bishop will take part in the as-

sault from d3; in either case White has an edge.

12 ♙e3

12 ♙xf6? would be a criminal act of greed. To win the d6-pawn White cedes all the dark squares and will no longer have anything to oppose to the mighty g7-bishop. Demonstrating a Black win from that position is of course impossible, but good luck to the fools who wish to defend the White side!

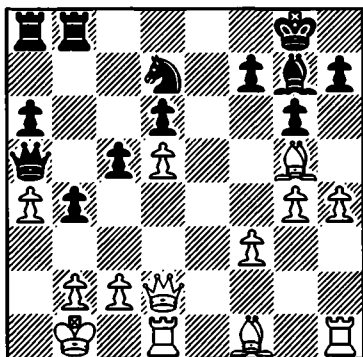
12...♖a5



13 ♗xd6?

13 ♖b1 is a more positional treatment, threatening at any moment to kill Black's aggressive inclinations with a knight jump to d5; but then 13...♞fd8 14 ♘d5 ♗xd2 15 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 16 ♜xd2 d5! equalizes – the reason why 11 g4 should have been selected. (Instead, White keeps an edge after 16...b6?! 17 c4 a6 18 a4.)

After 13 a3? the ...b5-b4 push will cause more damage: for example, 13...♞fd8 14 ♙g5 a6 15 g4 b5 16 ♖b1? (walking into the bombs!) 16...b4 17 ♘d5 ♙xd5 18 exd5 ♞db8 19 a4 ♘d7...



...with a clear advantage to Black in Petruschin-Kimelfeld, USSR 1979; he is reaching his goal whereas White's counter-attack has only just begun. The moves ...♖xa4, ...♗c3 and ...♘b6xa4 are all looming, with a devastating attack.

With the text move White wins a pawn, but generates tactical complications that, in view of his lead in development, favour Black.

13...♘d7?

Opening the bishop's diagonal, while at the same time defending c5. However, Black has a much stronger option in 13...♗xe4!!. That such an opportunity escaped the attention of two correspondence players is extraordinary. This knight move achieves the same purpose as 13...♘d7, but in a much more efficient way! For example:

a) 14 ♗xe4? ♜fd8 and White has to face up to giving up his queen, as 15 ♜xc5 ♗xb2+ 16 ♜xb2 ♜xa2+ 17 ♜c3 ♜xd1, with the threats ...♞c8 or ...♜a1+, is hopeless.

b) After 14 fxe4 ♗xc3 the bishop is taboo in view of 15 bxc3 ♜a3+ 16 ♜d2 ♜ad8. Black, moreover, threatens

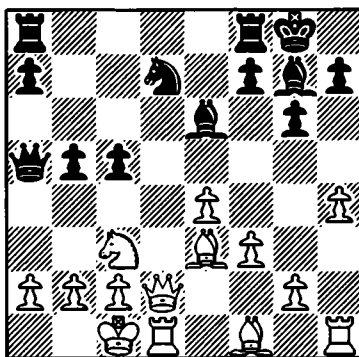
...♜xa2 and ...♗xb2+ and enjoys a clear advantage.

One should also note the possibility of 13...♗xa2!?, profiting from the immunity of the c5-pawn because of ...♗h6+.

14 ♜d2

14 ♗d2? is too artificial, as the following variation illustrates: 14...♗e5! 15 ♜d3 c4 16 ♜e3 b5 17 h5 b4 18 hxg6 fxg6 and Black's attack proceeds unabated. (Instead 18...bxc3?! 19 gxh7+ ♜h8 20 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 21 ♜xc3+ ♜xc3 22 bxc3 isn't so clear.)

14...b5



15 ♗h6!

15 a3?! is a move designed to slow down Black's attack. Its drawback is that it creates a hook and can actually have a reverse effect, e.g. 15...b4 16 ♘d5 ♜fb8 17 ♗f4? ♗xb2+ 18 ♜xb2 ♜xa3+ 19 ♜b1 b3 20 c3 b2 21 ♗xb8 ♜xb8 22 ♗e2 ♗e5 when White's king cannot run away via d3 and succumbs.

15...♗d4!?

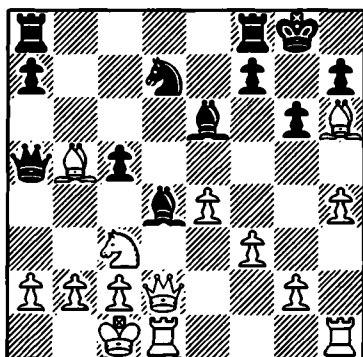
A speculative sacrifice in order to keep the 'monster' bishop.

Instead, 15...♗h8? is bad on account

of 16 ♔d5!, but the greedy 15...b4! would have restored the material balance: 16 ♔b1 ♚fd8! (16...♙xa2?! passes the initiative to White after 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 18 h5) 17 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 18 h5 ♔f8 19 ♚f4 ♚xd1+ 20 ♗xd1 ♕g8 and Black isn't worse; he will soon take on a2 and White's pieces are strangely placed (although not 20...♚xa2?? 21 h6+ ♕g8 22 ♚f6).

16 ♙xb5?

16 ♙xf8! was better than opening the b-file. Black would have had compensation in this case, but I don't see any forced win. 16...♚xf8 17 a3 b4 18 ♔b1 holds for White, who of course has an extra exchange for his suffering. After 18...♚b8 Black dominates the dark squares and won't be worried by an enemy attack. Following 19 b3 (19 c3 bxc3 20 ♔xc3 ♚b3) 19...♚c7 he certainly has some play, but is it enough?



16...♚fb8

16...♙xc3? 17 ♚xc3 ♚xb5?? allows 18 ♚g7 mate.

17 a4

17 ♙xd7? loses to 17...♚b4.

17...a6

17...♚xb5? 18 ♔xb5 ♚xa4 19 c3 ♙b3 20 ♔a3 gives White a large plus.

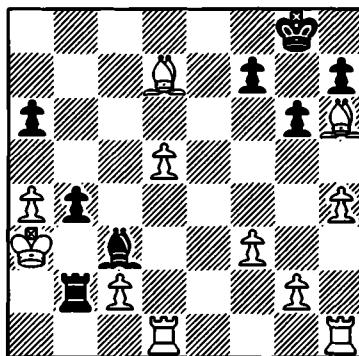
18 ♙xd7 ♚b4?!

This is an inaccuracy which fortunately doesn't spoil very much. Instead, Black can win by playing 18...♚xb2! and now:

a) 19 ♗xb2 ♚b4+.

b) 19 ♙xe6 fxe6 20 ♔e2? (20 ♗xb2 ♚b4+ 21 ♗a2 ♙xc3 wins) 20...♚b1+ 21 ♗xb1 ♚b6+ and mate in four.

c) 19 ♔d5 doesn't save White: 19...♚b1+ 20 ♗xb1 ♚b8+ 21 ♗a2 ♙xd5+ 22 exd5 ♚b2+ 23 ♗a3 (or 23 ♗a1 ♙c3! 24 ♚xc3 ♚xc3 25 ♚d3 ♚xc2 26 ♚a3 ♚b4 etc.) 23...♙c3 24 ♚f4 ♚b4+ 25 ♚xb4 cxb4.



An amusing mate, isn't it!

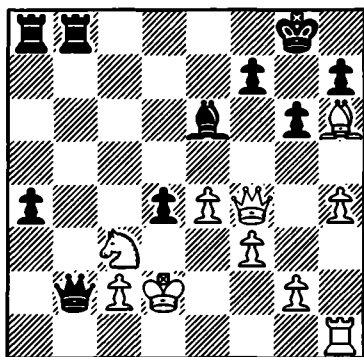
19 ♙b5 axb5

19...♚xb5?? would allow White to escape after 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♚g5! (21 ♗b1? ♚a5! 22 ♔a4 ♚xa4 23 c3 ♙b3! and 21 ♚f4? ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ♚xc3 would win for Black) 21...f6 22 ♙xd4 ♚a1+ 23 ♔b1.

20 ♚f4! bxa4 21 ♚xd4! ♚xb2+ 22 ♗d2!?

Or 22 ♗d1 ♚xc3! 23 ♚d3! ♚d8! (it was still possible to go wrong:

23...♖b1+ 24 ♔e2 ♜xc2+ 25 ♜d2 ♜c4+ 26 ♔f2 ♜xh1 27 ♜f6 ♜f1+ 28 ♔g3! ♜e1+ 29 ♜f2 ♜a1 30 e5 and mate is unavoidable) 24 ♜d2 ♜xd3 25 cxd3 (25 ♜xd3 ♜a1+ 26 ♔c1 a3 with an imminent promotion) 25...♜a1+ 26 ♜c1 ♜d4 and the a-pawn is a monster.
22...cxd4



23 ♘d1

23 ♜f6? loses to 23...♜xc3+ 24 ♔c1 ♜b2+ 25 ♔d1 d3!, covering g7!

23...♜b4+ 24 ♔e2

After 24 ♔c1? Black wins with 24...d3!! 25 ♜f6 d2+ 26 ♔xd2 ♜b1 mate.

24...♜a5?!

24...f5?! 25 h5 allows some swindling chances, but 24...♔c4+! 25 ♔f2 ♜b6 would have simplified Black's task.

25 ♜f6 ♜b5+ 26 ♔d2

Or 26 ♔f2?! ♜e5 27 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 28 ♔f4 ♜eb5 29 ♔xb8 ♜xb8+ with a similar end to the game.

26...♜e5

26...♜b4+? yields only a draw by repetition after 27 ♔c1! ♜b1+ 28 ♔d2 ♜b4+ (but not 27 c3? dxc3+ 28 ♘xc3 ♜d6+ 29 ♘d5 ♜xd5+ 30 exd5 ♜xd5+ 31 ♔e2 ♜a2+ 32 ♔e3 ♜b3+ 33 ♔f4 ♜d2+ 34

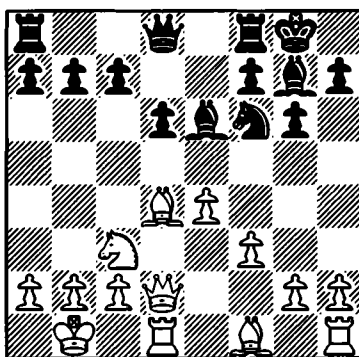
♔g3 ♜xh6 and Black wins).

27 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 28 ♔f4 ♜eb5 29 ♔xb8 ♜xb8 30 ♔d3?

After 30 ♘f2 a3 31 ♜a1 a2 32 ♔c1 the paralyzed rook leaves little hope of salvation.

30...a3 0-1

B213) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♔g7 6 ♔e3 ♘f6 7 ♜d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♘c6 9 f3 ♘xd4 10 ♔xd4 ♔e6 11 ♔b1



Another possibility that deserves a mention. White considers that his opponent can't do without ...c5 and thus decides on a useful move that doesn't weaken anything.

11...c5 12 ♔e3 ♜a5 13 ♘d5!

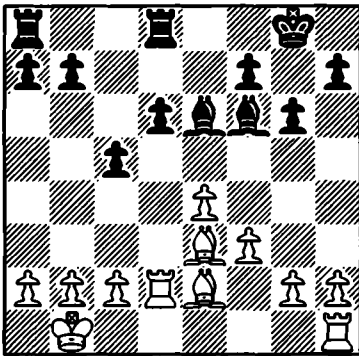
13 h4?! is illogical: 13...h5!? (13...b5?! 14 ♘d5! ♜xd2 15 ♘xf6+ ♔xf6 16 ♜xd2 ♜fd8 17 ♔f4! gives White an edge, but 13...♜fd8! equalizes – cf. Line B214) 14 ♔h6 ♜fd8? (14...♔h7 15 ♔xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♔e2 ♜ad8 17 ♜f4! is slightly better for White according to Prandstetter, but why should Black waste a tempo on 14...♔h7 - ? Instead 14...♜fb8, planning ...b5, seems more to the point) 15 ♔g5!

♞d7 16 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 17 ♘d5 ♗d8 18 ♙b5!
 ♙xd5 19 ♙xd7 ♙xa2+ 20 ♚xa2 ♗xd7 21
 ♗xd6 ♗a4+ 22 ♚b1 ♙d4 23 ♞d3 ♗b5 24
 ♞b3 ♗e2 25 ♗g3 ♙f2 26 ♗g5 b5 27 ♞d3
 ♙d4 28 ♗d2! ♗xd2 29 ♞xd2 and White
 won in Prandstetter-Plachetka, Tren-
 cianske Teplice 1985.

Move inversions are common here;
 13 g4 transposes to note 'a' to White's
 13th in Line B214.

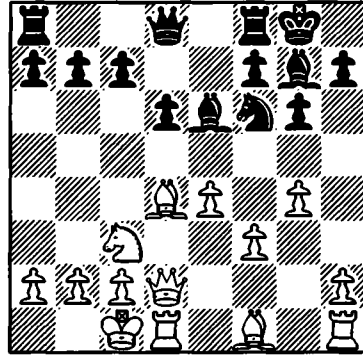
13...♗xd2 14 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 15 ♞xd2
 ♞fd8 16 ♙e2

If 16 c4 then 16...a6 with the idea of
 ...b5 and counterplay.



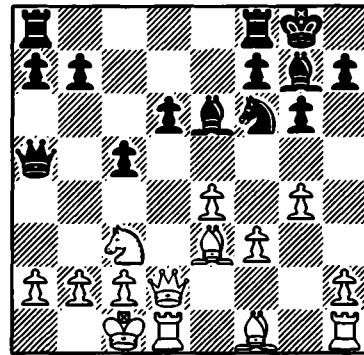
The differences between this posi-
 tion after 16 ♙e2 and the one where the
 bishop is still located on f1 and the
 white pawn is on h4 are clear: the h-
 pawn isn't hanging in some cases and,
 above all, the theme of the back-rank
 mate has disappeared. Black can't free
 himself by ...d5 (c5 drops) and is thus
 saddled with a backward pawn on d6.

B214) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4
 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♙g7 6 ♙e3 ♘f6 7 ♗d2
 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♘c6 9 f3 ♘xd4 10 ♙xd4
 ♙e6 11 g4



We've reached the most severe test
 for the variation 8...♘c6 and 9...♘d4.
 In our featured game in this line, White
 will bravely advance his king towards
 the centre, where it will be safe and
 even manage to join the assault against
 its counterpart!

11...c5 12 ♙e3 ♗a5



13 ♙h6!

Or:

a) 13 ♚b1 ♞fd8? (losing precious
 time; 13...b5! with the idea 14 ♘d5 ♗a6
 and Black is fine) 14 ♙e2 b5 15 ♘d5!?
 ♗a4 16 ♘c3 ♗a5 17 h4 b4 18 ♘d5 ♙xd5
 19 exd5 ♘d7 20 h5 gave White a clear
 plus in Ernst-Plachetka, Gausdal 1985.

Compare this with the game Petruschin-Kimelfeld (quoted in the notes to Line B212) This time White's attack is by far the more menacing.

b) 13 a3!? also deserves attention: 13...♞fd8 (13...♞fe8?! doesn't meet the demands of the position; after 14 ♖b5 White was much better in Nisipeanu-Djuric, FIDE World Ch., Las Vegas 1999) 14 g5 ♜e8 (or 14...♞d7?! 15 ♖b5 ♜b6 16 ♜xd6 ♜e5 17 ♜xb6 axb6 18 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 19 ♜c7! – giving back the pawn in order to extinguish Black's activity – 19...♞xf3 20 ♜xe6 fxe6 21 c3 with a nice edge in the ending, due to the pair of bishops and the possibility of a later king march on the queenside: c2-b3-c4-b5!) 15 ♞d5 and now:

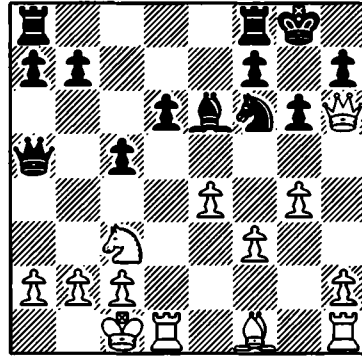
b1) In view of his backward d-pawn – and the strongpoint on d5 associated with it – Black should avoid 15...♜xd2+ 16 ♞xd2, after which a possible continuation is 16...♞xd5 17 ♞xd5 ♜c7 18 ♞d2 d5 (or 18...♜e6 19 c3 ♞e5 20 ♞c4) 19 ♞xc5 dxe4 20 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 21 fxe4 ♜e6 22 ♞xa7 ♜xg5 23 ♞g2 with a large edge for White. 19...♜e6 20 ♞e7 ♞e8 21 exd5 ♞xe7 22 dxe6 represents a lesser evil, but White has still won a pawn.

b2) 15...♜a4! 16 c3 ♞xd5! (preventing ♜c2, as White obviously wishes to recapture with a piece on d5) 17 ♜xd5 b5 and Black's (counter) play seems quite decent to me.

13...♞xh6

The inferior 13...♞fd8 leads to trouble for Black: 14 ♞xg7 ♜xg7 15 h4 h5 16 gxh5! ♜xh5 17 ♞g1 b5 18 ♜g5 b4 19 ♖b1 with a big advantage to White, Yurtaev-Gulko, Frunze 1985.

14 ♜xh6

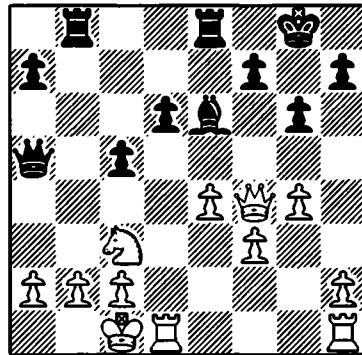


14...b5!?

If 14...♞xa2?! 15 h4! ♞e6 16 h5 with the idea of 17 hxg6 fxg6 18 g5 ♜h5 19 ♞xh5!.

With 14...b5!? we are following the game **Tseshkovsky-Vorotnikov, Aktjubinsk 1985**:

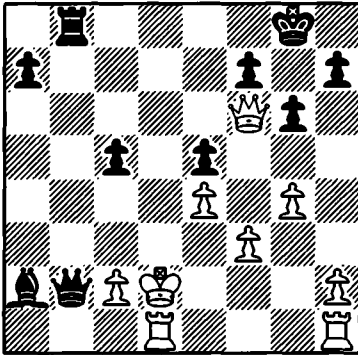
15 ♞xb5 ♞ab8 16 ♜f4! ♜e8 17 ♞xe8 ♞fxe8



18 ♞xd6!

Tseshkovsky thought that 18 ♜f6 was better: 18...♜b4 (18...♞xa2 19 ♞xd6 transposes to the game with White having avoided 18...♞xb2) 19 ♜e2! ♞xa2 20 ♜f4. The winner of the game

concludes that White has a large advantage, but if one carries on the analysis it transpires that Black is okay: 20...♗e5! 21 ♘d3 ♜d4 (with ideas of ...c4, ...♙c4 or even ...♗xe4) 22 ♘xe5 (other moves are worse) 22...♜xb2+ 23 ♘d2 dx5...



...when a pawn and a wandering white monarch provide enough compensation for the exchange.

18...♙xa2?!

Better is 18...♗xb2 19 ♘xb2 ♜b4+ 20 ♘c1 ♜xc3 21 ♗hd1 c4! 22 e5 (22 g5?! ♙f5 23 exf5? ♜a1+ 24 ♘d2 c3+) 22...h5 (to play ...♙f5 in case White captures on h5) 23 ♜d4 ♜xf3 24 gxh5, although the advantage is still White's.

19 ♜f6

After this point an improvement for Black is difficult to find.

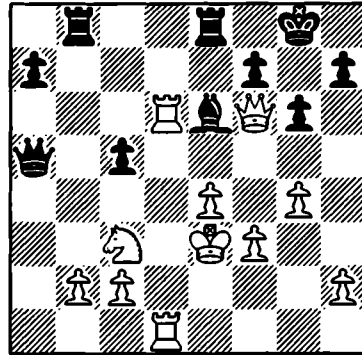
19...♙e6

19...♙c4 20 ♗hd1 ♜a1+ 21 ♘d2 ♜xb2 22 ♗b1 ♜a3 23 ♗xb8 ♗xb8 24 h4 and the white king is safe whereas its counterpart can see imminent danger.

20 ♗hd1 ♜a1+ 21 ♘d2 ♜a5

After 21...♜xb2? 22 ♗b1 ♜a3 23 ♗xb8 ♗xb8 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♜xe6+ a

check on e5 or d6 will net the b8-rook.
22 ♘e3!

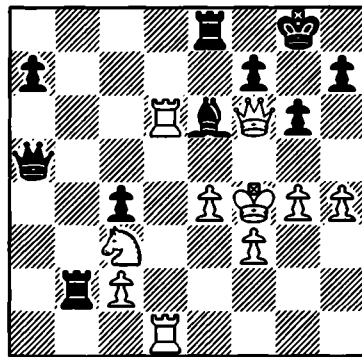


22...c4

Or 22...♗xb2 23 ♗xe6! and the rook landing on d7 or d8 will be decisive.

23 h4! ♗xb2 24 ♘f4

But not 24 ♗xe6? ♜c5+ 25 ♘f4 fxe6 26 ♗d7 ♜f8 when Black has the advantage.



24...♗b6

Or 24...♜c7 25 e5 ♜e7 26 ♘e4. Even without queens White has mating ideas.

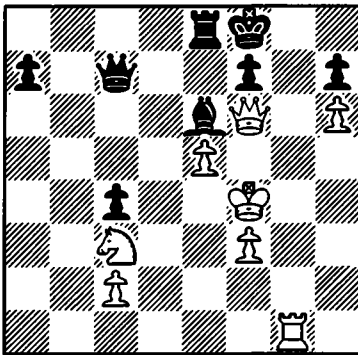
25 ♗d8 ♗b8 26 ♗xb8 ♗xb8 27 h5 gxh5 28 gxh5 ♗e8

Mate is looming after 28...♜xh5 29

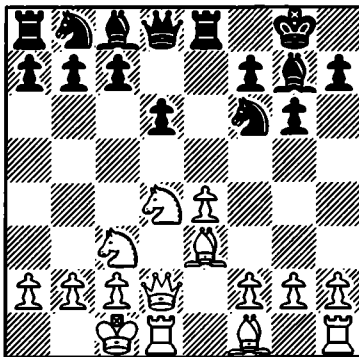
♖g1+ ♜f8 30 ♘d5! ♜h2+ 31 ♖g3 ♜d2+ 32 ♜e5!.

29 h6 ♜f8 30 ♖g1 ♜c7+ 31 e5 1-0

...and Black resigned. This convincing demonstration seems to spell the end of 9...♘d4. Black players should thus probably come back to 9...♞e8 if they want to persist with the fianchetto variation.



B22) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♖g7 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♜d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♞e8

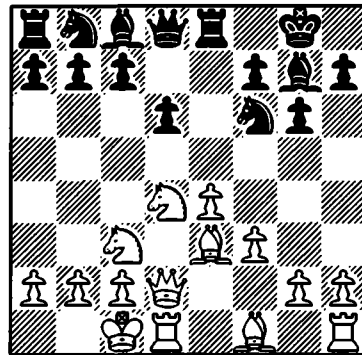


This move forces f2-f3 – which of course was part of White's intentions in any case, while it could be said that Black could do without ...♞e8. That is

probably why the Czech Grandmaster Blatny criticized 8...♞e8 in his annotations to the encounter Van Mil-Reinderman. Nevertheless, the move does still make sense, as we will see later on.

9 f3

9 ♗g5!? is an original idea tried with success by Hicham Hamdouchi versus yours truly: 9...♘c6 10 ♘de2 b5 11 ♘g3 and now 11...b4 (instead of my 11...a6?) 12 ♘d5 ♞b8 13 h4 ♗e6 14 h5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 ♘e5 is unclear.



After 9 f3 we will look at:

B221: 9...a6

B222: 9...♘c6

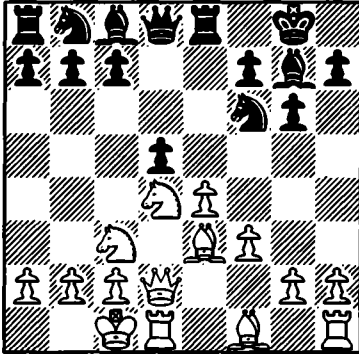
In Van Mil-Reinderman, Sonnevanck 1993, Black deviated with...

9...d5?

An idea borrowed from the Dragon Sicilian, where the position is almost identical (there is a black pawn on e7 rather than c7), but also radically different! Here the c-file is closed and so White's king will never be worried.

Instead, 9...h5? is a drastic way to

prevent g4, but the remedy is worse than the illness. White can now react by playing 10 h3, having in mind g4 (anyway) and ♖d5. Once the f6-knight is eliminated, the capture on h5 will cause damage.



10 ♖b3 c6 11 ♗h6 ♗h8

Revealing an idea behind 8...♗e8: Black can decline the disadvantageous trade of bishops. Unfortunately for him, the attack won't come along the h-file.

12 exd5 cxd5 13 ♖xd5

13 ♗c4!? profits from the pin, but the game continuation is convincing enough.

13...♖c6

Or 13...♖xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♗e1+ 16 ♖d2 ♗e8 17 ♗b5 ♖c6 18 ♖c1 with a clear advantage.

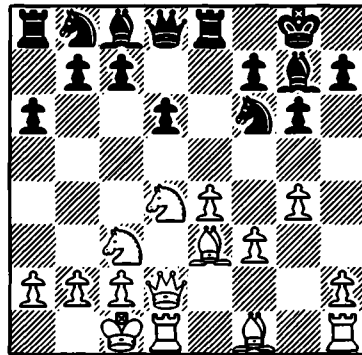
14 ♖c3

White has simply netted a pawn for nothing. Moreover, Black's back rank is weak and the game finished abruptly: 14...♗b6 15 ♗c4 ♖e5 16 ♗b5 ♗d7 17 ♗xd7 ♖fxd7 18 ♗he1 (not 18 f4? ♖g4) 18...♖f8 19 ♖d5 ♗a6 20 ♖b1 ♗ac8 21 ♗b4 ♗c6?? (but 21...♖c6 22 ♗h4 ♗xe1 23 ♗xe1 ♖e6 would only have pro-

longed the agony) 22 ♗xf8+! ♗xf8 23 ♖e7 mate.

B221) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 g6 5 ♖c3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♖f6 7 ♗d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♗e8 9 f3 a6 10 g4

10 h4 b5?! (10...♖c6!) is dubious, as the following demonstrates: 11 ♗h6 ♗h8 12 ♗g5 ♗b7 13 h5 ♖bd7 14 g3 ♗g7 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 ♗h3 ♖f8 17 ♖d5, as given by Khalifman and Semkov in *Opening for White According to Anand (Vol.1)*, when White is much better.



10...b5?!

10...♖c6! transposes back to the main line of 8...♗e8 (see B2223 below).

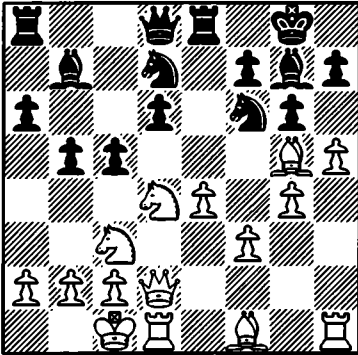
11 ♗g5

11 ♗h6! is stronger than the text because the future sacrifice ♖f5 gains in force. Indeed, after ...gxf5; gxf5, the threat of ♗g1+ will be lethal. 11...♗h8 is practically forced if Black wishes to resist the assault, after which 12 ♗g5 gives White a superior version of the Moingt-Levitt game below.

11...♗b7 12 h4 ♖bd7 13 h5 c5

From this position, two practical examples diverge. In the main text we

are following the game **Moingt-Levitt, Clichy 1986**.



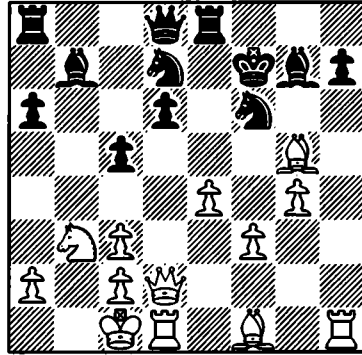
14 ♖f5?!

Or 14 ♖b3 b4 and now:

a) 15 ♖b1?! ♕e5 16 ♜xd6 (after 16 ♙e2 c4 17 ♘d4 c3 18 bxc3 bxc3 19 ♘xc3 White has grabbed a pawn at the cost of a vulnerable king; following ...♜a5 or ...♜c8 Black has excellent compensation) 16...♞xf3 17 ♜xd8 (or 17 ♜f4? ♞xe4!! 18 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 when the threat of ...♞e1+ wins back the queen, leaving Black with the advantageous endgame) 17...♞axd8 18 ♞xd8 ♞xd8 19 ♘xc5 ♘xg5 20 ♖xb7 ♞d4 and Black will regain his pawn and stand a bit better.

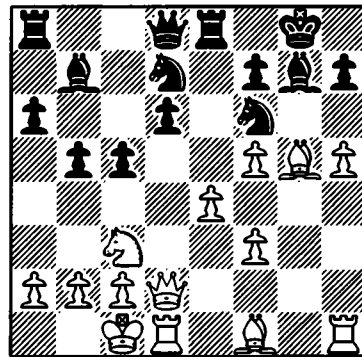
b) 15 ♘d5!? ♙xd5 16 exd5 ♖b6 (16...♕e5? 17 ♜f4 and Black can't move a single muscle) 17 hxg6 fxg6! and the position is messy. This adds weight to the argument for 15 hxg6, when 15...fxg6 is met by 16 ♙c4+.

c) 15 hxg6 is a sacrifice that deserves attention. If Black rejects it with 15...hxg6, then 16 ♘d5 will see the White attack reach its goal first. Instead 15...bxc3 16 gxf7+ ♜xf7 17 bxc3 was Joksic-Lehman, Plovdiv 1975.



The position remains sharp, and even a queen swap, after say 17...♜e7 18 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 19 ♞xd6, wouldn't guarantee Black an easy life: White would have three pawns and threats such as ♙c4+ and ♘xc5. As well as 17 bxc3, both 17 ♜xd6!? cxb2+ 18 ♜b1 ♕e5 19 ♘xc5 ♜xd6 20 ♞xd6 ♙c8 and 17 ♜xc3!? were worth considering. In each case White has reasonable compensation for the small material deficit.

14...gxf5 15 gxf5



15...♜h8?!

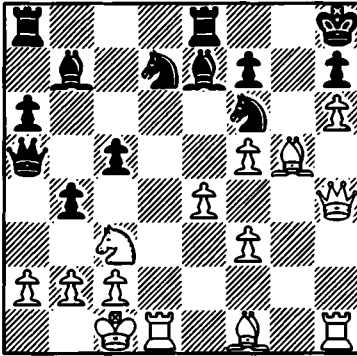
After 15...b4! 16 ♜g2 ♜h8 17 h6 ♙f8 18 ♘e2 d5 White doesn't have enough for the invested piece.

16 ♖xd6 b4 17 h6 ♔f8 18 ♗f4 ♕a5?

18...♔e7! was still winning.

19 ♗h4 ♔e7?

19...♗b6 was required, when the position remains unclear.

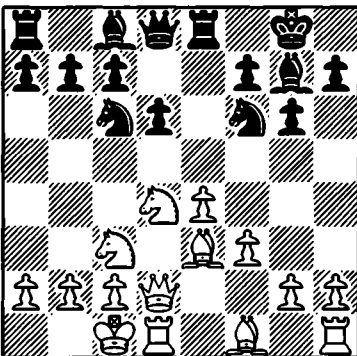


20 e5??

20 ♖xd7! would have turned the tables: 20...♗xd7 21 ♔xe7 ♗b6 22 ♔a4 ♗c6 23 ♗xc5! and this time it is White who wins!

20...bxc3 0-1

B222) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 g6 5 ♗c3 ♔g7 6 ♔e3 ♗f6 7 ♗d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♔e8 9 f3 ♗c6



and now:

B2221: 10 g4 introduction

B2222: 10 g4 ♗e5?!

B2223: 10 g4 a6!

B2224: 10 h4

Firstly, a look at other possibilities for White. Joachim-Bauer, Bad Zwosten 2002, continued...

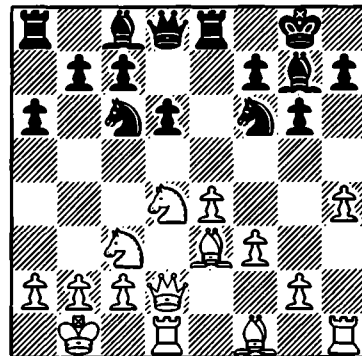
10 ♖b1

Alternatively:

a) 10 ♗xc6?!. This move has already been examined without the inclusion of f3 and ...♔e8, and it is still erroneous here to open the b-file. Black has an easier game, as he can continue ...♔e6, ...♗ab8 or ...♗b8-b4, and eventually even ...d5. An example: 10...bxc6 11 ♔h6 ♔h8 12 ♔c4 ♔e6 13 ♔xe6 ♖xe6 14 ♖he1 ♗b8 15 b3 ♗b4 and Black seized the initiative in Vega Holm-Barbero, Spanish Team Ch. 1993.

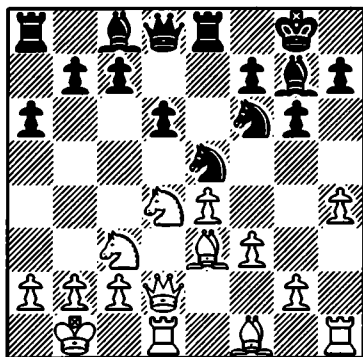
b) 10 ♔c4?!. We have already seen that ♔c4 doesn't meet the demands of the position. The bishop will be a target for the enemy pieces and pawns (10...♗e5), and thus a catalyst for the black attack.

10...a6 11 h4



11...♗e5?!

11...d5!, contrary to the ...d5-thrust in Van Mil-Reinderman, here levels the game. Indeed, the queen is protected well enough this time, so 12...dxe4 is possible on 12 ♖b3.



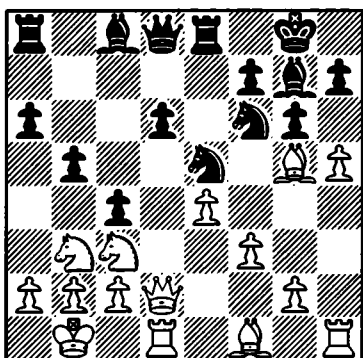
12 ♖g5

The only way to conduct the assault on the kingside. After 12 ♖e2 the move ♖b1 would be a pure waste of time.

12...b5?

I disliked the pin after 12...h5 13 ♗f4, but following 13...c6 White is deprived of the d5-square and Black, who can consider ...b5-b4, ...c5 and so on, isn't worse.

13 h5 c5 14 ♖b3 c4

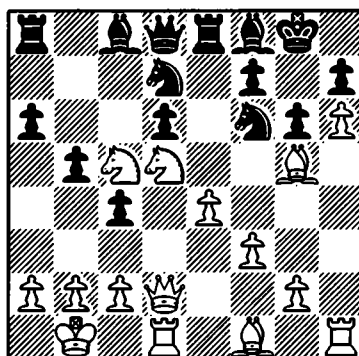


15 h6!

A finesse that escaped my attention. This little guy won't be hanging anymore when White grabs on d6.

15...♙h8

If 15...♙f8? 16 ♖d5 ♖ed7 17 ♖c5!!



...and Black's position falls apart.

16 ♗xd6?

16 ♖c5! would have given White a superior ending after 16...b4 17 ♖d5 dxc5 18 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 19 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 20 ♗xd8+ ♙xd8 21 ♙xd8. Attempts by Black to deviate are even worse.

16...♗xd6 17 ♗xd6 cxb3 18 ♗xf6

This wasn't my opponent's original intention, but 18 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 19 ♗xf6 bxc2+ 20 ♖xc2 ♙e6 followed by ...♖d7 and ...g5 traps the rook!

18...♙xf6 19 ♙xf6 bxc2+ 20 ♖xc2 ♙b7

...with an edge that I managed to convert.

Actually, my opponent had started with 6 f3 when, shame on me, I didn't equalize at once with an early ...d5!. To my credit, I should say that my book wasn't finished, and I thus didn't have the opportunity to consult it!

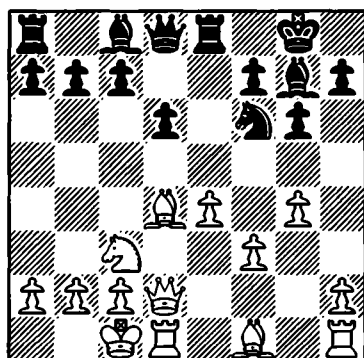
B2221) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♙g7 6 ♙e3 ♘f6 7 ♚d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♚e8 9 f3 ♘c6 10 g4

White's most popular choice.

10...♘xd4?!

10...d5!? is interesting: 11 g5! (11 ♙b5!? ♘xd4 12 ♙xd4 c6 13 g5 ♘h5 14 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 15 ♘xd5 cxd5 16 ♙xe8 ♚xe8 17 exd5 was unclear in Rasmussen-F.Andersen, correspondence 2000) 11...♘h5 12 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 13 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 14 ♚xd4 ♚xg5+ 15 ♚d2! (15 f4 ♚h4 16 ♚e3 ♙g4 was messy in Pirttimaki-Vorotnikov, Lvov 1983) 15...♚d8 (or 15...♚e5 16 f4 ♚xe4 17 ♙b5 ♙e6 18 ♙xe8 ♙xd5 19 ♚xd5 ♚xd5 20 ♚xd5 and White won in Kallmeyer-F.Andersen, correspondence 2000 - Black's position is hopeless for a correspondence game!) 16 ♚h6 ♚d6 17 ♙g1 (17 ♙c4!?) 17...♘f6 (maybe 17...c6 puts up more resistance, e.g. 18 ♘b6 ♚c5, or 18 ♚xh5 cxd5 19 ♚xd5 ♚f4+ 20 ♘b1 ♙e6 with some play) 18 ♙b5 ♚e5 19 ♙c4 ♘xd5 20 ♙xd5 ♚f8 21 ♚xg6+! hxg6 22 ♚xg6+ ♘h8 23 ♙xf7 with a large advantage for White, Dvoiry-Vorotnikov, Moscow 1985.

11 ♙xd4



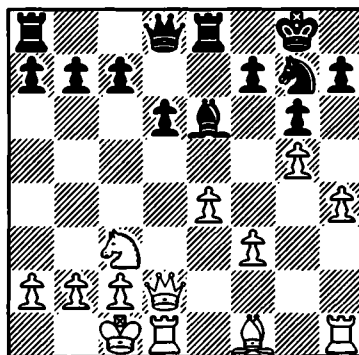
11...♙e6

11...c5?! condemns the d6-pawn for the sake of generating counterplay: 12 ♙f2! ♚a5 13 ♚xd6 ♘d7 14 ♚d2 ♘b6 15 ♘b1 ♙e6 16 ♘d5 (Nisipeanu-Negulescu, Romania 1995) gives White a clear plus according to Nisipeanu and Stoica, an opinion that I share.

12 g5

Rajskij-Kagan, Minsk 1985, is an illustration of Black's chances in this line: 12 h4 c5 13 ♙f2 a6 14 ♚xd6 ♘d7 15 ♚d2 ♚a5 16 a3 b5 17 ♘d5 b4 18 ♘b1 ♚ab8 19 ♙g3 ♙xd5 20 ♙xb8 ♚xb8 21 ♚xd5 bxa3 22 ♙c4 ♚xb2+ 23 ♘c1 ♚xc2+ and White resigned.

12...♘h5 13 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 14 h4



14...♚e7

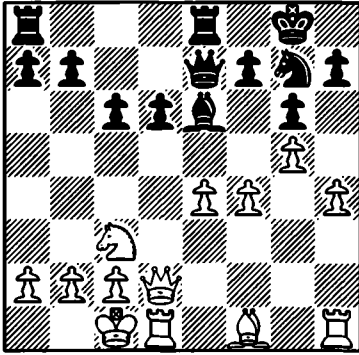
Or:

a) 14...♘h5? is senseless. White plays 15 ♙g1 followed by f4 and ♙e2, after which the knight has to withdraw.

b) 14...c6!? is interesting. Black plans ...b5-b4, followed by the freeing ...d5, so the obvious 15 ♚xd6 is practically forced. After 15...♚a5 16 a3 ♚ad8 17 ♚b4 ♚xd1+ 18 ♘d1 ♚c7 Black has

some compensation for the sacrificed pawn. 16 ♖a3!? is also possible. The ending resulting from 16...♗xa3 17 bxa3 ♖ad8 (or 17...♗h5) is a bit better for White, but Black has fair chances to hold; and there's an alternative in 16...♗b6, in order to probe White's kingside via e3 or f2.

15 f4 c6



16 ♖e2!

16 ♗xd6?! ♗xd6 17 ♖xd6 ♗h5 is okay for Black.

16...♖ad8 17 ♖f3 f6

The sharper 17...b5 also favours White: 18 f5 b4 19 ♗e2 gxh5 (or 19...d5 20 f6 ♗c5 21 ♗f4) 20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♖xc6 with a solid plus in both cases.

18 h5

White has a clear advantage, Rodin-Meister, Podolsk 1992.

B2222) 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 g6 5 ♗c3 ♖g7 6 ♖e3 ♗f6 7 ♗d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♖e8 9 f3 ♗c6 10 g4 ♗e5?! 11 ♖e2 a6

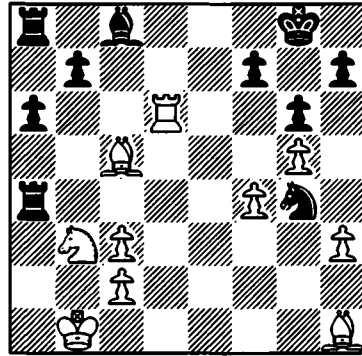
This was considered a very sharp and critical variation until the game Rytshagov-Meijers dismissed it com-

pletely (see the next note). In the main text we are following the game **Sax-Adorjan, Hungarian Ch. 1970.**

12 ♖g5

Or:

a) 12 g5! is a good move: 12...♗h5 (or 12...♗fd7 13 f4 ♗c6 14 h4 with a strong attack, Arkhipov-Klovans, Münster 1993) 13 f4! ♗g4 14 ♖g1 c5 15 ♗b3 ♖xc3 16 bxc3 (not 16 ♗xc3? ♗xf4!) 16...♖xe4 17 h3 ♗g3 18 ♖f3 ♖a4 (18...♖e7 wouldn't have brought much relief: 19 hxg4 ♗xh1 20 ♖h2, or 19 ♖xc5 ♗xh1 20 hxg4 ♗g3 21 ♖xd6 with a large advantage to White) 19 ♖xc5 ♗xh1 20 ♖xh1 ♖xa2 21 ♗b1 ♖a4 22 ♗xd6! (22 ♖d5 brought White a win on move 49 in Rytshagov-Meijers, Mezezers 2000) 22...♗xd6 23 ♖xd6...



...is winning for White.

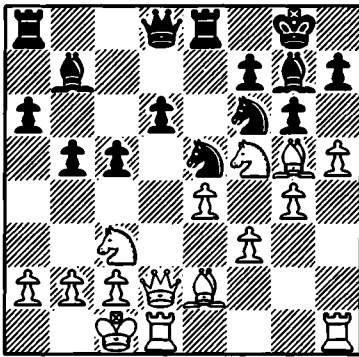
b) 12 ♖h6! ♖h8 13 ♖g5 is more accurate than the text move for reasons we've already discussed. The straightforward 13 h4 is playable as well: 13...b5 14 h5 c5 15 ♗f5 b4! 16 ♗d5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♖e6 18 ♗xd6 ♗f6 (with the threat of 19...♗d3) and the position is unclear. A game Cherniaev-

Vorotnikov, Moscow 1996, continued 19 g5 ♘d3+ 20 ♔d2 ♚d8 (20...♚xb2?? 21 ♚f8+! ♜xf8 22 ♘e7 mate) 21 ♚xd8 ♜axd8 22 cxd3 gxf5. White's bishop is blocked in on h6 whereas its counterpart fires down on the queenside. Black is certainly not worse.

c) 12 h4 b5 13 ♖h6 transposes to Cherniaev-Vorotnikov above. Conducting the assault with only pawns lacks punch: 13 h5?! c5 14 ♘b3 c4 15 ♘d4 b4 followed by 16...c3 and Black's attack is already well advanced. There's also 12...c5 13 ♘b3 c4 14 ♘d4 b5 when Black's counterplay is again taking shape.

12...b5 13 h4 ♖b7 14 h5 c5 15 ♘f5!?

Again we see this sacrifice. Although its worth is hard to evaluate, it at least has the merit of taking the initiative over to White.



15...gxf5 16 gxf5 ♖h8

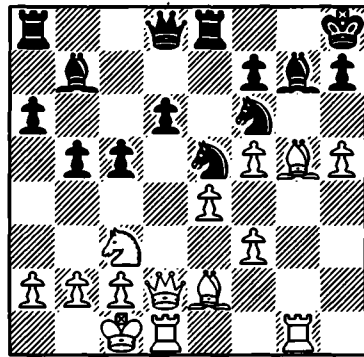
16...b4! gives Black the edge: 17 ♘a4 ♖c6 18 h6 and now:

a) 18...♖xa4? 19 hxg7 ♖b5 20 ♜h6 ♘ed7 21 ♜xh7!! ♘xh7 (not 21...♖xh7?? 22 ♖xb5 - threatening 23 ♚h2+ ♖xg7 24 ♚h6+ ♖g8 25 ♖xf6 and 26 ♜g1+ -

22...♖xg7 23 ♜g1 and White wins) 22 ♖xd8 ♖xe2 23 ♚xe2 ♜axd8 24 ♜xd6 with a clear plus to White, as Black's pieces can't coordinate efficiently.

b) 18...♖h8 19 ♜hg1 ♖f8 20 ♘b6 ♖xe4!! (in order to cover d6 when taking the knight) 21 ♘xa8 ♖xf3!. The knight on a8 can't escape and Black will get two minor pieces for the rook, with his king being rather secure.

17 ♜hg1



17...♜g8?!

17...♖f8! was more apt way to defend, as you can verify yourself! After the inferior text move White has the better of it.

18 f4 b4 19 ♘a4 ♘xe4 20 ♖xd8 ♘xd2 21 h6! ♜axd8 22 hxg7+ ♜xg7 23 ♜xg7 ♖xg7 24 f6+! ♖h6 25 ♜xd2?

The alternative capture 25 fxe5! was superior, since after 25...♘e4 26 ♖f3 ♘c3, White can win by means of 27 ♜xd6 ♖xf3 28 ♜xd8 ♘xa4 29 e6 ♖g6 30 e7 ♖c6 31 e8♚ ♖xe8 32 ♜xe8 etc. (and if 32...♖xf6?? 33 ♜a8).

25...♘f3 26 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 27 ♘xc5 ♜e8 28 ♜h2+ ♖g6 29 ♘xa6 ♜e4 30 ♜f2?

30 ♘d2 h5 31 c3 bxc3+ 32 ♖xc3 ♜xf4

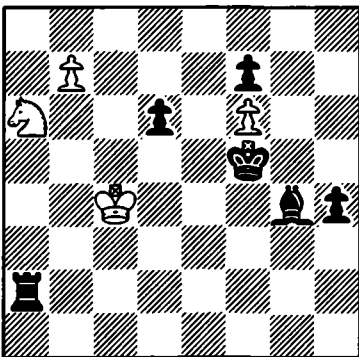
33 b4 gave better chances of salvation. It seems in the game that only Black's time trouble prevented White from losing.

30...♙g4 31 ♖d2 h5 32 c3 bxc3+ 33 ♖xc3 h4 34 b4 ♕f5?

A serious mistake. Black should have played 34...h3 – the passed pawn is very dangerous and must be pushed as soon as possible. In this case the result would probably have been reversed: after 35 b5 ♜e2 36 b6 (or 36 ♜f1 h2) 36...♜xf2 37 b7 h2 38 b8♗ h1♗ 39 ♗g8+ ♕f5 40 ♗g5+ ♕e4 Black escapes checks and wins.

35 b5 ♜xf4 36 b6 ♜f3+! 37 ♖c4 ♜xf2 38 b7 ♜xa2??

The final error. 38...♜c2+! would have saved the draw after 39 ♖b3! (not 39 ♖b5?? ♙e2+ 40 ♖a4 ♜xa2+ 41 ♖b3 ♜a1 42 ♖b2 h3 43 b8♗ h2 and Black should win!) 39...♜c1 40 ♖a3 h3 41 b8♗ h2 42 ♗b5+ ♕f4 43 ♗b4+ ♕f5 44 ♗b5+ when a draw by repetition is an appropriate conclusion to this hard-fought game.



39 ♖b4 ♜a5 40 b8♗ ♜c5+ 41 ♖d4 ♜e5
...and White won.

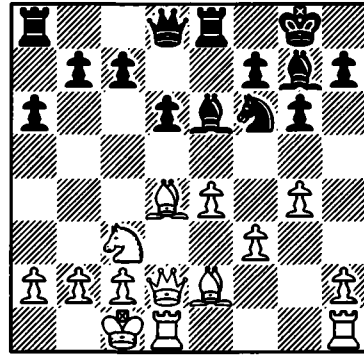
B2223) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♙g7 6 ♙e3 ♘f6 7 ♗d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♜e8 9 f3 ♘c6 10 g4 a6!

The only way I have found to repair the whole Black system. Now if...

11 ♙e2

...then Black continues with...

11...♘xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♙e6



...intending ...b5 and/or ...c5, which looks playable for Black. (12...c5? drops a pawn to 13 ♙xc5 ♙xg4 14 ♗xd6.) For example:

13 g5 ♘h5 14 ♙xg7 ♘xg7 15 h4 b5 16 f4

If 16 a3 ♗b8!?

16...b4 17 ♘d5 ♙xd5 18 exd5

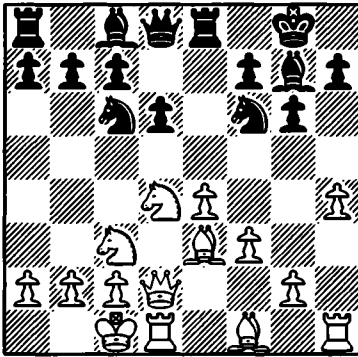
The alternative 18 ♗xd5 deserves consideration, even though Black seems to obtain a decent position in all lines: 18...♗e7 19 ♙c4 (19 h5 ♘xh5 20 ♙xh5 gxh5, or 19 ♙f3 ♗e6) 19...c6 20 ♗xc6 ♜ac8 21 ♗d5 ♜c5 22 ♗d3 ♗xe4 23 ♗xe4 ♜xe4 24 ♙xa6 ♜xf4 25 ♘xd6 ♘f5 with counterplay against White's kingside pawns.

18...♗e7 19 ♜de1 ♗e3 20 ♙g4 ♗g3

Or 20...♗c5, when White may be a bit better, but probably no more.

B2224) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♖e3 ♘f6 7 ♚d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♜e8 9 f3 ♘c6 10 h4

10 h4 represents the alternative way to start hostilities. Essentially White wants to open the h-file, but having g4-g5 at his disposal may prove helpful. However, beginning with g4 prevents defences based on ...h5.



10...♗e5

Black has some alternatives here:

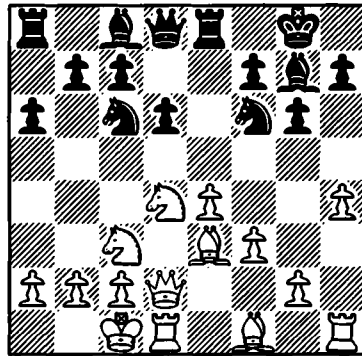
a) 10...h5!? would be an improved version of 9...h5. Stopping the h-pawn in this way would, however, still be far from ideal:

a1) 11 ♖g5 (with the idea of ♘d5; this motif doesn't appear in the Sicilian Dragon because, with a black pawn still on e7, the f6-knight isn't pinned) 11...♗d7 12 ♚f4 ♚e7 with an apparently playable game after, for example: 13 ♖c4 ♘xd4 14 ♜xd4 ♚e5, 13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 14 exd5 f6 15 dxc6 fxg5 16 ♖c4+ ♗h7 17 hxg5 bxc6, or 13 ♘db5!?

a2) Another common theme is the breakthrough with g2-g4, but here 11 g4? hxg4 12 h5 fails, as White isn't well enough prepared after 12...♘h5.

b) 10...♘xd4?! is a swap that doesn't fit in well with ...♜e8. Indeed, after the follow-up ...♖e6 and ...c5 that this simplification induces, the rook would prove more useful on d8. After 11 ♖xd4 ♖e6 12 h5 c5 13 ♖e3 White retains an edge: for example, 13...♘h5 14 ♖b5 followed by g4 or ♚xd6, while after 13...♚a5 there's 14 hxg6 fxg6 15 ♖b5 with the idea of ♚e2 and ♖c4 which helps to exploit the d5 outpost.

c) There is no drawback to playing 10...a6 before ...♗e5 given the fact that Black doesn't fear a swap on c6.



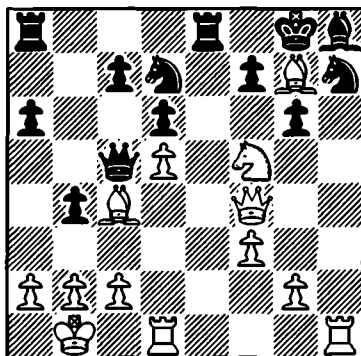
Another point of 10...a6 is to avoid the immediate ♖h6, which is crucial for the viability of the system. After 11 g4 ♗e5 12 ♖e2 one arrives back to a position treated in Line B222 (see note 'c' to White's 12th move).

11 ♖h6

The critical continuation, against which no remedy has yet been found.

11 ♚b1 is a prophylactic move that is not really required here, but even so, it's worth checking out the game **Hardicsay-Prinz, Böblingen 1985**, which provides much excitement: 11...a6 12

♙g5! b5 13 h5 ♙b7 14 hxg6 hxg6?! (14...fxg6 was to be preferred, so that the h-file remains only half-open; perhaps Black feared 15 ♖d5, but 15...c6 16 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 seems acceptable) 15 ♖b3! (with the idea of ♖a5!) 15...b4 16 ♖d5 ♙xd5 17 exd5 ♖b8 (17...a5?! would allow ♙b5 and ♖f4-h4) 18 ♖f4 (White has a clear plus) 18...♖ed7 19 ♙c4 ♖b6 (Black's counterplay is far too slow, a bad sign in opposite-side castling situations) 20 ♙h6 ♙h8 21 ♖d4?! (21 ♖h4! was stronger, with the threat of ♙e3) 21...a5? (here 21...♖c5!? was required, and after 22 ♖f5! ♖h7?! [if 22...♙e5 23 ♙f8!! wins, as does 22...♖e5 23 ♙g7!! ♖h5 24 ♖h6 ♙xg7 25 ♖xg7 ♖xc4 26 ♖xh5 ♖a3+ 27 bxa3 ♖c3 28 a4 b3 29 axb3 ♙ab8 30 ♖d2] then 23 ♙g7!



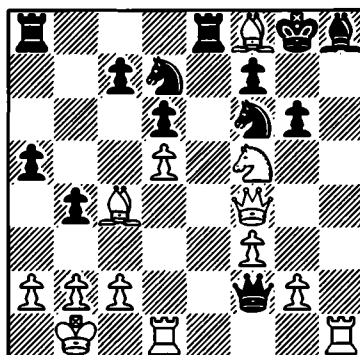
...is the most efficient way to eliminate the h8-bishop! But after 23...♙xg7 24 ♖xg7 ♖e3 25 ♖h4 ♖xg7 26 ♖xh7+ ♖f6, (thanks to his good control over the dark squares, Black manages to survive) 22 ♖f5! and now:

a) 22...gx f5 23 ♖g5+ ♖h7 24 ♙f8+ and White wins.

b) 22...♖h7 23 ♙g7! ♙xg7 24 ♖xg7

♖e3 25 ♖h4 ♖xg7 26 ♖xh7+ ♖f6 (this is similar to the line with 21...♖c5, but there's a nuance...) 27 ♖h4+ ♖g7 28 ♙de1 ♖d2 (28...♖c5 allows mate in 12. Fasten your seat belt and let's go! 29 ♖h6+ ♖f6 30 ♖f4+ ♖g7 31 ♙h7+! ♖xh7 32 ♖xf7+ ♖h6 33 ♙h1+ ♖g5 34 f4+ ♖g4 35 ♖xg6+ ♖xf4 36 ♙h4+ ♖e3 37 ♖g3+ ♖d2 38 ♖d3+ ♖e1 39 ♖f1+ ♖d2 40 ♖c1 mate!) 29 ♙xe8 ♙xe8 30 ♙b5 and White wins (the difference!).

c) 22...♖f2 (the game continuation) 23 ♙f8!.



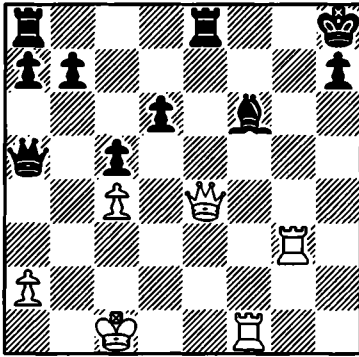
This pretty move threatens ♙xh8+, destroying the main guardian of Black's king. White is winning now: 23...♖g4 (23...♖xf8 24 ♙xh8+, 23...♖h5 24 ♖h6+) 24 ♙e7 ♙g7 25 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 26 ♙h7+ ♖xh7 27 ♖xf7+ and Black resigned.

11...♙h8 12 ♙g5!

With 12 h5 ♖xh5 13 g4 ♖g3 14 ♙h3 ♖xf1 15 ♙xf1 we are following the games **Korongy-Tolnai, Budapest 1972**, and **Emms-Summerscale, London 1997**. The logical, if not obligatory sequence continues 15...c5 16 ♖f5 ♖c4 17 ♖d3 ♙e6 and now the games split:

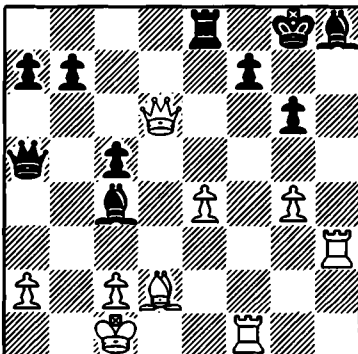
a) The Korongy-Tolnai encounter

continued 18 b3 ♖a5 19 bxc4 ♙xc3 20 f4 ♙xf5? 21 gxf5 ♙d4 22 fxg6 fxg6 23 f5 (here 23 c3!, with the idea ♗d5+ if the bishop withdraws, was better, with a nice advantage for White) 23...gxf5 24 ♖g3+ ♕h8 25 c3 ♙e5 26 ♙g5 fxe4?! (26...♗xa2!) 27 ♗xe4 ♙xc3?? (27...♞f8! and Black is still doing well) 28 ♙f6+ ♙xf6



29 ♗xh7+!! and mate next move.

Black can improve on this with 20...♙h8!, with the idea 21 ♘xd6 ♞ad8 22 f5 ♞xd6 23 ♗xd6 ♙xc4, and the game is messy after 24 fxg6 hxg6 25 ♞fh1 ♗xa2. Instead 25 ♙d2??...

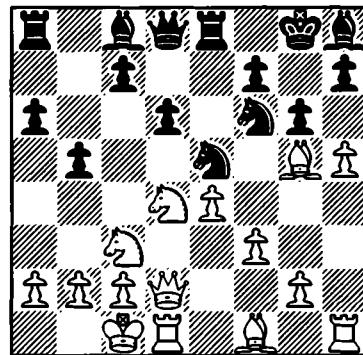


...intends ♞xh8, ♙c3+ and a quick

mate on the dark squares, but Black strikes first: 25...♙b2+!!, winning after either 26 ♖d1 ♗xa2 or 26 ♖xb2 ♗xa2+ 27 ♖c3 ♙xf1.

b) Emms preferred 18 ♙f4 ♗b6 19 b3 ♘e5 20 ♗d2 ♙xf5? (the same unfortunate move as in the Hungarian encounter; 20...♗a6 21 ♞fh1 h5 would have led to a double-edged position) 21 gxf5 ♗b4? 22 ♞xh7!! (a nice shot that clarifies the situation) 22...♖xh7 23 ♞h1+ ♕g8 24 ♞xh8+ and Black resigned on account of 24...♖xh8 25 ♙xe5+ followed by ♗h6+ and f6 with unavoidable mate.

12...a6 13 h5 b5



14 ♗e1!

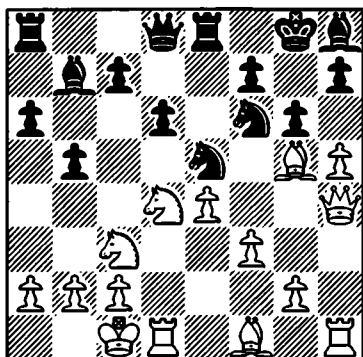
Instead, 14 ♗f4 b4 15 ♘d5 ♘d5 16 exd5 f6 isn't clear; while 14 ♖b1?! (Santo-Roman-Kosten, Mandelieu la Napoule 1992) allows Black some breathing space, and then 14...♙b7 is also unclear.

14...♙b7

If 14...♙g7 (planning to counter 15 ♗h4 with ...h6) 15 hxg6 fxg6 16 ♗h4 with a powerful attack.

15 ♗h4

...and Black is in trouble.



Conclusion

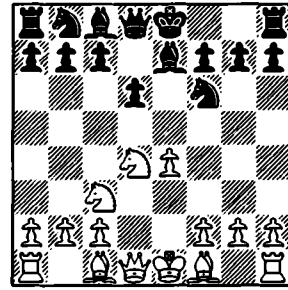
Black has more chances with 3...exd4 than with the options considered in Chapter 1. Firstly, 4 ♖xd4 is insufficient to claim an advantage. That said, White is able to lead the game into complex

battles which include opposite-side castling. Recapturing with the queen thus suits tactically-oriented players.

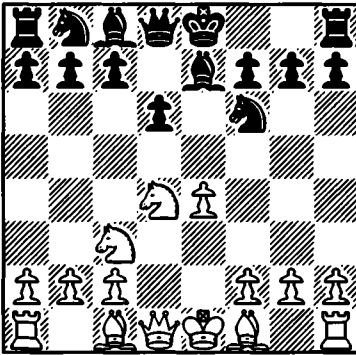
After the more popular 4 ♘d4, the kingside fianchetto offers Black dynamic counterplay, but is quite difficult to handle and probably fundamentally suspicious. Black has two ways to play the position: the simplifying swap ...♘xd4 followed, if White allows it, by ...c5 and ...♗a5; and the more complex ...♘e5, beginning a race of pawn storms against the kings on opposite sides of the board. Both possibilities are experiencing tough times, as illustrated by the games Tseshkovsky-Vorotnikov (Line B214) and Rytshagov-Meijers (Line B2222).

Chapter Three

Antoshin's Variation: Introduction



1 e4 e5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 fxd4 f6
5 c3 e7



This variation is named after the Russian Grandmaster Vladimir Antoshin, who popularized it as early as the mid 1950s. Instead of putting the bishop where it would be most active, on the long diagonal, Black chooses a more solid, but less ambitious set-up. In return for this he increases his chances of successfully achieving the ...d5 advance (after ...e7 his queen is defended twice, so tactics down the d-

file are more favourable for Black than in the 4...g6 line). One other positive feature of this system is that, with no pawn on g6 to act as a lever, White finds it significantly harder to open a front on the kingside.

White has a wide choice at move 6. In this chapter we will examine:

- A: 6 dde2
- B: 6 e.c4
- C: 6 e.e2
- D: 6 g3

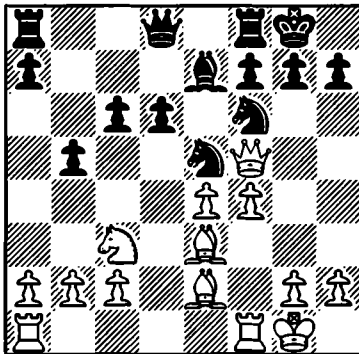
6 e.f4, seen traditionally as the main line, has a chapter of its own. Apart from these five options, few other moves make sense. Indeed, after 6 f3?! 0-0, Black will easily manage ...d5 and achieve a good position. 6 e.d3 is not to be feared either, since after 6...0-0 7 0-0 e.c6 or 7...e.bd7-c5 (or e5), Black will either gain a tempo on the bishop or obtain a semi-open b-file. There only remains the original...

6 ♖f3

...which aims to play ♕f5 without being forced to recapture with the pawn in the event of ...♙xf5.

6...♘bd7

After 6...0-0 7 ♕f5 ♙xf5 (7...♙e8 is a decent alternative) 8 ♖xf5 ♘c6 Black has a lead in development to compensate for the enemy bishops. Dell'Agosti-Schmidt Schaeffer, Swiss Team Ch. 2005, continued 9 ♙e3 ♘e5 (9...♖c8?! 10 ♖xc8 ♗axc8 11 ♙e2 is not disastrous for Black, but no picnic either) 10 ♙e2 c6 11 0-0 (11 0-0-0!?) 11...b5 12 f4?? (anything else was better, as now comes the brilliant trick...)



12...♘fg4!! 13 ♙xg4 (13 ♙xe5 ♘xe3 leaves even fewer chances to muddy the waters) 13...g6 14 ♙xe5 gxf5 15 ♗xf5 dxe5 with a sizeable advantage to Black, though some caution is still needed.

7 ♕f5 ♘e5! 8 ♖f4

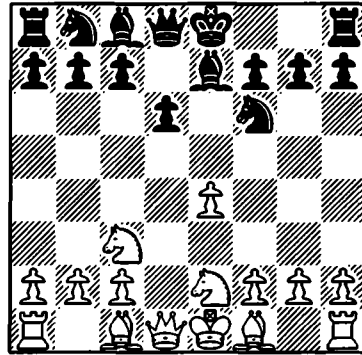
8 ♘g7+? loses to 8...♗f8 9 ♖g3 ♘fg4 and then 10...♙h4.

8...0-0

...and Black had no real problems in Zelic-Scalcione, Saint Vincent 2003 (8...♘h5!? is also possible).

A) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♙e7 6 ♘de2

Pursuing the same goal as 6 g3, but without allowing the freeing ...d5. The price for this is quite obvious: White loses a whole tempo to place his wonderful knight on an inferior square.



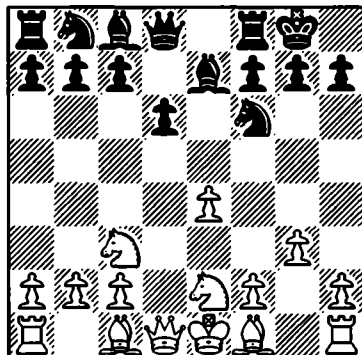
Black has three major replies:

A1: 6...0-0

A2: 6...c6!?

A3: 6...♘c6

A1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♙e7 6 ♘de2 0-0 7 g3



7...♙e8

a) 7...b5 is an interesting attempt to show the drawbacks of White's set-up:

a1) 8 dxb5?! b7! and now if White hangs on to his pawn by playing 9 f3, then 9...d5 opens up the game and Black's lead in development gives him sufficient compensation for a mere pawn.

Note that 8...dxe4?! is suspicious in view of 9 Wd5 c6 (9...d5? 10 Wxa8 b7 11 Wxa7 b7 12 Wxc7 and two black pawns are missing) 10 Wxe4 d5 11 Wd3 cxb5, although even here ...a6-c5 provides the opportunity to complicate matters.

a2) 8 g2 b7 9 0-0 b4 (the most principled continuation; on 9...c6 White should avoid the 10 e5?! dxe5 11 Wxd8 Wxd8 12 dxb5 a6 from Marinkovic-Nevednichy, Petrovac 2004, and prefer the simple 10 a3 Wc7 11 d4 e8 12 f5 f8 13 f4 with a clear plus, Kovalev-Stevic, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 10 d5 dxd5 11 exd5 f6 12 a3 a5 13 axb4 axb4 14 xa8 xa8 15 f4 d7 when White was only marginally better in Milu-Nevednichy, Romania 2004.

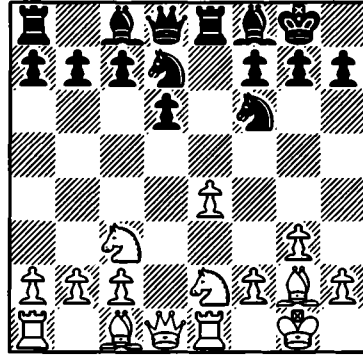
b) 7...a6 often comes to the same thing as the main text, and 8 g2 e8 9 0-0 f8! 10 e1 d5 11 d4 g4! 12 f3 f7 13 e3 c6 14 a4 a5 gave roughly equal chances in Bruzon-Nisipeanu, Decameron 2003.

Players wishing to use this set-up as Black would be well advised to avoid 9...c6?!, which enables White to reach his best formation after 10 h3 f8 11 g4 (Baklan-Payen, Paris 2004): the knight now goes to g3, while the rook can be used on the f-file for a kingside assault.

8 g2 f8 9 0-0 d7

Or 9...a6.

10 e1



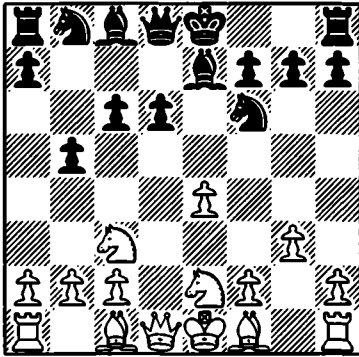
...with a likely transposition to the Bruzon-Nisipeanu game (see above). If White isn't happy with this, he can try either 10 f4 (Baklan-Sandipan, Paris 2004) or even 10 e3 d4 11 f4 is possible (Dreev-Tseshkovsky, Russian Ch., Moscow 2004).

A2) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 de2 c6!? 7 g3

7 a4?! is inaccurate, as it allows Black to push with ...d5 and achieve a nice position: 7...e6 8 d4 0-0 9 e2 d5 (Timofeev-Bacrot, Moscow 2004) and Black can be satisfied with the outcome of the opening.

7...b5

7...a6 8 g2 d7 is a sound alternative: 9 f4 0-0 10 0-0 and now either 10...b5 or 10...e8. Instead, 9 d4 (Fedorchuk-Urban Lubniewice 2005) doesn't really deal with Black's equalizing threat: 9...d5! 10 e5 d4 11 f4 and here either 11...f6 or 11...0-0 is fully okay for Black.



8 ♖g2

If White wishes to avoid the following complications, then 8 a3!? (Velicka-Ramik, Tatranske Zruby 2005) is called for. As Black easily gains a good position after 8 ♖g2, this lazy little pawn move may well be best.

8...b4

8...♖b7 seems less logical than 8...b4, though improvements do exist later on in the following sequence: 9 0-0 b4 10 ♖a4 0-0 (if 10...c5 White should refrain from the tempting 11 e5?!, which fails to 11...♖xg2 12 exf6 ♖xf1 13 fxe7 ♜d7, but simply continue 11 ♖f4, when the e-pawn is taboo) 11 ♜e1 ♜e8 12 ♖d4 ♖f8 13 ♖f5 c5 14 ♖g5 ♖c6 15 f4 ♜e6 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♜xd1 18 ♜axd1 ♜ae8 19 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 20 ♖xc5 ♜xe5 21 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 22 ♖xb7 ♜xg5 23 ♖xc6 (Naiditsch-Bacrot, Mainz rapid 2005) with a solid extra pawn that White duly converted.

9 ♖b5

9 ♖a4!? deserves further tests: 9...0-0 (or 9...♜a5 10 c3) 10 0-0 ♖bd7 (10...♖a6!?) 11 ♖d4 ♜c7 12 ♖f5 ♖e5 13 f4 (here 13 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 14 a3 is safer)

13...♖xf5 14 fxe5 leads to a rare material balance rendering the position unclear after 14...♖g4 15 exf6 ♖xd1 16 fxe7 ♜xe7 17 ♜xd1 ♜ad8 18 ♖f4.

9...0-0

...with an equal position. (9...♖b7 10 ♖bd4 g6! 11 ♖h6 ♖g4 is unclear.)

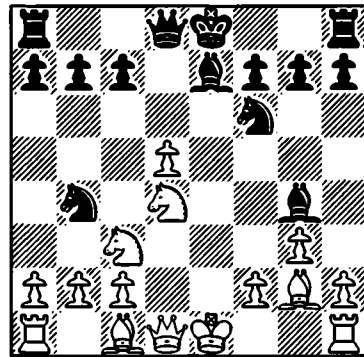
A3) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♖e7 6 ♖de2 ♖c6 7 g3 0-0

More 'spirited' attempts are also more hazardous, for example:

a) 7...♖d7?! 8 ♖g2 ♜c8 9 ♖f4 (Brkic-Pavasovic, Rabac 2004). Black's manoeuvre was visibly artificial and White's pieces are better placed. 9 h3!? is also possible.

b) 7...h5?! 8 h3 ♖e5 9 ♖g2 and, apart from weakening his own camp, it's unclear what Black has achieved.

c) 7...d5?! 8 exd5 ♖b4 9 ♖g2 ♖f5 10 ♖d4 ♖g4



11 f3?! ♖h5!? (11...♖c8 is equal) 12 ♖f5 0-0 13 a3 ♖bxd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 c4 (not 15 ♜xd5? ♖b4+! 16 axb4 ♜e8+ 17 ♜e4 ♜xe4+ 18 fxe4 ♜d1+ 19 ♖f2 ♜xc2+ 20 ♖g1 ♜d1+ 21 ♖f1 ♖f3 22 ♖e3 ♜e1 23 ♖g2 ♜xb4 and the lack of coor-

dination between White's pieces promises Black a huge advantage).

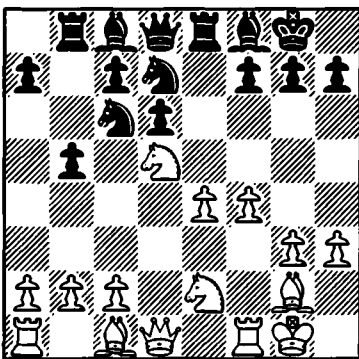
With 15 c4 we are following the internet game Timofeev-Fridman, 2004. Here 15...♗b6 would have been normal, but the Latvian was rewarded for his gambling: 15...♙g6!? 16 ♗xd5 ♙xf5 17 ♗xf5 ♗d4 (the white king is stuck in the centre – a hopeless situation in a blitz game!) 18 ♗d5 ♗b6 19 ♗b5 ♗d4 20 ♗d5 ♗b6 21 f4 ♖ad8 22 ♗f3 ♖fe8 23 ♗f1 ♙c5 24 b4?? (White's only mistake, but a decisive one; 24 ♙h3! ♙e3 25 ♙xe3 ♖xe3 26 ♗f2 and White should manage to digest the piece without too much stomach pain) 24...♗f6 25 ♖a2 ♗c3!! (a bolt from the blue!) 26 ♙d2 ♗xc4+ 0-1.

Going back, 11 ♖ce2! looks more to the point, as after 11...♗bxd5 12 c4 ♗b4 13 ♙xb7 it's unclear whether Black has enough for his pawn.

8 ♙g2 ♖e8 9 h3 ♗b8 10 f4 ♖d7

10...b5?? of course loses to 11 e5.

11 0-0 b5 12 ♖d5 ♙f8



We have been following the game Naiditsch-Nisipeanu, German League 2004. Here Huzman indicates 13 ♙e3

♖f6 14 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 15 ♖c3 b4 16 ♖d5 with a nice edge for White.

B) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♙e7 6 ♙c4 0-0 7 0-0

7 ♙b3 avoids the pseudo-sacrifice that follows, but runs into the reply 7...♗a6 with the obvious intention of 8...♖c5. Now we will consider:

B1: 7...a6

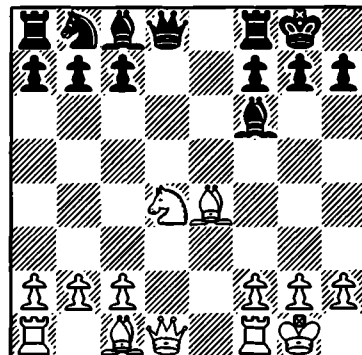
B2: 7...c6

a) 7...♖e8 is also sensible, for example 8 ♖e1 ♙f8 (or first 8...♗bd7) 9 ♙g5 c6 10 a4 (10 a3!?) 10...a5 with reciprocal chances.

b) 7...♖c6 8 h3 ♖e8 9 ♖e1 h6 10 a4 ♙f8 11 ♖f3 ♙e6 12 ♖d5 ♖d7 (as in Todorovic-S.Nikolic, Pancevo 1987) is unclear and interesting too. Black keeps a compact position and firm control of the e5-square. He will continue with ...g6 and ...♙g7.

Black doesn't quite manage to equalize by playing...

7...♖xe4 8 ♖xe4 d5 9 ♙d3 dxe4 10 ♙xe4 ♙f6



11 c3

11 ♖e3 (Dlugy-Alburt, US Championship, Jacksonville 1990) is interesting, too, and probably sufficient to claim an edge: after 11...♞e8 12 ♛d3 g6 then instead of 13 ♞ad1?! ♜d7, I would suggest 13 c3 ♜d7 14 ♛c2, planning 14...♜c5 15 ♖f3 or 14...♜e5 15 ♞ad1, with some pressure.

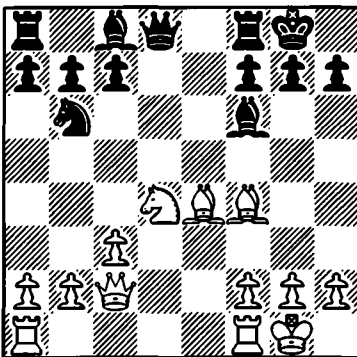
11...♜d7?!

11...♖xd4 12 cxd4 ♜d7 was worth attention.

12 ♖f4 ♜b6

12...♜c5 gives Black compensation for the pawn after 13 ♖xh7+ ♜xh7 14 ♛h5+ ♜g8 15 ♛xc5 ♖xd4 16 cxd4 c6 followed by ...♖e6-d5. The opposite-coloured bishops complicate the realization of White's advantage, but there is no doubt the advantage exists.

13 ♛c2



13...g6

Or:

a) 13...♜d5?! 14 ♖g3 (14 ♖xh7+?! ♜h8, with the double threat of ...g6 and ...♜xf4) 14...♖xd4 15 ♞ad1!.

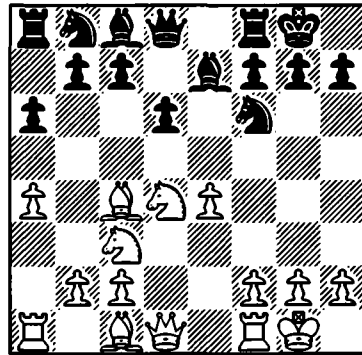
b) 13...♖xd4?! 14 ♞ad1 ♛f6 15 ♞xd4 c5 16 ♖xh7+ ♜h8 17 ♞e4 and Black

can't profit from his opponent's far-flung pieces. White will continue with ♖e3 or ♖g3 and eventually retreat the h7-bishop without any problems, remaining a safe pawn ahead.

14 ♞ad1 ♛e7 15 ♞fe1

Black's harassed queen has no satisfactory square and White is clearly on top, Lautier-I.Sokolov, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 1996.

B1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♖e7 6 ♖c4 0-0 7 0-0 a6 8 a4



Prompted by the desire to prevent ...b5. Indeed, if Black succeeded in achieving this push, he would solve his opening problems by gaining play on the queenside.

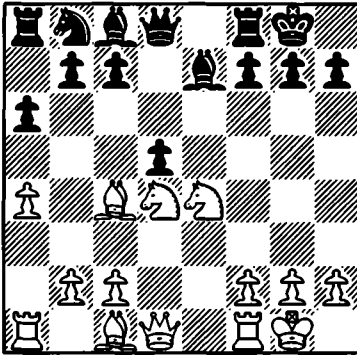
8...♜xe4

a) 8...c5?! 9 ♜de2 ♜c6 10 ♜f4 and Black has no real counterplay in exchange for the weakening of d5.

b) 8...♜c6 9 ♞e1 ♜b4 10 ♜d5 ♜fxd5 11 exd5 (White is playing simultaneously for a space advantage, and against the knight on b4) 11...♖f6 (threatening the obvious ...♖xd4, which Black plays even after 12 c3) 12 ♖e3

c5!? (sooner or later compulsory, as retreating the horse by playing 12...a5 13 c3 d6 is a bit passive; but 12...e8 first, was a reasonable alternative: 13 ♖d2 c5 14 dxc6 dxc6 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♙b6! ♗xe1+ 17 ♗xe1 ♖f8 with a similar assessment to the game) 13 dxc6 dxc6 14 c3 d5 15 ♙e2 and White stood slightly better in Rogic-Morrison, Ohrid 2001.

9 dxe4 d5



10 ♙d3

10 ♙d3!? would be interesting, since if Black captures on c4 the knight pair would restrain the mobility of the enemy pieces. For example: 10...dxc4 11 ♖xc4 d7 12 ♙f4 d6 13 ♖xc7 ♖xd4 14 ♖xe7 ♙f5 15 ♙e3 ♖xe4 16 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 17 ♙xb6 ♙xc2 is equal, as is 14...d5 15 ♗ad1 ♖c4 (15...♖xd1? loses a pawn after 16 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 17 ♙d6+ ♗g8 18 ♗xd1) 16 ♖e5 dxf4 17 ♖xf4 ♖xc2.

10...dxe4 11 ♙xe4 ♙f6

Comparing this to the analogous position from the previous section, the inclusion of the moves 7...a6 8 a4 has favoured Black: the b5-square is cov-

ered, which prevents a knight sally, while the b4-square is quite a weakness in White's camp. Nevertheless, Black must be careful in order to achieve full equality.

11...d7 is met by 12 c3, intending ♙c2, ♖d3, ♙h6 with an edge.

12 ♙e3

12 c3 ♙xd4, intending ...d6 or ...d7, equalizes, as the pair of bishops is counterbalanced by the isolani.

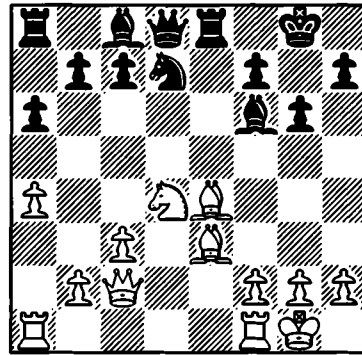
12...d7!

After 12...c5? 13 d6 b3 ♙xb2 14 ♗b1 White will recapture on c5 and exert heavy pressure on the queenside.

13 c3 ♗e8

Intending 14...d6e5 or 14...d5.

14 ♖c2 g6



15 ♗fe1!?

After 15 ♗ad1!? ♖e7 16 ♗fe1! ♖f8 17 h3 Black still experiences some difficulties finishing his development. If he manages ...d5, ...d7, ...♗ad8 and ...♙c8 he will solve his opening problems, but White won't contemplate this without acting!

15...♙g7! 16 ♗ad1 c5!

White wins after 16...♖h4?! 17 g3!

♖xe4? 18 ♔d2, and maintains significant pressure after 16...c6 17 ♔f4.

17 ♘e2!?

Black meets 17 ♘f3 with 17...♗c7 followed by ...♘f6, ...c4, ...♔f5 gaining counterplay; while 17 ♘b3 doesn't prevent Black from developing similarly with 17...♗c7.

17...♗c7!

After 17...♗e7 White plays 18 ♘g3 with the idea of ♔f3 and ♘e4, aiming at the weaknesses on c5 and d6.

18 ♘f4

Or 18 ♔f4!? ♘e5!? 19 ♔g3 followed by ♘f4 with the initiative.

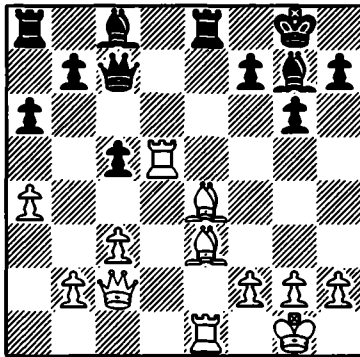
18...♘f6

Preventing ♘d5 was a must.

19 ♘d5

The inaccurate 19 ♔f3?! allows Black to equalize with 19...♘g4 or 19...♔g4 20 ♗e2 ♔xf3.

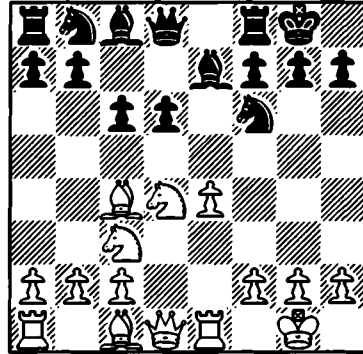
19...♘d5 20 ♗xd5



We have been following the game Yudasin-Adams, Dos Hermanas 1993 (some of my comments have been based on the exhaustive notes by Yudasin in *Chess Informant*). White still enjoys a small but persistent initiative due to his

more active pieces and slightly better structure.

B2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♔e7 6 ♔c4 0-0 7 0-0 c6 8 ♗e1



A rare case where allowing ...b5 isn't such a big concession. There are numerous reasons for this:

- 1) White would directly threaten a2-a4.
- 2) Black can't follow up with ...c5, as the b5-pawn would be en prise.
- 3) Black's c-pawn requires protection and this renders his development a bit problematic.

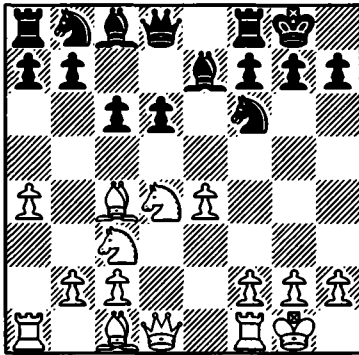
As a matter of fact, after saying 'A' Black must say 'B' and expand as much as possible on the queenside, chasing White's pieces while gaining space, but also accepting weaknesses in his own camp.

Alternatives for White include:

- a) 8 a3!? ♗e8 9 ♔a2 ♔f8 10 ♔g5 ♘bd7 (in the event of the risky 10...h6 11 ♔h4 g5?! 12 ♔g3 ♘xe4 13 ♘xe4

♙xe4 14 c3 White obtains excellent compensation for the pawn, threatening notably to set up the battery ♖b1-♗d3 and open the kingside by f2-f4) 11 f4 ♘c5 (11...♗b6!) 12 ♗f3 ♘e6?! (the tactical 12...♙g4!? was worth consideration), and now instead of 13 ♘f5 d5! 14 exd5 ♘c7 (Najer-Mamedyarov, Khanty Mansyisk rapid 2005) White could fight for an edge with 13 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 14 ♘xe6 ♙xe6 15 ♖h1.

b) 8 a4, the traditional way to deal with the ...b5 idea, is equally viable:



8...♘xe4 9 ♘xe4 d5 10 ♙d3 dxe4 11 ♙xe4 ♘a6 with near, but not quite complete equality after 12 c3 ♘c5 13 ♙c2.

c) 8 ♙b3?! ♘a6! 9 ♗f3 (after the less cautious 9 f4?! ♘c5! 10 ♗f3 ♙e8 Black seizes the advantage) 9...♘c5 10 ♘f5 ♙xf5! (more precise than 10...b5?! 11 ♙e3, and here 11...b4? 12 ♙xc5 bxc3 13 ♙d4 yields White a clear plus) 11 ♗xf5 b5 12 ♙e3 ♗c8! was equal in Guidarelli-Bacrot, Aix les Bains 2003.

8...b5

8...a5 9 a4 ♘a6 10 h3 ♘c5 11 ♙f4 ♗b6 12 b3 gave White a slight edge in Hracek-Piket, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

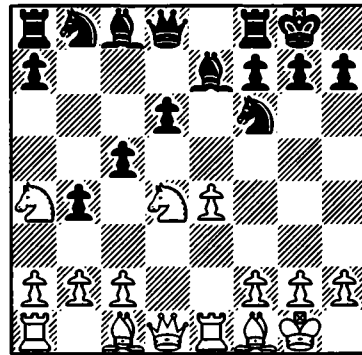
9 ♙f1 b4

Otherwise I don't see how to follow up, whereas White's plan is crystal clear: ♗f3, ♘f5, etc. The text move concedes the c4-square in return for activity.

10 ♘a4

10 ♘b1!? c5 11 ♘f5 (11 ♘b3 ♙b7 12 ♘1d2) 11...♙xf5 12 exf5 ♘c6 is unclear: Black has an extra pawn in the centre, but White has the two bishops and possible aggressive intentions linked with g4-g5.

10...c5



11 ♘f5

The most logical now that Black has weakened his light squares. After 11 ♘f3 ♙b7 (11...♙d7!?) 12 ♙d3 ♘bd7 Black has nothing to complain about.

11...♙xf5 12 exf5 ♘c6

A possible improvement over 12...d5 (Zapata-Nisipeanu, Bled Olympiad 2002), although Black was fine in that game too: 13 c4 ♘c6 (13...bxc3!? 14 ♘xc3 ♘c6) 14 ♙e3 d4 15 ♙g5 and now in place of 15...♙d6?! 16 b3 etc., which was the beginning of the Romanian GM's problems, 15...♗d6! 16 ♗f3 ♙fe8 would have kept the equilibrium.

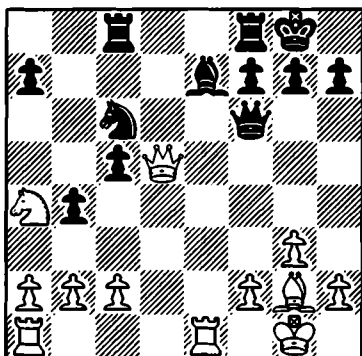
13 g3 d5 14 g2 ♖d7

Possibly 14...c4!?

15 g5 ♜xf5?!

15...♞ad8! 16 gxf6 gxf6 17 ♘xc5 ♜xf5 18 ♘d3 ♞fe8 is level.

16 gxf6 ♜xf6 17 ♜xd5 ♞ac8



Now 18 c3?! ♞fd8 was equal in M.Adams-Bacrot, European Ch. Internet final (blitz) 2003. White can improve with 18 ♞ad1! ♞fd8?? 19 ♜xc6! or, in reply to other Black moves, 19 ♜d7 with some pressure.

C) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 g5

Quiet, but perhaps sufficient to claim a tiny plus.

6...0-0

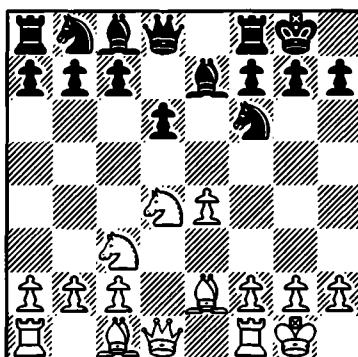
6...d5?! looks too simple to be good: 7 e5 (7 exd5?! doesn't bring much after 7...♘xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♜xd5 9 ♘b5 ♜xd1+ 10 ♘xd1 - or 10 gxd1 - 10...♘a6 11 g4 c6 12 ♘d6+ gxd6 13 gxd6 g5, when Black's dynamism compensates for the loss of the bishop pair) 7...♘e4 8 ♘xe4 dxe4 9 g4 and White stands a little better thanks to his more active pieces and the possibility of e5-e6 in some

circumstances, for instance 9...0-0 10 e6 fxe6 11 ♘xe6 ♜xd1+ 12 ♘xd1 gxe6 13 gxe6+ ♖h8 14 ♖e2.

7 0-0

The immediate 7 f4, as well as the hyper-aggressive 7 g4?!, invites the central reply 7...d5!.

After 7 0-0,



with both sides having finished development on the kingside, Black now faces the question of how to continue. He has several options, with 7...c5 and 7...♞e8 being the most critical in my opinion. Indeed, apart from the direct attempt to equalize by playing 7...d5, the other attempts (namely 7...♘c6, 7...c6, 7...a6, and 7...♘bd7) don't really distract White from the standard plan of f4, g4 and so on.

It should be noted that many transpositions are possible when Black chooses a set-up with ...c6, ...g6, ...♘bd7-c5, etc. As there is no point in analysing Black's wide range of possibilities at every move, I will try to present the pros and cons for each decent set-up.

We will look at:

C1: 7...c5!?

C2: 7...Ne8

Or:

7...d5

As with 6...d5, this hasty push fails to achieve its goal. This time, however, the reason why is different:

8 exd5

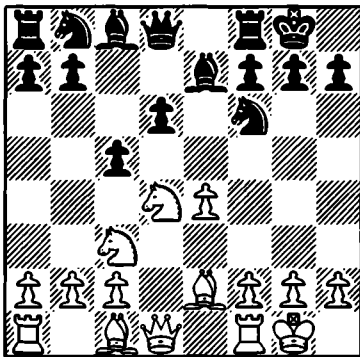
8 e5 d4 9 dxe4 dxe4 10 e4 (Matejov-Kikinder, Slovakia 2004) is less convincing (maybe 10...e5!).

8...dxd5 9 dxd5 Wxd5 10 e4

...followed by something like e4 and b5, when White's lead in development enables him to exert unpleasant pressure on the queenside.

C1) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 e2 0-0 7 0-0 c5!?

Black accepts a weakness on d5 in order to ward off the knight. From now on the strategical battle centres around this square.



8 d3!

The best reply, as 8 d3 and 8 d5 pose no problems for Black:

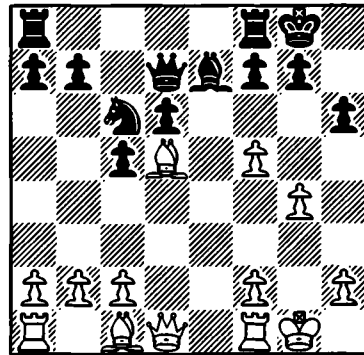
a) 8 d3 d6 9 e4 (the most sensi-

ble) 9...e6 (Akmentin-Tal, Riga 1954) and Black equalizes with 10...d5.

b) 8 d3 e4 (not 8...dxe4?! 9 dxe7+ Wxe7 10 d5 Wd8 11 e3 with tremendous compensation, as after a subsequent ...d6, then e4 is nasty, while 11...f5 is met by 12 f3) 9 exf5 d6 (stronger than 9...Wd7?! 10 g4 h6 11 f4, which puts Black on the defensive) and now:

b1) 10 d5 dxd5 11 Wxd5 with a roughly equal game in Cheparinov-Pavasovic, Plovdiv 2003.

b2) 10 e4 Wd7 11 g4 h6 12 d5 dxd5 (12...Ne8!) 13 e4

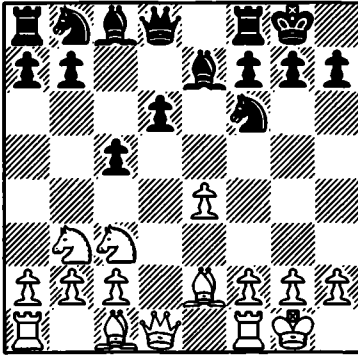


13...b4?! (another step in the wrong direction) 14 e2 Nd8 15 c3 when White had succeeded in preventing ...d5 and was clearly better in Boyd-Varrambier, Hyeres 1992.

13...e6 was more to the point: 14 c3 d6 15 e4 d5 16 f4 Wd6 17 g5 hxg5 18 fxg5 e5 19 f6!? gxf6 20 gxf6 e4 21 Wg4+ e5 22 e4 with enough play for the sacrificed pawn, but perhaps no more than that.

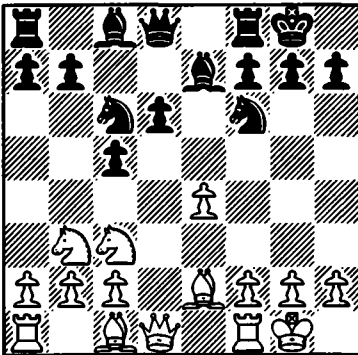
b3) 10 g4?! d5 11 g5 (or 11 e4 d4 12 d4 Ne8 and Black is absolutely

fine, too) 11...♖e4 12 f4 ♘d4 13 ♔g4 ♜e8 14 ♘xe4 dxe4 15 ♔e3 ♜b6 16 c3 (Salaun-Nepeina Leconte, St Lorrain 2001) 16...♞ad8!



8...♘c6

In the event of 8...♔e6, 9 f4 parries the threat of the freeing ...d5, and Black has nothing better than 9...♘c6.



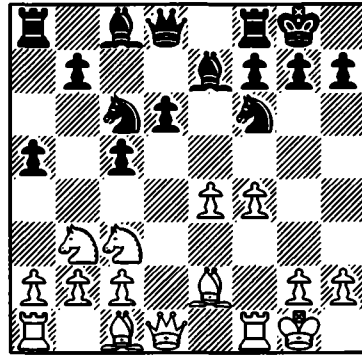
9 f4

9 ♔f4 is interesting: 9...♔e6 10 ♘d5 ♔xd5?! 11 exd5 ♘b4 12 c4 ♘e8 13 a3 ♘a6 (Karjakin-Tratar, Vienna 2003) and now instead of 14 ♘d2?! ♔g5, White should have preferred 14 ♔d3! with ♜h5 up his sleeve. But 10...♘xe4! is stronger: 11 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 12 f3 ♘f6 13

♜xd6 (13 ♔xd6? c4! 14 ♘c5 ♔d5 and the c5-knight is unstable) 13...b6 when White has two bishops, but Black's knights have some nice squares so the game is balanced.

9...a5!?

9...♜e8 should be compared to 7...♜e8 and transpositions are likely.



10 a4

This guy must be blocked! Black has compromised himself even more, but for the moment his knight is ensured of a beautiful outpost.

10...♘b4 11 ♔f3

11 ♔e3!?! is an interesting alternative.

11...♜b6

...with level chances, Sakelsek-Sebenik, Maribor 2004.

C2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♔e7 6 ♔e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♜e8

The most frequently seen continuation, allowing the rook to attack the white e-pawn without delay. For the moment Black keeps his queenside flexible.

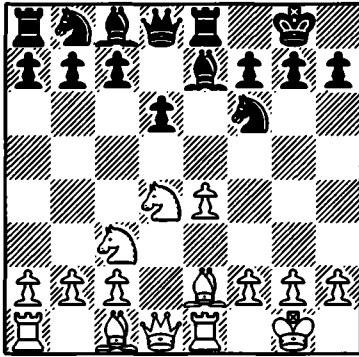
Now White can play:

C21: 8 ♖e1

C22: 8 f4

C21) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 c3 ♙e7 6 ♙e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♖e8 8 ♖e1

This normally leads to slower play and fewer tactics than 8 f4.



8...♙f8

Alternatively:

a) 8...c5?! 9 d3! d6 10 ♙f4 ♙e6 11 d5 d5?! 12 d6 b5 (underlining the difference between the current situation and the one where the rooks are still on f1 and f8; 12 exd5 ♙xd5 seems to be less efficient) 12...♞c8 13 exd5 ♙xd5 (or 13...dxd5 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♙g3) 14 c4 followed by 15 dxe6 (or dxe4) with a large advantage for White.

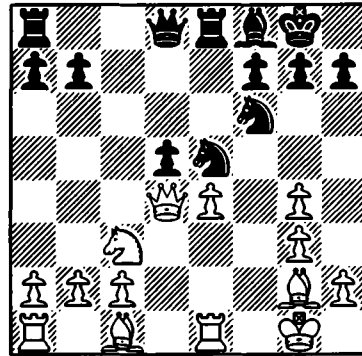
b) 8...d6d7 with a further split:

b1) 9 b3 ♙f8 10 ♙f1 d5! 11 f3 d5! and now 12 exd5 ♞xe1 13 ♞xe1 dxd5 14 dxd5 ♞xd5 was level in the clash M.Adams-Bacrot, European Ch. Internet final (blitz) 2003, while 12 e5 d5d7 13 f4 c6 led to unclear play in Wang Hao-Predojevic, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

b2) 9 ♙f1 ♙f8 10 g3 d5 (or

10...d5?! 11 ♙g2 with an edge for White, Baramidze-Thinius, Bad Zwosten 2006) 11 ♙g2 (11 h3!?) 11...♙g4 12 f3 c5!? (more dynamic than the retreat to d7) when nearly all the knight sallies, as well as the bishop's capture, result in double-edged positions:

b21) 13 fxg4 cxd4 14 ♞xd4 d5! (stronger than 14...d5xg4?! 15 h3 d5 16 ♞f2 with the idea of ♙e3-d4)



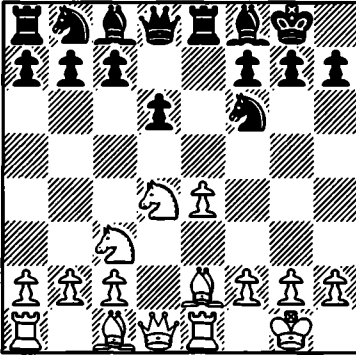
15 h3 (the d-pawn is immune due to the fork on f3; many White moves would be answered the same way) 15...♞c8 16 ♞h1 ♙c5, followed by ...d4-d3, when all Black's pieces are well placed.

b22) 13 d6b3 ♙e6 14 h3, followed by f4.

b23) 13 d6b5 ♙e6 14 ♙g5 a6 15 ♙xf6 gxf6 16 d6a3 b5 17 d5 b4 18 d6b1 ♙g7 (or 18...d6c4). Black's pawn structure is damaged, but after ...f5 his dark-squared bishop will be powerful.

b24) 13 d5 ♙xf5 14 exf5 d5 was equal in Gouliev-Bacrot, Mulhouse 2005. Indeed, the obvious 15 f4?! is faulty as White can't win his opponent's d-pawn: 15...d6c4 16 ♞xe8 ♞xe8 17 dxd5 dxd5 18 ♞xd5 (18 ♙xd5?

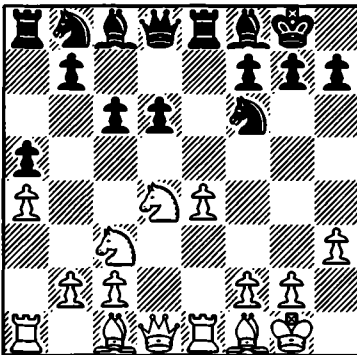
♠d8) 18...♖e1+ 19 ♔f1 ♕e3 with some advantage to Black.



9 ♔f1 c6

9...a6, 9...♖bd7 and 9...c5 are again valid candidate moves. In the final case, if Black wishes to follow the traditional ...♖c6 and ...♔e6, to carry out the ...d5 push, he will probably have to throw in ...h6 in order to prevent ♔g5.

10 a4 a5 11 h3



Or immediately 11 b3.

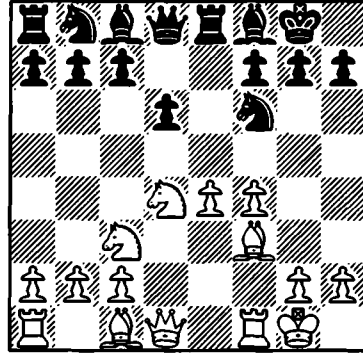
11...♖bd7 12 g3 h6 13 ♔g2 ♕e5 14 b3 ♔d7 15 ♕ce2 ♖b6 16 ♔b2

...and a draw was agreed in this balanced middlegame, Dgebuadze-Nevednichy, La Fere 2002.

C22) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♕xd4 ♕f6 5 ♕c3 ♔e7 6 ♔e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♜e8 8 f4 ♔f8

8...♖c6 9 ♔e3 ♔f8 10 ♔f3 is slightly in White's favour.

9 ♔f3



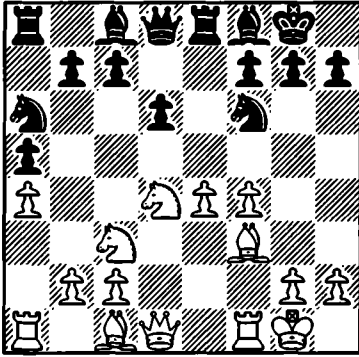
9...c5

Alternatively:

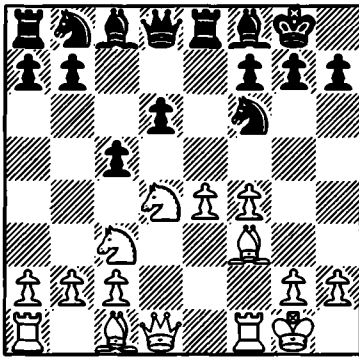
a) 9...c6 10 a4 (10 ♔e3?! allows 10...♕xe4 11 ♔xe4 d5 12 ♔xh7+ ♖xh7 with an equal position, Frolov-Yurtaev, Podolsk 1989) 10...a5 11 b3 and after the typical continuation 11...♕a6 12 ♔b2 ♖b6 13 ♖h1 ♔d7 etc., White has a small plus.

b) 9...♖bd7 10 ♜e1 (the clever 10 ♖b3 was well met by 10...♖b6 in Buenermann-Guehne, German League 1992: both knights are rather misplaced, but the black one prevents the c1-bishop's development because ...♖c4 would follow) 10...♖c5 11 ♖b3 (or 11 b3 g6 12 ♔b2 ♔g7 13 ♖d2 with a small edge for White – if 13...♔g4?? 14 e5!) 11...♕xb3 12 axb3 and again White's position is to be preferred, even if Black has no weaknesses (Unzicker-Dely, Bari 1970).

c) 9...a5!? follows the same goal as the straightforward 9...d6, 9...b7 or 9...c6; i.e. 10 a4 d6 and so on.



Black will increase the pressure on e4 by playing ...c5, and if he finds enough time to complete his development by means of ...c6, ...b6, ...d7 and ...ad8 he won't have too many headaches.



10 d2!

More elastic than 10 d5?! e3 11 exf5 d6, which reveals itself to be insufficient to claim any advantage after 12 g4 d5! 13 g5 d4. And grabbing the pawn with 13 dxd5 gives Black enough play following 13...dxd5 14

xd5 (or 14 e3 d5 f6) 14...d4 (or 14...h4).

10 b3!? is an interesting alternative. Play continues 10...d6 and now:

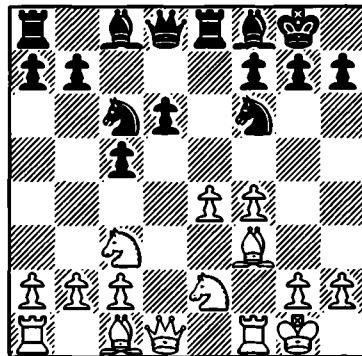
a) 11 h1 a5 12 a4 e6, as played more than once, reaches a complex position.

b) 11 e3 d5! (a powerful strike) 12 exd5 xe3 13 dxc6 b6 14 d2 xf3 15 xf3 (or 15 gxf3 xc6 with enough compensation for the exchange) 15...c4+ 16 d4 e5 and Black wasn't worse in Smirin-G.Kuzmin, Leningrad 1990. According to my database, Kuzmin has met both 11 h1 and 11 e3 with some success (two points from three games).

c) 11 e1 a5 12 a4 b4 (12...d5?! is premature: 13 e5 d4 14 b5 d7 15 c3 dxc3 16 bxc3 and Black was in bad shape in the game Yurtaev-Payen, Calcutta 2000) 13 e3 d7 14 f2 e6 15 d2 with an edge for White, Santo Roman-Marcelin, French League 1999.

10...d6

Or 10...g4!? 11 g3 e3 12 xf3 d6, Alcazar Jimenez-Pakleza, Chalkidiki 2003.



11 h3!

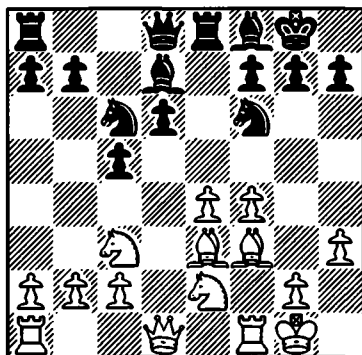
11 ♖h1?! eases Black's defence by giving him an improved version of 10...♗g4 after 11...♗g4 12 ♖g3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 ♖d4 etc., as in Grigoriant-Tischbierek, Stepanakert 2005.

As well as the main 11 h3, White has the interesting 11 f5!? at his disposal. The move 11 b3, on the other hand, doesn't trouble Black: 11...a5 12 ♗b2 a4 13 e5 a3 with a messy game which White eventually won in Felgaer-Nisipeanu, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

11...♗d7

After 11...♗b6 12 b3 ♗d7 13 ♗e3 (T.L.Petrosian-Tischbierek, Stepanakert 2005), White's position looks easier to play. 13 ♗b2!? is also possible.

12 ♗e3



This is sounder than 12 g4 (Renet-Fressinet, Clichy rapid 2001) when 12...b5! is a good reply: 13 g5 b4 14 ♗g2 (14 gxf6!?) 14...bxc3 15 ♖xc3 ♖xe4 with unclear play.

12...b5 13 ♖g3

I dislike 13 e5?! (Boidman-Seel, German League 2004), since instead of the game's 13...♗b8?! Black has two stronger options: 13...b4 and, even bet-

ter, 13...dxe5! 14 fxe5 ♖xe5 (14...♗xe5!?) 15 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 with great play and a pawn for the exchange.

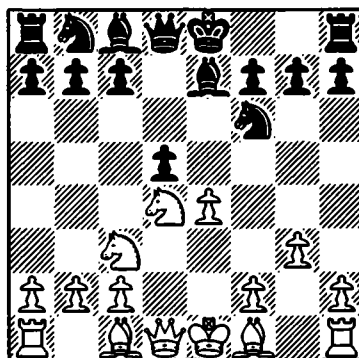
13...♗b6 14 ♖h5 ♖xh5 15 ♗xh5 ♖e7 16 f5 ♗c6 17 f6 ♖g6

...and Black was more or less okay in K.Lahno-Tischbierek, Stepanakert 2005.

D) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♗e7 6 g3

White wishes to play a position that could arise via the move order 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 g3 e5 5 ♖ge2 (see Chapter 8) 5...exd4 6 ♖xd4 ♗e7. In that case the move 5...exd4 gives up the centre and is condemnable. To avoid such a transposition, Black must keep away from standard moves and act promptly:

6...d5!



This move highlights the drawback of g3: Black is able to 'equalize' in the centre. We shall consider the moves:

D1: 7 exd5

D2: 7 e5

D1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗e7 6 g3 d5 7 exd5

This is harmless for Black provided that he reacts adequately.

7...♘xd5

Now none of the numerous White attempts have proven problematic:

8 ♗d2

Or:

a) 8 ♘db5 ♘xc3 9 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 10 ♘xc3 ♗f5 (10...0-0 might be good enough as well) 11 ♗g2 ♘c6! was equal in Spassky-Fressinet, Paris (rapid) 2001. But not 11...c6?! 12 ♘e4 (Kacirek-Payen, Pardubice 1998) when Black will have to choose between two evils: tolerating the knight on d6 or eliminating it at the cost of the two bishops.

b) After 8 ♗g2?! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 0-0 ♘a6 (Sveshnikov-Gabdrakhmanov, Naberezhnye Chelny 1988) White has some compensation for his damaged pawn structure, but he can hardly hope for more than equality. 10...c5!? is possible too.

8...♘b4!

Getting rid of the dominant d4-knight before castling seems the most precise. The main alternative is 8...0-0 9 ♗g2 and now:

a) 9...♗f6 10 ♘xd5 ♗xd4 11 0-0! ♗xb2 12 ♗b1 ♗a3 13 ♗f4 ♘a6 (13...♗d6? runs into the devilish 14 ♘xc7!! ♗xc7 15 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 16 ♗xb7 and White nets a pawn, e.g. 16...♘d7 17 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 18 ♗xa8) 14 ♘xc7 ♘xc7 15 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 16 ♗xc7 with a difficult endgame for Black, Teske-Ekstroem, Montecatini Terme 1997.

b) 9...♘xc3 10 ♗xc3 ♗f6 11 0-0 c6 12

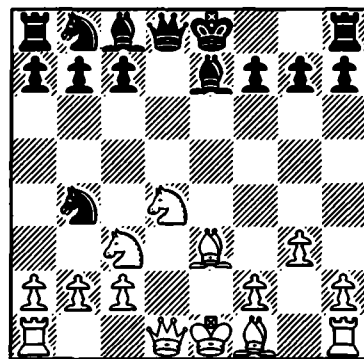
♗d3 when White has a lead in development and good chances to exploit the weakened d6 spot, Spraggett-Tratar, Andorra 2005.

c) 9...♘b6! 10 ♗f4 (more active than 10 ♗e3, when 10...♘c4 gave Black good play in Popchev-Chiburdanidze, Sochi 1989) 10...c6 (on 10...♗f6, 11 ♘db5 seems promising for White: 11...♗e7+ 12 ♗e2 ♗e8 13 ♗xe7 ♗xe7+ 14 ♘e4! ♗xb2 15 ♗b1 with favourable complications) and now, instead of 11 0-0 ♗f6 as in Horvath-Sedlak, Sibenik 2005, White could have kept a slight plus with 11 ♗d3.

In the game Tompa-Pavasovic, Austrian League 2004, the bold 8...♘c6!? 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 saw Black maintain dynamic equality. In return for the doubled pawns he had a strong knight in the centre, coupled with the possibility of pressurizing the queenside by means of ...♗b8 and ...♗f6.

9 ♗e3

9 ♗f4?? loses to 9...♗xd4!



9...c5!?

9...♘d5?! is a flawed return to d5 (Vlssavov prefers both 9...c5 and the ob-

vious 9...0-0) and then:

a) The artificial 10 ♖b5+?! fails 'logically' to 10...c6 11 ♜xc6? bxc6 12 ♜xd5 ♙d7 13 ♜f3 cxb5 14 ♜xa8 ♙c6.

b) 10 ♜d3 0-0 11 0-0-0 ♜xe3 12 ♜xe3 and White has some activity to counteract the pair of bishops in McShane-Bacrot, Lausanne 2003.

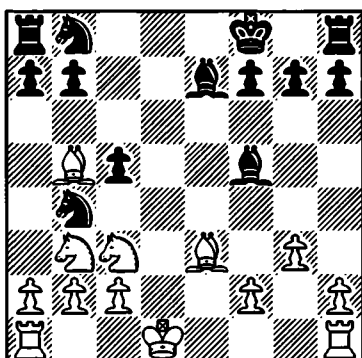
c) 10 ♜d5! (the reason why 9...♜d5 is dubious) 10...♜xd5 11 ♜b5! ♜xh1 (both 11...♜c6 12 ♜d5! and 11...♜xd1+ 12 ♜xd1 leave White with a clear plus) 12 ♜xc7+ ♜f8 13 ♜xa8 ♙h3 (13...♜c6!? 14 ♜d4!, with the ideas 0-0-0, ♜xa7 and ♜c4, also leaves White on top) 14 ♜d3 b6 (or 14...♙xf1 15 ♜xf1 ♜c6 16 0-0-0 with a clear advantage to White, as the a8-knight will escape – thanks to ♜h1, if needed!) 15 f3 ♜xh2 16 0-0-0 and White enjoys a powerful initiative.

Instead, the natural 9...0-0 deserves consideration, when 10 ♙g2 c5!? promises level chances.

10 ♙b5+ ♜f8!

10...♙d7?! 11 ♜f5 is a bit better for White.

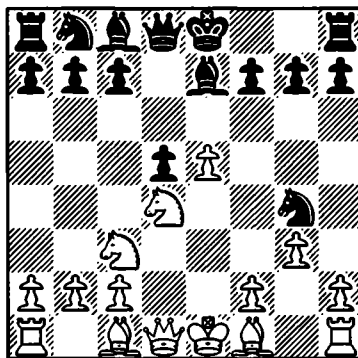
11 ♜b3 ♜xd1+ 12 ♜xd1 ♙f5



...with equality.

D2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♙e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♜g4

Now White's two main options are:



D21: 8 ♙g2!?

D22: 8 ♙f4

Alternatively:

a) 8 f4 c5 followed by 9...d4 with a slight initiative for Black, for instance 9 ♜f3 d4 10 ♜e2 f5, Spassky-Fressinet, Paris (rapid) 2001.

b) 8 e6 ♜f6 9 exf7+ ♜xf7, followed by ...♙e8, ...c6 and so on. Black will castle by hand, and with an extra pawn in the centre, he has achieved equality.

c) 8 ♜f3 ♜c6 9 ♜xd5 ♙f5 10 ♙c4 ♜xd5 11 ♜xd5 ♜gx5! 12 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 13 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 14 ♙d5 c6 15 ♙f4 cxd5 16 ♙xe5 f6 17 ♙d4 ♙xc2 and a draw was agreed in Grischuk-Fressinet, Enghien-lès-Bains 2001. In the final position Black stands a bit better without any risk of losing, and should thus have continued the fight.

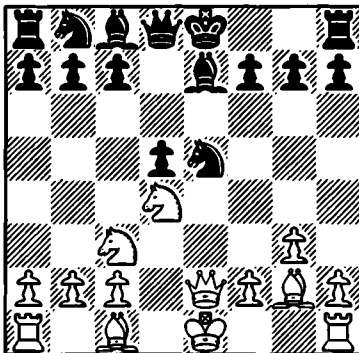
D21) 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♙e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♜g4

8 ♖g2!? c6

So far this move hasn't been tested in practice. It may, however, supersede the more natural 8...♗e5, after which Black doesn't seem to fully equalize:

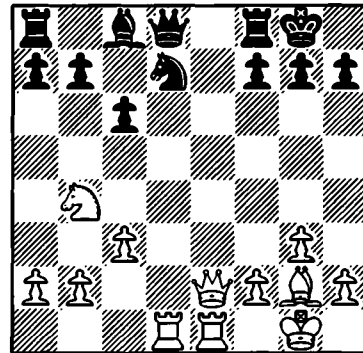
a) 9 ♘xd5!? ♕d6 (9...0-0!?, intending 10 ♘b5 c6 or 10 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 11 0-0 ♜d8) 10 ♘b5 0-0 (not 10...c6? 11 ♗f6+ ♖e7 12 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 13 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 14 ♗e4+ ♖c7 15 ♕f4 f6 16 0-0-0 with a large plus for White, Ivanisevic-Tratar, Ljubljana 2004) 11 ♘xd6 ♖xd6, when White has the two bishops but his opponent's piece play is quite free and harmonious (...♗c6, ...♕f5/...♕g4, ...♜ad8, etc.).

b) 9 ♖e2



9...♗ec6 (or 9...♗bc6!? 10 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 11 ♘xd5 when the minimum White can do is to grab the bishop pair and stand slightly better: 11...♕e6 12 0-0 0-0 13 ♜d1, Anand-Aronian, Monaco [blind-fold rapid] 2006) 10 ♕e3 0-0 (Black can't hold his booty, as 10...♕e6 11 ♖b5! simultaneously attacks d5 and b7, while 10...♘xd4 11 ♕xd4 ♗c6 12 ♕xg7 ♜g8 13 ♕f6 also favours White) 11 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 12 ♕xd4 ♖b4+! (Black's

best bet, keeping White's edge within bearable proportions; 12...♕g5?! 13 ♕e5 ♘a6 14 ♜d1, and 12...♕d6?! 13 0-0-0 ♗c6 14 ♕c3 ♕f5 15 ♖b5!, Hracek-Abeln, Saint Vincent 2005, are less resilient) 13 ♘xb4 ♖xd4 14 c3 ♖d8 (14...♖c5?! 15 ♘d5 ♕e6 16 b4 ♖d6 17 ♜d1 ♕xd5 18 ♕xd5 was clearly better for White in Timofeev-Nisipeanu, Denmark 2005, owing to his strong bishop and more active heavy pieces) 15 ♜d1 ♘d7 (15...♖e8?! 16 ♘d5 with a clear advantage, Palac-Stevic, Zagreb 2004) 16 0-0 c6 17 ♜fe1! (after 17 ♕h3?! Black successfully solved his problems after 17...♖e8 18 ♖d3 ♖a5 19 ♕xd7 ♜d8 with equality, Landa-Fridman, Dutch League 2005).



After 17 ♜fe1 Black still must be careful in order to equalize. Indeed, despite the awkwardly-placed knight on b4, White is still clearly more active.

Two more tries for Black:

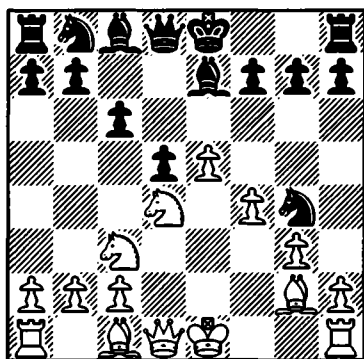
a) 8...c5?! 9 ♘db5 a6 10 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 11 exd6 gave White a clear edge, thanks to his two bishops and Black's weaknesses on the queenside in Smagin-Antoshin, Moscow 1982.

b) 8...0-0 was Nisipeanu's latest try, but he again failed to achieve equality: 9 0-0 ♖xe5 10 ♗xd5 ♙c5 11 c3 (in order not to be worried by a later ...♙g4, to which ♚b3 now becomes a good reply; 11 ♗b5?! is highly suspicious after 11...c6 12 ♗dc7 ♜e7 13 ♗xa8 cxb5 followed by ...♗bc6 and ...♙g4) 11...c6 12 ♗e3 ♗bd7 13 b4 ♙b6 14 b5 cxb5 15 ♗xb5 with a White initiative, Shirov-Nisipeanu, Fors 2006.

9 f4

Supporting the e-pawn this way seems logical, now that Black's central reaction ...c5 and ...d4 is less effective.

9 ♙f4!? g5 (9...♚b6 comes into consideration) 10 h3 ♗xf2 11 ♜xf2 gxh4 gives a position similar to those arising after 8 ♙f4 g5. It is unclear to me whether the insertion of ♙g2 and ...c6 favours one camp or the other. I would thus label this position as unclear and recommend further analysis!



After 9 f4 Black has many interesting continuations, namely 9...♚b6, 9...♗h6, 9...c5, and 9...0-0. It is unclear to me whether he can gain complete parity, but I believe Black retains better

winning chances than after 8...♗xe5.

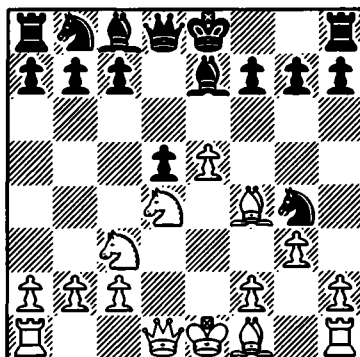
a) 9...♚b6 10 h3 (10 0-0?! ♙c5 11 ♗ce2 f6 is less precise) 10...♗h6 11 ♗ce2 0-0 12 0-0 ♗f5 13 ♜h2 and White will try to roll down the kingside by playing g4, f5 etc.

b) 9...♗h6 10 0-0 ♚b6 (trying to disturb White's plan) 11 ♜h1 ♙g4 12 ♚d3 ♗d7 13 ♗a4 ♜a5 14 b3 and White seems on top.

c) 9...c5!? (anyway!) 10 ♗db5 a6 11 ♗d6+ ♙xd6 12 exd6 d4 (12...0-0?! 13 ♚xd5 ♜e8+ 14 ♜f1 shouldn't give Black enough compensation, though I'd rather refrain from a final verdict on this position) 13 ♜e2+ ♜f8 14 ♗e4 (14 ♗d5!? ♚xd6 15 f5) 14...f5 15 ♗xc5 ♚xd6 with a messy position.

d) 9...0-0 10 0-0 f5, followed by ...♗a6-c7. This drastic way of preventing f4-f5 appeals to me more than 10...♜e8 11 h3 ♗h6, intending 12 f5 ♙g5. Finally, 10...f6?! is wrong on account of the obvious 11 e6!.

D22) 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♙e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♗g4 8 ♙f4



...and now:

D221: 8...0-0?!

D222: 8...c5?!

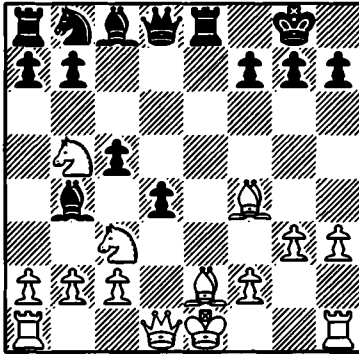
D223: 8...g5 9 h3?!

D224: 8...g5 9 e6!

D221) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 dg4 8 f4 0-0? 9 h3 dxh5

9...d6 10 dxh6 is too ugly.

10 dxh5 xe8 11 dxh6 e2 dxh4 12 f4 c5 13 ddb5 d4



14 0-0?!

Stronger was 14 d3! g5 (or 14...dxc3 15 b3 we7 16 dxa8 d6 17 f1 d4 18 dxh3 when White's king is safe enough and his extra material should tell) 15 dxh6 gxf4 16 0-0 and Black has sacrificed too much material.

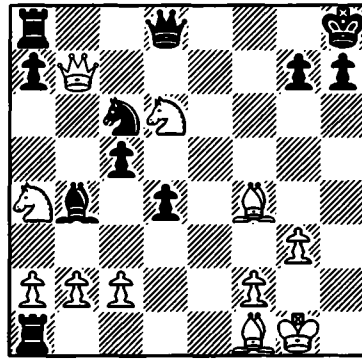
14...dxh3

14...dxc3 would lose after 15 wxd8 dxh3 16 d3 dxh3 17 bxc3 dxh3 18 dxa8, when White is going to be a piece up for only two pawns.

15 da4 dc6 16 dd6 dxh3?

This was unnecessary. The natural 16...dxh3 was called for, presenting

White with realistic chances to err: 17 dxh3!! (the two others recaptures leave Black well alive thanks to the resource 17...g5, e.g. 17 dxh3? g5 18 dxh3 gxf4 19 a3 dxh3 20 dxc5 wxh3) 17...dxh3 18 wh5! (18 wxh3?? dxh3 19 dxh3 wa5 wins for Black!) 18...dxa1 19 wxf7+ dh8 20 wxb7...



...and in this chaotic position White is two exchanges down but his threats of d7+ and wxc6 prevail. All in all, he stands much better.

17 wxh3 c4 18 wh5 dxh3 19 wxf7+ dh8 20 dxb7

...and Black resigned, Smirin-G.Kuzmin, Lvov 1990.

D222) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 dg4 8 f4 c5?!

This central counter-attack deserves further investigation, even though it may be dubious.

9 ddb5 d4 10 dd5

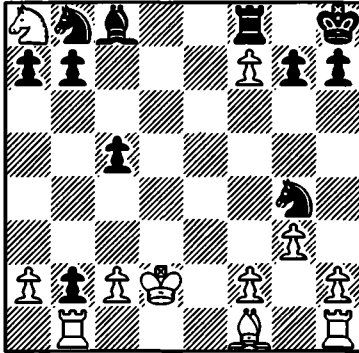
10 e6!?, as in Sedina-Vasilevich, German League 2002, may be stronger. 10...0-0 and now:

a) 11 dxh3? was the game continua-

tion: 11...dxc3 12 ♖c7 cxb2 13 ♖b1 ♗xd1+ 14 ♖xd1 ♙xe6 15 ♖xe6 (no better was 15 ♙xe6 fxe6 16 ♖xa8 e5 17 ♙e3 ♖a6 and the knight is lost) 15...fxe6 16 ♙xe6+ ♖h8 17 ♙xg4 ♖c6 18 0-0 ♖ad8 19 c3 ♙f6 20 ♙d6 (a blunder, but the 'b' passer was too strong anyway) 20...b1♗ 21 ♖xb1 ♖xd6 and White resigned.

White should have played one of the following:

b) 11 exf7+ ♖h8 (11...♖xf7? is bad in view of 12 ♙c4 dxc3 13 ♗xd8+ ♙xd8 14 ♖d6, when White wins an exchange for only one pawn and stands clearly better) 12 ♖c7 dxc3 13 ♗xd8 ♙xd8 14 ♖xa8 cxb2 15 ♖b1 ♙a5+ 16 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 17 ♖xd2.



I believe White should be able to extract the knight from the corner and end up with an extra exchange for just one pawn.

c) 11 ♖c7 dxc3 12 ♗xg4, or even 12 b3!? ♙xe6 13 ♖xa8 ♙d5 14 ♖g1 (not 14 f3? ♙g5! and Black wins) 14...♖xh2 15 ♙g2.

10...0-0 11 ♙g2!

The obvious 11 ♖bc7 wins material,

but with the white king remaining in the centre Black has full compensation. The following sequence is forced: 11...♖c6 12 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 13 ♖xa8 ♖xe5 14 ♙g2 ♙g4 15 f3. Now both 15...♖xf3+ 16 ♖f2 ♖fe5 and 15...♖d3+ 16 ♖f1 ♖xf4 17 fxg4 (but not 17 gx4? ♙f5 with an ugly position for White, Marrero-Krivec, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 17...♖xg2 18 ♖xg2 ♗e4+ 19 ♖h3 ♖xa8 leave Black okay.

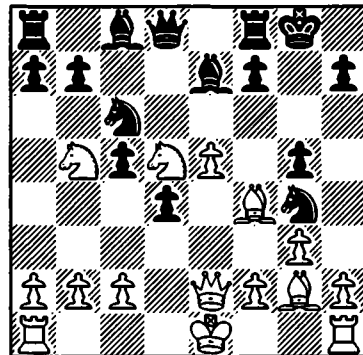
If instead 11 ♖dc7!? a6 12 ♖xa8 axb5 13 ♙e2 ♖h6! (this looks like the correct answer; if 13...♖xe5?! 14 ♙xe5 ♗d5 15 0-0 ♙h3 [15...♗xe5 16 ♖b6] 16 ♙f3 ♗xe5 17 ♖e1 ♗d6 18 ♙xb7 and with either ♗f3 or a4-(a5) to follow, the extra exchange should tell), and now both 14 ♙xh6 gxh6 and 14 a4 bxa4 15 ♙xh6 gxh6 16 ♖xa4 ♖a6 are murky, but I wouldn't mind being Black.

11...♖c6

11...♗a5+?? loses to 12 ♙d2 ♗xb5 13 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 14 ♖xc8.

12 ♗e2 g5

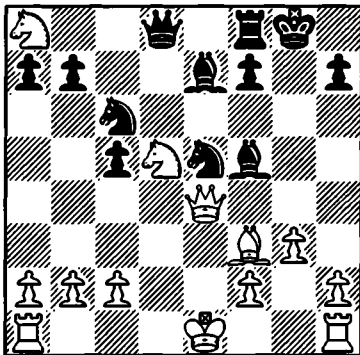
12...♙g5?! 13 ♙xg5 ♗xg5 14 f4 (Deiko-Antoshin, Minsk 1986) gives White fewer chances to err.



13 d3c7?

13 h3! apparently leads to a big White advantage, as the following lines suggest: 13...dxf2 14 e2xf2! (not 14 e2xf2? gxf4 15 e2xe7+ e2xe7 16 gxf4 f6 when Black acquires adequate counterplay) 14...gxf4 15 gxf4, and although this present position still looks pretty messy, it transpires that Black's king is too vulnerable: 15...e2h8 16 e2h5 f6 17 e2xf6 e2xf6 18 e2e4 e2d7 19 d3bc7 e2b8 20 d3e6 and Black will have to offload some material; or 15...e2e6 16 d3dc7 e2c8 17 e2h5 e2h4+ (17...e2xc7? loses on the spot to 18 d3xc7 e2xc7 19 e2xc6 e2xc6 20 e2hg1+ e2h8 21 e2h6) 18 e2g1 e2h8 19 e2h2 with e2e4 and/or e2hg1 to follow.
13...gxf4! 14 d3xa8 d3 15 e2xd3 d3gxe5 16 e2e4 f3 17 e2xf3

17 e2f1 doesn't save White after 17...f5 18 d3xe7+ e2xe7 19 e2h4 e2f7.
17...e2f5!!



This clever tactic is already the decisive blow.

18 e2xf5 d3d4 19 d3xe7+ e2xe7 20 e2h5 d3exf3+ 21 e2f1 e2e2+

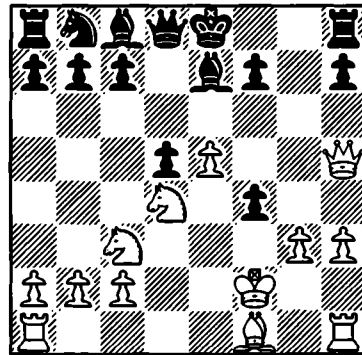
...and White resigned in Nikolenko-Antoshin, Moscow 1986.

D223) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 d3xd4 d3f6 5 d3c3 e2e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 d3g4 8 e2f4 g5 9 h3?!

This is nowhere near as good as the powerful 9 e6!, as is shown by the following analysis, the majority of which is extracted from Huzman's annotations.

9...d3xf2 10 e2xf2 gxf4 11 e2h5

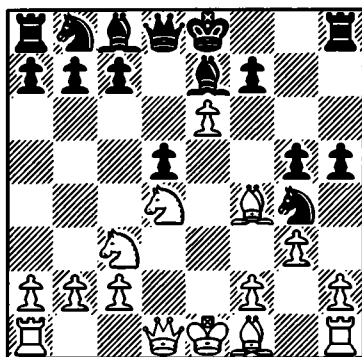
If 11 gxf4, then 11...e2c5 planning ...e2h4+ in some cases. The white king is the more exposed and the edge is with Black.



We have been following Topalov-Bacrot, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2003. Bacrot continued with 11...e2c5?!, but 11...e2c6! looks stronger. For example, 12 e6 (12 gxf4 is no better: 12...e2b6 13 d3ce2 e2c5 14 c3 e2xb2 when White has no attack, and thus no compensation at all for the lost pawn) 12...e2f8 13 gxf4 e2b6 14 e2d1 e2f6 15 e2xf7+ e2xf7 16 e2e1+ e2e7. White can't conveniently cover the pinned knight, whereas his own pins on the black pieces are quite bearable. As a consequence Black holds a marked advantage, even though the position is still complex.

D224) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♞xd4 ♟f6 5 ♝c3 ♖e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♞g4 8 ♙f4 g5 9 e6! h5

9...♞xf2?! looks very suspicious. In the only game in which this move was tried Black got crushed quite effectively: 10 ♞h5 0-0 11 ♟xf2 fxe6 12 ♙d3 ♜f7 13 ♟f3 gxf4 14 gxf4 (nearly all White's pieces join the assault and the imminent landing of a rook on g1 will spell the end for the black king) 14...♞c6 (if 14...♜g7, 15 ♟e2 avoids ...♙c5+ before continuing with ♜ag1) 15 ♜hg1+ ♟f8 16 ♞h6+ ♟e8 17 ♜g8+ ♙f8 18 ♞h5 ♞f6 19 ♞g5 and White was winning in Gasanov-A.Ivanov, Kharkov 2001.



After 9...h5 there's one final split to make:

D2241: 10 exf7+

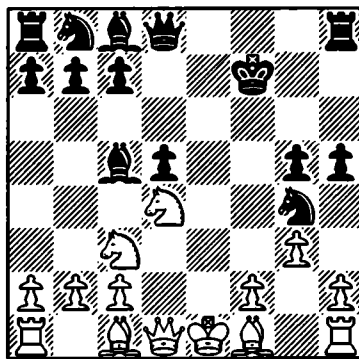
D2242: 10 h3

D2241) 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♞xd4 ♟f6 5 ♝c3 ♖e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♞g4 8 ♙f4 g5 9 e6 h5 10 exf7+ ♟xf7

10...♟f8? makes no sense here, as Black deprives himself of the important ...♜e8+. Then 11 ♙c1 ♞c6 12 ♙g2 ♙c5

13 ♙e3 ♞xe3 14 fxe3 proved much better for White in the encounter L.Dominguez-Luther, Havana 2004.

11 ♙c1 ♙c5



Here are three White options from this position:

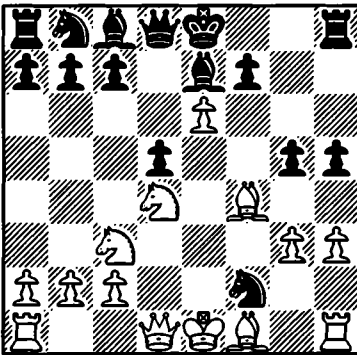
a) 12 ♙e2 ♞c6 (Black must seek activity; in the event of the seemingly more solid approach 12...♞f6 13 ♙e3 c6, White seizes the initiative by means of 14 0-0 ♟g8 15 ♞a4, intending to open up the game with c4) 13 ♙e3 ♞xe3 14 fxe3 h4 with a double-edged position.

b) 12 ♙g2 ♞c6! (the intermediate check 12...♜e8+ is less appropriate: 13 ♞ce2 ♞c6 14 0-0, or 13...c6 14 0-0 ♞f6 15 c3 or 15 f4!?, and in all cases White retains an edge due to Black's rather unsafe king) 13 ♙e3 (13 ♙xd5+ ♟g7 would be perilous for White) 13...♙xd4 (after 13...♞xe3 14 fxe3 Black should capture on d4; indeed 14...♞xd4 15 exd4 ♜e8+ 16 ♞e2 ♙b6 17 ♞d3 ♟g7 18 0-0 ♙g4 gives fair chances of equalizing) 14 ♙xd4 ♜e8+, and now both 15 ♞e2 ♞xd4 16 ♞xd4 c6 and 15 ♟f1 ♞xd4 16 ♞xd4 c6 are equal.

c) 12 ♖e3!?, preparing long castling, is perhaps the best choice here. After 12...♜xe3 13 fxe3 c6 14 ♛d2 White's chances are a tad better because of the somewhat exposed black king.

D2242) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♖e7 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♜g4 8 ♖f4 g5 9 e6 h5 10 h3 ♜xf2

Or 10...fxe6!? 11 hxg4 gxf4 12 ♛d3 f3 13 ♛g6+ (13 f3 is probably more promising) 13...♜f8 14 f3, and now instead of 14...♛e8 15 ♜xe6+ ♖xe6 16 ♛xe6 with an edge for White (Palkovi-M.Stangl, Balatonbereny 1996), Black should have tried 14...♖f6.



11 ♛f3!?

Alternatively:

a) 11 exf7+ ♜f8 (11...♜xf7 12 ♛f3 transposes to 11 ♛f3 gxf4 12 exf7+ ♜xf7) 12 ♖xc7 (12 ♜xf2 gxf4 13 gxf4 is playable too, and gives a balanced position) 12...♛xc7 (if 12...♜xd1 13 ♖xd8 ♜xc3 14 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 15 bxc3 ♜xf7 16 0-0-0) 13 ♜xf2 ♖c5 (13...h4!?) 14 ♛d3? (14 ♜a4) 14...♜c6 15 ♜b5 ♛e5 16 c3 ♖f5 with an edge to Black, Michielsen-Abeln, Haarlem 2005.

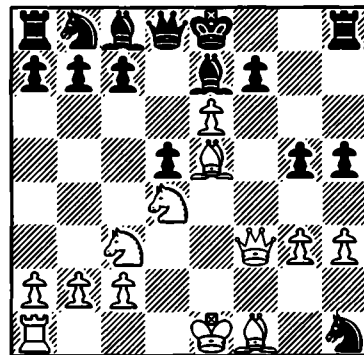
b) 11 ♜xf2?! is wrong: 11...gxf4 12 ♖e2 (it is not too late to insert 12 exf7+ ♜xf7 13 ♛f3, which reduces Black's edge to its minimum) 12...c5 13 ♜f5 ♖xe6 14 ♜g7+ ♜f8 15 ♜xe6+ fxe6 (De-labaca-Seel, Cannes 2001) and Black is going to be an healthy pawn up.

11...gxf4

This is compulsory. Indeed, both 11...♖xe6 and 11...♜xh1 lead to defeat, as shown by the following lines:

a) 11...♖xe6? 12 ♖e5 ♜xh1 13 ♖xh8 and White is going to win the beast in the corner.

b) 11...♜xh1? 12 ♖e5!...



...and here, despite his extra rook, Black is lost:

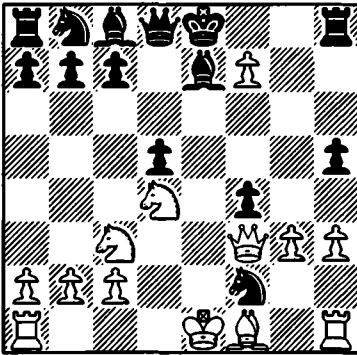
b1) 12...♖h7 13 ♜xd5 ♜f8 14 ♖d3 g4 15 ♛xh1 fxe6 16 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 17 hxg4, followed by ♛xh5 and/or 0-0-0, when the attack is decisive.

b2) 12...♖f8 13 ♜xd5 fxe6 14 ♜xc7+ ♛xc7 (on 14...♜d7, 15 ♖b5+ mates) 15 ♛xh5+ ♜d8 16 0-0-0 ♖d6 17 ♜b5 when White regains the invested material with interest and is winning (or more directly, 16 ♖xc7+ ♜xc7 17 ♛h7 ♖e8 18 ♛e4 ♜xg3 19 ♛e5+ ♖d6 20 ♜b5+).

b3) 12...f6 13 ♖xd5 g4 14 ♜e4 and Black has no satisfactory reply to both ♖xc7+ and ♜g6+.

12 exf7+!

A logical and necessary intermezzo. On the immediate 12 ♜xf2?, Black would simply take the e-pawn, when he is not only a pawn up, his king is also safer than after 12.exf7+. For example, 12...fxe6 13 0-0-0 fvg3 14 ♜xg3 ♜d6 and Black slowly but surely converted his extra pawn in Lupulescu-Nevednichy, Targoviste 2001.



12...♜f8

12...♜xf7!? is playable as well: 13 ♜xf2 ♖f6, or 13 ♜xf4+ ♜g7 14 ♜xf2 ♜f8 15 ♜e2 offers chances for both sides, though Black's open king may not be to everyone's taste.

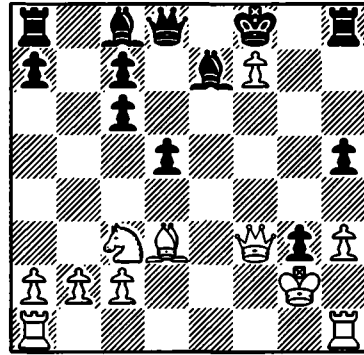
13 ♜xf2 fxg3+

Enemy pawns can serve as a shelter, and both camps rightfully keep them alive.

14 ♜g2 ♖c6!

The right way to proceed. 14...c6? leads to an uncomfortable, if not yet lost position after the cunning manoeuvre 15 ♖ce2! h4 16 ♖f4 ♜h6 17 ♜e1 ♜d6 18 ♖d3 ♖a6 19 ♖f5! ♜f6 20 ♜g4 ♜xf7 21 ♜hf1.

15 ♖xc6 bxc6 16 ♖d3



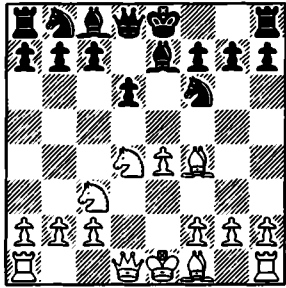
In this obscure position White has compensation for the pawn.

Conclusion

White has several ways to fight against the Antoshin Variation. Besides the main line, 6 ♖f4 (see the following chapter), it transpires through recent games that both 6 g3 d5 7 e5 ♖g4 8 ♖g2 and the seemingly modest 6 ♖e2 allow White to battle for an opening edge. The retreat 6 ♖de2 and the 'more active' 6 ♖c4 also lead to complex positions, but it seems to me that Black's counterplay is more apparent in these lines.

Chapter Four

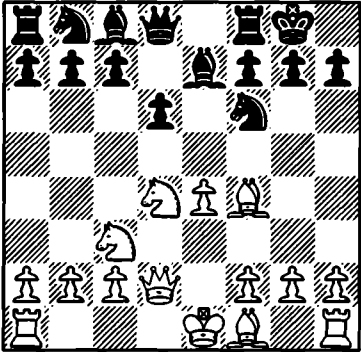
Antoshin's Variation 6 ♖f4



1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6
5 ♗c3 ♖e7 6 ♖f4

This move traditionally leads to a plan involving a quick 0-0-0. Black must react actively or else he will end up with an inferior position.

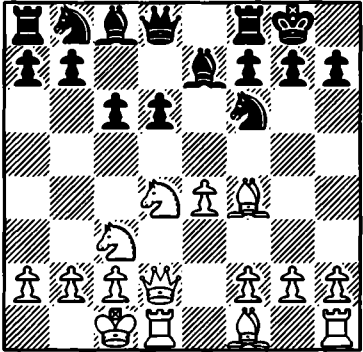
6...0-0 7 ♗d2



Now we will consider:

- A: 6...c6
- B: 6...a6
- C: 6...♗c6
- D: 6...d5

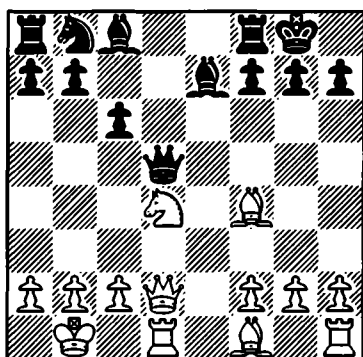
A) 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4
♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♖e7 6 ♖f4 0-0 7 ♗d2 c6 8
0-0-0



8...b5

8...d5 induces simplifications that turn out better for White: 9 exd5! (without doubt the best here; 9 ♗f5?! ♖xf5 10 exf5 ♗a5, Lebedev-Ganiev, Kolontaevo 1997, and 9 e5 ♗e8, Zaychuk-Butsenko, Odessa 2003, only give Black undeserved counterchances!) 9...♗xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 11 ♖b1 (probably the strongest continuation;

11 c4!? ♖c5 12 ♔d3 brought White a win in Coleman-Rayner, London 1993, but the weakened queenside may prove a nuisance in the future; and 11 ♘b3 seems too early: after 11...♗xd2+ 12 ♜xd2 ♘d7 two recent games of the Russian IM Mikhail Zaitsev prove that the White edge is only tiny).

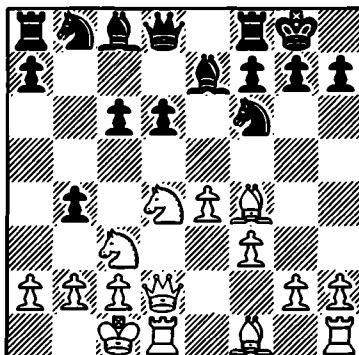


Back to 11 ♖b1, Black has tried several moves in this given position but none has enabled him to equalize:

a) 11...a5 12 ♔e2, followed by ♔f3 and ♜ae1, ideally directing all the white forces towards the centre. Grabbing the g2-pawn would be suicidal: 12...♗xg2? 13 ♜hg1 ♗xf2 14 ♔h6 g6 (14...♔f6?? 15 ♔xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♗g5 and wins) 15 ♜df1 ♗xh2 16 ♔f4 ♗h4 17 ♜h1 and White gets back the material with interest.

b) 11...♜d8 12 ♔e2 ♔f6 (after 12...♗xg2?, this time 13 ♗e3! ♔f8 14 ♘f3 is strong) 13 ♘b3 ♗xd2 14 ♘xd2 (Simmelink-Plukker, correspondence 1997). White has an improved version of 11 ♘b3 ♗xd2: his knight is ready to jump to d6, via either c4 or e4.

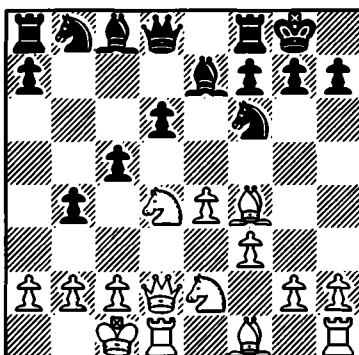
9 f3 b4



10 ♘b1!

Or:

a) 10 ♘ce2 c5! and now:



a1) 11 ♘b5? leads to disaster after 11...♗a5.

a2) 11 ♘b3!? c4 12 ♘bd4 ♗a5 13 ♖b1 and the situation remains unclear.

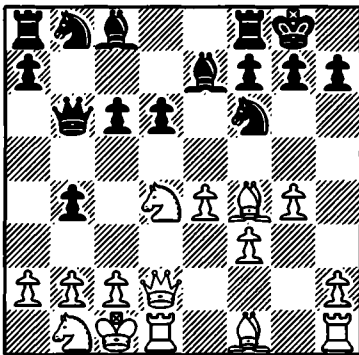
a3) 11 ♘f5 ♔xf5 12 exf5 d5! (12...♘c6?! gave White the initiative after 13 g4 ♗a5 14 ♖b1 ♘e5 15 ♘g3! in Rodriguez Cespedes-Conquest, Cienfuegos 1996; 12...♗a5, on the other hand, is worth a try: 13 ♖b1 [F.Nielsen-C.Hansen, correspondence 1994] and here maybe ...c4-c3) 13 g4 d4, vacating d4 for the knight, with level chances.

b) 10 $\text{d}a4$ $\text{e}d7$ 11 b3 (11 $\text{c}xb4?$ loses to 11...c5 12 $\text{c}b7$ cxd4 13 $\text{c}xa8$ $\text{c}c7!$, White having to sacrifice material in order to rescue his trapped queen) 11...d5 12 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 13 exf5 (Kovalev-Sizykh, Alushta 1997). Again it is difficult to come to a firm verdict on the position, and this remains the case after some more moves: 13... $\text{d}bd7$ 14 g4 $\text{d}b6$ 15 $\text{d}b2$ a5 16 g5 $\text{d}h5$ 17 f6 etc. White strikes first, but his attack isn't that dangerous yet.

10...a5

Black has two other options here:

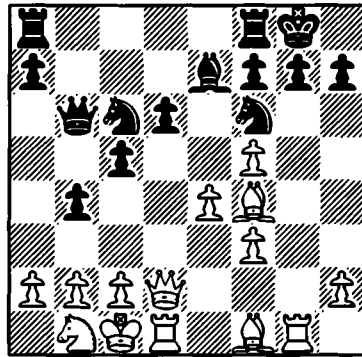
a) 10... $\text{c}b6$ (having in mind ...d5, which was prohibited on this move due to $\text{e}xb8$) 11 g4 and now:



a1) 11... $\text{d}d8?$! 12 h4 (White judges that he isn't in a hurry to jump to f5 and thus prefers this useful move; 12 g5 is possible too: 12... $\text{d}h5$ 13 $\text{e}e3$ c5 14 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 15 exf5 d5 16 f6 [on 16 $\text{c}g2$ $\text{c}a5$ 17 f4 $\text{c}xa2$ 18 $\text{e}e2$ Black has the cunning 18... $\text{d}f6!$, when grabbing the knight isn't advisable] 16...gxf6 17 gxf6 $\text{e}xf6$ 18 $\text{c}g2+$ $\text{c}h8$ 19 $\text{c}h3$ $\text{c}e6$ and Black was okay in Bindrich-Pakleza, Czech Team Ch. 2005) 12...c5

(an admission of failure) 13 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 14 gxf5 $\text{d}c6$ 15 $\text{c}g2$ $\text{d}d4$ 16 $\text{e}h6$ $\text{d}e8$ 17 $\text{e}g5$ (17 $\text{c}g1$ $\text{e}f6$ 18 $\text{e}c4$ is also possible) when White stood much better and went on to win in Lanka-Bosboom, Amsterdam 1994.

a2) 11...c5? would merely invite the knight to where it belongs: 12 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 13 gxf5 $\text{d}c6$ 14 $\text{c}g1$

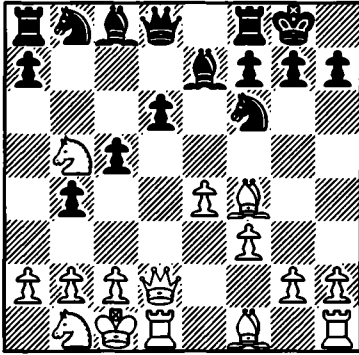


(Crouan-Gouret, Mans 2001) and White was clearly in the driving seat.

a3) 11...d5 12 e5 $\text{d}e8$ 13 $\text{d}f5$ (if 13 $\text{e}d3!$? f6 14 $\text{c}he1$, and on account of his well-centralized forces, White stood better in Copie-I.Jensen, correspondence 1992; or 13... $\text{c}a5!$ [Black is wasting time in order to grab the rather unimportant a-pawn] 14 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5?$! [14... $\text{e}c5$] 15 gxf5 f6 16 e6 $\text{c}xa2$ 17 $\text{c}hg1$ $\text{d}a6$ 18 $\text{c}g4$ $\text{d}c5$ 19 $\text{c}g2$ – of course the last few moves weren't compulsory, but they do show the danger Black is under: White's attack is already decisive here) 13... $\text{e}c5$ 14 $\text{c}e1$ (on 14 h4 Black could well consider 14...f6) 14...a5 15 h4 $\text{d}a6$ (here, or on the next move, 15...a4 was more to the point, while the sacrifice 15...b3 also deserved attention) 16 h5

♠ac7?! 17 ♖g5 (A.Poulsen-I.Jensen, correspondence 1984), and with ideas such as h6 g6; ♗e7+ ♜h8; ♜f4, White has seized the initiative.

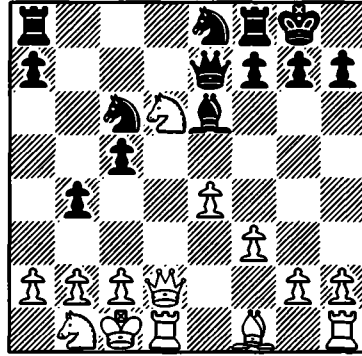
b) 10...c5!? looks like a very decent alternative. After 11 ♖b5 Black has two playable continuations at his disposal:



b1) 11...♜a5 12 ♖xd6! (12 ♖xd6!? ♖e6 [definitely not 12...♜xa2?? 13 ♖c4 ♜a1 14 ♖xf7 ♜xf7 15 ♜d8+ and it's curtains!] 13 e5 ♗e8 14 ♖d3 ♖xd6 15 exd6 ♖f6 16 ♖g5 ♖d7 and in return for the pawn, Black has an attack) 12...♖xd6 13 ♖xd6 ♖e6 14 a3 and White should stand a bit better.

b2) 11...♖e6 12 ♖xd6 (12 ♖xd6 ♜a5 13 e5 transposes to 11...♜a5 12 ♖xd6 etc.; or if instead 12...♖c6?! 13 ♖f5 ♖xf5 14 ♜xd8 ♜fxd8 15 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 16 exf5 and the extra pawn combined with the pair of bishops should outweigh the temporary activity of Black's pieces) 12...♗e8 (if 12...♖xd6!? 13 ♖xd6 with a slight edge to White; taking back with the knight is stronger than 13 ♜xd6?! ♜a5 14 ♖c7 ♗e8 15 ♖xe8 ♜xe8 with ample compensation for a mere pawn – a2 is hanging and White's pieces are

anything but impressive; or 14 a3 ♖a6! with ideas such as ...♜fd8 and ...bxa3 ♖xa3 ♖b4; but not 14...a6?! 15 axb4! cxb4 16 ♖d4) 13 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 14 ♖d6 ♖c6



(Al Modiahki-Belkhodja, Casablanca 2002). Black has some compensation for his pawn, but White's game should be somewhat preferable.

White also keeps an edge after 14...♖xa2 15 ♖f5 ♜e5 (or 15...♜b7?! 16 b3 ♖xb1 17 ♜xb1 with a clear advantage) 16 ♜d8!.

11 g4 a4

11...♜b6?! is now illogical. White was clearly better after 12 g5 ♖h5 13 ♖e3 c5 14 ♖f5 ♖xf5 15 exf5 in Arakhamia-Orr, Grangemouth 2000.

12 a3

Opening lines in front of one's own king may look peculiar, but White's choice is reasonable. Moreover, he probably wasn't convinced that the customary 12 ♖f5 was any better. Indeed, Black would have gained sufficient counterplay after 12...♖xf5 (12...d5!?) 13 gxf5 b3. The alternative, 13 exf5?, would be suspicious to say the least,

after 13...♘d5 14 ♗g3 a3, then 15 b3? ♗f6 is an immediate disaster, so White must reconcile himself to the unappealing 15 bxa3.

12...bxa3 13 ♘xa3 ♖b6

...with a complex position, Maze-E.Moser, Zemplinska Sirava 2004. And 13...♗e8!? is another possibility.

B) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗e7 6 ♗f4 0-0 7 ♖d2 a6 8 0-0-0

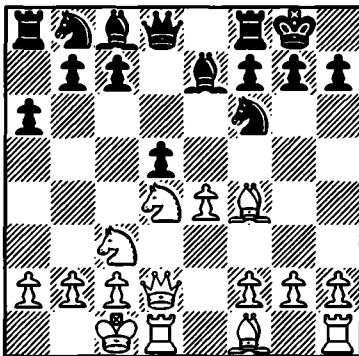
Now Black can play:

B1: 8...d5

B2: 8...b5

After 8...c5? 9 ♘f5 ♗xf5 10 exf5 the d-pawn is bound to fall.

B1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗e7 6 ♗f4 0-0 7 ♖d2 a6 8 0-0-0 d5



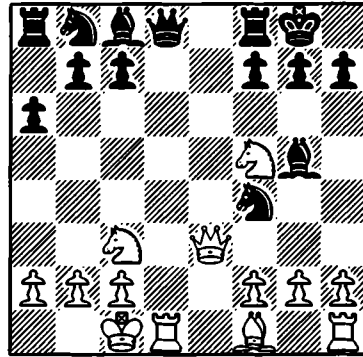
9 exd5

9 e5 is not as 'clean'. After 9...♘h5 10 ♗e3 c5 11 ♘b3 d4 12 ♖e2 the game is a mess.

9...♘xd5 10 ♘xd5!

10 ♘f5!? leads either to a programmed draw, or a symbolic White edge: 10...♘xf4 (10...♗xf5? 11 ♘xd5 ♗d6 12 ♗xd6 and Black must recapture sadly with the pawn, since 12...♖xd6? 13 ♖g5! wins) and now:

a) 11 ♖e3 ♗g5!!



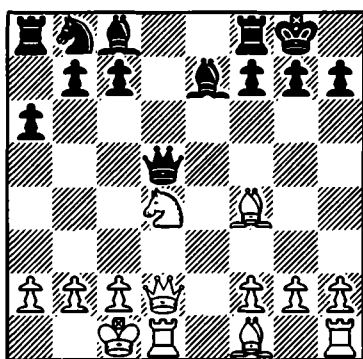
12 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 13 ♖e4 ♘e2+ 14 ♖b1 ♘xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♗d1+ 16 ♖b2 ♗c1+ 17 ♖b3 ♗e6+ 18 ♗c4 ♘d7 (not 18...♗xh1?? 19 ♖d4! ♗xc4+ 20 ♖xc4 f6 21 ♖d5+ ♖f8 22 ♖xb7 – the materialistic approach, even if it is probably possible to deliver mate!) 19 ♖xe6!! ♘c5+ 20 ♖b4 ♘xe6 21 ♗xd1 (we have been following the game Giplis-Antoshin, Moscow 1972) 21...♗f4 and Black should hold.

13...♘d3+ isn't bad either: 14 ♖b1 ♘xf2 15 ♖e5 ♗xf5 16 ♖xf5 ♘h1 17 ♖xg5 ♘c6 18 ♗e2 (White's task, in order to stay alive, is to prevent the errant horse from arriving back home) 18...♗e8 19 ♖c5 ♗e5 20 ♖g1 ♗ae8 21 g4 (if 21 ♖xh1? ♘d4 wins) 21...♗e3 22 ♖xh1 ♗xc3 23 bxc3 ♗xe2, and while Black can hardly lose this endgame, I'm not sure how realistic any winning chances are.

b) 11 ♖xe7+! ♜xe7 12 ♜xf4 ♙e6 13 ♙d3 with an edge (S.Marjanovic-L.Kalashian, Kirovakan 1978).

10...♜xd5

Nearly the same position can occur if Black opts for 7...c6 8 0-0-0 d5 and so on. In that case a pawn stands on c6 rather than a6, and I would recommend playing 11 ♖b1. Here, however, this doesn't bring much in my opinion, whereas 11 ♖b3 is critical because the c7-pawn often hangs.



11 ♖b3

11 ♖b1 c5 12 ♖b3 ♜xd2 13 ♜xd2 ♖c6 (Trois-Parente, Brasilia 1969) is more or less okay for Black.

11...♜c6

11...♜xd2+ 12 ♜xd2 c6 13 ♙d3 leads to a White edge. This ending isn't a worry for Black in the line 7...c6 8 0-0-0 d5 etc., but here he has had to consent to a lost tempo. Against the natural 13...♙e6 there would follow 14 ♖d4.

12 ♙e2

12 ♙d3 is also good.

12...♜a4 13 ♖b1

Or even 13 ♙xc7 (Kholmov-Garcia Martinez, Havana 1968), since after

13...♜xa2 14 ♜a5 White trades queens and maintains a lasting pressure.

13...c5 14 ♙d6 ♙xd6

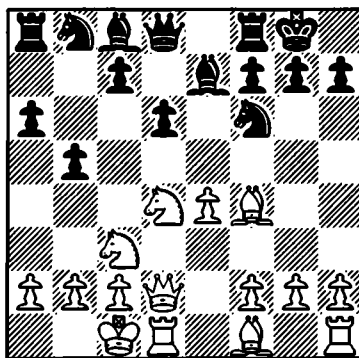
14...♜d8?! would accelerate Black's downfall: 15 ♖xc5! ♜c6 16 ♙xe7 ♜xd2 17 ♜xd2 h6 18 ♜d8+ ♖h7 19 ♙d3+ f5 20 ♜e1 (or 20 ♙c4), when Black's pieces are still parked in the garage and are unable to assist their monarch.

15 ♜xd6 ♙e6 16 ♙f3 ♖c6 17 ♙xc6 bxc6 18 ♜xc5

...with a healthy extra pawn.

B2) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4 0-0 7 ♜d2 a6 8 0-0-0 b5

8...c5? 9 ♖f5 (9 ♖b3 is good too) 9...♙xf5 10 exf5 and the d-pawn is bound to fall.



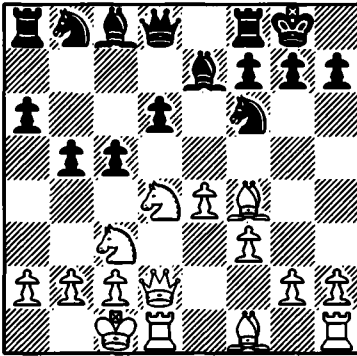
9 f3

9 ♖d5 (Kupreichik-L.Kalashian, Kirovakan 1978) may be good enough to claim a small edge. If Black gets rid of the knight, then f3, g4 will be on his opponent's agenda, and perhaps also ♖f5 given the right circumstances. If he doesn't, then White can simply swap on e7.

9...c5

a) After 9...d5 10 dxd5 dxd5 11 exd5 ♖xd5 12 b3 ♗xd2+ 13 ♜xd2 the inclusion of f3 and ...b5 doesn't really help Black; for instance 13...f5 14 d4 g6 15 fxc7 (Ermenkov-Lechtynsky, Berlin 1982), or 13...c5 14 f3 e6 15 f4 a7 16 ♞hd1; in both cases the White position is superior.

b) 9...b4 10 d5 dxd5 11 exd5 a5 and after 12 f4 (Kholmov-Antoshin, Havana 1968) or 12 g4 (Liberzon-Antoshin, USSR 1971) White is dictating events.



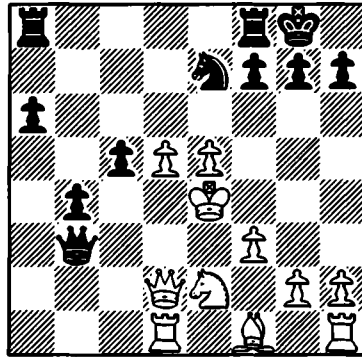
10 d5

Or:

a) 10 dde2?! b4! 11 d5 dxd5 12 exd5 (12 ♗xd5 isn't any better: 12...a7 13 b1 f6 with fine play) 12...d7 13 c4 bxc3 14 dxc3 ♞b8 (Brkic-Tratar, Rabac 2004) and Black is in the ascendancy.

If I'm not mistaken 10...d6?! doesn't give enough compensation for the loss of the d-pawn: 11 f4 b4 12 a4 ♗a5 13 fxe7 dxe7 14 b3 f6 15 e5 d6 16 c4 fxa4 (16...♞ac8!? intending 17 cxd5 c4) 17 cxd5, although Black

now has two ways to add fuel to the fire: 17...dxd5 18 ♗xd5 (if 18 bxa4? ♞ad8 'with a raging attack for the piece', to quote Nikolai Vlassov, with whom I can only agree) 18...♞fd8 19 ♗c4!; and 17...f4 18 axb3 ♗a1+ 19 c2 ♗a2+ 20 d3 ♗xb3+ 21 f4.



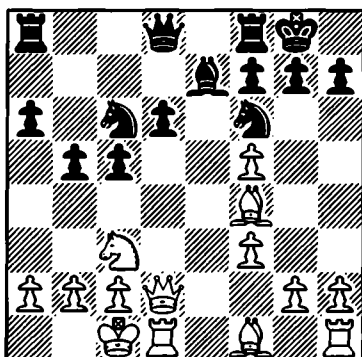
The computer is very happy with White's position here, but what about you?

b) 10 d3?! c4! (but not 10...b4? since both 11 d5 dxd5 12 ♗xd5 a7 13 dxc5! and 11 d3 f6 [or 11...a7 12 dxc5] 12 f4 net a pawn for nothing) 11 d4 b4 12 d5 dxd5 13 exd5 c3 14 bxc3 bxc3 15 ♗xc3 f6 (Martorelli-Scalcione, Massafra 2005). For the invested pawn, White's king is going to be permanently vulnerable.

10...f4 11 exf5 d6

11...b4?! proved to be too hasty after 12 f4 in Nestorovic-Ragger, Urgup 2004.

After 11...d6 White is at a crossroads. Out of his four seemingly reasonable options: 12 f4; 12 f4; 12 b1; and 12 g4, only two are interesting in my opinion.



12 g4

Or:

a) 12 $\text{g}4$ $\text{d}5$ 13 $\text{g}5$ $\text{e}7$ (on 13 $\text{f}4$, then 13... $\text{g}4$ 14 $\text{g}5$ $\text{d}6$ $\text{b}4$ 15 $\text{a}3$ [or 15 $\text{b}1$ $\text{a}8$]) 15... $\text{d}6$ is very acceptable for Black) 13... $\text{e}7$ 14 $\text{b}1$ $\text{a}8$ 15 $\text{c}1$ $\text{f}5$ with at least an equal game, Damia-Scalcione, San Martino di Castrozza 2003.

b) 12 $\text{e}4$? $\text{d}5$! 13 $\text{f}6+$ $\text{g}5$ 14 $\text{d}5$ $\text{b}6$ 15 $\text{c}3$ (15 $\text{e}3$? $\text{a}8$ saw Black win a miniature in Mrdja-Scalcione, Reggio Emilia 2003) 15... $\text{b}4$ with a powerful initiative, Vitoux-Payen, Val d'Isere 2004.

c) 12 $\text{b}1$ $\text{d}4$ with sufficient counterplay in Slaby-Luther, Deizisau 2004.

12...b4

12... $\text{d}4$ was playable too, but 12... $\text{a}5$?! is suspicious: 13 $\text{g}5$ $\text{b}4$ 14 $\text{g}6$ $\text{b}3$ 15 $\text{xc}3$! $\text{xc}3$ 16 $\text{b}3$ $\text{g}6$ 17 $\text{d}6$ with a clear advantage to White, mainly due to the weak black pawns on the queenside. 15... $\text{b}4$ doesn't change the assessment much: 16 $\text{c}4$ $\text{g}6$ 17 $\text{a}3$ and $\text{d}6$ will drop. Instead, after 17 $\text{f}7$?! $\text{xa}2+$ 17 $\text{d}2$ $\text{xc}3$ 18 $\text{xf}8+$ $\text{xf}8$ 19 $\text{b}3$ $\text{d}5$ White

has a nominal material advantage, but with his shattered pawn structure and above all his wandering king, I suspect that he can hardly stand better.

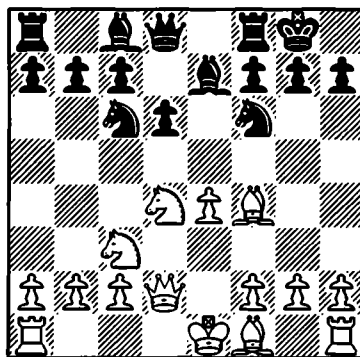
13 e4 d4 14 xf6+

After 14 $\text{g}5$?! $\text{f}3$ 15 $\text{f}6+$ $\text{g}6$ (not 15... $\text{g}6$? 16 $\text{d}5$ $\text{g}5$ 17 $\text{h}4$) 16 $\text{d}5$ $\text{f}5$ 17 $\text{f}3$ $\text{g}4$ White has compensation for his pawn(s), but no real target.

14...g5 15 g5 e5 16 xe5 dx5 17 f6 gxf6 18 c4 h8 19 we3 wd6

...and in this more or less balanced position a draw was agreed in Jakic-Z.Jovanovic, Zadar 2003.

C) 1 e4 e5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 xd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 f4 0-0 7 wd2 dc6



8 0-0 dxd4

a) 8... $\text{e}5$?! is dubious because the knight becomes a target for the enemy soldiers: 9 $\text{g}3$ $\text{h}5$ (or 9... $\text{e}8$ 10 $\text{f}4$ $\text{g}6$ 11 $\text{e}2$ $\text{f}8$ 12 $\text{f}3$, Fedorchuk-A.Ivanov, Kharkov 2001, planning $\text{h}4$ - $\text{h}5$) 10 $\text{e}2$ $\text{d}3$ 11 $\text{hxg}3$ and the half-open h-file outweighs the two bishops, Arkhipov-Vorotnikov, Moscow 1995.

b) 8... $\text{a}6$ 9 $\text{f}3$ $\text{d}7$?! (returning to

8...♗xd4 with 9...♗xd4 was wiser) 10 ♗f5 with a clear edge for White, Papp-Vajda, Budapest 2004.

9 ♖xd4

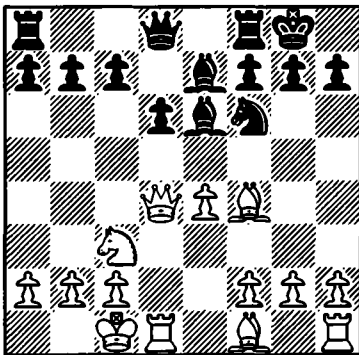
...and now:

C1: 9...♗e6

C2: 9...a6!?

C1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♗e7 6 ♗f4 0-0 7 ♖d2 ♗c6 8 0-0-0 ♗xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♗e6

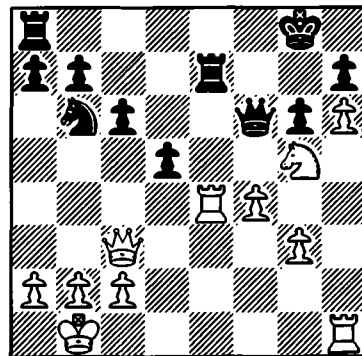
Black has tried knight moves, but each time there follows ♗d5 and White robs Black of the pair of bishops, securing a lasting edge.



10 f3

Initiating a kingside offensive without using the f-pawn seems less powerful to me: 10 ♗e2 a6 (here or on the next move 10...♗g4 is perfectly viable too) 11 ♖e3 (threatening e5) 11...♗d7 12 h4 ♗f6 13 h5 (on 13 ♗d5 Black obtains a sufficient counterplay by means of 13...♗xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖e7 15 f3 ♖fe8 16 g4 ♗b6 17 ♗d2 d5, but 13 g4!? was a worthy alternative) 13...h6 with complicated play, Acs-Nevednichy, Paks 2004.

However, the prophylactic 10 ♖d2 has some point, as White discourages his opponent from playing ...c5 (d6 would fall): 10...♗d7 (10...♖e8 has been tried as well: 11 f3 a6 12 g4 ♗d7 13 g5 b5 14 h4 ♗e5 15 ♖g2 ♖b8 16 ♗d5 with a slight edge for White in Doroshkievich-Lein, Sochi 1964; 10...a6!?) 11 ♗b1 f5!? (Black assesses that queenside action would be too slow and thus decides on seeking counterplay on the other wing) 12 exf5 ♗xf5 13 g3 ♗b6 14 ♗d3 ♗xd3 (14...♖d7! was a bit more precise) 15 ♖xd3 ♗g5 16 ♗d5 ♗xf4 17 ♗xf4 ♖d7 18 ♖b3+ ♗h8 19 h4 ♖f7 20 ♖f3 (the ending after 20 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 21 ♖he1 doesn't promise much: 21...♗c4! with the idea of 22...♗e5) 20...d5 21 h5 ♗g8 22 ♖c3 c6 23 h6 g6 24 ♗e6 ♖fe8 25 ♗g5 ♖f8 26 ♖d4 ♖f6 27 f4 ♖e7?? (Black surely missed his opponent's witty reply; 27...♖e2! was far stronger, keeping the balance) 28 ♖e4!!.



A pretty shot!

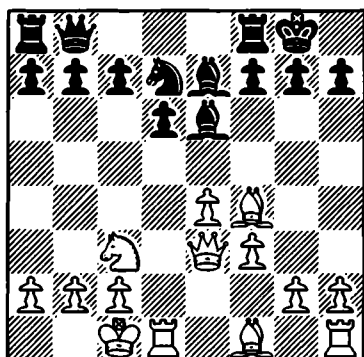
a) 28...♖d6 29 ♖e6 d4 30 ♖xe7! dxc3 31 ♖g7+ ♗f8 32 ♖e1 and Black resigned, Rublevsky-Kolasinski, Chelia-binsk 1991.

b) 28...♖f8 29 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 30 ♜e1 ♜d7 31 ♜f6 ♜f8 32 ♜e7 with a decisive advantage.

c) The 'obvious' 28...♜xc3 was in fact the most stubborn: 29 ♜xe7 ♜f6 30 ♜he1 ♜c4 (30...♜f8? 31 ♜xh7 and Black must give up the queen in order to prevent ♜xf8 followed by h7) 31 ♜e8+ ♜xe8 32 ♜xe8+ ♜f8 33 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 34 ♜xh7+ ♜f7 35 b4!? ♜e3 36 ♜b2 ♜f5 37 ♜g5+ ♜g8 38 h7+ ♜h8 39 ♜c3 and the white monarch will penetrate the queenside and cause havoc.

10...a6

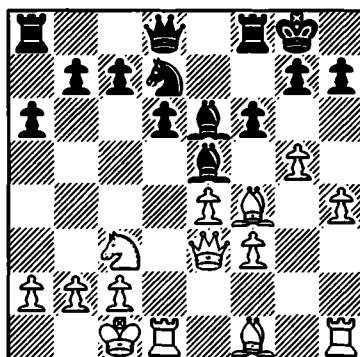
If 10...♜d7 11 ♜e3!? (here 11 g4?! would play into Black's hands due to 11...♜g5!; instead, the move 11 ♜d5 is enough to claim a small edge, due to the pair of bishops after 11...♜b6, or the space advantage in the event of 11...♜g5 12 ♜xg5 ♜xg5+ 13 f4 ♜d8; with the ambitious 11 ♜e3, however, White is looking for more) 11...♜f6 (the highly imaginative 11...♜b8...



...was seen in Volokitin-Harikrishna, Lausanne 2005; the young Ukrainian wasn't impressed and gained a solid plus in the endgame after the sequence

12 g4 ♜e5 13 h4 c6 14 g5 b5 15 ♜g3 ♜b6 16 ♜xb6 axb6 17 f4 ♜g4 18 f5 ♜xa2 19 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 20 ♜xd6) 12 g4 a6 (if 12...♜e5 then 13 ♜g3 with the idea ♜e2, f4 etc.) 13 g5 ♜e5 14 h4 was Lautier-Dorfman, Val d'Isere 2002. Now 14...♜e7 was a mistake according to Lautier, who correctly answered 15 ♜h2! and firmly held the initiative later on. Although his suggestion of 14...f6!? is indeed interesting, I believe the move actually played was not bad either. An improvement was possible a couple of moves later, namely 15...♜xh2 16 ♜xh2 ♜ae8!, intending 17 f4 ♜b6, followed by ...f5.

But let's return to 14...f6!?



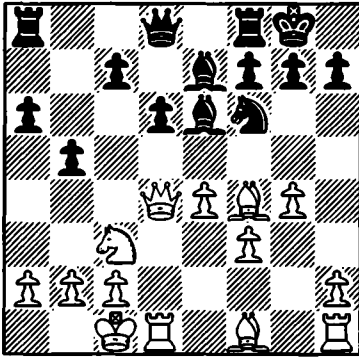
White now has three decent options, all leading to a balanced position:

- a) 15 g6 hxg6 16 ♜h3.
- b) 15 ♜e2 ♜e7 16 ♜g1!? ♜f7.
- c) 15 ♜h2 fxg5 16 hxg5 ♜xc3 17 ♜xc3 ♜xg5+ 18 f4 and here, instead of 18...♜xf4?! 19 ♜xf4 ♜xf4+ 20 ♜b1 ♜c5 21 ♜c4 (Ovetchkin-Kodinets, Internet 2004) with better prospects for White, Black should prefer 18...♜c5 19 ♜h3 ♜xh3 20 ♜xh3 which remains unclear.

Finally, 10...c5 11 ♖d2 ♗a5 12 ♖b1 (Mosquera-Barle, Bled Olympiad 2002) is slightly better for White.

11 g4 b5

Or 11...c5 12 ♖d2 b5 and, since accepting the challenge by playing 13 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♗a5 isn't without risks, White's safest is 13 ♖b1.



12 h4

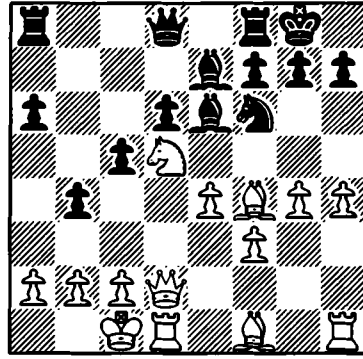
After 12 ♖d2, numerous examples from Italian FM Scalcione show that the position remains very sharp and with mutual chances: 12...b4 13 ♗d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♖b8 15 h4 a5 16 h5 a4 17 g5 ♗d7 18 h6! (18 g6?! b3 saw White's attack running out of gas, while Black's was becoming more and more potent in Brancaleoni-Scalcione, Italy 2001) 18...g6 19 ♗e1! (19 ♖d4 was less precise after 19...f6 20 ♗h3 ♗e5 in Isonzo-Scalcione, Genoa 2001) 19...♗d8 20 ♗h3 ♗c5 (Guido-Scalcione, Genoa 2001) and now after 21 ♗e3 White has the upper hand.

12...c5 13 ♖d2 b4 14 ♗d5

(see following diagram)

Now both captures give White an slight edge: 14...♗xd5 15 exd5 ♗d7 16 ♖b1 b4 17 ♗d5 (Korneev-P.Roberts,

Guernsey 2005) or 14...♗xd5 15 exd5 ♗d7 16 g5 (T.Sorensen-Granberg, correspondence 1982).

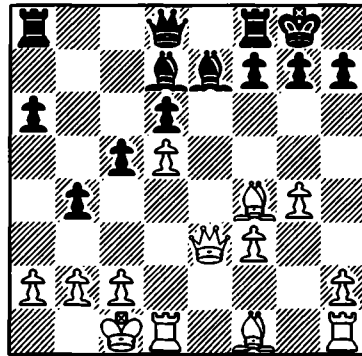


C2) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♗e7 6 ♗f4 0-0 7 ♖d2 ♗c6 8 0-0-0 ♗xd4 9 ♖xd4 a6!? 10 f3 b5 11 g4 c5

Or 11...♗b8!? 12 e5 b4 (Manakova-Olarasu, Antalya 2002).

12 ♖e3 b4 13 ♗d5 ♗xd5 14 exd5 ♗d7

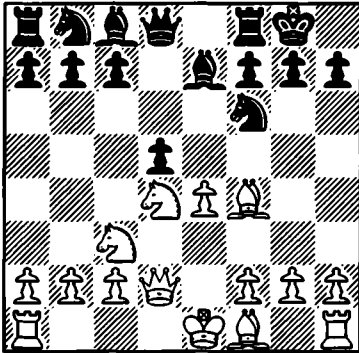
14...♗e8!? is another possibility.



(D.Stern-Ingerslev, correspondence 1985). Black has saved an important tempo in comparison to lines arising after 9...♗e6, and thus his position is very playable.

D) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4 0-0 7 ♚d2 d5

This advance is carried out before White has a chance to castle long. In order to continue fighting for an advantage White must enter into huge complications.



The two main moves in this position are:

D1: 8 exd5

D2: 8 ♘db5

8 e5?!

...is dubious.

8...♘h5

8...♘e4?! 9 ♘xe4 dxe4 10 0-0-0 was better for White in E.Paetz-Vasilevich, Internet (blitz) 2004.

9 ♙g3

9 ♘f3 ♘xf4 10 ♚xf4 (Leko-Svidler, Monaco rapid 2004) doesn't cause too much trouble either.

9...c5

Or 9...f6!?

10 ♘b3 d4

...with the initiative, Yurtaev-Antoshin, Frunze 1979.

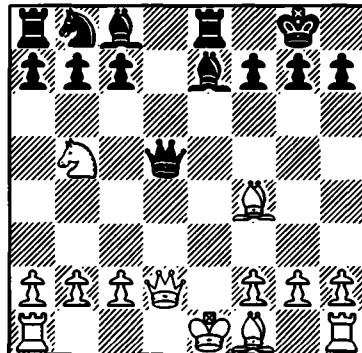
D1) 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4 0-0 7 ♚d2 d5 8 exd5 ♘xd5!

8...♙b4?! 9 0-0-0 ♙xc3 (if 9...♘e4?! 10 ♚e3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♙a3+ 12 ♘b1 ♚xd5 13 c4 ♚a5 14 ♘b5 with an advantage) 10 ♚xc3 ♘xd5 11 ♚g3 ♘xf4 12 ♚xf4 was played in Kotronias-Gelashvili, Korinthos 1997. White's pieces are more actively posted, and he therefore stands better.

9 ♘xd5 ♚xd5 10 ♘b5

An old line that tries to profit from Black's queenside still being asleep.

10...♙e8!!



A brilliant discovery that was unearthed in the correspondence encounter Talving-L.Karasek, 1990. This unexpected move promises approximate equality, even though it deserves more.

10...♚e4+!? is interesting too, but more risky: 11 ♙e2 ♚xg2! (not 11...♘a6?! 12 0-0 when White had a very pleasant game due to his far better pieces, Van den Doel-Kovacevic, Leon 2001) 12 0-0-0 ♘a6 13 ♙hg1 ♚xf2 (13...♚c6?! 14 ♘c3 is worse: White plans ♘d5 and has more than enough

for the sacrificed pawn) 14 $\text{h}h6$ g6 15 $\text{h}xf8$ $\text{h}xf8$. Black has two pawns and the pair of bishops for the exchange, but he is behind in development – the situation is unclear.

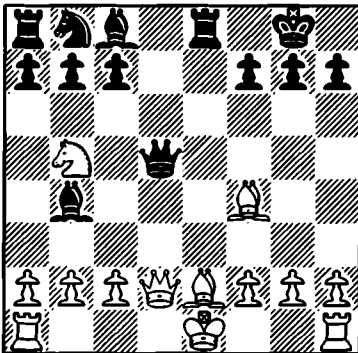
11 $\text{h}e2$

Of course not 11 $\text{h}xd5??$ $\text{h}b4+$ 12 $\text{d}d1$ $\text{h}e1$ mate, but 11 $\text{h}e3$ deserves consideration: 11... $\text{h}e5$ 12 0-0-0 $\text{d}c6$ 13 $\text{h}f4$ $\text{h}e6$ (Boros-Thinius, Budapest 2005) and now 14 $\text{h}d5!$.

11... $\text{h}b4!!$

11... $\text{h}xg2!?$ 12 0-0-0 looks like it should lead to a rapid victory for White, but the reality is somewhat different, and 12... $\text{d}a6$ 13 $\text{h}e3$ $\text{h}c6$ 14 $\text{d}d4$ $\text{h}b6$ leads to unclear consequences.

The text move temporarily sacrifices a piece to make use of the pin on the e2-bishop.



12 $\text{h}xb4$ $\text{d}c6$ 13 $\text{h}c3$

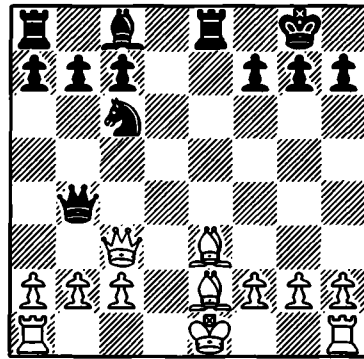
13 $\text{h}b3?!$ is worse. Black plays 13... $\text{h}xg2$ and now:

a) 14 0-0-0 $\text{h}xe2$ 15 $\text{d}xc7$ (or the catastrophic 15 $\text{h}hg1?!$ $\text{h}e4$ 16 $\text{h}h6$ $\text{h}f5!$ 17 $\text{f}3?$ $\text{h}xc2+$ 0-1 Monteau-Cornette, French League 2002) 15... $\text{h}f5$ and Black organizes a mighty counter-

attack, for instance 16 $\text{d}xa8$ $\text{h}xc2+$ 17 $\text{h}xc2$ $\text{h}xc2$ 18 $\text{h}he1$ $\text{h}e4$.

b) 14 $\text{h}f1$ a6 and if the knight withdraws, its counterpart rushes to d4. Instead, 15 0-0-0 $\text{h}e4$ (15... axb5 is equally satisfactory) 16 $\text{h}xc7$ $\text{h}xe2$ 17 $\text{d}d6$ $\text{h}e7$ leads to a complicated game.

13... $\text{h}xb5$ 14 $\text{h}e3$ $\text{h}b4$



(O.De la Riva Aguado-G.Kuzmin, Ubeda 1998). In this final position the activity of Black's pieces compensates for the loss of the two bishops. White must consent to a disruption of his pawn structure after the swap of queens on c3, as 15 $\text{h}xb4$ $\text{d}xb4$ would be too perilous.

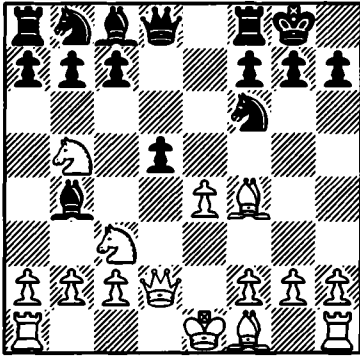
D2) 1 e4 e5 2 $\text{d}f3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\text{d}xd4$ $\text{d}f6$ 5 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{h}e7$ 6 $\text{h}f4$ 0-0 7 $\text{h}d2$ d5 8 $\text{d}db5$

The critical move, against which Black has two options:

D21: 8... $\text{h}b4?!$

D22: 8...c6!

D21) 1 e4 e5 2 $\text{d}f3$ d6 3 d4 exd4 4 $\text{d}xd4$ $\text{d}f6$ 5 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{h}e7$ 6 $\text{h}f4$ 0-0 7 $\text{h}d2$ d5 8 $\text{d}db5$ $\text{h}b4?!$



9 0-0-0!

The best reaction. Others:

a) 9 exd5?! ♖e8+ 10 ♔e2 ♗e4 (Fili-penko-Antoshin, Togliatti 1985) with adequate play for the pawn.

b) 9 f3 ♔a5 or 9...♗a6 (Czebe-Urban, Budapest 1993) is okay for Black.

c) 9 ♗xc7?! d4! (9...♗xe4?! leads to an unappetizing ending after 10 ♗xd5 ♗xc3 [10...♔xc3+ 11 bxc3 ♗xd5 12 ♗xd5 and 10...♗xd5 11 ♗7xd5 ♔a5 12 ♔d3 are also insufficient] 11 ♗xd8 ♔xd8 12 a3 ♔a5 13 ♗xa8 ♗d5+ 14 b4 ♗xf4 15 bxa5 and Black had nothing for the exchange in J.Cuartas-Rohl Montes, Medellin 2003) 10 0-0-0 ♗c6 11 ♗xa8 ♗a5 (Kolker-Podolsky, correspondence 1977) with a messy game in which it is Black who will have the fun!

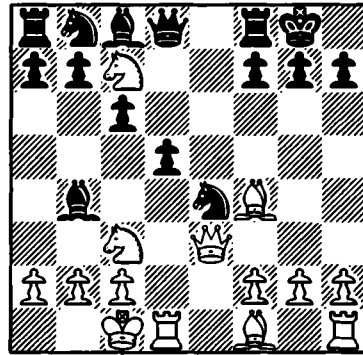
9...c6

9...♗xe4 10 ♗xd5 is out of the question, while 9...♔a5 doesn't solve Black's problems either: 10 exd5 a6 11 ♗d4 ♔xc3 (if 11...♗xd5 12 ♗b3 ♗f6 13 ♗xa5 ♗xf4 14 g3, or 11...♗e4?! 12 ♗e3 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 with the idea 13...♗xd5? 14 ♗b3 winning) 12 ♗xc3 ♗xd5 13 ♗g3 ♗xf4 14 ♗xf4 with some annoying

pressure for White in Istratescu-Gelashvili, Patras 2001 (the position is virtually identical to the earlier Kotronias-Gelashvili – see the note to Black's 8th move in Line D1).

10 ♗c7 ♗xe4 11 ♗e3

Black now has a wide choice, but nothing really works.



11...♔xc3

Neither 11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♔a3+ 13 ♗b1 ♗a6 14 ♗xa8 b5 15 ♗g3 ♗c5 16 ♔d3, nor 11...♔c5 12 ♗xe4 ♗xc7 13 ♔xc7 dxe4 14 ♗xe4 improves the situation for Black.

12 bxc3 g5

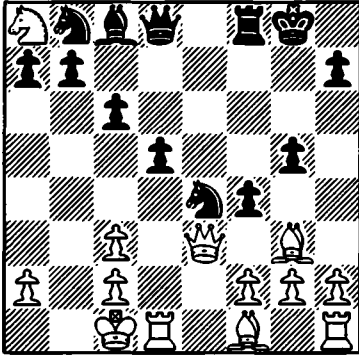
An attempt to improve on 12...♗e7 13 ♗b2 g5 14 ♔g3 f5 15 ♗xa8 f4 16 ♗e1 fxg3 17 f3 ♗a6 18 ♔xa6 bxa6 19 fxe4 (Shabanov-Vorotnikov, Krasnodar 1991) when Black lacked compensation for his material deficit.

13 ♔g3

13 ♗xa8? gxf4 14 ♗xa7 ♗a6 (D.Pedersen-Seel, German League 2002) was not as good, and indeed Black won quite quickly, but 13 ♗xe4 ♗xc7 14 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 15 ♔xc7 (Gyimesi-Nevednichy, Nova Gorica 2004) should

be a bit better for White.

13...f5 14 xa8 f4



15 f4!

15 Wa7?! f3 is playable for Black, for instance 16 d3 (16 Wxb8? loses to 16...Wa5!) 16...dxf2 17 Wxb8 dx1 18 dx1 g4 19 Wg3 fxd1 20 cxd1 (Yagupov-M.Kozlov, Tula 2000) and here 20...f7! is even much better for Black.

15...gxf4 16 Wa7 a6 17 e1 Wa5 18 xe4 dxe4 19 c4+ g7 20 b2

White stands slightly better.

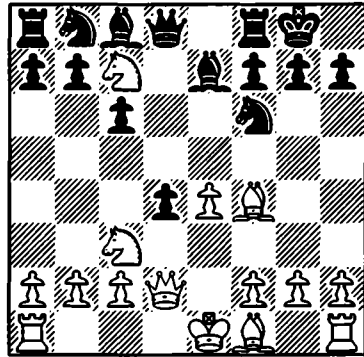
D22) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dx4 d6 5 c3 e7 6 f4 0-0 7 d2 d5 8 db5 c6! 9 c7

White has almost crossed the point of no return: his position can either be excellent or simply losing. One can imagine the difficulties that the Ukrainian GM Brodsky experienced when he was confronted with the novelty 8...c6 in the stem game against Nisipeanu (see Line D222).

Instead, 9 exd5!? is a very fresh try: 9...cb5 10 d6 fxd6 (perhaps 10...e8 11 dxe7 We7+, though 12 e2 b4 13

b5 also seems to favour White) 11 Wxd6 Wa5 12 0-0-0 e6 (12...b4 13 d5 isn't any better) 13 fxb5 fxa2 14 e5 a6 15 fxf6 axb5 16 fxg7 xg7 17 d3 d7 18 Wxd7 c4 19 g3+ h8 20 Wg4 and Black resigned, Kristjansson-Le Roux, Hastings 2005/06.

9...d4!



Now we shall consider the following:

D221: 10 0-0-0

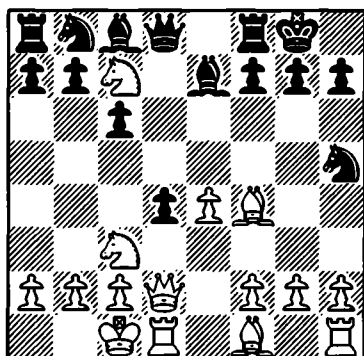
D222: 10 e2?!

D223: 10 xa8!

10 d1?! has been employed only once to my knowledge, and shouldn't have too many followers: 10...dxc3 11 Wxc3 db7 12 xa8 dx4 13 Wc4?! (13 Wd3 was better: 13...Wa5+ 14 c3 d6f6 15 f3 dxc3 16 bxc3 f5 followed by 17...xa8 with fine play for Black) 13...Wa5+ 14 c3 d6f6 15 f3 e6 16 Wd4? (16 Wd3 would have limited the damage after 16...d5 17 Wd2 xa8 18 b4 Wxa2 19 Wxa2 fxa2 20 bxc5 fxc5) 16...f5 17 f7 Wxa2 0-1 E.Moser-I.Schneider, Böblingen 2004.

D221) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♝c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4 0-0 7 ♚d2 d5 8 ♜db5 c6 9 ♜c7 d4 10 0-0-0 ♜h5

Not 10...dxc3?! 11 ♚xc3! (11 ♚xd8? turns the tables: 11...♙xd8 12 ♜xa8 [12 ♚xd8? gives fewer chances for Black to go wrong: 12...♙xd8 13 ♜xa8 ♚d1+! 14 ♜xd1 cxb2 winning] 12...♜xe4 13 ♙e3 [or 13 ♙xb8 ♜xf2] 13...cxb2+ 14 ♜xb2 ♙f6+ 15 ♜a3 b5! 16 ♙xa7 [16 ♜c7 ♙e5] 16...♜a6 and in all these lines Black is clearly on top) 11...♜bd7 12 ♜xa8 ♜xe4 13 ♚e3 ♜ef6 14 ♙c4 (or maybe even 14 ♚xa7), when White has the upper hand.



11 ♙e5

If 11 ♜xa8 ♜xf4 12 ♚xd4 ♚xd4 13 ♚xd4 ♜e6 14 ♚d1 b5 – the recurring theme is the trapped knight on a8 and White’s material superiority may not last very long; while 11 ♚xd4!? ♜xf4 12 ♚xd8 ♙xd8 13 ♜xa8 b6 14 g3 ♜g6 (or 14...♜e6) is unclear.

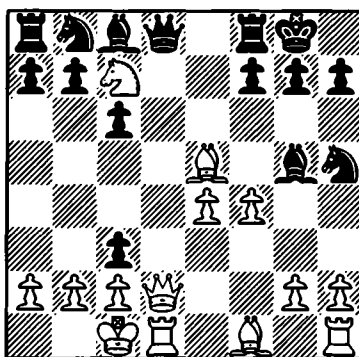
11...♙g5

a) 11...dxc3?! 12 ♚xd8! (12 ♚e2!?) 12...♚xd8 13 ♚xd8+ ♙xd8 14 ♜xa8 with a large edge.

b) 11...♜d7?! 12 ♚xd4 ♚b8 13 ♙d6

♙xd6 14 ♚xd6 and White should win. **12 f4 dxc3!?**

Or 12...♜xf4! 13 ♙xf4 ♚xc7 (theme: the pin!) 14 ♙xc7 (14 ♙xg5 dxc3 15 ♚xc3 is close to equal, as the isolani counterbalances the pair of bishops) 14...♙xd2+ 15 ♜xd2 dxc3+ 16 ♜xc3 ♜d7 (or 16...♙g4 first) and Black should hold.



With 12...dxc3!? we are following the game **Pavasovic-Nisipeanu, Ljubljana 2002**. Nisipeanu’s move complicates matters, but in White’s favour.

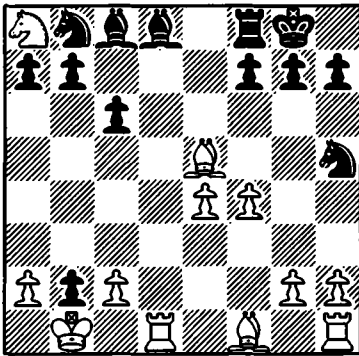
13 ♚xd8 cxb2+

13...♙xd8!? was perhaps more appropriate. Here’s a sample of the analysis published in *Chess Informant* which shows Black’s hidden resources (of course not everything is forced): 14 ♜xa8 ♙g4 15 ♚d3 (15 ♚d4) 15...♜d7! 16 ♙d6 (if 16 ♙xc3 ♜xf4 17 ♚g3 h5 18 ♙d2 ♙g5 19 ♜c7 ♚d8 20 h3 [20 ♚e3 ♜e5 21 h3 ♜xh3 22 ♚hxh3 ♙xh3 23 gxh3 ♜f3 and Black wins] 20...♜c5 21 ♚e3 ♜xh3 22 ♚hxh3 ♙xh3 23 gxh3 ♚c8 with a clear plus for Black) 16...♚e8 17 ♚xc3 ♚xe4 with an unclear position.

14 ♜b1

At first sight, a reflex move in this kind of position. The b2-pawn can in some cases protect the white king, but with the queens off 14 ♖xb2 looks normal (the white monarch may play an active role in this ending). White, however, anticipates that the king may be misplaced in some specific variations, where a pin on the long diagonal occurs: 14 ♖xb2 ♗xd8 15 ♘xa8 ♖g4 (not 15...♗f6? 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 17 ♗d4 with a clear plus) 16 ♗d4 (16 ♗d3 ♘d7 or 16...♗a6 is also messy) 16...♖e7 (16...♘d7?! 17 ♗d6 ♖f6 18 e5 ♗xa8 19 exf6 ♘hxf6 is clearly better for White) 17 h3 (17 f5 c5 18 ♗d6!?) 17...♘g3 18 ♗g1 ♖e2! is equal.

14...♗xd8 15 ♘xa8



15...♖g4

15...♘d7 was no better: 16 ♗d6 ♗e8 17 ♘c7 (or 17 ♗d3!?) 17...♗xe4 18 ♗d3 ♗a4 19 ♗he1 ♘df6 20 ♖e2! g6 21 ♗xh5 gxh5 22 ♖e5 and White enjoys a big advantage.

16 ♗d3 ♗a6 17 h3

17 ♗e3!? or 17 ♗d6 ♗e8 18 ♗a3! were also possible. The correct idea consists of getting rid of the knight on a6,

the guardian of the c7-square. Once it has disappeared, its white counterpart will manage to escape from the corner and the extra exchange will tell.

17...♖e6 18 f5?!

It wasn't too late for 18 ♗e3! (preceded or not by 16 ♗d6 ♗e8). White will keep the exchange and a clear ascendancy after 18...♖a5 19 f5, or 18...f6 19 ♗d6, or 18...♖f6 19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♗xa6 bxa6 21 ♘c7.

Now, however, Black stays alive.

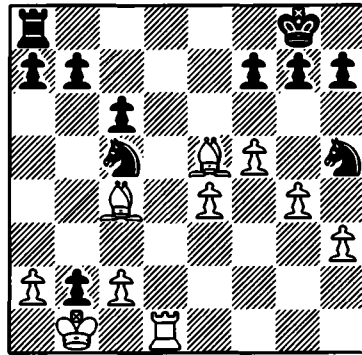
18...♖c4 19 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 20 ♖xc4 ♗xa8 21 ♗d1

21 g4! was still promising for White: 21...♘f6 22 ♗xa6 bxa6 23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♗d1 with a superior rook ending.

21...♘c5

If 21...b5? 22 ♖e2 ♘f6 23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♗d6.

22 g4



22...b5

The bishop must be kicked off the a2-g8 diagonal. On 22...♘f6?! 23 g5 ♘fd7 (23...♘fxe4 24 g6 is nasty too) 24 ♗xb2 ♘b6 25 ♗b3 White remains better, for instance 25...g6 26 fxg6 hxg6 27 ♗d6 ♖f8 28 ♖a3 ♘xb3 29 axb3 ♖e8 30

e5 ♖d5 31 e6 fxe6 32 ♜xe6+ ♜f7 33 ♜d6.
23 gxf5 bxc4

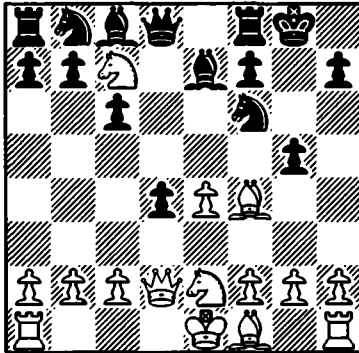
...and the players agreed a draw. Play could continue 24 ♜g1 g6 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 fxg6 ♜e8 (or 26...♖a4!?) with simplifications and sufficient counterplay for Black.

D222) 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4 0-0 7 ♗d2 d5 8 ♖db5 c6 9 ♖c7 d4 10 ♖e2?!

The move chosen in the stem game, **M.Brodsky-Nisipeanu, Bucharest 2001**, which we shall now follow.

10...g5!

Luring the bishop to e5, which will enable the b8-knight to develop with tempo.

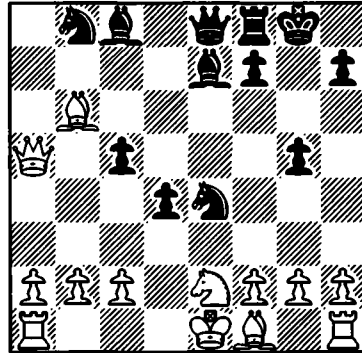


11 ♙e5

The alternative is 11 ♖xa8 and then:

a) 11...♖xe4!? is worth a try, when 12 ♙c7 ♗e8 13 ♗a5 (13 ♗xd4? invites the obvious 13...♙c5) 13...b6 14 ♖xb6 (worse is 14 ♗xa7? ♙b4+ 15 c3 dxc3 16 bxc3 ♖xc3 17 a3 ♖b5+ 18 axb4 ♖xa7 19 ♜xa7 ♗e4!, and although the material balance is approximately even, the lack of harmony in White's pieces makes

his position hopeless) 14...axb6 15 ♙xb6 c5...



...with pretty good compensation (even though the computer disagrees!): White's queen and b6-bishop are out of play, while most of his other pieces still occupy their initial squares.

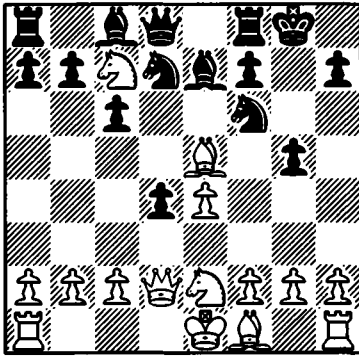
b) 11...gxf4 and now:

b1) 12 ♗xf4 ♖a6 13 ♖g3 ♖b4 14 0-0-0 ♖fd5! 15 ♗f3 ♖xa2+ 16 ♜b1 ♖dc3+ 17 bxc3 ♖xc3+ 18 ♗xc3 dxc3 19 ♜xd8 ♙xd8, followed by ...b5, ...♙b7xa8 and a resulting edge; or 13 0-0-0 c5 14 ♖g3 ♖g4 15 ♜b1 ♙d6 (Varga-Bacrot, Mainz rapid 2004), when Black will sooner or later have two minor pieces for a rook and a pawn – even though he still has a tough task ahead, Black should gradually be able to convert his advantage.

b2) 12 f3 c5 13 ♗xf4 ♖a6 14 ♖g3 ♖b4 and Black's compensation is easy to see: the a8-knight's days are numbered, the dark squares in White's camp are seriously weakened, and finally the direct threat of ...♖xc2+ is difficult to parry.

11...♖bd7!

11...dxe4?! 12 dxd4 d7 13 dxe4! (not 13 0-0-0?, which turns out badly after the long sequence 13...dxe5 14 dxe5 d6! 15 dxd8 dxe5 16 dxf8+ dxf8 17 dxa8 dxf2 18 g1 dxc2 19 g3 dxc3 20 dxc3 e7) 13...dxe5 14 dxa8 d5+ 15 c3 f5 16 dxc2 is clearly better for White. I think that he will find time to regroup while his opponent rounds up the knight on a8, and then he will be an exchange up for not too much compensation.



12 dxf6!

This is stronger than 12 dxa8 dxe4!? (here the safe 12...dxe5 avoids complications while keeping the advantage after 13 d3 dxe6 14 dxc3 dxc3 dxc5 18 dxe8 dxd3+ 19 d1 dxe8 with a clear plus) 16...d3 17 cxd3 dxb2 18 dxb6 dxe7! 19 dxe4 d4+ 20 d1 dxa1. Once again the position is chaotic and White's pieces are not well placed to rescue their king. The initiative counts for more than the material deficit.

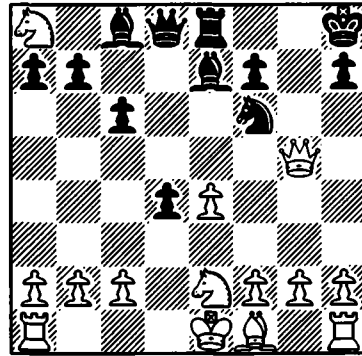
If instead 12 dxc6+ h8 13 dxa8 (13 0-0-0?! is even worse: 13...dxe5 14

dxe5 [or 14 dxa8 dfg4!]) 14...d6 15 dxd4 dxc7 and suddenly it is Black who gains material) 13...d5+ 14 d2 dxd2+ 15 dxd2 dxe5 16 d3 d7 17 f4 d6 and Black has an edge as the a8-knight is lost.

12...dxf6 13 dxc6+

After 13 dxa8 dxe4 14 dxd4 d5+ 15 c3 d5 Black has ideas of ...d5, ...d8 and ...dxa8 and firmly holds the initiative. 14...d4?, on the other hand, seems to fail to 15 dxd4 d4+ 16 c3 dxc3 17 a3 d8+ 18 d2 d4+ 19 d2.

13...h8 14 dxa8 d8!



We have reached the second critical phase of the game. If White still has a chance to escape, it is now or never!

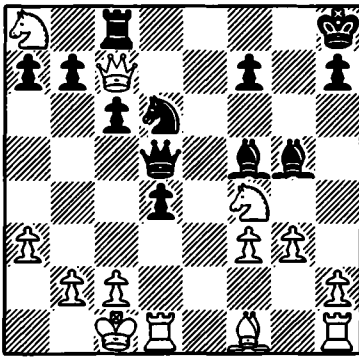
15 f3?

A mistake. Out of the alternatives, option 'e' looks like the best bet.

a) 15 e5? (underdeveloped, White can't afford a pawn move) 15...d4 16 d4 d5+ 17 c3 (17 d1?! d5) 17...dxc3 18 bxc3 dxc3 19 d2 d4 and heavy material losses are unavoidable, for instance 20 a3 dxe2 21 dxb4 dxe5 and Black wins.

b) 15 a3? (the previous comment also

applies here) 15...♖xe4 16 ♖e5+ ♔f6 17 ♜c7 ♜d5 (White's pieces completely lack any harmony; the threat is ...d3) 18 f3 ♘d6 19 0-0-0 (19 ♜b8 d3!) 19...♔f5 (Black's whole army is concentrated in direction of the enemy king) 20 ♘f4 (otherwise ...d3 and the monarch gets slaughtered) 20...♔g5 21 g3 ♝c8...

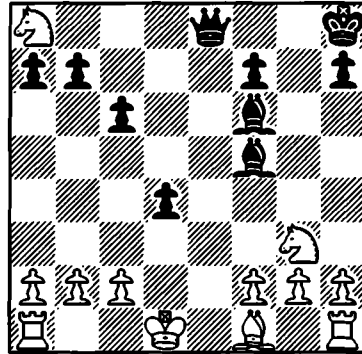


...winning the queen and the game.

c) 15 0-0-0?! ♖xe4 16 ♜h5 ♘xf2 17 ♝xd4 (not 17 ♘xd4? ♔g4 18 ♖e5+ ♔f6 and Black wins; or 17 h4? ♔g4 18 ♖e5+ ♔f6 19 ♜f4 ♘xd1 20 ♜xg4 ♘f2 21 ♜f3 ♘xh1 0-1 Karolyi-Ellenbroek, Apeldoorn rapid 2001) 17...♔g5+ 18 ♖b1 ♜xd4 (her majesty is taboo, but this isn't the end of the story) 19 ♜xg5 ♜d1+ 20 ♘c1 ♘e4! (20...♘xh1? 21 ♜f6+ ♖g8 22 ♜g5+ ♖f8 23 ♜h6+ ♖e7 24 ♜g5+ ♖d6 25 ♜f4+ is a draw by perpetual check) 21 ♔d3 ♜xd3 22 ♘xd3 (22 ♜f4 calls for the 'iron refutation', or the royal march, if you prefer: 22...♘d2+ 23 ♖a1 ♜xc2 24 ♜f6+ ♖g8 25 ♜g5+ ♖f8 26 ♜h6+ ♖e7 27 ♝e1+ ♖d7 28 ♜h3+ f5 29 ♜xh7+ ♖d6 30 ♜g6+ ♖d5 31 ♘c7+ ♖c4! 32 b3+ ♖c5 33 ♘d3+ ♜xd3 34 ♝c1+ ♖b6 35 ♘a8+ ♖a5 with a

trivial win!) 22...♘xg5 and White will have to be creative to solve the question of the a8-knight.

d) 15 ♘g3 ♖xe4 16 ♖e5+ ♔f6 17 ♜xe4 ♔f5 18 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8+ 19 ♖d1 isn't clear.



Optically I find the position really disgusting from White's point of view, but my assessment is probably subjective. He will certainly lose the a8-knight, with Black thus restoring the material balance. During this time White's task must be to coordinate his forces.

e) 15 ♜d2! ♖xe4 16 ♜xd4+ ♜xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♔b4+ (17...♔c5 doesn't work: 18 ♘c7 ♝e7 19 ♘ce6! ♔xe6 [or 19...fxe6 20 f3] 20 ♘xe6 ♔xf2+ 21 ♖e2 ♝xe6 22 ♖f3 and the extra exchange should tell) 18 ♖e2 ♘g3+ (18...♔c5?! 19 ♘b3!) 19 ♖f3 ♘xh1 20 ♔c4 b5 21 ♘c7 ♝e7 22 ♔b3 ♔c5! (22...♘xf2?! is wrong due to 23 ♘cxb5, while 22...♝xc7 23 ♝xh1 is given by Khalifman and Semkov in *Opening for White According to Anand* - Black doesn't have enough for the pawn) 23 ♝xh1 ♔xd4 24 ♝d1 ♔b7! 25 ♘d5 c5 26 c3 ♝e6! intending 27 cxd4 c4 28 ♔c2 ♔xd5+ when I think Black should

eventually equalize.

15...dxe4 16 We5+ g8

Black now has a clear advantage (but not 16...f6?? which loses to 17 Wc7 Wd5 18 fxe4).

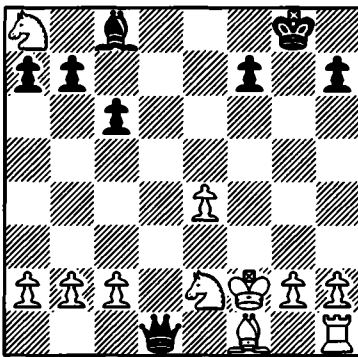
17 Wxd4

17 Wxe4 f6+ 18 c3 Wxe4 19 fxe4 dxc3 20 bxc3 f5 is similar to the game and equally bad for White, as is 17 Wf4 f6.

17...f5 18 Wxe4

Or 18 Wxd8 f2+ 19 e1 Wxd8+ 20 d4 f4 and Black enjoys a great advantage.

18...Wxe4 19 fxe4 f5 20 e1 f2+ 21 e2 Wxd1



The motif of the entire game is again apparent. After the recapture of the stranded knight White will only have a rook and a knight for the queen.

22 c3 Wd2 23 g3 Wxb2 24 f2 f3 25 f3 xf3 26 e3 Wd2! 27 f1

Or 27 e2 Wd8.

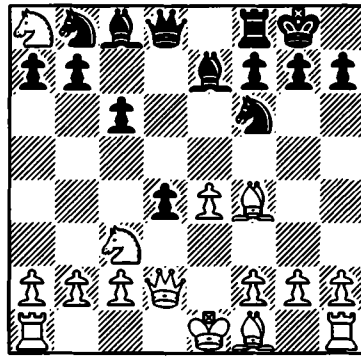
27...Wd3+ 28 e2 Wxe4 29 d4 We8 30 e7 Wd7 31 a6 bxa6 32 b1 c5 33 b8+ g7 34 e2 Wd2 35 c8 Wxa2 36 c5 a5 37 e3 a4 38 d4 a3 39 e5+ e6 40 d6 Wb1 0-1

An impressive game and superb preparation from Nisipeanu.

This game perfectly illustrates the risks White is running when he tries to keep an opening advantage. It has, of course, been thoroughly analysed and various improvements for White have been found. Finding the right path over the board, however, was 'mission impossible'.

D223) 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4 d6 5 d3 e7 6 f4 0-0 7 Wd2 d5 8 ddb5 c6 9 d7 d4 10 dxa8

The most efficient way to proceed. By eliminating the majority of Black's pieces, notably the queen, White reduces the handicap of his poor development.



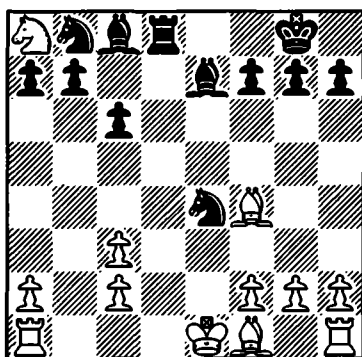
10...dxc3 11 Wxd8 Wxd8

11...f6?! seems to fall short after 12 b3!, intending 12...d7 13 f3, when I believe in a big advantage for White, as the knight should escape. 12 f6?, on the other hand, is unsound: 12...cxb2 13 b1 a5+ 14 e2 f4+ 15 f3 dxe4 16 e5 e8! (or 16...xa8) with a large plus to Black this time.

12 bxc3

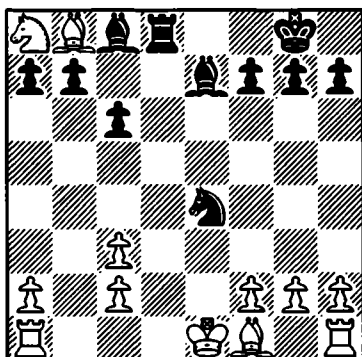
12 b3, which remains to be tested, might altogether refute Black's concept. But 12 ♖xb8? is not recommended: 12...cxb2 13 ♜b1 ♖b4+ 14 ♔e2 ♜xe4 15 ♜xb2 ♖c5 and despite a whole extra rook, White is in bad shape.

12...♜xe4



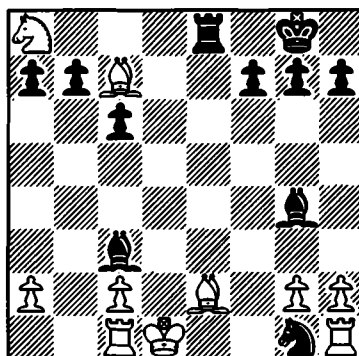
13 ♖d3

This leads to a more artistic position than 13 ♖xb8, but also one that is more difficult to evaluate.



After 13 ♖xb8, as in numerous other lines, White has an extra rook which he will try to consolidate: 13...♖f6 14 ♖d3 ♖xc3+ (14...♖f5!?) 15 ♔e2 ♖f5 16 ♜ad1

(White can't afford too much ambition here, as the following variations witness: 16 ♜ab1? ♜xb8 17 f3 ♜d6 with a Black advantage; or 16 ♖c7? ♜e8! 17 ♜ac1 ♜d2+ 18 ♔d1 ♖g4+ 19 f3 ♜xf3 20 ♖e2 ♜g1



[funny, isn't it?] 21 ♜b1 ♜xe2 0-1 Korneev-Milla de Marco, Campillos 2005; and finally the more reasonable 16 ♖xa7 ♜xa8 17 ♖e3 ♖xa1 18 ♜xa1 ♜c3+ 19 ♔d2 ♖xd3 20 ♔xc3, which was equal in L'Ami-Pavasovic, Maribor 2004) 16...♜xb8 17 f3 and now:

a) 17...♜xa8! (the most precise move) 18 ♖xe4 ♖e6 and Black looks safe enough as 19 ♜b1 runs into 19...f5 20 ♖d3 b5.

b) 17...♜d6 is inferior and leaves White with an edge: for example, 18 ♖xf5 ♜xf5 19 ♜c7 ♖e5 20 ♜d7 ♜c8 21 g4 ♜h4 (or 21...♜d4+ 22 ♔d3 ♜xf3 23 ♔e4) 22 ♜hd1 ♔f8 23 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 24 ♜xd8+ ♔e7 25 ♜e8+ ♔d6 (25...♔f6? 26 g5+ ♔f5 27 ♜e7 with a clear advantage) 26 ♜a8 followed by ♜b8 and White is in no danger of losing; on the contrary, it is Black who has to battle to save the draw.

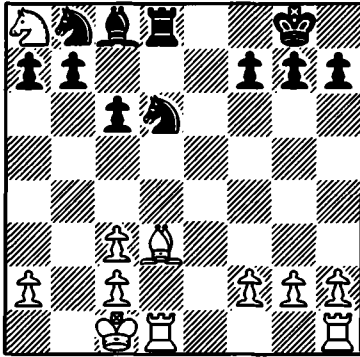
13...♗d6

13...♘d6 14 0-0-0 gives a clear advantage to White.

14 ♗xd6

The alternative 14 ♗e3!? may be even stronger.

14...♘xd6 15 0-0-0



15...♖f8

15...b6 has been tried in practice, but without success: 16 ♖he1 ♖f8 17 ♘c7 g6 (17...♗d7 only prolongs the agony: 18 ♗f5 ♖xc7 19 ♖xd6 ♗d7 20 ♗xh7 g6 21 ♗xg6 fxg6 22 ♖xg6 ♗e8 23 ♖xe8+ 1-0 Bindrich-Lorscheid, Budapest 2005) 18 ♗f1 1-0 Martorelli-Di Caro, Rome 2005, since ♖xd6 followed by ♖e8+, winning a piece, is unstoppable.

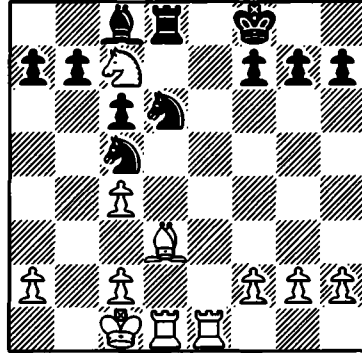
16 ♖he1 ♘d7

White is an exchange up, but the knight on a8 is still a concern.

17 c4!

Not 17 ♗xh7?! ♘f6 18 ♗d3 ♘fe8! followed by ...♗d7 and ...♖xa8.

17...♘c5 18 ♘c7



The animal is alive, even if it still can't get out! The position, albeit confusing, seems more suspicious for Black, because I can't really figure out how he will round up the knight on c7.

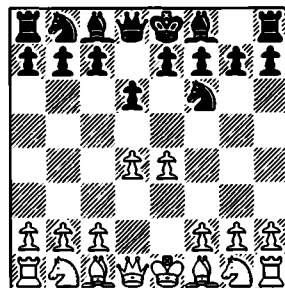
Conclusion

Nisipeanu's 8...c6 is the move upon which the entire assessment of 7...d5 depends. If Black stands well, then the development of ♗f4, ♖d2 is harmless; otherwise, as seems to be the case, White enjoys a certain advantage.

White enjoys a clearer plus in the other lines, although 9...a6 in Line C2 is worth further investigation.

Chapter Five

Early Deviations and 3 f3



Because of the difficulties Black has experienced with the lines treated in the first four chapters, another move order to reach the Philidor Defence has arisen in practice.

By playing 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 Qbd7 Black avoids having to accept a persistent disadvantage or a wild but risky position.

This move order also has an independent significance, as White isn't obliged to go for 4 Qf3. Black thus needs to be aware of the secondary lines 4 g4, 4 f4, and 4 Qe3 with a plan based on 0-0-0, which are still rather unexplored. Deviations at move 3 are also possible for White, mainly with either 3 Qd3 or 3 f3, and these two moves are the subjects of Chapters 5 and 6.

As for Black, he can also opt for 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 e5!? (Chapter 7), the ending resulting from 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 Qxd8+ Qxd8 being fully playable.

Before entering into the heart of

our subject, let's have a quick look at deviations prior to 3...Qf6.

Second Move Alternatives

1 e4 d6 2 d4

2 Qc3 avoids the Philidor – for those who have understood how strong this opening is! Now 2...c5 is a Sicilian Defence; 2...e5 3 f4 a King's Gambit; and finally 2...Qf6 3 f4 g6 4 d4 Qg7 5 Qf3 transposes into the Austrian Attack of the Pirc Defence.

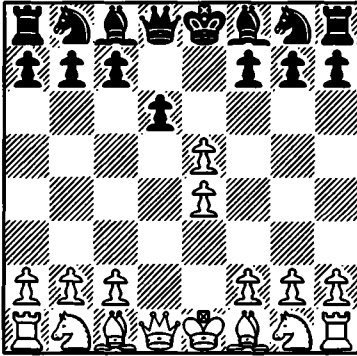
2...e5

2...Qd7 3 Qf3 e5 transposes to Chapter 1. Instead 3...Qgf6?! 4 e5 is unhealthy for Black: the position resembles Alekhine's Defence where the d7-knight would be misplaced. This gives White attacking prospects based on e6 ...fxe6; Qg5, but also a good game if he continues more calmly: 4...Qd5 5 c4 Q5b6 6 Qc3 etc.

3 dxe5

3 Qf3(!) transposes back to 1 e4 e5 2

♟f3 d6 3 d4.



3...dxe5 4 ♜xd8+ ♝xd8 5 ♙c4 f6 6 ♙e3 c6 7 ♟d2 ♟d7 8 ♟b3!

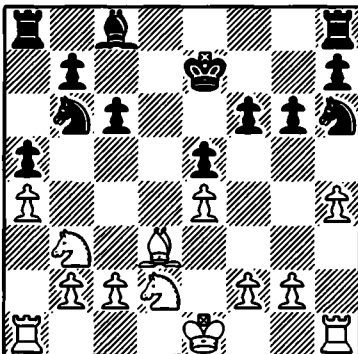
8 ♟e2 and 8 0-0-0 are other sensible continuations. In all cases the position oscillates between a slight edge to White and equality.

8...g6

8...♟b6 9 ♙e2 ♟a4 10 0-0-0+ ♝c7 11 ♟f3 ♙e6 12 ♟fd2 g6 13 f4 ♙d6 14 g3 left White with a slight edge in Rezaei-Ardeschi, Tehran 2001.

9 h4 ♙h6 10 ♙xh6 ♟xh6 11 ♟f3 ♝e7 12 a4 a5 13 ♟fd2 ♟f7?!

Or 13...♟b6 14 ♙d3...



...with a small plus for White (the

knight on h6 is badly placed, and there's a possibility of playing ♟b3-c5) but it is one that should evaporate against precise defence from Black.

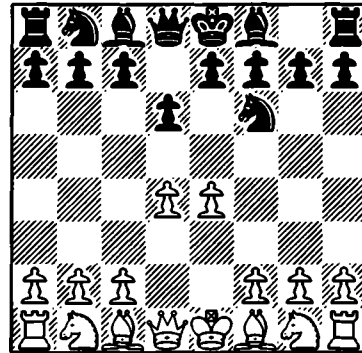
14 ♙xf7! ♝xf7 15 ♟c4 b6 16 0-0-0

...with a clear advantage to White, Al.Moreno-Moreira Romero, Latacunga 2000, as Black will experience problems finishing his development.

In conclusion, the endgames resulting from an early dxe5 dxe5; ♜xd8+ ♝xd8 aren't to be feared by Black in general. White's slight initiative should evaporate bit by bit, leaving the position roughly equal. I thus recommend avoiding these endings by playing 3 ♟f3 (unless White is an endgame expert or not averse to a draw).

Black Plays 2...♟f6

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6



Now we will consider:

A: 3 ♟d2

B: 3 f3

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟d2

This insipid move doesn't pose Black real problems. Indeed, compared to 3 ♖c3 many drawbacks are apparent: White's control of the centre is diminished (d5 is beyond the knight's horizon); the c1-bishop is blocked in; and the queen's development options are limited.

Now either 3...g6 or 3...e5 should equalize. Here's a rather recent example, **Esquivel-Bauer**, taken from FIDE's Internet qualifications for the World Championship:

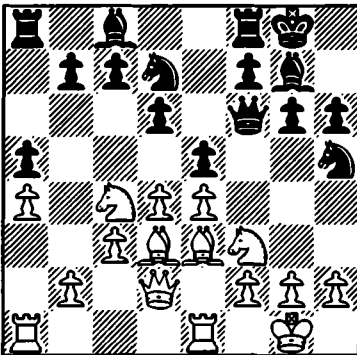
3...e5 4 c3 g6

4...♗e7 offers similarities to 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 ♗c4 ♗e7, seen in Chapter 1.

5 ♖gf3 ♖bd7

5...♖c6!? is another option.

6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 0-0 0-0 8 a4 a5 9 ♗e1 ♖h5 10 ♖c4 h6 11 ♗e3 ♗f6 12 ♗d2



12...♖h7?!

A loss of time (12...g5!), and moreover the relationship between the d3-bishop and the king on h7 is a bit uncomfortable.

13 b3?!

Returning the favour with a senseless move.

13...♗e8 14 ♗ad1 ♖f8 15 h3 g5

If 15...♗xh3?! 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 ♖fxe5 and the tactics end in White's favour.

16 ♖h1 ♖g6 17 ♖h2 ♖hf4 18 ♗c2 h5 19 ♖a3!

Seeking play before the Black attack on the other wing becomes too strong.

19...g4 20 ♖b5 ♗e7 21 hxg4 hxg4 22 dxe5 dxe5

22...♗xe5 23 ♖d4! followed by ♖f5 is annoying.

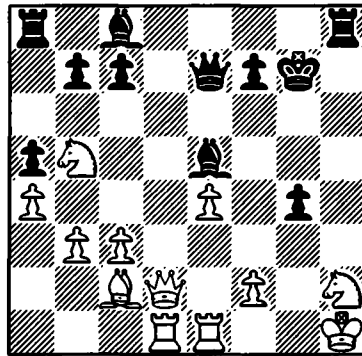
23 g3 ♗h8?!

Optimistic, but 23...♖h5 24 ♗e2 ♖f6 25 ♗g5 didn't appeal to me.

24 gxf4 exf4 25 ♗xf4

25 ♗d4! was stronger, when either 25...♗h4 or 25...g3 is probably insufficient.

25...♖xf4 26 ♗xf4 ♗e5 27 ♗d2 ♖g7



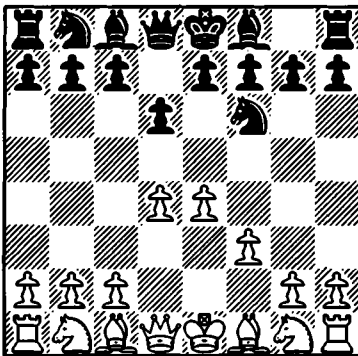
At this point the whole remaining six minutes of my opponent's time passed away. He probably didn't manage to reconnect and lost on time!

The final position is complex and offers level chances. For example, 28 f4 g3 (28...gxf3? 29 ♗g1+ ♖f8 30 ♗d8+ ♗e8 31 ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 32 ♗d2 and White wins) 29 ♗e2 (not 29 ♗g1? ♗xf4!)

29...♗g4 30 ♖e3 ♗xe2 31 ♖xg3+ ♕f8 with an unclear position.

In conclusion, by choosing 3 ♘d2 White can't really expect an opening edge. But this sub-variation shouldn't be neglected. It leads to rather flexible and often complex positions, as few pieces get traded at an early stage.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3



This move relies on the spatial advantage White usually gains in several of the ensuing variations. The most frequent Black reply consists of 3...e5 (Line B2), or 3...♘bd7 followed by ...e5 (Line B3). One of Black's strategic goals is then to swap the dark-squared bishops with the manoeuvre ...♗e7, ...♘h5 and ...♗g5.

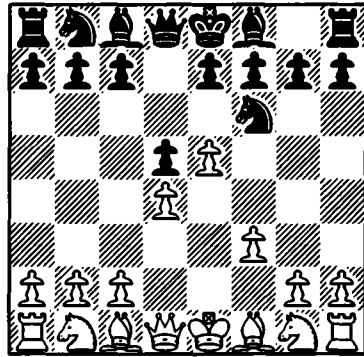
From the diagrammed position we will look at the following moves:

- B1: 3...d5**
- B2: 3...e5**
- B3: 3...♘bd7**

3...c5 and 3...g6 are playable continuations too, their drawback being

the vast choice of options they leave White. 3...c5 may lead to an Alapin Sicilian after 4 c3, or a Benoni after 4 d5 e6 5 c4 exd5 6 cxd5. While after 3...g6 Black must be ready to transpose into a King's Indian Sämisch in the event of 4 c4 ♗g7 5 ♘c3 0-0 etc.

B1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3 d5 4 e5



Now Black must make a decision:

B11: 4...♘g8!?

B12: 4...♘fd7

B11) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3 d5 4 e5 ♘g8!?

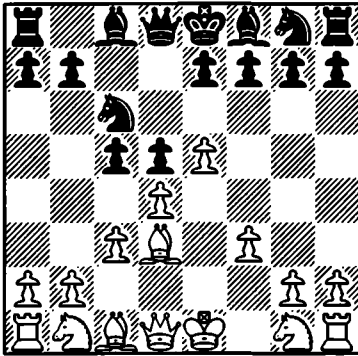
Intending to reroute the knight to f5, via e7 or h6.

5 ♗d3

Aiming to prevent the development of the c8-bishop while Black hasn't touched his e-pawn (after ...e7-e6 it won't be able to develop on its best diagonal, c8-h3).

Instead, 5 c3 c5 6 f4 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♘c6 8 ♘c3 ♘h6, followed by ...♘f5 and ...e6, is a good version of the French Advance for Black.

5...c5 6 c3 ♖c6



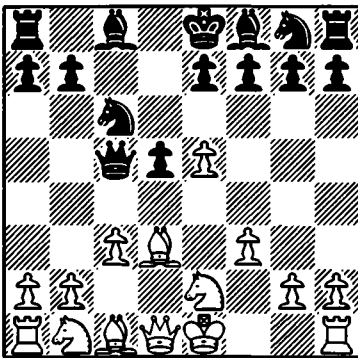
7 ♖e2

7 ♖e3 isn't enough to claim an edge either, because of 7...♗b6 8 ♗d2 cxd4 9 cxd4 ♖b4, when Black either grabs the pair of bishops or manages to develop his 'bad' bishop on f5.

7...♗b6 8 dxc5

It was difficult for White to maintain the tension.

8...♗xc5



9 b4

Setting up a possible b4-b5 push.

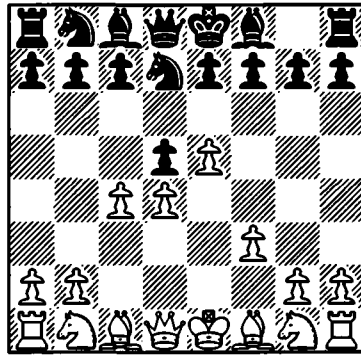
9...♗b6 10 f4 a6

...with an original and unclear position, Zsinka-Beim, Oberwart 1996.

The more typical 10...e6 also deserves consideration, with 11 b5 ♖a5 or 11...♖b8!? offering level chances.

B12) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 f3 d5 4 e5 ♖fd7 5 c4

5 f4 c5 6 ♖f3 e6 comes back to a French Defence.



5...dxc4 6 ♖xc4 e6

6...♖b6 7 ♖b3 ♖c6 8 ♖e2 ♖f5 would this time transpose to a line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but where the f-pawn usually stands at f2. Korchnoi-Bauer, Swiss Team Ch. 2005, continued 9 ♖bc3 e6 10 0-0 ♗d7 11 ♖e3, and now Black could have benefited from the above-mentioned nuance by means of 11...♖a5 12 ♖c2 ♖ac4 13 ♖c1 ♖xc2 14 ♗xc2 c5!.

7 f4 c5 8 ♖f3

8 dxc5 was the King's preference in the encounter Kasparov-Cu.Hansen, Svendborg (match) 1990. There followed 8...♖xc5 9 ♖f3 a6 10 ♖c3 b5 11 ♖d3 ♖b7 12 a3 ♖c6 and Black should be okay. Note that 9...♗b6?! is a loss of time because after 10 ♖c3!, 10...♖f2+ 11 ♖e2 causes Black more problems than

his opponent: then ♟e4, targeting d6, will gain time by attacking the bishop, and the white king, surrounded by its own pieces, can't be seriously harassed.

8...♟c6

With counterplay. On the hasty 9 d5?!, for example, Black could already claim an edge on account of 9...♟b6!.

B2)

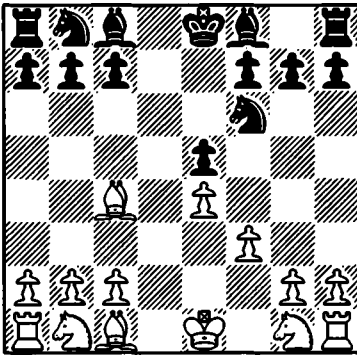
1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 f3 e5

...and now:

B21: 4 ♟e2

B22: 4 d5

The dry 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♛xd8+ ♚xd8 6 ♟c4 ♚e8...

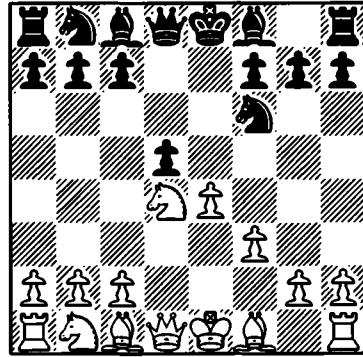


...followed by ...♟bd7, ...♟c5 and so on, doesn't cause Black the slightest problem (except how to win!). The position is similar to 3 ♟c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♛xd8+ ♚xd8, with the difference that f3 is occupied by a pawn rather than a knight. As a consequence, White doesn't attack e5, leaving his opponent with much more time to arrange his pieces effectively.

B21) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 f3 e5 4 ♟e2

This move avoids both the boring 4 dxe5 and the main line 4 d5. Black can either opt for similar development as after 4 d5, or try to achieve the ...d5 push under favourable conditions.

4...exd4 5 ♟xd4 d5!

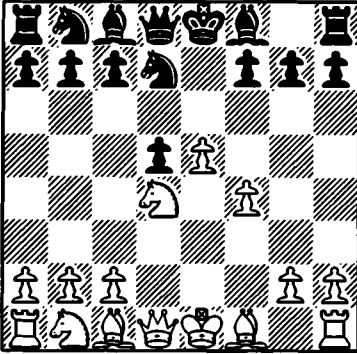


The real test of White's system. Instead 5...♟e7?! enables the first player to set up the bind e4/c4, after which he can count on a persistent plus owing to his space advantage: 6 c4 0-0 7 ♟c3 c6 8 ♟e3 (or 8 ♟e2 ♛e8 9 ♟c2 ♟bd7 10 0-0 ♟f8 11 ♚h1 with an easier game for White in Lautier-Degraeve, Aix les Bains 2003) 8...♛e8 9 ♛d2 d5 (if 9...♟f8!? then 10 0-0-0 should be the way to proceed [10 ♟e2?! allows the freeing 10...d5] as after 10...d5?! 11 ♟c2 a pawn drops) 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♟b5! (better than 11 e5 ♟c5! 12 exf6 ♟xd4 13 ♛xd4 ♟c6 14 ♛f4 d4 when Black should be more or less okay) 11...♟d7 12 e5 ♟xb5 (12...♟c5?! doesn't work so well this time: 13 exf6 ♟xd4 14 ♛xd4 ♟xb5 15 0-0-0 ♟c6 16 ♛f4 with a tangible advantage) 13 ♟dxb5 a6 14 ♟d4 when White was better and won a nice

game in Anand-Nisipeanu, German League 2004.

6 e5 ♖fd7 7 f4

In this position Black has three continuations, each of which gives fair equalizing prospects in my opinion.



7...♖c6

With the idea of ...♖dx5; fxe5 ...♖h4+ and ...♖xd4. Alternatively:

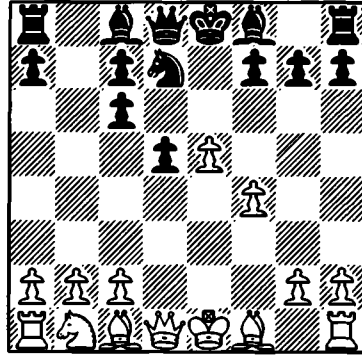
a) 7...c5 8 ♖f3 ♖b6 9 c3 ♖c6 10 ♖d3 d4 (10...♖g4?! is worse: 11 h3 ♖xf3 12 ♖xf3 c4 13 ♖c2 d4 14 ♖e4 ♖c8 15 0-0 ♖c5 16 ♖h2 and White stands better) 11 ♖a3 dxc3 12 bxc3 ♖e6 13 ♖e2 ♖a4 with a mess, Piket-Shirazi, Antwerp 1998.

b) 7...♖b6 8 ♖c3?! (or 8 a4!? c5, Movsesian-Fridman, Internet blitz 2005) 8...♖b4 9 ♖d2 0-0 10 ♖e2 f6 and the initiative passed to Black in W.Rosen-G.Braun, German Senior Team Ch. 1994.

8 ♖xc6

Or 8 ♖f3 ♖b6 9 ♖d3 (9 a4!?) 9...♖b4! 10 ♖e2 (10 0-0!? ♖xd3 11 ♖xd3 is unclear) 10...♖f5 11 ♖a3 (not 11 ♖d4? ♖e4 and ...c5 is coming) 11...♖c4! and Black was fine in G.Livshits-V.Golod, Israeli Team Ch. 2005.

8...bxc6



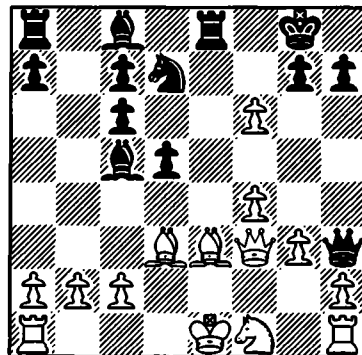
9 ♖d3 ♖h4+ 10 g3 ♖h3 11 ♖f3 ♖c5 12 ♖e3 0-0 13 ♖d2

Or 13 ♖xc5!? ♖xc5 14 ♖c3.

13...f6 14 exf6

If 14 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 15 ♖e3 ♖xd3+ 16 cxd3 fxe5 17 fxe5 ♖g4!.

14...♖e8 15 ♖f1



15...♖xf6!

The tempting 15...♖xe3? 16 ♖xe3 d4 dxe3 18 ♖xc6 ♖b8 19 ♖d5+ ♖h8 20 fxg7+ ♖xg7 21 ♖c4 etc.

16 ♖d2 ♖g4 17 ♖f2 d4 18 ♖xd4 ♖e2+ 19 ♖xe2 ♖e4+

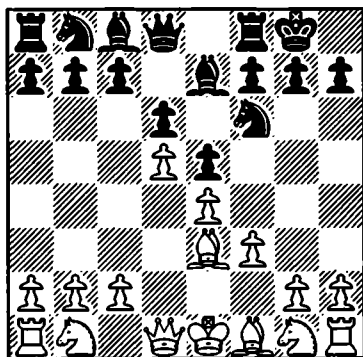
...and White resigned, Rauzer-Ilyin

Zhenevsky, USSR Ch., Tbilisi 1937. An impressive miniature, in which it is not obvious what White did wrong.

B22) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 f3 e5 4 d5

The most principled continuation, and perhaps the only viable try to gain an opening advantage.

4...♙e7 5 ♙e3 0-0



From this position we will examine:

B221: 6 ♙d3

B222: 6 c4

B221) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 f3 e5 4 d5 ♙e7 5 ♙e3 0-0 6 ♙d3 c6 7 c4 b5!?

An ambitious plan that aims to undermine White's centre. Black's concept is partly justified by the white king still being stuck in the middle.

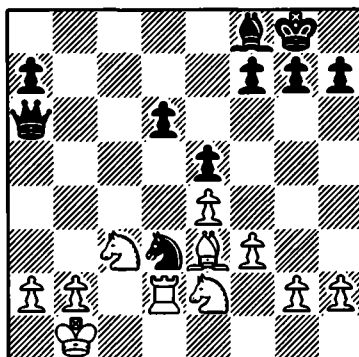
8 ♟c3

8 ♟e2 would have rendered the option 8...b4 less appropriate than in the game, and practically forced Black to take on c4. In this case, however, Black would have enjoyed extra possibilities, as the following variations demonstrate: 8...bxc4 9 ♙xc4 cxd5 (9...♙b7 10

♟bc3 would transpose to 8 ♟c3; this is a better option than 10 dxc6?! ♟xc6 11 ♟bc3 ♟a5 when Black is ready for the freeing ...d5, or if 12 ♙d5?! ♟xd5 13 ♟xd5 ♟c4 with a strong initiative) 10 ♙xd5 ♟xd5 11 ♟xd5 ♟d7! (a trick that renders Black's position playable) 12 ♟xa8 (or 12 ♟bc3 ♙b7 13 ♟d2 ♟a6 14 0-0 ♟c7 and here, too, the ...d5 push is in the air) 12...♟c6 13 ♟bc3 ♙a6 14 ♟xf8+ ♙xf8 and now:

a) 15 0-0 ♟d4 16 ♟xd4 exd4 17 ♙xd4 ♙xf1 18 ♟xf1, and with rook, knight and one pawn for her majesty, White isn't worse. This is all the more true because the knight will occupy a wonderful square on d5, and also because the pawns on a7 and d6 are weak. Judging whether White has any realistic chances to win, however, is another debate.

b) 15 0-0-0! ♟b4 16 ♟d2 ♟c6 17 ♟b1 (or 17 a3 ♙xe2 18 axb4 ♙c4 19 ♟hd1 a6!?) 17...♙d3+ 18 ♟xd3 (or 18 ♟a1 ♟c2+ 19 ♟xc2 ♙xc2 20 ♟c1 ♙d3 21 ♟d5 with full compensation for the queen) 18...♟xd3 19 ♟d1 ♟a6 20 ♟d2 is similar to the previous note.

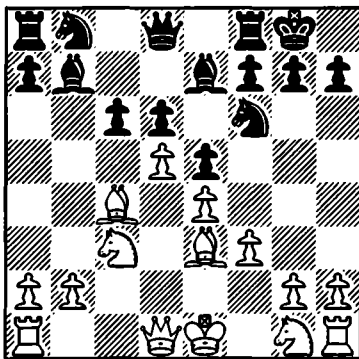


Again White doesn't risk much: the 'bad' bishop on f8 and the beautiful d5 outpost provide excellent compensation for the small material deficit.

8...bxc4

Black can also play 8...b4!? 9 ♖ce2 (9 ♖a4 c5 10 a3 ♖a6 or 10...a5!? leads to a complex game as well) 9...a5 (9...♗h5? would be pointless: after 10 g4 the sacrifice 10...♗f4 11 ♖xf4 exf4 12 ♗xf4 is dubious, while the kingside expansion with 10 g4 improves White's position) 10 ♖g3 ♖a6 which is unclear. Black has kept intact the possibility of opening the c-file (by playing a later ...cxd5) and has thus retained potential counterplay. Closing the queenside completely would of course be a strategic mistake, since White would be free to attack on the other wing.

9 ♗xc4 ♗b7



The whole game now revolves around the key square d5. White will try to occupy it with a piece (after the exchange ...cxd5), while simultaneously neutralizing his opponent's activity.

10 ♖b3!

Or 10 ♖ge2 ♖bd7 11 dxc6 ♗xc6 and:

a) 12 ♖d5 ♖xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖f6 is equal, as ...d5 is next on the agenda.

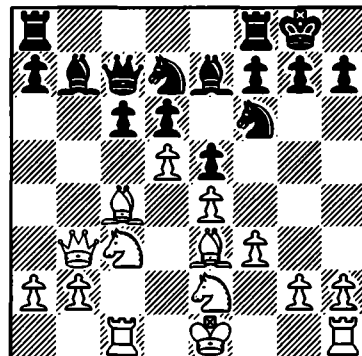
b) 12 ♖d3 ♖b6 13 ♗b5 ♗xb5 (13...♖d7!?) 14 ♖xb5 d5 15 ♗xb6 axb6 and ...♗a5 follows.

c) 12 ♖d2 ♖b6 13 ♗b3 a5 14 a3 d5 15 ♗xb6 ♖xb6 16 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 17 exd5 ♗fd8! and with the pair of bishops and the enemy king stuck in the centre Black has nothing to complain about.

10...♖c7 11 ♖ge2

11 ♗c1 ♖bd7 12 ♖ge2 transposes to the text, while 12 dxc6 ♗xc6 is comfortable for Black: for example, 13 ♖b5?! ♖b7 or 13...♖a5+ 14 ♗d2 ♖b6. Instead, 11...cxd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♖a5+ 14 ♗d2 ♗xd5 15 exd5 is a rare case where the recapture on d5 by a pawn isn't bad, the reasons being the weak c6-square and Black's lack of development; after 15...♖a6 16 ♖e2 ♗c8 (or 16...♖d7!?) 17 ♗xc8+ ♖xc8 18 ♖f2 chances are level. Or if 15 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 16 exd5 ♖d7 (or 16...♖a6!?) 17 ♗c7 ♗fd8 18 ♖e2 ♖f8, planning a knight move, and Black should be okay.

11...♖bd7 12 ♗c1!

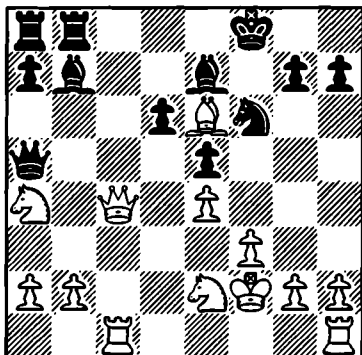


12...♞fb8

12...c5!? was an interesting option, leaving both light-squared bishops misplaced. Black could then slowly prepare the ...f5 thrust.

13 dxc6 ♟xc6 14 ♟xf7+ ♟f8 15 ♖c4 ♞xb2

Black had a worthy alternative in 15...♟b6!?, bringing huge tactical complications: 16 ♟xb6 (16 ♟b5? nets an exchange but is wrong: 16...♟xc4 17 ♟xc7 ♟xe3 18 ♞xc6 ♟xf7 19 ♟xa8 ♟xg2+ 20 ♟f2 ♟f4 21 ♟xf4 exf4 22 ♟c7 ♞xb2+ and it's Black who ends up better) 16...♖xb6 17 ♟e6 ♟b7 18 ♟a4! (probably the best way to consolidate the extra pawn; other attempts would give Black more play, for instance: 18 ♖b3?! ♖e3, 18 ♞c2 a5, or 18 b4?! d5! 19 ♟xd5 [or 19 exd5 ♟xb4] 19...♟xd5 20 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 21 exd5 ♟xb4+ 22 ♟f1 ♖e3 in all cases with an unclear position) 18...♖a5+ (on 18...♖e3? 19 ♞c3 ♖g5 20 0-0 White succeeds in solving his main problem, i.e. evacuating his king, and stands much better) 19 ♟f2



19...♟a6 (the tactical 19...♟xe4?! is insufficient after 20 fxex4 ♞b4 21 ♖c6

♟xe4+ 22 ♟g1 when, thanks to the attack on the a8-rook, White keeps his extra piece; 19...d5 20 exd5 ♟xd5 21 ♟c5 is also in White's favour) 20 ♖c2 ♞b4 21 b3 and it seems that Black doesn't have quite enough compensation for the pawn.

16 ♟d5 ♟c5

Or 16...♞c8 17 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♟xc6 ♞xc6 19 ♟xa7 with an extra pawn for which Black's activity doesn't fully compensate.

17 0-0

17 ♟xc6!? ♖xc6 (17...♞b4? loses to 18 ♖xb4 ♟d3+ 19 ♟f1 ♟xb4 20 ♟xa8) 18 0-0 ♞ab8 19 a3 a5 20 f4 ♖a6 21 ♖xa6 ♟xa6 is equal, as is 19 ♞b1 ♞xb1 20 ♞xb1 ♞xb1+ 21 ♟xb1 d5.

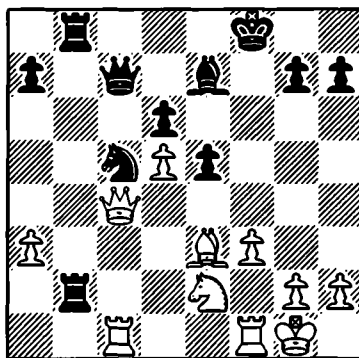
17...♞ab8 18 a3

With the idea of f4.

18...♟xd5 19 ♟xd5!

19 exd5 is met by 19...♟e6!.

19...♟xd5 20 exd5



We have been following the game Gelfand-M.Adams, Tilburg 1996, a tense strategical and tactical struggle in which Black sought active counterplay from the very beginning by undermin-

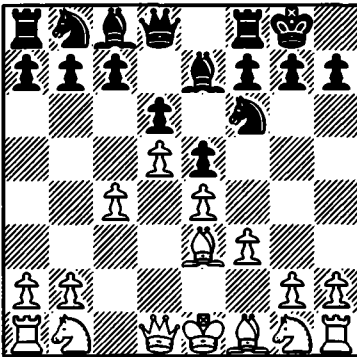
ing White's centre, and in doing so obtained a complex game with level chances.

Here Adams erred with 20...♞a5?! 21 f4 e4 22 ♔d4 ♜2b3?, the first real mistake from the Englishman. Instead, after 22...♔f6!? 23 ♔xb2 (or 23 ♔xf6 gxf6 with the idea of ...♞d2) 23...♜xb2 24 ♜c2 ♞xa3, the passed pawn supported by the mighty f6-bishop provides adequate compensation for the exchange.

Also, 20...♜8b3! was stronger, since after Gelfand's suggestion of 21 ♘c3 (or 21 ♜c3 ♞a5) 21...♜xa3 22 f4 e4 23 ♔d4 'with compensation', Black has the nasty 23...♞a5!, with the idea of ...♜b4.

B222) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3 e5 4 d5 ♔e7 5 ♔e3 0-0 6 c4

6 ♞d2 usually comes to the same thing, as White can't really do without both moves.



6...c6

Or 6...a5!? (with the idea, as in the King's Indian, of establishing a knight on c5) 7 ♘c3 ♘fd7 8 ♔d3 ♔h4+ 9 g3

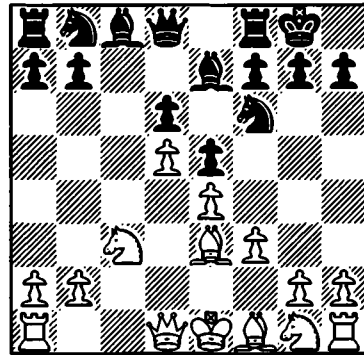
♔g5 10 ♔f2 with an edge for White in C.Lutz-A.Sokolovs, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

7 ♘c3 cxd5?!

With 7...a6 8 ♞d2 b5 Black tries to undermine his opponent's centre and generate counterplay on the queenside, where he will soon open lines: 9 ♜d1 b4 10 ♘ce2 a5 11 ♘g3 ♘a6 12 ♘le2 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♔d7 14 ♘c1 ♞b8 15 ♘b3 a4 16 ♘a5 (Sakaev-Svidler, Yugoslav Team Ch. 1995) and a draw was agreed in a position still full of life!

7...cxd5?! was played in the game **Sakaev-Nevednichy, European Ch., Ohrid 2001**, which we shall now follow. Nevednichy probably feared an improvement over the Svidler game and thus decided to deviate first.

8 cxd5



A King's Indian position with the significant nuance that the bishop stands on e7 rather than g7. Black gains the possibility of a future ...♔g5, but traditional counterplay based on ...f5 is slowed down.

8...♘h5 9 g3 g6

9...♔g5 doesn't help Black after 10

♙f2, threatening to grab a piece by playing 11 f4.

10 ♚d2 f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 0-0-0 ♙d7

Strange, as 12...♘d7 seemed quite natural. After 13 f4, however, White would enjoy a pleasant position anyway.

13 f4 ♙f6 14 ♘f3

14 fxe5!? dxe5 would have been unclear (but not 14...♙xe5?! 15 ♘f3).

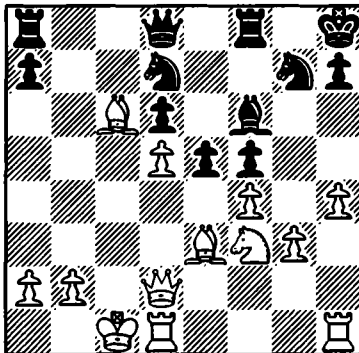
14...♙h8 15 ♙e2 ♘g7 16 h4

Stronger was central play with 16 fxe5! dxe5 17 ♚he1, when the pressure on e5 would have caused Black serious problems.

16...b5?

Here 16...e4! 17 ♘d4 ♘a6 led to a complex game, with reciprocal chances. The Romanian's move is too optimistic (indeed, Black will never see this pawn again!).

17 ♘xb5 ♙xb5 18 ♙xb5 ♘d7 19 ♙c6



The bishop is solidly cemented on c6 and grants White an advantage. Black will still fight, but without real hope of salvation.

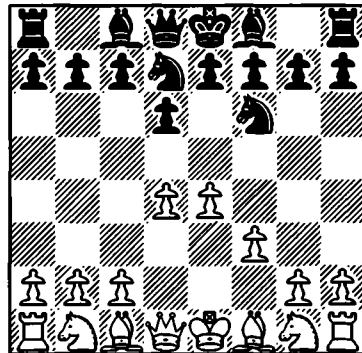
19...♚b8 20 b3 a5 21 h5 ♘e8 22 ♚h2 ♚b4 23 ♚c2 ♙e4 24 ♙d2 exf4 25 gxf4

♘c5 26 ♘g5 ♚b6 27 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 28 ♙e2 ♘g7 29 h6 ♘h5 30 ♙xe4 fxe4 31 ♚xe4

With two extra pawns, White is winning and the rest requires no comment – though Sakaev took his time.

31...♚c5+ 32 ♙b1 ♚f2 33 ♚e3 ♚h4 34 ♚f3 ♚h2 35 ♚e3 ♚h4 36 ♚e6 ♚f2 37 ♙c1 ♚f3 38 ♙d2 ♚xf4 39 ♚e2 ♘g3 40 ♚f2 ♚e4+ 41 ♙c2 ♘f5 42 ♚f4 ♚d3 43 ♙b5 ♚xd5 44 ♙c4 ♚e5 45 ♚xe5 dxe5 46 ♙d3 ♘d6 47 ♙a3 ♙d8 48 ♙f2 ♙h4 49 ♙f1 ♘c8 50 ♙f8 ♘b6 51 ♙g7+ ♙g8 52 ♙f5 ♙f7 53 ♙xh7+ ♙e7 54 ♙g6 ♘d5 55 h7 ♘f4 56 ♙xf4 1-0

C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 f3 ♘bd7



This way Black avoids the dull 3...e5 4 dxe5, but purists may find Black's third move to be inaccurate.

4 ♙e3 e5 5 d5 ♙e7 6 c4 ♘h5

A manoeuvre which aims to exchange the 'bad' e7-bishop. In contrast to the Sakaev-Nevednichy game (Line B222), Black doesn't mix actions on both flanks (...c6 and ...♘h5), and this seems sounder. We will follow the game **Baklan-Galdunts, Metz 2000**.

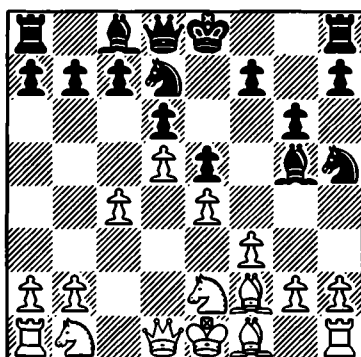
7 ♖e2?

7 ♜d2 allows 7...h6 and ...♗g5. If White insists on preventing the swap with 8 g3 ♗g5 9 f4?!, then 9...exf4 10 gxf4 ♗h4+ 11 ♗f2 ♜f6 seizes the initiative.

7...♗g5 8 ♗f2

White withdraws his bishop, but its black counterpart is more active at present.

8...g6



Planning a future ...f5. Black obviously wishes to recapture on f5 with a pawn, so as not to concede an outpost on e4 to an enemy knight.

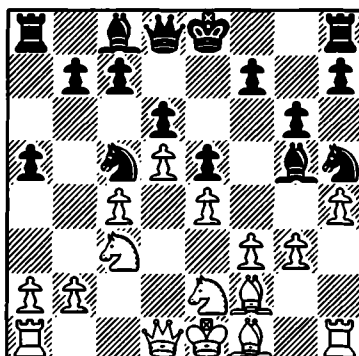
9 ♖bc3 a5

If 9...0-0 10 g3 (10 h4!? implies that White won't castle short, but the advantages of this move don't spring to mind after the retreat 10...♗h6) 10...f5 11 ♗g2 ♖df6 12 h3 (parrying 12...fxe4 13 fxe4 ♗g4) when White has a firm grip on the position and enjoys a long-term space advantage.

10 g3 ♖c5 11 h4?!

After this White will have to worry about his king. This is the reason why 11 ♗g2 f5 12 0-0 0-0 13 exf5 gxf5 14 f4!,

with an edge, was to be preferred.



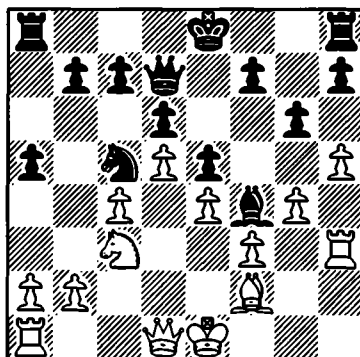
11...♗h6 12 ♗h3

White also had his bad bishop to get rid of!

12...♗xh3 13 ♖xh3 ♜d7 14 g4

After 14 ♖h1 f5 15 ♜c2 0-0 Black's prospects are slightly better, and he can consider doubling his rooks on the f-file.

14...♖f4 15 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 16 h5



16...f5?!

A sacrifice designed to exploit the vulnerability of White's king, but 16...0-0 17 ♖e2 ♖g7 18 ♜c2 and 16...0-0-0! 17 a3 f5 18 b4 ♖a6 were better options.

17 hxg6 fxg4 18 fxg4 0-0-0 19 ♖xh7

After 19 gxf7 ♗df8, the h7-pawn falling and the white king stuck in the centre offer decent compensation.

19...♖xh7 20 gxh7 ♖xh7

20...♗f8 21 ♖f3 ♙d2+? simply drops a piece to 22 ♖xd2 ♖xf3 23 h8♖+.

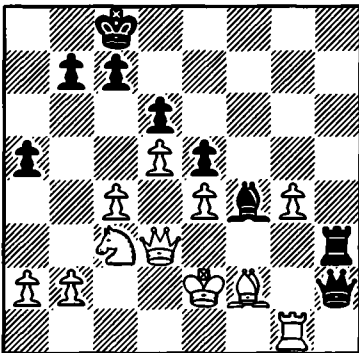
21 ♖f3 ♖h8

Or 21...♗f8 22 ♖e2 ♙h6 23 ♖g2 ♙g5 24 ♙xc5 dxc5 25 ♖f1 ♙f4 and the extra pawn is not easy to convert.

22 ♖e2 ♖h2 23 ♖g1 ♘d3?

After 23...♖h3 24 ♖g2 ♖xg2 (or 24...♘d3!? 25 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 26 ♖xd3 ♖xf2 27 ♘e2 ♙g5) 25 ♖xg2 ♙g5 the g-pawn is blocked for the moment and White finds it pretty hard to realize his edge. On the other hand, only he has any winning chances.

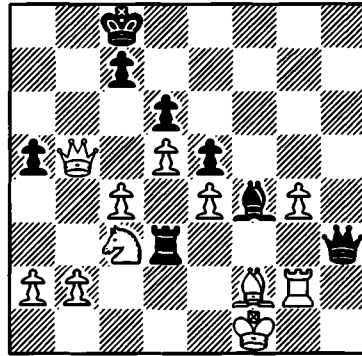
24 ♖xd3 ♖h3



25 ♖c2?!

Instead 25 ♖d1! would have opened the doors to victory, as the following variations demonstrate: 25...♗e3+ (not 25...♙e3?? 26 ♖f1) 26 ♖f1 ♖h3+ 27 ♖g2 ♖d3! (27...♖h1+? 28 ♙g1 ♙g3 29 g5! [passed pawns must be pushed!] 29...♖d8 30 g6 ♖e7 31 g7 ♖f7 32 g8♖+

♖xg8 33 ♖g4+ ♖h8 34 ♘e2 and White wins) 28 ♖a4 b5 (to avoid a later ♖e8 mate) 29 ♖xa5 (29 ♖xb5?? allows a surprising mate in four:

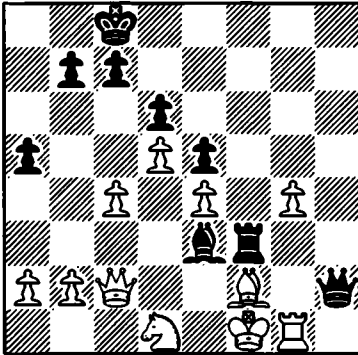


29...♖d1+!! 30 ♘xd1 ♖d3+ 31 ♖g1 ♖xd1+ 32 ♙e1 ♖xe1 mate) 29...♖h1+ 30 ♙g1 ♖f3+ 31 ♖f2 ♙g3 32 ♖e2! (32 ♘d1? spoils everything by enabling Black to save half a point: 32...♙xf2 33 ♘xf2 ♖h3+ 34 ♖e2 ♗e3+ 35 ♖d2 ♖f3 36 ♖c1 ♖g2 when White must take the draw: 37 ♖a8+ ♖d7 38 ♖c6+ ♖d8 39 ♖a8+ ♖e7 40 ♖c6 ♖xg1+ 41 ♘d1 and the black monarch can't escape perpetual check) 32...♙xf2 33 ♙xf2 ♖g2 34 ♘d1 ♖xg4 35 ♖d2 ♖xe4 36 ♖a8+ ♖d7 37 ♖c6+ ♖d8 38 ♙e3. White has consolidated and enjoys a decisive material plus. Furthermore, he threatens to deliver a quick mate starting with ♙g5+.

25...♙e3! 26 ♖f1?!

After 26 ♖f1 ♙xf2 27 ♖d1 (not 27 ♖xf2?? ♖xf2+ 28 ♖xf2 ♖h2+ 29 ♖g3 ♖xc2 and Black wins) 27...♖f3 28 ♖e2 (28 ♖a4 ♖d8 is unclear) 28...♖g3 29 ♖c2 ♖f4 30 g5, White is still a pawn up, but for how long?

26...♖f3 27 ♘d1



27...♖h3+?

The losing move. Black still had enough compensation after 27...♖xf2! 28 ♘xf2 ♖h3+ 29 ♔e2 (29 ♗g2 ♖h1+ 30 ♗g1 ♖h3+) 29...♗e3+ 30 ♔d2 ♖f3 31 ♔c1 ♗e2 32 ♖a4 ♖e3+ (or 32...b5 33 ♖xb5 ♖xf2 34 ♖e8+ ♔b7 35 ♖b5+) 33 ♔b1 ♗xb2+ 34 ♔xb2 ♖xf2+ draws, as long as Black avoids ♖e8 mate.

28 ♔e2!

28 ♗g2?? ♖xf2 29 ♘xf2 ♖h1 goes back to the previous note.

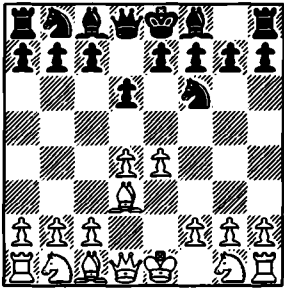
28...♖xf2 29 ♗f1 ♖xg4 30 ♘xf2 ♖h5 31 ♖d1 a4 32 ♗h1 ♗h3+ 33 ♔d2 ♖g5+ 34 ♔c2 ♗g3 35 ♗h8+ ♔d7 36 ♖h5 1-0

It transpires from the analysis that Black's sacrifices on moves 16 and 22 were dubious. 16...0-0-0 was to be preferred, offering level chances. After move 16, despite his few inaccuracies, only White could foster realistic hopes of winning.

Conclusion

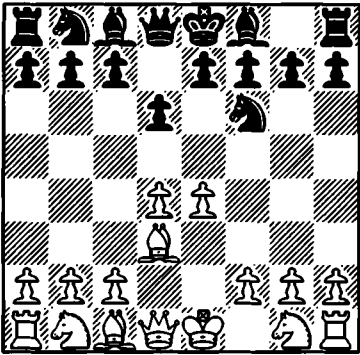
One can conclude through the numerous examples in this chapter that 3 f3 is no 'small affair'. This move usually leads to closed positions, and is thus probably suited to 1 d4 players. Given the variety of positions reached, Black's 3rd move is already crucial: 3...d5 should be played by French Defence exponents; 3...e5 (or alternatives) by other players. After 3...e5 White traditionally bases his play on the spatial advantage he gets after d4-d5.

Chapter Six



3 ♖d3

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♗d3



This bishop move is less natural than 3 ♗c3, but also has its merits. The main advantages, in my view, are that the c-pawn remains free, and White can castle more quickly.

3...e5

Black has a wide range of possible replies. Apart from this central thrust, 3...g6 and 3...c5 seem to be the most interesting options.

4 c3

Logical, since 4 ♗e2 exd4 5 ♗xd4

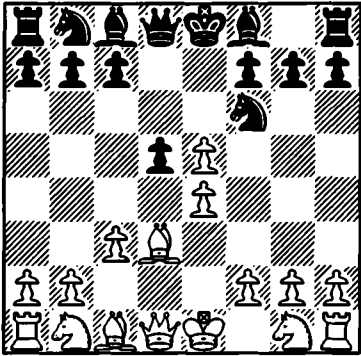
♟bd7 or 5...g6 is already satisfactory for Black.

4...d5!

This thrust, disturbing White's plan of ♗e2 and f4, is certainly the best option here.

5 dxe5!

The most challenging. 5 exd5 ♜xd5 6 dxe5 ♜xe5+ or 6...♜xg2 7 ♜f3 ♜xf3 8 ♗xf3 is roughly equal and not very exciting.



After 5 dxe5 Black has a choice of captures on e4:

A: 5...dxe4

B: 5...dxe4

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 dxf6 3 d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 dxe4!?

This capture is objectively less sound than the main move, 5...dxe4, but it looks playable.

6 d5+

...and now:

A1: 6...c6

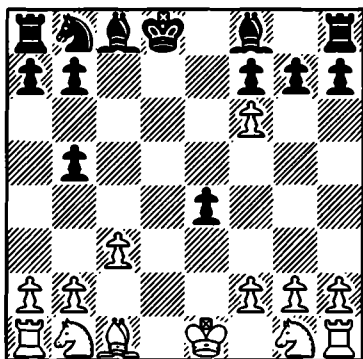
A2: 6...d7

6...d7? loses outright to 7 e6 fxe6 8 Wh5+ e7 (8...g6?! 9 We5) 9 d5+ d6 10 d2 when Black lasted only five more moves in H.Hansen-Eikseth, Norwegian Team Ch. 1993.

A1) 6...c6 Wxd8+ e8xf6!

8 d4?! d5 or 8...d4 is nothing for White.

8...cxb5



The e4-pawn is weak and Black's pawn structure is compromised. The bishop pair isn't enough to compensate for that, but White must take care to

maintain his edge.

9 d5!

9 d2 d5 (or 9...e3!?) 10 d2 g6 11 d3 d6 12 dxe4 e8 13 f3 h5! gives Black a decent position, as f6 is bound to fall.

After 9 d5 Black has three options:

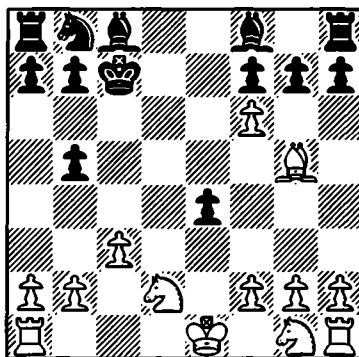
9...c7

Alternatively:

a) 9...g6 10 d2 d5 (or 10...h6!?, E.Campos-Malmstig, Sollentuna 1995) 11 d2 d7 12 d3 h6 13 e3 dxf6 14 d4 d7 15 dxe4 with a small plus for White.

b) 9...g8 10 d2 (10 fxg7+?! e7 is a bit worse) 10...d5 11 d2 with an edge for White, Rabiaga-C.Bauer, Dresden 2003 (it wasn't me, honest!). Or 10...gxf6 11 dxf6+ c7 (on 11...e8, 12 f1! defends g2 while enabling e1) 12 dxe4 xg2 13 e5+ (trapping the rook is wrong: 13 d3? d7 14 d4 b6) 13...c6 14 d3 and don't ask me why, but the computer is quite happy with White's position!

10 d2



10...d7!

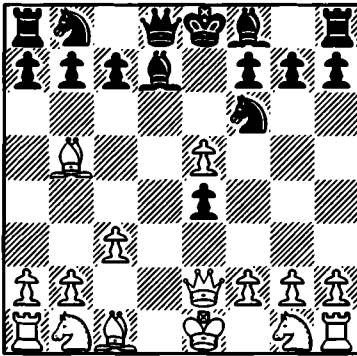
10...d5 11 d2 gives an edge.

11 xe4 xf6 12 xf6 gxf6 13 xf6 g8

...with good compensation for the pawn, Rabiaga-Polzin, Dresden 1996.

A2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 dxe4!? 6 b5+ d7 7 c4

Instead, 7 xd7+?! fxd7 8 e6 fxe6 9 h3 c5 is fine for Black, but 7 e2!? deserves attention. For example:



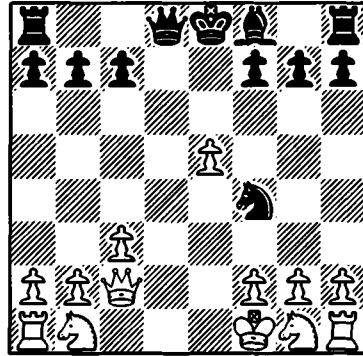
a) 7...xb5 8 xb5+ fd7 9 xb7 (more ambitious, but also more perilous than 9 e3 c6, or 9 e6 fxe6 10 h3 c6 11 g5 e7 12 xe7 xe7 13 0-0 with a microscopic plus, Sharif-M.Gurevich, Marseilles 1988) 9...c6 and:

a1) After 10 e2 c5 11 xa8 d3+ 12 f1 xc1 13 d2 xe2 14 xe2 d3+ 15 e1 b5 White's royal couple was in dire straits in Sedina-Di Donna, Turin 1996.

a2) 10 e6!? fxe6 11 xa8 c7 (perhaps 11...c5) 12 h3, intending 12...b6 13 f4 e5 14 xe5 xe5 15 xa7.

a3) 10 xa8 c7, with the idea of meeting 11 e3 by 11...c5, needs investigation.

b) 7...d5 (a novelty!) 8 xd7+ xd7 9 xe4 c5 10 c2 (or 10 d4 b4! 11 xd8+ xd8 12 cxb4 d3+) 10...f4 11 xf4 d3+ 12 f1 xf4 with good compensation.



Note that 13 a4+?! c6 14 xf4?? is met by 14...d1 mate.

7...g4 8 xf7+ xf7 9 e6+ xe6 10 xg4+ f7 11 h5+ g6 12 d5+ g7 13 e2

After 13 g5 e7 14 e5+ f6 15 xf6+ xf6 16 xc7 f8 17 g3 e3! (much better than 17...a6?! 18 e3 with an edge for White, Hamdouchi-Chabanon, Lyon 1993) 18 f3 exf2+ 19 xf2 e8+ 20 d1 c6, the white king will never reach safety.

13...c6

...with an unclear position, Dolmatov-Karasev, Severodonetsk 1982.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 xe4

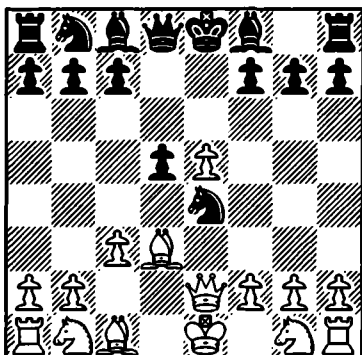
The most popular recapture.

6 f3

6 xe4?! dxe4 7 a4+ d7 8 xe4 c6 9 g4 h5 gives Black more than enough compensation for a mere

pawn: 10 ♖h3 ♗d7 11 f3 and here, for instance, 11...♗d5; and 10 ♖g3 h4 11 ♖h3 ♗d7 is even worse, since Black has ...♖h5 in store.

The unusual 6 ♗e2!?, immediately questioning the knight and keeping f2-f4 as an option, needs a closer look:

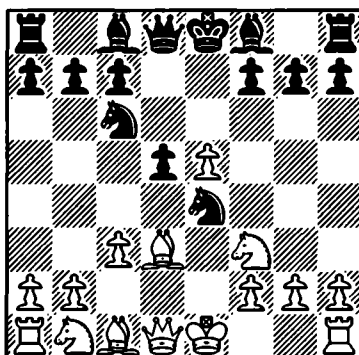


6...♗c5 (if 6...♗d7 7 ♖f3! ♗dc5 8 ♗c2 intending both b4 and 0-0, ♗d4, f3-f4) 7 ♗c2 and here Black has two different ways to try to benefit from his opponent's ambitious set-up: 7...b6 8 b4 ♗a6, and the sacrifice 7...♗c6 8 b4 ♗e4 9 ♗xe4 dxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♗e6.

6...♗c6

The immediate 6...♗c5 avoids the option 8 ♗b5 (as in Line B221). Play continues 7 ♗c2 ♗g4 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♗e1 ♗c6 10 ♗bd2 ♗d7 11 ♖f1 d4! (11...0-0?! would be less appropriate and leads to an inferior game after 12 ♗e3 or 12 b4!?) 12 b4 (12 cxd4?! ♗xf3 13 ♖xf3 ♗xd4 14 ♖c3 ♗xc2 15 ♖xc2 ♗d3! is already a bit better for Black because of the exposed e5-pawn) 12...♗e6 13 b5 ♗cd8 14 ♗b2 dxc3 (if 14...c5?! 15 cxd4 cxd4 16 a4 0-0 17 h3 and White will either grab the bishop pair or establish

a knight on f5 via g3; Black would like to bring the beast on d8 into play by ...♗c5 and ...♗de6, but he may not have time for it) 15 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 16 ♗xc3 ♗xf3 17 gxf3 a6 (Smirin-Dorfman, Tilburg rapid 1993) and Black soon got the better of things, even if the game ended peacefully.



The position after 6...♗c6 resembles an Open Lopez, where Black hasn't 'compromised' his queenside by playing ...a6 and ...b5. As for White, having his bishop directly on d3, without needing the Ruy Lopez recycling ♗b5-a4-b3-c2, definitely speaks in his favour.

Now we will look at:

B1: 7 ♗e2

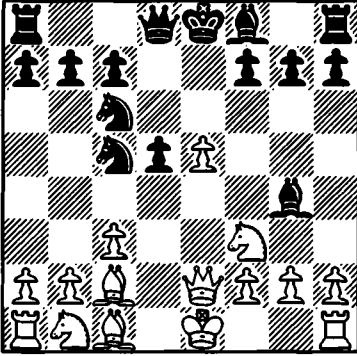
B2: 7 ♗bd2

7 ♗f4!? is interesting, but leaves Black with many satisfactory continuations. Apart from 7...♗e7, he can consider 7...♗c5 or 7...f6.

B1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 ♗xe4 6 ♖f3 d5 7 ♗e2 ♗c5 8 ♗c2

Or 8 ♗b5 ♗e7 etc.

8...Qg4



9 0-0

9 Qf4? d4! gives Black the upper hand.

9...Wd7

Black has a major alternative in 9...Qe7!?, e.g.: 10 Qd1 a5 (securing the knight against b4; if 10...0-0?! 11 b4 Qe6 12 Qb3, while 10...Qxf3 11 Wxf3 Qxe5 12 Wxd5 Wxd5 13 Qxd5 and the pair of bishops grants White a slight plus) 11 Qbd2 and now:

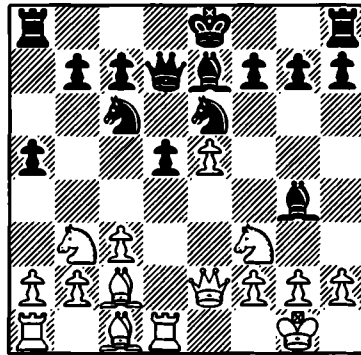
a) 11...a4 12 h3 Qh5 13 Qf1 Qe6 14 Qg3 (14 Qe4?! Qa5) 14...Qxf3 (14...Qg6 15 Qf5 with nasty pressure) 15 Wxf3 Qxe5 16 Wh5?! (16 Wf5! Qf6 17 Qh5 was the correct way to proceed) 16...Qf6 17 f4 g6 18 We2 Qc4 19 f5 gxf5 20 Qxf5 c6, which was complicated, but objectively not worse for Black in Ibragimov-Agrest, St Petersburg 1993.

b) 11...Wd7! and then:

b1) 12 Qf1 was seen in R.Mainka-V.Malaniuk, Koszalin 1998: 12...0-0 13 Qe3 (13 h3!?) 13...Qxe5 14 Qxd5? (14 Qxg4! Qxg4 15 c4 c6 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 Qd4 gave reasonable compensation) 14...We6 15 Qxh7+ Qxh7 16 Wc2+ Qg6

17 Qe5 Wd7 18 Qxg4 f5 19 Qe2. And now instead of 19...Qad8? Black could have secured a large advantage with 19...fxg4!, e.g. 20 Qe5 (or 20 Wxg6+ Qxg6 21 Qe5+ Qf6 22 Qxd7+ Qxd7 ... 1-2-3, 1-2-3-4: one white piece is missing!) 20...Wf5 21 Wxf5 Qxf5 22 Qxg6 Qd8 23 g3 Qd1+ 24 Qg2 Qxg6 25 Qxe7 Qd3 and it's curtains.

b2) 12 Qb3 Qe6! (a venomous move; instead 12...a4 13 Qxc5 Qxc5 14 h3 Qh5 15 Qf4 revealed itself as only slightly better for White in A.Sokolovs-Fridman, Riga 1995, while the greedy 15 Qe4?! runs the risk of indigestion: 15...Qa5 16 Wd2 Qb6 17 Qxd5 0-0 when White's piece placement doesn't inspire confidence)



13 Qe4 a4 14 Qxd5 Wc8 and Black's devilish 12th move has netted an exchange: 15 Qbd4 (if 15 Qbd2 Qf4) 15...Qxcd4 16 Qxd4 (or 16 cxd4 c6) 16...Qxd4 17 cxd4 c6 with some advantage to Black.

10 Qd1

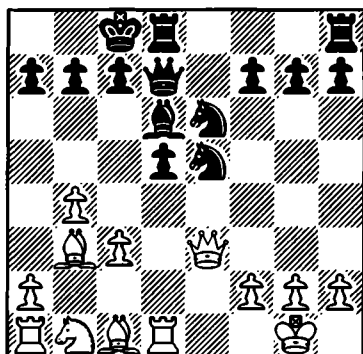
Or 10 h3 Qh5 11 Qbd2!? (not 11 Qe1? d4! and Black seized the initiative in Bastian-Lobron, German Ch. 2001;

but 11 b4!? and 11 ♖d1!? are possible)
 11...d4 12 ♛c4 d3 13 ♙b1 0-0-0 14 b4
 ♜e6 with a messy position.

**10...0-0-0! 11 b4 ♜e6 12 ♙b3 ♙xf3 13
 ♛xf3 ♜xe5 14 ♛e3**

On 14 ♛xd5!?, both 14...♙d6 and
 14...♛xd5 are okay for Black.

14...♙d6!



15 ♛xa7

15 ♖xd5!? c6 16 ♖d1 ♜b8 is roughly
 level too, but 16...♜g4?! would be a
 shot in the dark. After 17 ♛e2, the h2-
 pawn is taboo: 17...♜xh2 (17...♙xh2+?
 18 ♜f1 is even worse) 18 f4 h5 19 ♜xh2
 ♜xf4 20 ♙xf4 ♙xf4+ 21 ♜g1 and Black
 hasn't enough compensation.

15...c6

...with equal chances, Psakhis-Cher-
 nin, Irkutsk 1983.

**B2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♙d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5
 dxe5 ♜xe4 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 ♜bd2**

Now we will consider:

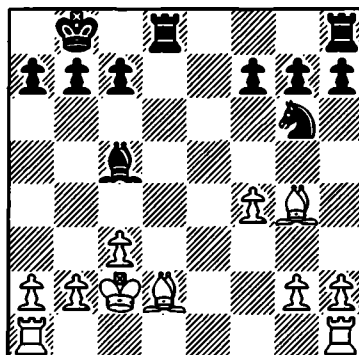
B21: 7...♙g4

B22: 7...♜c5

B21) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♙d3 e5 4 c3 d5

**5 dxe5 ♜xe4 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 ♜bd2 ♙g4 8
 0-0**

8 ♜xe4 may be a simpler path to a
 small, but risk-free advantage: 8...dxe4
 9 ♙xe4 ♛xd1+ 10 ♜xd1 0-0-0+ 11 ♜c2
 ♙xf3 12 ♙xf3 ♜xe5 13 ♙e2 ♙c5 14 f4
 ♜g6 15 ♙g4+ ♜b8 16 ♙d2...



...when the two bishops give White
 the better prospects.

8...♜xd2?!

8...♜c5 was stronger, as the text
 move eases White's development.

9 ♙xd2 ♙e7 10 ♖e1 0-0

After 10...♛d7 11 ♛c2! ♙xf3 12 ♙f5
 ♛d8 13 gxf3, White's kingside pawn
 structure is damaged, but the dynamic
 factors are more important. Queenside
 castling is impossible for Black, and
 after a continuation like 13...g6 14 ♙h3
 0-0 15 f4 f5 16 exf6 ♖xf6 17 ♙e6+ White
 would keep the initiative.

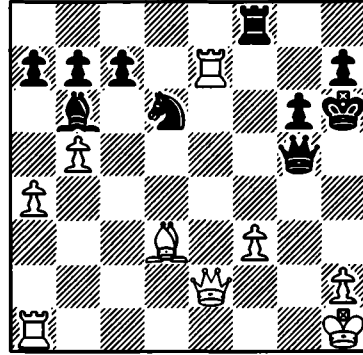
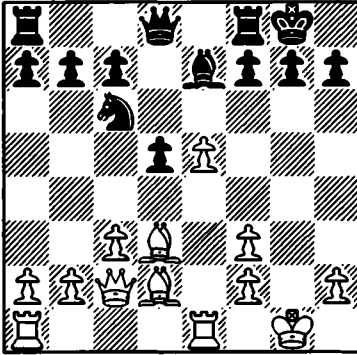
10...♙h5 11 ♛c2 ♙g6 12 ♙xg6 hxg6
 13 e6 isn't satisfactory either.

11 ♛c2 ♙xf3 12 gxf3

The doubled pawns don't represent
 a handicap here either, as White can
 get rid of them by playing f4-f5-f6.
 Moreover, the g-file and the bishops

pointing at the enemy king augur well for a powerful attack.

28 ♖h5+.
27 f3



12...g6 13 f4 ♗c5 14 ♖d1! f6

14...♖h4 is met by 15 ♖f3 – the point of 14 ♖d1.

15 b4 ♗b6 16 c4 dxc4

16...fxe5? seems attractive, but in fact it simply loses a piece after 17 c5 e4 18 ♗e2 ♘d4 19 ♗e3 ♘xe2+ 20 ♖xe2.

17 ♗xc4+ ♔g7 18 b5

Inviting the knight to a square coveted by the queen.

18...♘d4 19 a4 ♘f5

Here 19...fxe5 20 ♗xe5 ♘f5 21 ♗c3 ♗d4 22 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 24 ♗e7+ was a bit uncomfortable, but probably holdable after 24...♔h6 25 ♗xc7 ♗ac8 26 ♗xc8 ♗xc8.

20 ♗b4 fxe5

A worthy practical choice: for the exchange Black gets good play on the dark squares.

21 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8 22 ♗xe5 ♘d6

The alternative 22...♘h4?! 23 ♖g4 would be worse.

23 ♖e2 ♖xf4 24 ♗e7+ ♔h6 25 ♗d3 ♗f8

26 ♔h1 ♖g5

26...♖xf2? loses to 27 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7

We have been following Smirin-Huzman, Wijk aan Zee 1993. Now, instead of the game's 27...♘f5?, Black should have played 27...♗f4!. Then after 28 a5 ♗d4 29 ♗f1 ♗h4 White keeps a better position, but there is still all to play for.

B22) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 ♘xe4 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♘bd2 ♘c5

...and now:

B221: 8 ♗b5

B222: 8 ♗c2

B223: 8 ♗b1 ♗g4 9 b4

B224: 8 ♗b1 ♗g4 9 h3

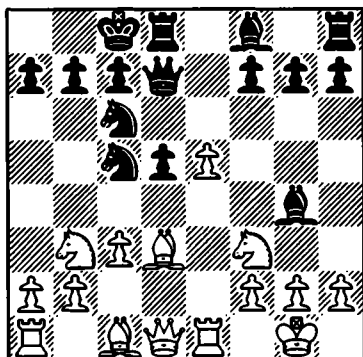
White normally moves the bishop, but it can be left on d3:

8 ♘b3 ♗g4

8...♘xd3+ 9 ♖xd3 ♗e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗f4 ♗e6 (Lalic-Bauer, Lausanne 2001) should be okay as well.

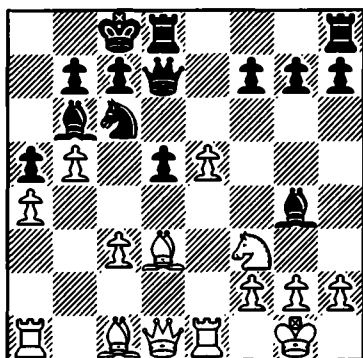
9 0-0 ♖d7 10 ♗e1 0-0-0

Despite opposite castling, the game keeps a mainly positional character.



11 dxc5 bxc5 12 b4 b6 13 a4 a5 14 b5

Closing this wing plays into Black's hands, but White judges that maintaining the tension wouldn't bring him any benefit. As his opponent is still far away from any serious attack on the kingside, this decision proves to be correct.



14... dxe7 15 e3 fxe3 16 fxe3 xb8 17 xe1 xf3

To avoid having to accommodate a knight on d4.

18 fxf3 g6 19 hd1 we6 20 he3 he8 21 hxg6

Played only now that the rook has

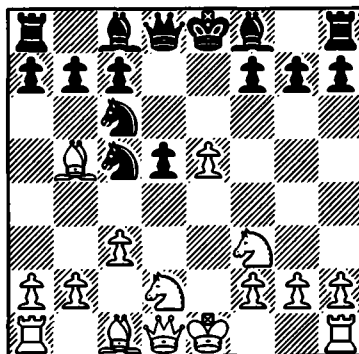
left its initial post. This swap eliminates one attacker of e5 and keeps the equilibrium.

21... hxg6 22 h3 g5 23 hd4 wf5 24 wh2

...and a draw was agreed in the game Yusupov-M.Adams, Hastings 1989/90.

B221) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 df6 3 ed3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 dxe4 6 df3 dc6 7 dbd2 dc5 8 ab5

This move reinforces White's control over d4, but loosens the control over e4. You can't have your cake and eat it too!



8... ed7

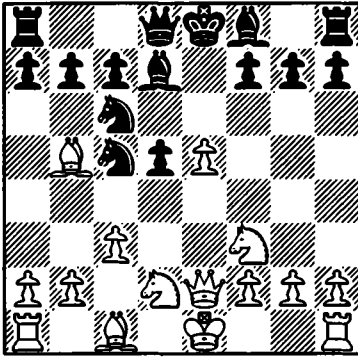
a) 8... ee7 9 b4 de6 10 db3 gives good control of d4 and, with the bishop still on c8, White can be satisfied with his opening.

b) 8... eg4 is more active. In this case White would have a choice between fighting for an edge with either 9 h3 or 9 b4 , or levelling the position by playing 9 db3 . Thus 9 h3 eh5 10 g4 eg6 11 hd4 wd7 and 9 b4 de6 10 dxc6+ bxc6 11 wa4 wd7 both lead to unbalanced positions, while 9 db3 a6 10 dxc6+ bxc6 11 dxc5 dxc5 12 wa4 wd7 offers

equal chances, for example 13 ♘d4 0-0 14 0-0 ♙b6 15 ♚xc6 ♙xd4 16 ♚xd7 ♙xf2+ 17 ♜xf2 ♙xd7.

9 ♚e2

After 9 0-0?! ♘xe5 10 ♚e2 ♙xb5 11 ♚xb5+ ♘ed7 12 ♜e1+ ♙e7 Black is a pawn up for nothing.



9...a6!

If he is going to lose the battle for d4, Black should at least console himself with the pair of bishops!

9...♘e6?! lets White organize himself at leisure. After 10 ♘b3 ♙e7 11 ♙e3 a6 12 ♙d3 White has a firm grip over d4 and it's easy to understand that something has gone wrong for the second player. A.Fedorov-A.Gubanov, St Petersburg 1994, continued 12...♘g5 13 ♘xg5 ♙xg5 14 f4 ♙h4+ 15 g3 ♙e7 16 0-0-0 and White held a clear advantage. Black lacks a tempo to extricate himself with ...♙e6 and ...♚d7.

10 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 11 ♘d4 ♙d7 12 0-0 ♘e6 13 ♜d1

Or 13 a4 c5 14 ♘xe6 ♙xe6 15 f4 ♚d7 (Smirin-Chernin, Groningen 1993), and now 16 ♚f2 would have led to reciprocal chances after 16...♙f5 17 ♘f3 ♙e7 18

♙e3.

13...c5 14 ♘xe6 ♙xe6 15 c4 d4

15...♙e7 16 ♘e4 d4 would come to the same thing.

16 ♘e4 ♙e7 17 a4

After 17 b4!? cxb4 (17...b6 also offers mutual chances after 18 bxc5 bxc5) 18 ♙b2 0-0 19 ♜xd4 ♚c7 20 ♘d6 the monster on d6 counterbalances the pair of bishops. Moreover, capturing it would awaken the bishop on b2, which would then eye g7.

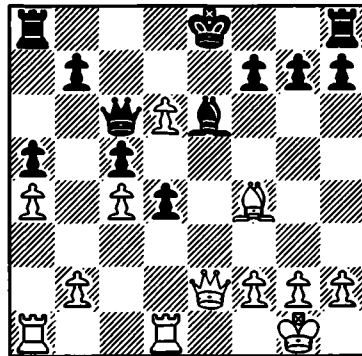
17...♚c7 18 ♙f4

On 18 f4 ♚c6 19 b3 h5 threatens ...♙g4 while preventing an appearance of an enemy pawn on this very same square. Black has everything under control and stands a bit better.

18...♚c6 19 ♘d6+

Eliminating the black pair of bishops. Instead, 19 b3 0-0 would give Black an edge.

19...♙xd6 20 exd6 a5!



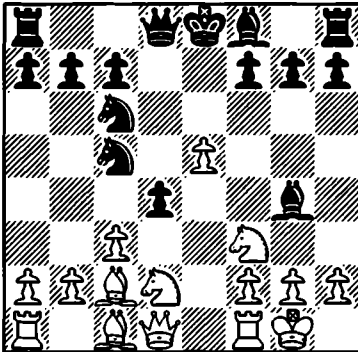
Depriving White of the b4 break. Now Black's king will be perfectly safe in the centre.

21 ♜a3 ♘d7 22 ♜b3 ♜he8 23 ♚d3 b6 24 ♜b5

An indirect (and rather peculiar!) way to protect the a4-pawn. Even with this rook temporarily immobilized, the position remains difficult to unbalance.

24...g6 25 f3 h5 26 ♖b3 ♜ab8 27 ♜e1 f6 ...and here the point was split in A.Fedorov-Korotylev, St Petersburg 1994. (Note that 27...♙xc4?? loses to 28 ♜xe8 ♙xb3 29 ♜xb8.)

B222) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♙d3 e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 ♟xe4 6 ♟f3 ♟c6 7 ♟bd2 ♟c5 8 ♙c2 ♙g4 9 0-0 d4



An uncompromising move. (9...♙e7 is a quieter option.)

10 ♖e1!

Played in the game **Slobodjan-Beliavsky, German League 2000**, which we shall now follow.

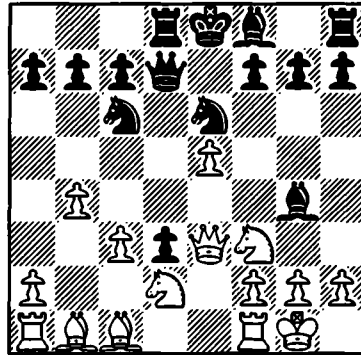
10 ♜e1 dxc3 11 bxc3 ♟d3 (or 11...♙e7), and 10 h3 ♙h5 11 ♟b3 dxc3 12 bxc3 ♖xd1 13 ♜xd1 ♙g6 had been tested before, but without much success for White. After Slobodjan's move, however, Black is facing a hard task to equalize.

10...dxc3?!

The alternative 10...d3!? is usually

not to be recommended, as the d-pawn becomes weak, but I don't see where Black could have equalized after Beliavsky's apparently safer 10...dxc3.

After 10...d3!? 11 ♙b1 ♖d7 12 ♖e3 ♜d8 13 b4 ♟e6 is unclear...



14 ♟e4 is met by 14...♙xf3 and 15...♟xe5, while 14 b5? ♟a5 15 ♖xa7 b6 is dubious for White, to say the least.

11 bxc3 ♖d7

11...♙e7 12 ♖e3 0-0 13 ♟b3 doesn't solve all of Black's problems either, while 11...♟d3? is a pawn-fishing move that unsurprisingly leads to trouble after 12 ♖e4 ♟xc1 13 ♖xg4 ♟e2+ 14 ♟h1 ♟xc3 15 ♜fe1 or 15 ♖c4 ♟d5 16 ♙b3 ♟ce7 17 ♟e4, in both cases with tremendous compensation for the pawn.

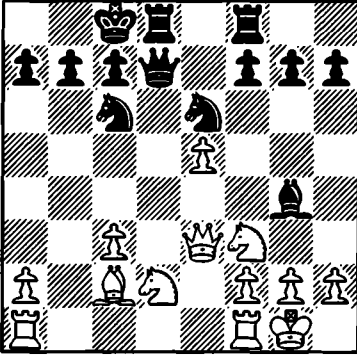
12 ♖e3 0-0-0

12...♟e6?! gives up the control of e4, for the sake of preparing ...♙c5 and ...♙h5-g6: 13 ♟e4! (13 ♜b1?! would be inadequate after 13...0-0-0 or 13...♙c5 14 ♖e4 ♙h5 15 ♜xb7?! ♙g6 16 ♖a4 ♙xc2 17 ♖xc2 ♙b6 with a clear plus for Black) 13...♙xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♟xe5 15 ♖g3 ♟c6 16 ♜d1 ♖e7 17 ♜b1 with a mighty initiative for White.

13 Qa3 Qe6

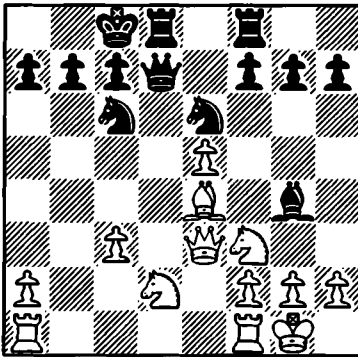
13...Qd3? was less resilient: 14 Qxf8 Qxf8 15 Qa4 Qb8 16 Qd4 and the capture on c6 will do harm to Black's position.

14 Qxf8 Qxf8



15 Qe4!

15 Qa4? would be faulty in view of 15...Qd3! 16 Qxc6 Qxe3 17 Qxb7+ Qxb7 18 fxe3 Qd3, when Black collects back his pawn and remains on top with the better pawn structure.



15...b6

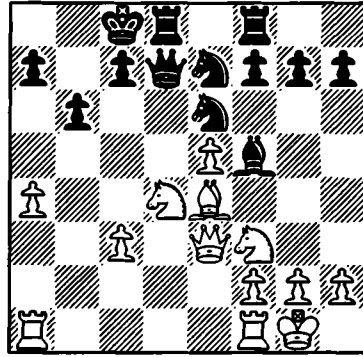
I don't like this move as it weakens Black's castled king, but on 15...Qb8, 16 Qab1, followed by Qb3 etc., is no joy

either.

16 Qb3

Preventing ...Qc5.

16...Qe7 17 a4 Qf5 18 Qbd4



18...Qc5?!

Instead, 18...Qxe4 19 Qxe4 Qd5 deserved serious attention, as after 20 Qg4 or 20 Qe2, then 20...Qb8 seems to hold.

19 Qxf5 Qxf5 20 Qf4 Qxe4 21 Qxe4 Qb8 22 a5 Qd3 23 Qb4 Qfe8 24 axb6 cxb6 25 Qa4 Qd7

25...Qe7? loses to 26 Qfd1.

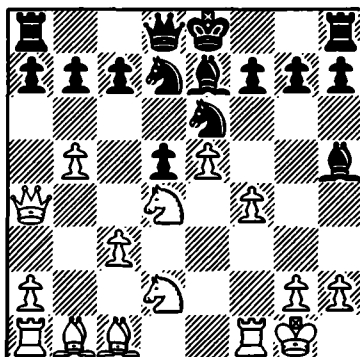
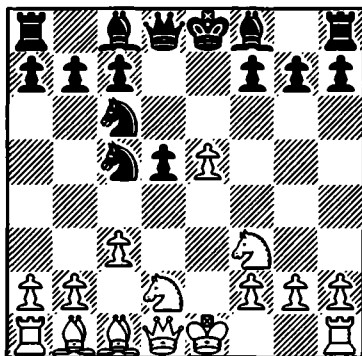
26 Qf4 Qe6 27 Qg5 Qxe5 28 Qxe5+ Qxe5 29 Qxf7 Qde8 30 Qxe5 Qxe5 31 Qfd1

White is winning now and even such a strong defender as Beliavsky succumbs little by little.

31...Qe7 32 Qd5 g6 33 f4 Qb7 34 Qf2 h5 35 Qad1 Qc6 36 Qe5 a5 37 Qxe7 Qxe7 38 Qe1 Qd5 39 Qe6+ Qc5 40 Qxg6 a4 41 f5 a3 42 Qg8 Qxc3 43 Qa8 Qb4 44 Qf3 Qd5 45 g4 hxg4+ 46 Qxg4 b5 47 Qg5 Qb3 48 f6 Qxf6 49 Qxf6 b4 50 h4 Qc4 51 h5 b3 52 Qa4+! 1-0

If 52...Qb5, 53 Qxa3 b2 54 Qa8 decides. A nice game from Slobodjan.

B223) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♙d3 e5 4 c3
d5 5 dxe5 ♘xe4 6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♘bd2 ♘c5
8 ♙b1



A more frequent reply than 8 ♙c2, 8 ♙b5 or 8 ♘b3. I don't really see the advantage of the text move over 8 ♙c2, apart from maybe that Black won't win a tempo on the bishop after ...d4-d3. Fedorov seems to have shifted to 8 ♙b1 from his former favourite 8 ♙b5.

8...♙g4

The customary reaction to 8 ♙c2, which is equally appropriate here.

9 b4

This is Fedorov's idea, and we now follow the game **A.Fedorov-E.Agrest, European Ch., Ohrid 2001.**

9...♘d7

The other retreat is 9...♘e6!?. Now the game A.Fedorov-Khalifman, Maikop 1998, continued 10 ♖a4 ♙h5 11 0-0 ♙e7? (after this move White reaches his goal; instead 11...♖d7 [with the idea of ...♘xe5] 12 b5 ♘e7 13 ♖h4 ♙g6 and Black is okay, while 11...a6!? questions the queen's placement and with it White's whole concept) 12 b5 ♘b8 13 ♘d4 ♘d7 14 f4.

Even though White's means seem a bit artificial, he has managed to realize his plan: the f4-push. All his queenside operations in fact constituted a decoy in order to expand on the other wing: 14...♙c5 15 ♙b2 ♘b6 16 ♖c2 ♙e2 (it was too late to retreat; Black has to face the ensuing complications) 17 ♖f2 ♙xb5 18 f5! ♙a4 (18...♘xd4?! 19 cxd4 ♙e7 20 f6 gxf6 21 exf6 ♙xf6 22 ♖f5 ♘d7 23 ♖xd5 and for a mere pawn Black is left in a perilous situation: his king is stuck in the centre (though he wouldn't feel any happier after ...0-0) and all the white pieces will converge in his direction) 19 ♖d3 ♘g5 20 ♖g3 (White has a clear advantage) 20...♖e7 21 f6 gxf6 22 exf6 ♖e1+ 23 ♘f1 ♘e4 24 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♘d2 ♖g6 26 ♖xc7 ♖c8 27 ♖e1+ ♘f8 28 ♖xb7 ♖g4 29 ♘2b3 ♙xb3 30 axb3 ♖d7 31 ♖a6 h5 32 ♙a3 ♖d6 33 ♖fe2 ♘g8 (or 33...♙xa3 34 ♖xc8+ ♘xc8 35 ♖e8 mate) 34 ♖e8+ and Black resigned. The end could have been 34...♖xe8 35 ♖xe8+ ♘h7 36 ♖d3+ ♘h6 37 ♙c1+ ♖f4 38 ♙xf4 mate. Black found himself in trouble quite early on, all due to his faulty 11th move.

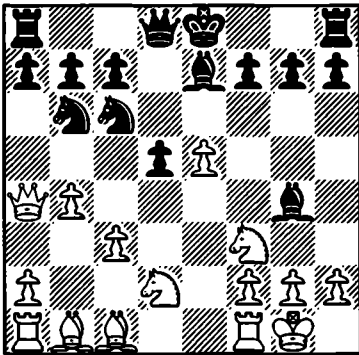
100-0 Qe7

10...Qxe5!? seems dangerous, but perhaps not that much according to the following analysis, 11 h3 and now:

a) 11...Qh5 12 g4 (or 12 We1 Qxf3 [12...We7? 13 Qxe5 Qxe5 14 f4 and g4, f5 locks the bishop in] 13 Qxf3 We7 but here Black survives, for instance 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 f4 Qc4 16 Wf2 Wf6 and Black is even better here!) 12...Qxf3+ (12...Qg6 13 Qxe5 Qxe5 14 Ke1 wins) 13 Qxf3 Qg6 14 Wxd5 c6 15 Wd4 Qf6 16 Ke1+ Qe7 17 Qg5 0-0 18 Qxg6 fxc6 (18...hxc6 is playable too) 19 Kad1 with an edge for White.

b) 11...Qxf3+ 12 Qxf3 Qe6 (or if 12...Qxf3 13 Wxf3 with compensation thanks to the pair of bishops and lead in development) 13 Qd4 (13 Qg5 Wf6 isn't clear either) 13...Wf6 14 f4 Qb6 15 f5 Qd7.

11 Wa4 Qb6



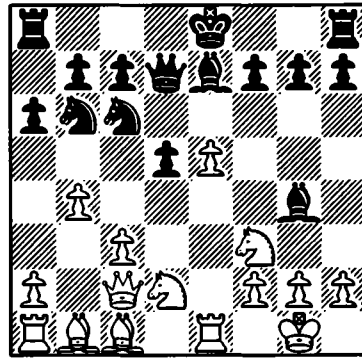
12 Wc2

White again intends b5, followed by Qd4 and f4.

12...a6 13 Ke1 Wd7?

Avoiding 13...Qh5 14 e6 was probably the justification for 13...Wd7, but

this shouldn't have been feared (better would be 14 Wf5 transferring the queen to the side where the black king is going to take refuge). After 14...fxe6! 15 Qxe6 Wd7, intending ...Qg6xb1 and ...0-0, I slightly prefer Black; even more so after 16 Wf5?! g6 17 Wh3 0-0, since the white pieces badly lack coordination.



14 a3! Qh5 15 Qd4 Qxd4 16 cxd4 Qg6 17 Wc3 Qxb1 18 Qxb1

Without counterplay but also with no real weakness, Black stands a bit worse.

18...0-0 19 Qb3 Qae8 20 f4 Qd8 21 h3 f5 22 Qh2 Qe6 23 Qg1 h5

Possibly 23...Qc8!?, or 23...Qa8!? in order to reroute the knight to e6, after ...c6, ...Qc7.

24 Qf3 Qc4 25 Qe3 Qe7 26 Qf2 Wd8 27 We1

Preventing ...h4. On the other hand, White now has to tolerate a knight on e4.

27...Qd6 28 Qh4 Qxh4 29 Qxh4 Qe4 30 Qf3 Qc6 31 We3 Wd7

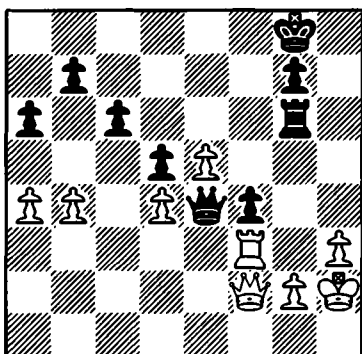
Perhaps 31...Qe8!?, with the idea of meeting 32 Qc1 by 32...Qee6.

32 Qc1 Qxc1 33 Wxc1 Qe8 34 Qb2 Qe6

35 ♖c2 c6 36 a4

Slowly but surely the black fortress breaks down. White has all the levers (b4-b5 and g2-g4), and Black is reduced to waiting.

36...♗h7?! 37 ♖g5+! ♜xg5 38 fxg5 ♜e7
39 ♜d2 ♗g8 40 ♝b2 h4 41 ♜f4 ♜g6 42
♜xh4 ♜xg5 43 ♜f2 f4 44 ♝b3 ♜f5 45
♝f3 ♜e4



46 ♜d2!

46 ♝xf4?? would spoil all the good work: 46...♝xg2+ 47 ♜xg2 ♜xf4+.

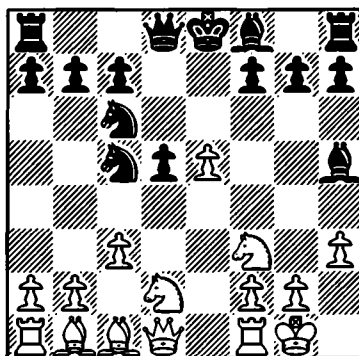
46...b6 47 ♜xf4 ♜xf4+ 48 ♝xf4 c5 49
dxc5 bxc5 50 bxc5 ♝c6 51 ♗g3 ♝xc5 52
♝b4 ♗f7 53 ♗f4 a5 54 ♝b7+ ♗e6 55
♝b6+ ♗e7 56 ♗f5 d4 57 ♝b7+ ♗d8 58
♗e4 g5 59 ♗xd4

White has two extra pawns, so the rest is a matter of technique.

59...♝c2 60 g4 ♝a2 61 e6 ♝xa4+ 62 ♗e5
♝a3 63 ♝h7 ♝f3 64 ♝a7 ♝xh3 65 ♝xa5
♝f3 66 ♗d6 ♝d3+ 67 ♝d5 ♝e3 68 ♝xg5
♝a3 69 ♗e5 ♗e7 70 ♝g7+ ♗f8 71 ♝f7+
♗g8 72 g5 ♝a1 73 ♝d7 ♗f8 74 g6 ♝e1+
75 ♗d5 ♝d1+ 76 ♗c4 ♝g1 77 ♝f7+ 1-0

This game wasn't spectacular, but the way Fedorov always kept pressing is instructive.

B224) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♞f6 3 ♙d3 e5 4 c3
d5 5 dxe5 ♞xe4 6 ♞f3 ♞c6 7 ♞bd2 ♞c5
8 ♙b1 ♙g4 9 h3 ♙h5 10 0-0



10...♙e7

In connection with Black's plans of long castling, in my opinion it seems more relevant to begin with 10...♜d7, as this bishop move isn't compulsory.

11 ♝e1

Contemplating ♞f1, g4 and ♞g3 in the event of Black castling short. We now follow the game **Rabiega-Ftacnik, German League 2000**.

11...d4 12 ♜e2 ♜d7

After 12...♜d5 her majesty would exert more influence in the centre, but would also be more exposed to enemy attacks.

13 ♞b3 dxc3

13...d3? 14 ♞xc5 dxe2 15 ♞xd7 ♙xf3
16 gxf3 ♗xd7 17 ♝xe2 is clearly better for White. However, 13...♞xb3 14 axb3
♝d8 15 ♙e4 d3 16 ♜d2 is unclear: the d3-pawn is surrounded but also annoying for White.

14 bxc3 ♞a4 15 ♜c4

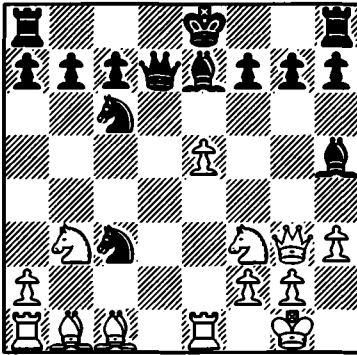
Based on Ftacnik's annotations to the rest of the game, 15 ♙d2! was to be

preferred because the white queen is going to be harassed on c4. After 15 Qd2, both 15...Qd8 16 Qe4 Qb6 17 Qad1 and 15...0-0-0! 16 Qe4 Qb6 17 Qad1 lead to a White edge.

15...Qb6

If 15...Qxc3?! 16 Wxc3 Qb4 17 e6!? fxe6 18 Wc4 Qxe1 19 Qxe1 0-0 20 Qe4 with a small plus for White; or 17 Wb2 Qxf3 18 Qd2 Qxd2 19 Qxd2 Qh5 20 Qe4 with good compensation for the pawn.

16 Wf4 Qd5 17 Wg3 Qxc3!



The justification of Black's previous play. The game now takes a very tactical turn, where only calculation counts.

18 Qc2

18 Wxg7? is suspicious: 18...0-0-0 19 e6 (the point; 19 Qbd2 Qxb1 20 Qxb1 Qhg8 21 Wh6 Wxh3 and Black wins) 19...fxe6 20 Wxc3 Qb4 21 We3 Qxf3 22 Qf1 (or 22 gxf3 Qhg8+ 23 Qf1 Qxe1 24 Wxe1 Qd4 when White has a material advantage, but his king won't survive) 22...Qd5 with a large plus for Black.

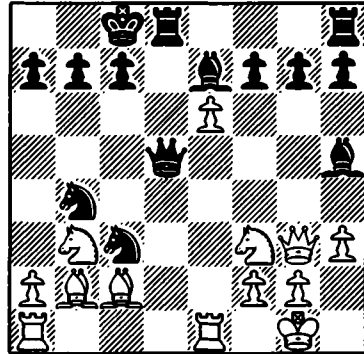
18...0-0-0 19 Qb2 Qb4 20 e6!

After 20 Qac1 Qxc2 21 Qxc2 Qd5 22 Qfd4 Wa4 Black has the pair of bishops

and an extra pawn, while White has no real threat.

20...Wd5!

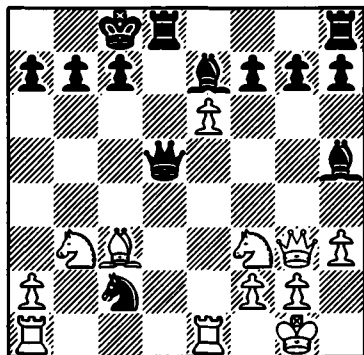
20...fxe6? would lose to 21 Qe5 Qe2+ 22 Qxe2 Wb5 23 Qe4 Qxc2 24 Qc1 Qd1+ 25 Qxd1 Qxd1 26 Wxg7 We8 27 Qc6 bxc6 28 Wxh8.



21 Qxc3

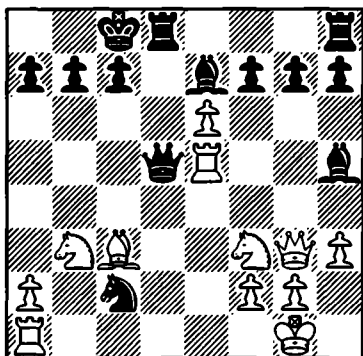
Following 21 Qe5? Qd6! 22 Qxc3 (if 22 Qxd5 Qe2+) 22...Qxe5 23 Wxe5 Qxc2 24 e7 Qxa1 25 exd8W+ Qxd8, the queen swap is imminent, when the rook and two pawns will prove much stronger than the two minor pieces.

21...Qxc2



22 Qe5

Again the lesser evil. 22 ♖ad1? ♗xe1! 23 ♜xd5 ♗xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♜xd5 was worse.

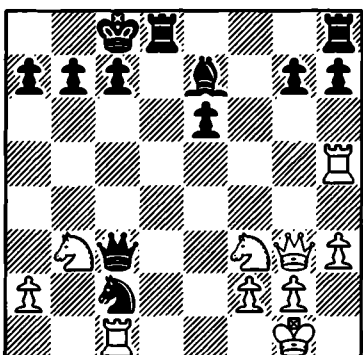


22...♗d3

Compared with 21 ♜e5? above, the circumstances after the continuation 22...♗c4 23 ♗fd2 ♗d3 24 ♜xh5 ♗xg3 25 fxg3 ♗xa1 26 ♖xa1 are clearly less favourable for Black. Moreover, he only has a rook and one pawn for White's two knights.

23 ♜xh5 ♗xc3 24 ♜c1 fxe6

Not 24...♖a3? 25 exf7 and the rook is immune due to ♜c5.



25 ♗g4?!

Inserting 25 ♜a5! ♗b8, and then 26

♗g4 would have maintained parity.

25...♖a3 26 ♗xe6+ ♗b8 27 ♜b1 ♜he8 28 ♗g4

28 ♜d5!? ♖d6! 29 ♗f5 was possible too, as long as White watches out for the ...♖h2+ and ...♜xd5 threat.

28...♗e1! 29 ♗a5! ♗xf3+ 30 ♗xf3 ♜e1+

30...♗xf3?! was objectively inferior, even if a reasonable choice in time trouble: 31 gxf3 ♗c8 and now either 32 ♜xh7 or 32 ♜xb7, when Black's advantage has decreased.

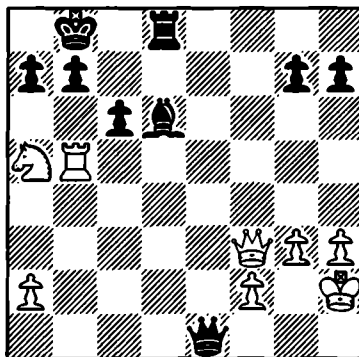
31 ♜xe1 ♗xe1+ 32 ♗h2 ♖d6+

32...♗b4? 33 ♜c5! a6 34 ♗xb7! is just equal.

33 g3 c6?

Wasting the advantage, which could have been increased with 33...♗b1, or else 33...♗b4 34 ♜f5 (34 ♜xh7 is no better: 34...♜f8! 35 ♗g2 ♜xf2 36 ♗xf2 ♗xh7) 34...g6 35 ♜f7 ♗b5.

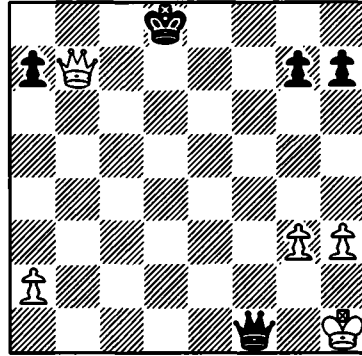
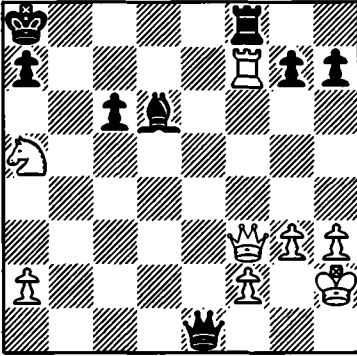
34 ♜b5!!



A bolt from the blue!

34...♜f8 35 ♜xb7+ ♗a8 36 ♜f7!

The sacrifice 36 ♜b8+? doesn't work after 36...♗xb8 37 ♗b3+ ♗c7 38 ♗b7+ ♗d8 39 ♗xc6+ ♗e8 40 ♗c8+ ♗f7 and the black king escapes.



36...♗xf7

Or 36...♗xg3+ 37 ♖xg3 ♗xf7 38 ♗xf7 ♗xa5 39 ♗xg7 with a likely draw.

37 ♗xc6+ ♖b8 38 ♗xd6+ ♖c8

38...♗c7 39 ♗d8+ ♗c8 40 ♗d6+ leads to perpetual check.

39 ♗c6+ ♖d8

39...♖b8 wouldn't alter the outcome: 40 ♗b5+ ♖c8 41 ♗c4+ ♗c7 42 ♗g8+ ♖d7 43 ♗xg7+ ♖e6 44 ♗g8+ with a draw.

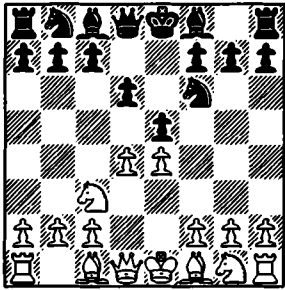
40 ♘b7+ ♗xb7 41 ♗xb7 ♗xf2+ 42 ♖h1 ♗f1+

...and the players agreed a draw. A nice balancing act!

Conclusion

Variations with 3 ♗d3 lead to rich positions. Furthermore, chances to extract an opening advantage for White are quite reasonable. The debate frequently centres on the d4-square and Black's push with ...d5-d4. If Black doesn't lose its control, his prospects are generally satisfactory.

Chapter Seven



3 ♘c3 e5

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 e5

After 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 Black has two move orders at his disposal in order to try and reach the Philidor Hanham variation: 3...e5, intending 4 Qf3 Qbd7; and 3...Qbd7, with the idea of meeting 4 Qf3 with 4...e5. In this chapter we will concentrate on the first move order.

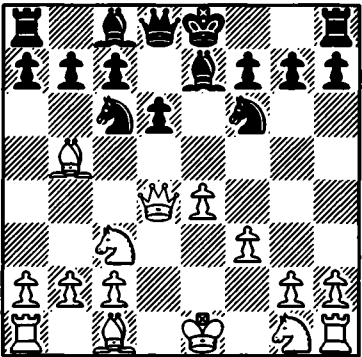
Playing 3...e5 implies that Black doesn't fear the ending resulting from 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8, which constitutes the main 'drawback' of this move order. We will see that Black faces only minor problems here, even though from a practical viewpoint this kind of position is not everyone's cup of tea!

Now we shall consider:

- A: 4 f4
- B: 4 Qge2
- C: 4 dxe5

4 Qf3 is the subject of Chapters 10-14, while White has also played:

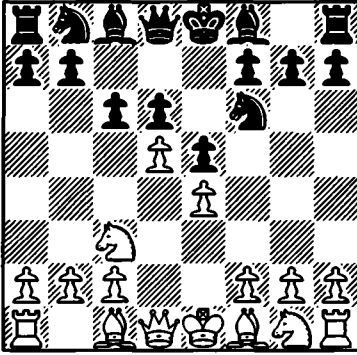
a) 4 f3 exd4! (this continuation seems to equalize, as the g1-knight is deprived of its favourite square; 4...♗e7 would 'only' transpose to 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 Qbd7 4 ♗e3 e5 5 f3, leading to tense positions – see Chapter 8, Line B) 5 ♜xd4 Qc6 6 ♗b5 ♗e7 is equal...



...as Black finishes his development without fearing the doubled pawns. 6...♗d7 7 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 is also level, and the drawback of f2-f3 is highlighted by the gross trick 8 ♗g5 ♗e7 9 0-0-0 0-0 10

♟ge2? ♟xe4 11 ♟xe7 ♟xc3 when Black won a pawn, and later on the game, in Pirrot-Schmidt Schaeffer, German Ch., Bad Wildbad 1993.

b) 4 d5?! (this advance is only efficient if the c-pawn stands on c4, or if it's capable of reaching this square) 4...c6! and Black equalizes by eating away at White's centre.



White has no real plan to follow, and the position is easier to play from Black's side. Indeed, the second player can contemplate ...♟e7, ...0-0, ...♟bd7-c5 and ...a5, whereas for White only the manoeuvre ♟f3-d2-c4 (linked with a4) comes to mind.

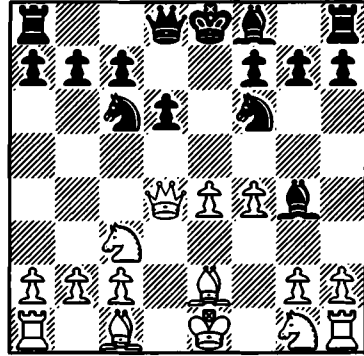
A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 e5 4 f4 ♟g4

4...♟bd7 transposes to 3...♟bd7 4 f4 e5 (see Chapter 8).

Black can also play 4...exd4 5 ♟xd4 ♟c6 6 ♟b5 (or 6 ♟f2 immediately) 6...♟d7 (6...♟e7!? 7 ♟f3 0-0 8 ♟xc6 bxc6 9 0-0 c5, followed by 10...♟b7, gave Black fine play in Hodgson-Collinson, British Rapidplay Ch. 1994) 7 ♟f2 (7 ♟xc6?! would be suspicious this time, since the c1-bishop wouldn't reach g5,

and e4 would become a target after 7...♟xc6) 7...g6 8 ♟f3 ♟g7 9 ♟d2 0-0 10 0-0-0 with mutual chances, Kotronias-Jansa, Gausdal 1995.

5 ♟e2 exd4 6 ♟xd4 ♟c6



Now 7 ♟b5 ♟d7 would rejoin Kotronias-Jansa, while 7 ♟f2 ♟xe2 8 ♟gx2 g6 is equal.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 e5 4 ♟ge2!?

An interesting alternative to the usual 4 dxe5 and 4 ♟f3.

Now Black has a broad choice of how to develop, notably with respect to his b8-knight and f8-bishop.

4...♟c6

The three other valid moves, 4...♟bd7, 4...c6 and 4...♟e7, are more 'Philidorian'. There is no significant difference between them, although 4...♟e7 is the least flexible, since Black deprives himself of the ...g6 possibility (but as he intended to play a Philidor Defence anyway...).

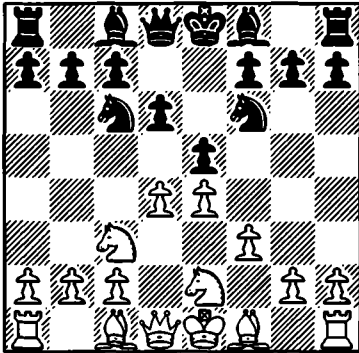
After 4...♟bd7 5 f3 one reaches a position similar to that examined via 3...♟bd7 4 ♟e3 e5 5 f3 (see Chapter 8). Instead, 5 g3 will transpose to a Pirc if

Black opts for 5...g6, or a Philidor in the event of 5...♗e7 (for which see Chapter 8 again).

5 f3

5 h3?! seems imprecise because, with 5...exd4 6 ♖xd4 g6, Black could reach the Larsen Variation where h2-h3 is not particularly helpful to White.

Closing the centre with 5 d5?! doesn't bother Black. He will withdraw his horse to e7 or b8, and then undermine the centre by playing ...c6, as after 4 d5?!



5...♗e7?!

Here, 5...exd4 6 ♖xd4 g6 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 (see Chapter 2) is more dynamic.

6 ♗e3 0-0 7 d5

Played only now Black has castled, thus creating a target.

7...♖b8 8 ♗d2 c6 9 g4 cxd5 10 exd5

...with a nice edge to White, Svidler-A.Hoffman, FIDE World Ch., Moscow 2001.

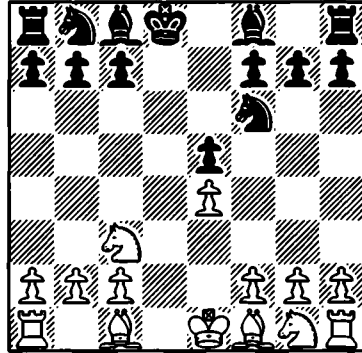
To summarize, if White wants to avoid playing 4 dxe5 or 4 ♖f3, then only 4 ♖ge2 gives him chances to gain an opening advantage. 4 h3 followed by 5 g4, or 4 f3 and then ♗e3 may

transpose into variations we will discuss later on, but Black can look for more.

C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 e5 4 dxe5

Again, 4 ♖f3(!) is probably a better try for an opening advantage.

4...dxe5 5 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8



With such a symmetrical pawn structure only the relative activity of the pieces can disturb the balance. This is especially true here, since White can hardly change the structure to his advantage. Indeed, using his only lever, f2-f4, causes him more problems than anything, as we will see. Finally, having lost the right to castle constitutes a small inconvenience for Black, but a quite bearable one in these given circumstances.

Now White's two main moves are:

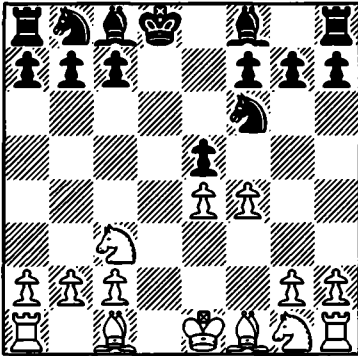
C1: 6 ♗g5

C2: 6 ♗c4

Alternatives are not to be recommended:

a) The hasty advance 6 f4?! is not advisable. Indeed, White is less active

here than in the line 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟bd7 4 f4 e5 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 fxe5 ♟xe5 7 ♟xd8+ ♟xd8 (see Chapter 8), which is already fully satisfactory for Black.

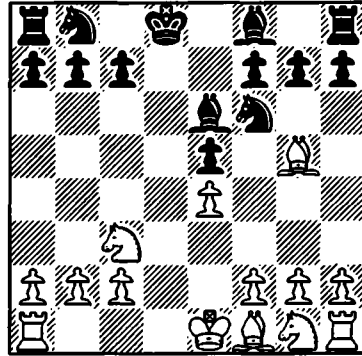


After 6...♟b4 or 6...♟d6, I already prefer Black's position.

b) On the imprecise 6 ♟f3?! Black equalizes easily with 6...♟d6 7 ♟g5 (or 7 ♟c4 ♟e6 8 ♟xe6 fxe6 9 ♟e3 ♟c6 when Black has obtained an improved version of the critical line 6 ♟c4 ♟e6) 7...♟e6. In comparison with many lines, Black doesn't need to waste time by playing ...♟d8-e8.

C1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♟xd8+ ♟xd8 6 ♟g5 ♟e6!

The most reliable reply, which is indeed Black's main choice according to the statistics. Black can now place his knight on d7 without blocking his bishop. Other possibilities include 6...♟d6, 6...c6, and finally 6...♟e7, with a plausible continuation 7 0-0-0 ♟bd7 8 ♟f3 ♟g4 9 ♟xe7+ ♟xe7 10 ♟d5+ ♟d8 11 ♟g5 ♟h6, followed by ...c6, ...♟e7, ...f6 etc.



7 0-0-0+

Alternatively:

a) 7 f4 exf4 8 ♟ge2 is interesting (but not 8 e5? h6 9 ♟xf4 ♟g4 10 h3 g5! and Black already held the upper hand in De Firmian-Ubilava, Moscow 1989). An appropriate reply, recommended by Stohl, is 8...♟e7 9 ♟xf4 ♟g4 10 ♟xe6+ fxe6 11 ♟f4 ♟f8, when the activity of Black's pieces compensates for the loss of the two bishops.

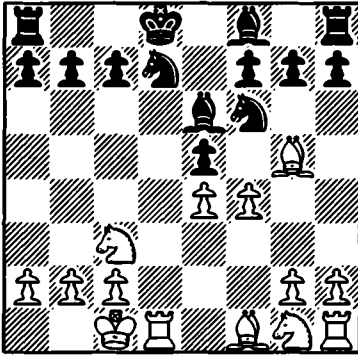
b) There are two ideas behind 7 g3: creating a pawn duo after 8 f4 (with the idea of meeting ...exf4 with 9 gx4), and swapping bishops with ♟f1-h3. The game may continue as follows:

b1) 7...♟c8 8 ♟xf6 gxf6 9 ♟d5 ♟d7 10 ♟h3 c6 with equality, Rozentalis-Gavrikov, Suhr 1991.

b2) 7...♟bd7 8 f4 h6 9 ♟xf6+ ♟xf6 10 0-0-0+ ♟c8 11 ♟f3 exf4 12 gxf4 g6 13 f5!? gxf5 14 exf5 ♟xf5 15 ♟e5 (Santo Roman-Chabanon, French Ch., Nantes 1993) when, instead of the blunder 15...♟e6?? 16 ♟xf7 ♟xf7 17 ♟h3+ and White wins, Black should have played 15...♟c5 with equality.

7...♟bd7 8 f4

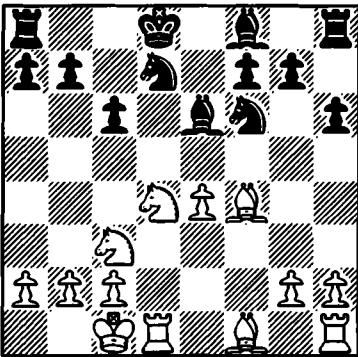
After 8 ♖f3 ♜c8 White lacks targets and the position should be considered as roughly level.



8...exf4 9 ♖f3

9 e5?! wouldn't bring anything tangible, other than the weakening of this pawn, and after 9...h6 10 ♖xf4 ♖g4 Black is in the ascendency.

9...h6 10 ♖xf4 c6 11 ♖d4



The loss of castling rights counterbalances the isolani on e4, but White can't claim any edge. Black should play 11...♙b4!, for example: 12 e5 (White cannot hesitate any longer as ...♙xc3, followed by ...♖xe4, was threatened) 12...♖g4 13 ♖xe6+ fxe6 14 ♙c4 ♜e7 15

♜he1 (a self-pin, but it's the only way to cover e5) 15...♜hf8 16 ♙g3 ♜f5 (16...♙xc3 17 bxc3 ♜f5 18 ♜d6 ♖c5 with equality was possible at once, but there is no hurry) 17 ♜d6! ♖c5 (the rook was taboo: 17...♙xd6? 18 exd6+ ♜d8 19 ♙xe6 and Black's position collapses like an house of cards) 18 ♜d4 ♖f2 (18...♙xc3! 19 bxc3 ♖f2 isn't clear, as the knight doesn't run any real risks once ...♜af8 arrives; the e4-square may also become available if the d4-rook withdraws) 19 ♜e3 (Svidler-Bologan, Novgorod 1995), and now instead of Bologan's 19...♙a5?, 19...♙xc3! (the last chance this time!) keeps the balance after 20 bxc3 or 20 ♜xc3 ♖fe4.

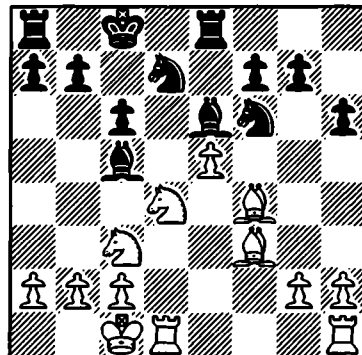
The game **Degraeve-S.Kasparov, Bethune 2001**, on the other hand, is an illustration of unsuitable play by Black: **11...♙c5? 12 ♙e2 ♜e8 13 ♙f3**

White patiently strengthens his position before engaging in more concrete operations.

13...♜c8

13...g5 14 ♙g3 doesn't fundamentally alter the position.

14 e5!



14...♙xd4

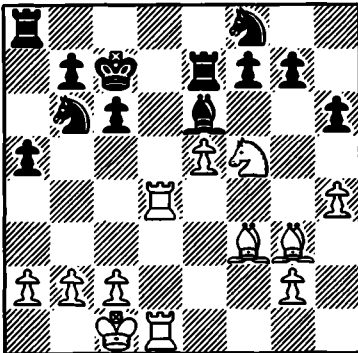
14...♘h7 15 ♚xe6 fxe6 (15...♗xe6? 16 ♙g4 ♗e7 17 ♚e4) 16 ♚e4 was no improvement.

15 ♗xd4 ♘h7 16 ♚e4 ♚c7 17 ♚d6 ♗e7
18 ♗hd1 ♘hf8 19 ♙g3

Prophylaxis directed against ...♚g6.
19...a5?!

More resilient is 19...♚g6 20 ♙h5 ♚gxe5!? (or 20...♚df8 and Black is suffering) 21 ♘xf7! ♙xf7 22 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 23 ♙xe5+ ♚b6 24 ♗xd7 ♙xh5 25 ♗xg7 with a clear White advantage, but also with chances of salvation for Black, due to the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

20 h4 ♚b6?! 21 ♚f5!



A crushing move!

21...♗d7

I'll let you guess the fate which awaits Black in the event of the capture...

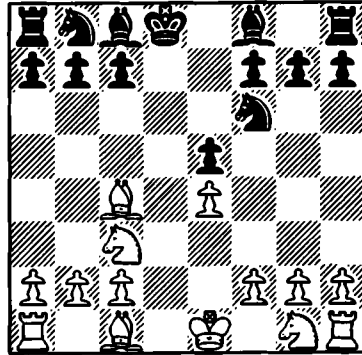
22 ♘xg7 ♗xd4 23 ♗xd4 ♗d8 24 ♗f4

...and Black threw in the towel

C2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♚c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♗xd8+ ♚xd8 6 ♙c4 ♙e6

After this bishop move, Black has

three possible ways to deal with the attack on his f-pawn:



C21: 6...♙e6

C22: 6...♙b4

C23: 6...♚e8

6...♚e7? is inferior as it would block the bishop on f8 and invite ♚d5+ in some lines.

C21) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♚c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♗xd8+ ♚xd8 6 ♙c4 ♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6 8 f3

8 ♙e3 doesn't really change the assessment of this ending: White stands a trifle better, but converting his edge into a full point is a hard task. Here's an example where Black managed to hold without much difficulty: 8...♙d6 (or 8...♙b4 9 0-0-0 ♚e7 10 ♚ge2 ♚c6 11 a3 ♙d6 12 f3) 9 f3 ♚c6 10 0-0-0 ♚e7 11 ♘h3 a6 12 ♚f2 h6 13 ♚a4 ♗hd8 14 ♗d2 (14 ♚d3!? is interesting, but after 14...♚d7 Black remains more or less okay) 14...♙b4 (Black doesn't mind some simplification) 15 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 16 ♚c5 (after this the advantage becomes symbolic) 16...b6 17 ♚xa6 ♙d6 18 a3

(White has to give back his pawn in order to rescue the knight) 18...♖a8 19 ♖b4 ♖xb4 20 axb4 ♙xb4 with equality, Marciano-Maiwald, Austrian Team Championship 1999.

16 ♙c5+ would probably have given better chances of maintaining a slight plus: 16...♙xc5 17 ♖xc5 ♘d7 (or 17...♗b8!? 18 ♗d1 [with the idea 19 ♖g4, to access the seventh rank after the knight swap] 18...h5 19 ♖h3 a5 20 ♖g5 ♘d8 and Black has made some concessions, though after ...b6 and ...♘c6 his position remains acceptable) 18 ♖fd3 ♗b8 19 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♗d1 ♗d6 and White has no dangerous discovered check, so Black's game should still be in order.

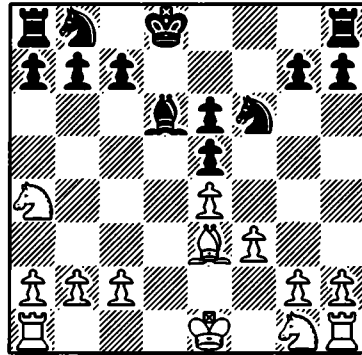
8...♙c5

Schandorff-V.Georgiev, Nordic Ch., Bergen 2001, continued instead 8...a6 9 ♙e3 ♙b4 10 0-0-0+ (in order to install a knight on d3 as soon as possible, while avoiding doubled pawns) 10...♗e7 11 ♖b1 ♗c8 (weird; Black wishes to expand on the queenside, but this pseudo-active plan will backfire, and the classical defence ...♙d6, ...♘c6, ...♘d7 was more to the point) 12 ♖h3 c5?! 13 c3 ♙a5 14 ♗d2 c4 15 ♗hd1 ♖bd7 16 ♖f2 b5? (16...♘f8 was more stubborn) 17 ♖g4! ♗c6 (or 17...♗c7 18 ♙g5 and Black cannot get rid of the pin easily: 18...h6? 19 ♙xf6+ and either h6 or e5 drops) 18 ♙g5 ♗c7 19 f4 h6 20 ♙h4 ♗e8 21 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 22 fxe5 ♘d7 (if 22...♖xe4?! 23 ♗d8+ ♗xd8 24 ♙xd8 wins) 23 ♗d6 g5 24 ♗xe6+ ♗f7 25 ♗xh6 gxh4 26 e6+ ♗g7 27 exd7 ♗xh6 28 d8♚ and White won.

9 ♖a4 ♙d6

9...♙b4+!?, provoking c3 or an exchange of White's stronger bishop, has its merits. After 10 c3 ♙d6 11 ♙e3 ♖bd7 12 b3, however, White remains a tad better.

10 ♙e3



White's superior pawn structure promises a very slight edge. One understands here why 6 ♖f3 was imprecise: it is preferable to cover the e4-pawn by its colleague on f3, so that the knight can freely frolic. The most successful plan for White is to put a knight on d3, usually with the manoeuvre ♖h3-f2-d3. From here this piece exerts pressure on e5, while simultaneously controlling the important squares c5 and f4. Next up is to open the queenside, and c2-c4 (threatening c5 if the king stands on e7) forces Black to react.

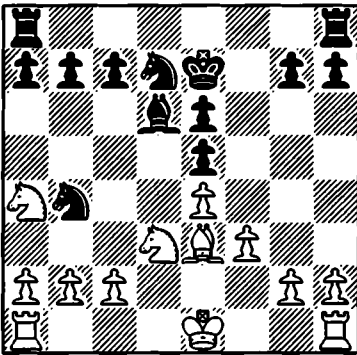
As for White's other pieces: the bishop is ideally placed on e3; the other knight is not bad on a4 – if it is chased, it will leap into c5. There are two different plans involving the king and rooks: firstly, the king on e2 and rooks free to support queenside action (the

most promising plan in my opinion); and secondly, queenside castling. In the latter case the presence of the king on the queen's flank may be a source of counterplay for Black, while the rooks also have fewer prospects, since only the d-file is open (see Schandorff-Georgiev above for a good example).

From Black's point of view it is usual to expand on the queenside, by playing ...a6, ...b5 etc. The most common formation consists of ...♟e7, ...♟c6, ...♟d7, and ...♟d6. The rooks, as with their counterparts, have no well-defined posts. Black will have to await further developments before deciding upon their best placement.

Here's an example of the difficulties Black may experience:

10...♟fd7 11 ♟h3 ♟e7 12 ♟f2 ♟c6 13 ♟d3 ♟b4



The knight on d3 is ideally placed, so it is justifiable to get rid of it.

14 ♟xb4 ♟xb4+ 15 ♟e2 b5!?

The less compromising 15...a6 16 ♟hd1 and 15...♟b6 16 ♟c5+ ♟xc5 17 ♟xc5 ♟d7 don't completely solve Black's problems either.

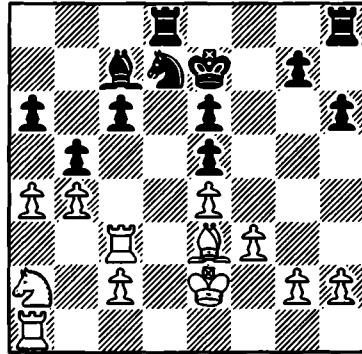
16 a3 ♟d6

16...♟a5!? 17 ♟c5 ♟b6 was probably better, as now White seizes the initiative on the queenside.

17 ♟c3 a6 18 a4 c6 19 ♟hd1 ♟ad8?!

19...♟hd8 was better, even though the immediate 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♟a7 ♟a8 doesn't bring White much.

20 ♟d3 h6 21 b3 ♟b4 22 ♟a2 ♟a5 23 b4 ♟c7 24 ♟c3



24...♟b6

Giving up the c-pawn, but 24...♟b8 25 ♟c1 wasn't appealing either.

25 ♟xc6 ♟xe3 26 ♟xe3 ♟c8 27 ♟xc8 ♟xc8 28 ♟d3

Black has nothing for the pawn deficit and White went on to win in Vaissier-Epishin, Novosibirsk 1993.

C22) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♟xd8+ ♟xd8 6 ♟c4 ♟b4

Not a frequent reply, but frankly I don't see why.

7 ♟d2

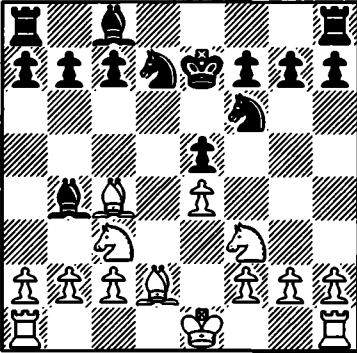
After 7 ♟xf7?! ♟f8 8 ♟c4 ♟xe4 9 ♟ge2 it seems that Black can enter the complications arising after 9...♟xf2, for instance: 10 ♟f1 (10 0-0? ♟c5) 10...♟g4

11 ♖g5+ ♜e8 12 ♜xf8+ ♙xf8 13 ♜d1 ♙d6 14 ♜b5 h6, followed by ...♞e7 (or if 15 ♙h4?? ♜e3!).

7...♞e7

If 7...♙e6 8 ♙xe6 fxe6 the position is similar to 6...♙e6.

8 ♜f3 ♜bd7



...followed by ...c6 and ...♙d6, when the game tends towards equality.

If White allows 7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3, for example with 7 ♙g5 or 7 f3, Black isn't troubled either. He can then accept a deterioration of his pawn structure by playing 8...♙e6 9 ♙xe6 fxe6.

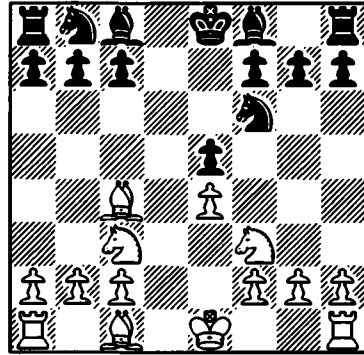
C23) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 6 ♙c4 ♞e8

Nowhere near as common as 6...♙e6, but this move has the merit of being less committal. If White can't find a way to add pressure, his opponent will gradually equalize.

6...♞e8 is a specialty of the Georgian Grandmaster Azmaiparashvili, and with this move he has scored a flattering 3/4, versus no lesser players than Hodgson, Godena, Bareev and Greenfeld!

7 ♜f3

Forcing Black's next move, due to the double threat of ♜xe5 and ♜g5.



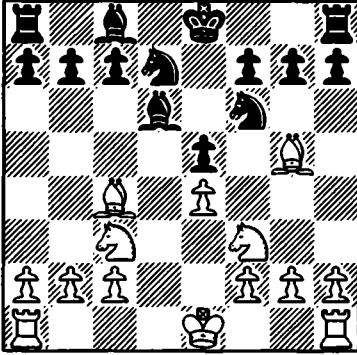
7...♙d6 8 ♙g5 ♜bd7

The first crossroads. Apart from the text move, Black has also tried:

a) 8...♙e6 9 ♜d2!? (9 ♙xe6 fxe6 10 0-0-0 ♜c6 is a better version – for Black – of 6...♙e6 7 ♙xe6 fxe6; Black has solved his opening problems here: for example, 11 ♜d2 a6 12 ♜b3 ♜g4 13 ♜df1 h6 14 f3 hxg5 ½-½ Karjakin-V.Georgiev, Chalkidiki 2002) 9...♜bd7 10 0-0-0 h6 (on 10...♞e7 White keeps a slight plus after 11 ♜d5+ ♙xd5 12 ♙xd5 as the attempt to regain the pair of bishops fails: 12...c6 13 ♙c4 h6 14 ♙h4 g5 15 ♙g3 ♜h5 16 ♙xf7! ♜xf7 17 ♜c4) 11 ♙h4 ♞e7 12 ♙xe6 fxe6 (or 12...♞xe6!?) 13 ♜c4 ♜b6 (perhaps 13...♙b4) 14 ♜xb6 (14 ♜a5? is wrong on account of 14...♙b4! 15 ♜xb7 ♜ab8) 14...axb6 15 f3 and White converted his permanent structural edge into a full point in Rublevsky-G.Hernandez, French League 2004.

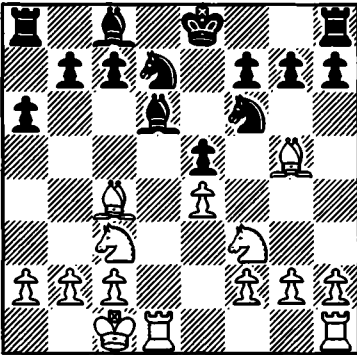
b) 8...c6 9 0-0-0 ♙c7 (A.Kuzmin-Damljanovic, Brena Baja rapid 2005)

needs further investigation, but should be okay provided that White can't exploit the weakened d6-square (and I can't see how he is able to).



9 h3!?

After the more usual 9 Qd2 and 9 0-0-0, the assessment of the position oscillates between a slight edge to White and equality. For example, 9 0-0-0 a6...

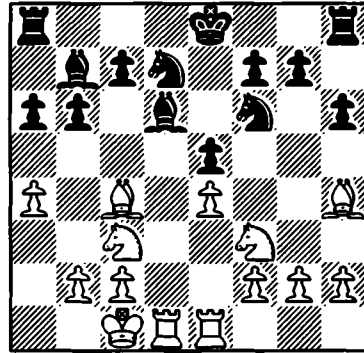


...and now:

a) 10 Qhe1 h6 11 Qh4 Qb8 (11...Qb6 may be inaccurate: 12 Qb3 Qg4 13 Qd3 Qfd7 14 h3 Qxf3 [an unhappy trade but the following sequence wasn't appealing either: 14...Qh5 15 g4 Qg6 16

Qg3 f6 17 Qh4 Qh7 18 Qf5 Qxf5 19 exf5 Qc5 20 Qd2 Qxb3+ 21 axb3 with Qe4 and/or f4 to follow] 15 Qxf3 and again White has obtained something concrete: the two bishops, Greenfeld-Azmaiparashvili, European Ch., Neum 2000; however, the drastic 11...g5!? 12 Qg3 Qh5 seems playable) 12 Qb3 Qh5 13 Qd5 Qc5 14 Qe3 g5 15 Qg3 f6 etc., Kunte-Wang Rui, Asian Championship, Hyderabad 2005.

b) 10 a4 h6 (10...Qb6 11 Qb3 Qg4 12 h3 Qxf3 13 gxf3 gave White some pressure after 13...Qbd7 14 Qhg1 Qf8 [14...g6!?!] 15 a5 in Karjakin-Pikula, Biel 2003; while 10...b6?! [M.Adams-Azmaiparashvili, Cap d'Agde rapid 2003] allows 11 Qxf6! gxf6 [or 11...Qxf6?! 12 Qg5! Qf8 13 Qd5 wins material] 12 Qd5 followed by Qc6, Qh4-f5 and so on) 11 Qh4 b6 12 Qhe1 Qb7...

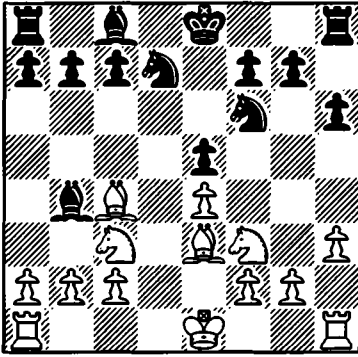


...with a balanced position, Karjakin-McShane, Tiayuan 2005.

9...h6 10 Qe3!

The idea of 9 h3 becomes clear: Black can't continue ...Qg4. Also prohibited is 10...Qc5 as the e5-pawn would be hanging.

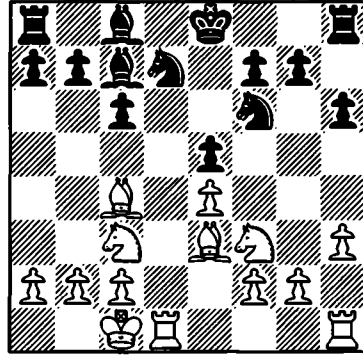
After 10 ♖e3, the game Illescas Cordoba-Azmaiparashvili, Dos Hermanas 2001, continued 10...♗b4?!...



when White could have achieved an advantage with 11 ♖d2 ♖xc3 12 ♖xc3 ♘xe4 13 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘d6 15 ♖b3: long castling and ♖he1 are next on the agenda, when the black king may feel unsafe.

Instead of Azmaiparashvili's move, Black should have played 10...c6, intending to meet 11 0-0-0 with 11...♖c7. Black will slowly catch up in develop-

ment and obtain a decent position.

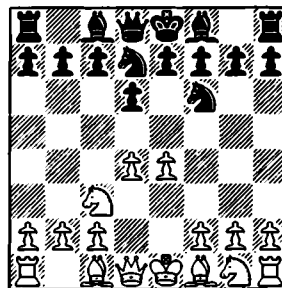


Conclusion

From the few analysed examples of the ending reached after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8, one can conclude that White stands a trifle better.

However, provided he plays accurately, Black doesn't have much to fear. Following 6 ♖c4, by choosing any of the three valid replies, 6...♗e8, 6...♖b4 or 6...♖e6 7 ♖xe6 fxe6, his position remains a hard nut to crack.

Chapter Eight



3 ♘c3 ♘bd7: Introduction and 4 f4

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7

3...♞bd7 is the move Black plays if he wishes to avoid the endgame arising after 3...e5 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♜xd8+ ♝xd8 (see the previous chapter). If White now plays 4 ♟f3 then 4...e5 leads us to Chapters 10-14. In this chapter and the following one, we'll have a look at the independent paths that White can take. 4 g4 is the subject of Chapter 9, while here we will study:

A: 4 g3

B: 4 ♞e3

C: 4 f4

Before diving into critical variations, let's browse the harmless lines induced by White's less important 4th moves.

a) 4 f3 should be followed up by ♞e3, reaching Line B; it makes no sense if White castles short.

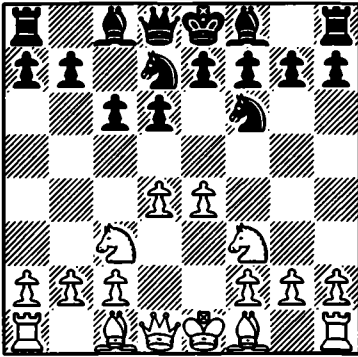
b) White has no reason to limit his bishop by playing 4 ♞e2?! (this applies also to 4 ♞d3). A logical continuation is

4...e5 5 ♟f3 ♞e7 (see Chapter 10), which causes Black no problems.

c) 4 ♞g5?! (if White is probably going to castle kingside, it is more to the point to develop pieces from this wing; 4 ♞g5 isn't bad in itself, but White loses all hope of an edge) 4...e5 5 ♟f3 (after 5 f4?! h6 White must give up the bishop for the knight or lose f4 for nothing) 5...♞e7 and the position is level, provided that White avoids the trap 6 ♜d2 h6 7 ♞h4? ♟xe4!, which costs him a pawn.

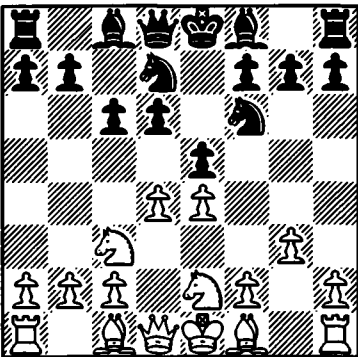
d) 4 ♞c4 is interesting, but after 4...e5 White would be forced to make concessions in order to persist in an original way! It would be wiser to re-join the trodden paths by playing 5 ♟f3. Black has the extra possibility of 4...c6!? threatening ...b5-b4, or 5...d5 6 exd5 ♞b6, or even 5...♟xe4 followed by 6...d5.

Finally, let's go back to 4 ♟f3. Instead of the usual 4...e5 Black could try 4...c6!?



This is unusual, but there is no direct refutation. White can reach normal lines after 5 a4 e5 6 ♖c4 etc., or attempt to punish Black by means of 5 e5 ♘d5 (5...dxe5? 6 dxe5 ♘g4 7 e6 fxe6 8 ♘g5 gives White a clear advantage) 6 ♘xd5 cxd5 7 e6 fxe6 8 ♘g5 ♖a5+! (8...♘f6? 9 ♖b5+ ♖d7 10 ♘xe6 ♖a5+ 11 ♖d2 was much better for White in Damljanovic-Udovcic, Yugoslavia 1974) 9 ♖d2 ♖b6, but the position after 10 ♖c3 ♘f6 11 ♖d3 g6 (Prié-Chabanon, Aix les Bains 1991) is messy.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 g3 e5 5 ♘ge2 c6



5...b5!? should be compared to Line B2 in the next chapter, where White's g-pawn stands one square further forward.

6 a4

It makes sense to hinder the thematic ...b5 push. After 6 ♖g2?! b5 7 d5 (7 a3 a5 or 7...♖b7 wouldn't change much) 7...♖b7 Black's counterplay arrives faster than in the main text.

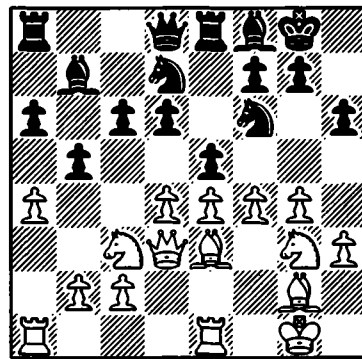
6...♖e7 7 ♖g2 0-0 8 0-0 ♜e8!

Better than 8...♖c7?! 9 h3 ♜e8 10 g4, when White has obtained the optimal configuration for this system.

With 8...♜e8 we are following the game **Gallagher-Bauer, German League 2000**:

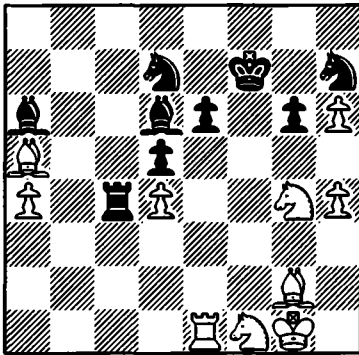
9 h3 ♖f8 10 ♜e1

10 g4, as chosen by Grischuk several months later, seems more logical to me: 10...h6 11 ♖e3 b6 12 ♘g3 ♖b7 13 ♜e1 (the immediate 13 f4 was possible too: 13...a6 14 g5 hxg5 15 fxg5 exd4 16 ♖xd4 ♘h7 with mutual chances) 13...a6 14 f4 b5 15 ♖d3...



15...b4? (15...♖c7 would have kept the position unclear and rich in possibilities; Black isn't ready for the text)

move as the pressure against e4 isn't strong enough) 16 ♗d1 exf4 17 ♙xf4 c5 18 c3! (White obviously maintains a pawn on d4, in order to keep control of the important e5-square) 18...a5 19 ♗f2 bxc3 20 bxc3 cxd4 21 cxd4 ♗b6 (erroneous, as the knight will be needed on the other side) 22 g5! ♗h7 (22...hxg5?! 23 ♙xg5 ♗bd7 24 ♗g4 with a nasty initiative) 23 gxf6 g6 24 ♗g4 ♙a6 25 ♗f3 ♙c8 26 e5 d5 27 e6 ♙xe6 28 ♙xe6 fxe6 29 ♙e1 ♗e8 30 h4 ♗d7 (better 30...♙b4!) 31 ♙d2 (and here 31 ♗e3! ♙c4 [but not 31...♙c6?? 32 ♙xd5] 32 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 33 ♙xe6 ♗f7 34 ♙e1) 31...♗f7 32 ♙xa5 ♙d6 33 ♗xf7+? ♗xf7 34 ♗f1? ♙c4 ½-½ Grischuk-Bauer, French League 2001.



Here, while assessing my position as superior (we both had about 1 minute and 30 seconds left), I offered a draw, but regretted it instantly!

This was the only position Grischuk spoiled that weekend; his overall score was 3½/4.

10...b6

10...a5!? is another option.

11 ♙e3 ♙b7

11...a6?! 12 g4! h6 13 ♗g3 gave White an edge in H.Schumacher-Van de Plassche, Belgian Team Ch. 1997.

12 ♗d2

Or 12 g4?! exd4! 13 ♗xd4 c5 and e4 falls.

12...a6 13 g4 exd4 14 ♗xd4 b5!

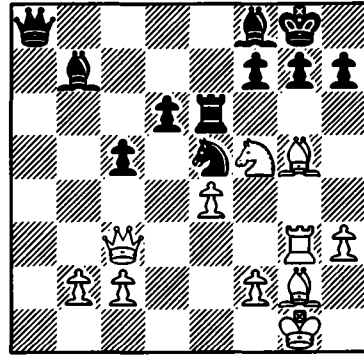
White wins after 14...c5?! 15 ♗f5 ♗xe4? 16 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 17 ♙g5.

15 axb5 axb5 16 ♙xa8 ♗xa8 17 g5 b4!

18 gxf6 bxc3 19 ♗xc3 ♗xf6 20 ♙g5

♗d7 21 ♗f5 ♙e6! 22 ♙e3 c5 23 ♙g3

♗e5



24 ♙h6?

The ugly-looking move 24 f3! would have enabled White to stay in the game.

24...♙g6 25 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 26 ♗xg7 ♙xe4

27 ♙xe4 ♗xe4 28 ♗e8 ♗f8 29 ♗c7

♗e7?

In time-trouble, I had simply forgotten that 29...♗f3+! 30 ♗f1 ♗d4 prevented ♗h8+ in my calculations! Now White is alive again.

30 ♙xg6 hxg6 31 ♗f1 ♗d7 32 ♗b5 ♗c6

33 ♗a3 ♗f3 34 ♗e3 ♗xe3 35 fxe3

♗d2+ 36 ♗e2 ♗e4 37 ♗f3 d5 38 h4 f6

39 c3 ♗d6 40 ♗c2 ♗d2+ 41 ♗e2 ♗c4 42

b3 ♖a5 43 b4 ♘c6 44 ♘d3 ♘e5+ 45 ♜e2 ♘c6 46 ♘d3 ♘e5+ 47 ♜e2 ♘c6 48 ♘d3 ½-½

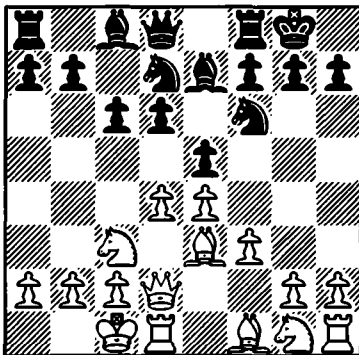
In this game the respective operations (on the queenside for Black; on the kingside for White) led to a lively and balanced game. Had White played 24 f3!, the position would have remained unclear.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♙e3 e5 5 f3

5 ♜d2 doesn't change anything, as sooner or later f2-f3 will be compulsory, while 5...♘g4 6 ♙g5 suits White quite well.

5...c6 6 ♜d2 ♙e7 7 0-0-0 0-0

7...b5? 8 d5! b4 9 dxc6 bxc3 10 cxd7+ (check!) 10...♙xd7 11 ♜xc3 leaves White with a clear advantage.



8 g4 b5 9 ♜b1 ♘b6

9...exd4? is a premature reaction: 10 ♙xd4 b4 11 ♘ce2 c5 12 ♙e3 ♘e5 13 ♘f4 (as a result of his 9th move, Black's attack has reached a dead end and he has conceded the d5-square) 13...♞b8 14 g5 ♘xf3?! (this gives only a semblance of an initiative, although it is true that the

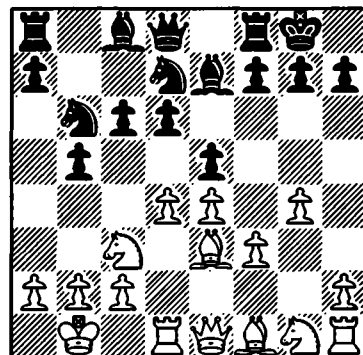
alternative 14...♘fd7 15 ♘d5 wasn't a delightful prospect) 15 ♘xf3 ♘xe4 16 ♜c1 ♙g4 17 ♙e2 is the end of Black's initiative! He could now grab a third pawn for his sacrificed piece, by means of ...♙xf3 and ...♘xg5, but this wouldn't solve his problems. Black therefore adds some more fuel to the fire by another speculative sacrifice – a correct choice for a practical game: 17...♘c3+!? 18 bxc3 bxc3+ 19 ♜a1 ♜a5 20 ♘d5 ♞b2 (otherwise ♞d3 and it's goodbye to the c3-pawn) 21 ♘xe7+ ♜h8 22 ♜xb2 cxb2+ 23 ♜b1. White enjoys a huge material advantage and is obviously winning here (though in Boudremensch, French League 2001, he made some mistakes and ended up losing).

10 ♜e1

Directed against 10...b4 11 ♘ce2 ♘c4 and ...♘xe3. We are following the game **J.Polgar-Bauer, World Cup of Rapid Chess, Cannes 2001:**

10...b4?!

Here 10...♘fd7! deserved serious attention.



The idea of g4-g5 is parried and the horse may be rerouted to e5 after a

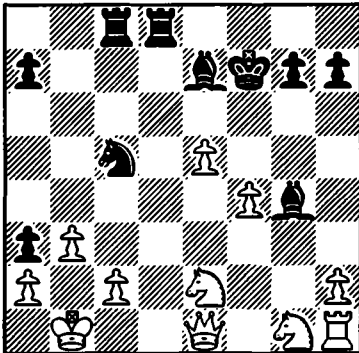
follow-up such as 11...exd4 12 ♗xd4 b4 13 ♖ce2 c5 14 ♗e3 ♖e5. On the other hand, 10...exd4?! 11 ♗xd4 b4 12 ♖ce2 d5 13 ♖g3 would again be erroneous.

11 ♖ce2 ♖c4 12 ♗c1 d5?

A gross mistake. 12...♗b6 was called for, even though the edge would have remained with White after 13 g5! ♖e8 (if 13...d5 14 gxf6 ♖a3+ 15 bxa3 bxa3+ 16 ♖a1 ♗b8 17 ♖c3 wins, as does 13...♗b8? 14 b3) 14 ♖g3.

13 b3 ♖a3+ 14 ♗xa3 bxa3 15 dxe5 ♖d7 16 f4 ♖c5 17 ♗g2 ♗xg4 18 exd5 cxd5 19 ♗xd5 ♗c8 20 h3

20 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♗xd8 ♗fxd8 was what I was hoping for during the game.



Black will continue ...♗f5, ...♖a6 (or ...♖e4), and ...♗b4 (or ...♖b4), though it seems that Black's compensation is still a bit light after 22 ♖c3.

20...♗f5 21 ♖c3 ♗a5 22 ♖ge2 ♖a6?!

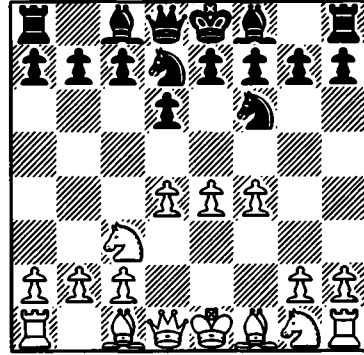
Visually it appears that Black has some play. If only the e7-bishop could jump over that knight...

23 ♗e4 ♗xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♗c7 25 c4 ♗b4 26 ♗g3 ♗b7 27 ♖f6+ ♖h8 28 ♗hg1 g6 29 ♗h4 h5 30 ♗g5 ♖g7 31 ♗d7 ♗c7 32

♗xg6+ 1-0

An abrupt end.

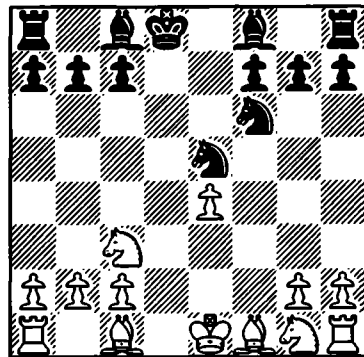
C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♖c3 ♗bd7 4 f4



Together with 4 g4, this is a real test of Black's move order. It certainly looks sensible to include the f-pawn in the battle for the centre.

4...e5 5 ♖f3

a) 5 dxe5 (or 5 fxe5) is a harmless follow-up, as long as Black pays attention over the next few moves: 5...dxe5 6 fxe5 ♖xe5 7 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8...



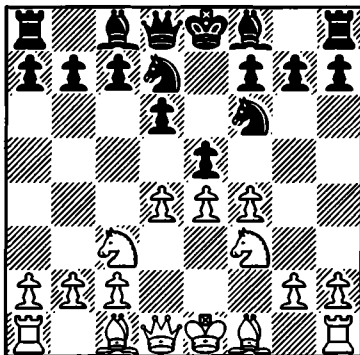
...and now, for instance, after 8 ♗f4 ♗d6 9 0-0-0 ♖e7 (threatening ...♖d3+) White could soon end up worse.

Other White continuations are obviously possible at move 8, such as 8 $\text{d}f3$ or 8 $\text{g}5$. But Black has nothing to complain about as long as he keeps controlling e5. For instance:

a1) 8 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{d}d6$ 9 $\text{g}5$ $\text{c}6$ 10 0-0-0 $\text{c}c7$ 11 $\text{d}d4$ $\text{d}d7$ (11... $\text{d}e8!$?) 12 $\text{d}f5$ $\text{e}xf5$ 13 exf5 $\text{d}eg4$ 14 $\text{e}c4!$ $\text{h}6$ (if 14... $\text{d}f2$ 15 $\text{f}xd6$ $\text{c}xd6$ 16 $\text{f}f1$ with compensation) 15 $\text{f}xd6$ (15 $\text{e}xf6$ gxf6) 15... hxg5 (15... $\text{c}xd6!$ 16 $\text{e}f4+$) 16 $\text{f}d2$ $\text{d}e5$ with an equal position, Sedina-Bauer, Swiss Team Ch. 2006.

a2) 8 $\text{g}5$ $\text{e}e7!$? (8... $\text{c}6$ 9 0-0-0+ $\text{c}c7$ is valid too) 9 0-0-0+ $\text{d}fd7$ 10 $\text{e}xe7+$ $\text{c}xe7$ 11 $\text{h}3?$! (useless) 11... $\text{c}6$ with an edge to Black in Braeuner-Schmidt Schaeffer, Triberg (rapid) 1991. White had no compensation for his isolani.

b) 5 $\text{e}e3!$?, to recapture with the bishop in case Black takes on d4, is quite interesting. The drawback lies in the eventuality of a timely ... $\text{d}g4$, gaining a tempo. Black can either react by playing ... $\text{g}6$, or ... $\text{c}6$ intending ... $\text{b}5$ and ... $\text{a}5$.



After 5 $\text{d}f3$ Black's three main moves are:

C1: 5... $\text{e}e7!$

C2: 5... $\text{c}6$

C3: 5... exd4

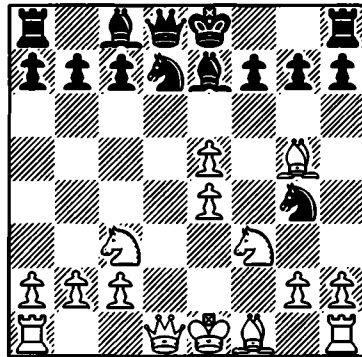
5... $\text{e}e7?$ obstructs the bishop and therefore isn't advisable. After 6 $\text{e}c4$ $\text{d}b6$ 7 $\text{e}b3$ White enjoys the more harmonious development and a central supremacy.

C1) 1 $\text{e}4$ $\text{d}6$ 2 $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}f6$ 3 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{d}bd7$ 4 $\text{f}4$ $\text{e}5$ 5 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{e}e7!$

Following the same goal as 5... $\text{c}6$, but the e7-bishop will have to be redeployed. Basically, controlling d5 is important, which makes 5... $\text{e}e7$ inferior to moving the c-pawn. The encounter **Conquest-Hodgson, London 1991**, continued:

6 dxe5 dxe5 7 fxe5 $\text{d}g4$ 8 $\text{e}f4$ $\text{e}c5$ 9 $\text{g}5$ $\text{e}e7$

Forced, which means that White can already repeat moves if he wishes.



10 $\text{e}f4$ $\text{e}c5$ 11 $\text{e}c4$ 0-0 12 $\text{e}e2$

12 $\text{e}6!$ seriously deserved consideration. The two plausible Black replies lead to complications that seem to favour White:

a) 12...fxe6 13 ♙xe6+ ♚h8 14 ♙xg4 ♜xf4 15 ♙f5 locks the rook in, which induces the following weakening of Black's castled king: 15...g6 (15...♞e8 16 ♞e2!) 16 ♞d5!? ♜xf3 17 ♞xf3 gxf5 18 ♞c3+ ♟g8 19 ♞g3+, followed by ♞xc7 and then 0-0-0 or exf5 with a powerful initiative.

b) 12...♞f2 13 exd7 ♞xd1 14 dxc8 ♞xc8 15 ♜xd1. The three minor pieces would 'normally' be stronger than the queen, but as the c5-bishop is forbidding White to castle, matters are not as clear cut here: 15...♞g4 16 ♙g3 ♙b4 (placing a rook on d8 or e8 may be better) 17 0-0 ♙xc3 18 bxc3 ♞xe4 19 ♞e5 and White, with his pieces coordinated against f7 and the black king, should have an edge.

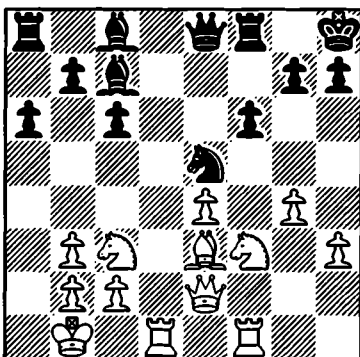
12...♞e8 13 0-0-0 ♞gxe5 14 ♙b3 a6 15 ♜hf1 ♙d6 16 ♟b1 ♟h8

The assessment is unclear at present.

17 h3 f6 18 g4 ♞c5 19 ♙d5! c6 20 ♙b3

White has destabilized the d6-bishop, and the weakness of d6 will play a role later on.

20...♙c7 21 ♙e3 ♞xb3 22 axb3



22...b6?!

22...♞xf3 23 ♞xf3 ♙e6 would have been decent for Black.

23 ♞xe5 fxe5 24 ♜xf8+ ♞xf8 25 ♞c4 ♞e8 26 ♞d5! cxd5 27 ♞xc7

Opposite-coloured bishops have appeared, but Black's pawns are weak and his pieces lack good squares.

27...d4 28 ♙g1 ♙e6

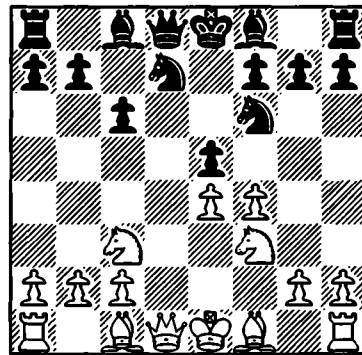
Otherwise ♙h2 and White still collects the pawns.

29 ♞xe5

Black could have saved himself the following few moves.

29...♞g6 30 ♜xd4 ♞e8 31 ♜d6 ♞f7 32 ♙d4 a5 33 ♞b5 a4 34 bxa4 ♜c8 35 ♙xg7+ ♟g8 36 ♙c3 h6 37 ♜xb6 ♙d7 38 ♞d5 1-0

C2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♞f3 c6 6 dxe5 dxe5



7 fxe5

Or:

a) 7 ♞xe5?!? ♞xe5 8 ♞xd8+ ♟xd8 9 fxe5 ♞g4 10 ♙f4 ♙c5 11 ♙c4 and now:

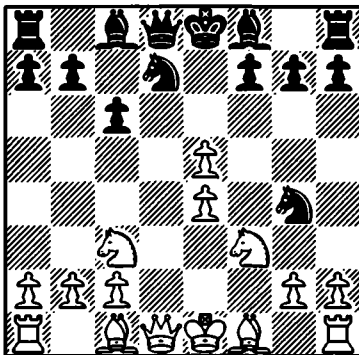
a1) 11...♟e7 12 ♜f1 b5 (alternatives are not satisfactory either: 12...♙e6?! is well met by 13 ♞d5+! cxd5 14 exd5 fol-

lowed by d6+; 12...♖f8 13 ♘d1 ♗d4 14 ♗e2! and e5 is immune: 14...♘xe5? 15 c3 or 14...♗xe5 15 ♗xg4) 13 ♗xf7 (13 ♗b3 ♖f8) 13...♗f2+ 14 ♖xf2 ♘xf2 15 ♗b3 (or 15 e6) 15...♘g4 16 ♗g5+ and White stands much better.

a2) 11...♗e8 12 ♖f1 ♖f8 13 h3 (if 13 ♖d1?! ♗e3 14 ♗g3 ♗c5 and there seems to be nothing better than repeating moves; but 13 ♘d1!?, as in the lines with ...♗e7, may be stronger) 13...♘e3 14 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 15 ♖d1 ♗e7 and White stands slightly better on account of his extra pawn. The pawn, however, is a doubled and isolated one; furthermore, Black has the pair of bishops, so he should manage to hold this ending.

b) Out of the three sensible possibilities for White, 7 ♗c4?! is the least good. Black must now refrain from 7...♗c5? 8 ♘xe5 when he doesn't have enough for the pawn after either 8...0-0 or 8...♘xe5 9 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 10 fxе5 ♘g4 11 ♗xf7 ♘xe5 12 ♗h5. Instead, 7...♗b4 equalizes easily.

7...♘g4



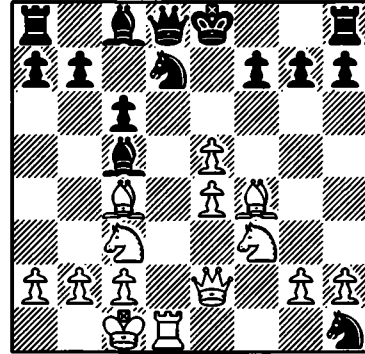
8 e6!?

The classical recipe in this kind of

situation. Rather than ending up with a weak, isolated pawn on e4, White gives back the pawn in a favourable way.

The alternative is 8 ♗f4?!/!? ♗c5 9 ♗c4 and now:

a) 9...♘f2! 10 ♖e2 ♘xh1 11 0-0-0...



All the white pieces are out and ready to bite. The compensation for the rook is obvious, but still probably insufficient after 11...♘f2!. White can try 11 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 12 e6+ ♗e8 13 0-0-0 too, but the verdict remains the same: 13...♘f2 14 exd7+ ♗xd7 and the extra material should prevail.

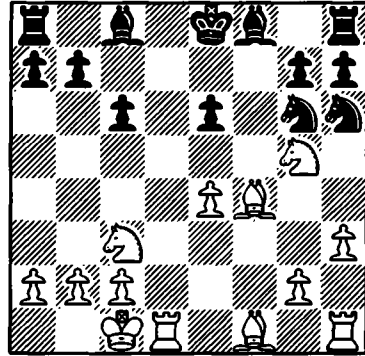
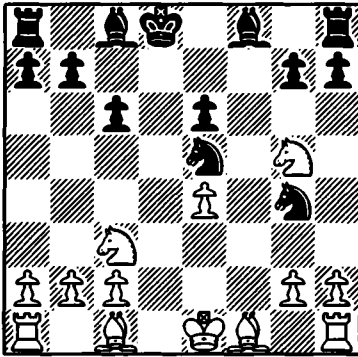
b) 9...♖e7 10 e6 fxе6 11 ♗g5 ♖f7 12 ♖f1 ♖g6 13 ♖d2 h6 14 ♗f4 e5 15 ♗g3 ♘e3 16 ♘h4 ♘xf1 17 ♘xg6 ♘xd2 18 ♗xd2 ♖f8 19 ♘xf8 ♗xf8 20 ♖f1 ½-½ A.Graf-Ermenkov, Dubai 2000: and now 20...♗e7 21 ♗f7+ ♗d8, followed by ...♗f6 and ...♗e7 (Ermenkov) would be equal.

8...fxе6 9 ♘g5 ♘de5

9...♘ge5? is completely wrong: 10 ♘xe6 ♖h4+ 11 g3 ♖f6 12 ♘c7+ and White wins material after every move: 12...♗d8 13 ♗g5, 12...♗e7 13 ♘7d5+, or 12...♗f7 13 ♗e2 with the double threat

of ♖f1 and ♗xa8.

10 ♗xd8+ ♕xd8



A rather tricky endgame has arisen. At first sight White stands much better, for he has more space, can still castle, and Black's c8-bishop also looks grim. But Black's prospects shouldn't be underestimated. His king will stand well on e7 and he has a classy outpost on e5. Moreover, d5 is well controlled and the weakness of d6 should not be that relevant.

11 h3!

Forcing the knight to the edge is best. After the less energetic 11 ♖e2 ♗e8 or 11 ♖f4 h6 (not 11...♖c5? 12 h3! ♖f8 13 g3) 12 ♖d1+ ♗e7 13 ♗f3 ♗xf3+ 14 gxf3 e5 15 ♖c1 ♗f6, Black gains equality.

11...♗h6 12 ♖f4 ♗hf7

The unsound 12...♖d6?? is punished immediately after 13 0-0-0 ♗e7 14 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 15 ♗f3 (or 15 ♖e2) 15...♗hf7 16 ♖e2 when the pin is fatal, A.Gomez-M.Ostertag, France 1994.

12...♗g6 is the alternative, the assessment of which depends on the follow-up: 13 0-0-0+ ♗e8

14 ♗b5!? ♗xf4 (Black was smashed after 14...cxb5? 15 ♖xb5+ ♗e7 16 ♖c7 ♗f6 17 h4 in N.Ong-Oaker, correspondence 2004 – the black king has a bad time of it here) 15 ♗c7+ ♗e7 16 ♗xa8 g6 17 g3 ♗h5 18 ♖d3, defending g3 while preparing ♖a3. This messy position needs further analysis.

14 ♖c7 and 14 ♖e3 are less wild but also give reasonable chances: 14 ♖c7 ♖c5! (stronger than 14...♖e7 15 ♗f3 ♖d7 [on 15...♖f8 16 ♖c4, intending ♗d4, while if 15...♗f7 then 16 e5 or 16 h4!]) 16 e5!, vacating e4 for his knight, gives White the better game, Golod-J.Hodgson, Forli 1992) 15 ♖d8+ ♗e7 16 ♖xh8 ♖e3+ 17 ♗b1 ♗xh8 18 ♗f3 (18 ♗xh7 ♗8f7) 18...♗g6, as in J.Nielsen-Oortwijn, correspondence 1997.

13 0-0-0+

On 13 ♖c4 ♗e7 (or even 13...♗xg5 14 ♖xe5 ♗f7 15 0-0-0+ ♗e8) 14 ♗xf7 (or 14 ♖b3 g6) 14...♗xf7 15 0-0 g6 16 ♖ad1 ♖g7 (Sumets-Pichugin, Odessa 1995) looks playable for Black.

13...♗e7

This is better in my view than 13...♗e8, which allows White to keep a

small plus with 14 dxf7 dxf7 15 e3c4 (after 15 e5 g5 16 e3 g7 17 d4 xe5 18 d5 d5 19 e5 White had all the fun in Storani-Geus, correspondence 2000) 15... e3b4 ! (15... e3c5 16 e5 ! g5 17 d2 d5 18 e2 [Hallengren-Mary, correspondence 2004] intending a combination of d4 , e3 , hf1 and h5+ with ample compensation; or 15... g5 ! and 16... g7) 16 hd3 e7 ?! (now or on the next move 16... b5 should probably have been tried: 17 b3 a6 with the idea of ... c5-c4 , or 17 dxb5 !? cxb5 18 e5 b5 e7 19 e6 e5 with unclear consequences) 17 hd1 e5 18 d2 (L.Arnold-Jonitz, Brno 1995) and White has a clear advantage due to the unpleasant threat d5+ .

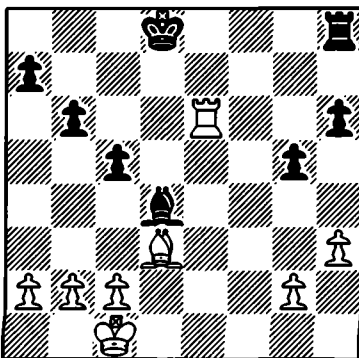
14 dxf7 dxf7 15 e5 g5 16 e3 b6 17 d4 h6 18 d6 dxe5

18... g7 19 dxf7 dxf7 was a trifle better for White in E.Prie-J.Shaw, Oakham 1994.

19 dxc8 hxc8 20 a6 hd8 21 hxd8 dxd8 22 d4 g7 23 he1

What else?

23... d3+ 24 d3 xd4 25 hxe6 c5



The position is equal.

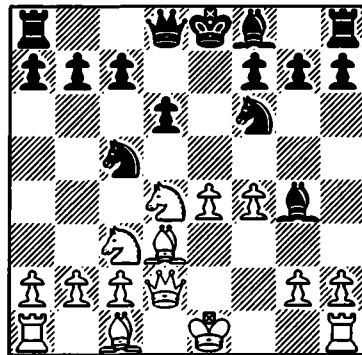
C3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 d6 3 c3 bd7 4 f4 e5 5 d3 exd4 6 xd4

Or 6 dxd4 and now:

a) 6... d5 !? was an oversight from yours truly before I consulted Janssen and Van Rekom's *The Lion*:

a1) If 7 d3 Black can consider 7... dxe4 8 dxe4 e7 9 b5 d7 10 xd7 xd7 11 e3 dxe4 12 0-0-0 e8 13 h3 !?! d8 , which is unclear.

a2) With 7 d3 White gladly allows the swap of his bishop for the knight, when he would recapture with the c-pawn, reinforcing e4 , and have nice attacking prospects on the kingside; while after 7... g4 8 d2 !

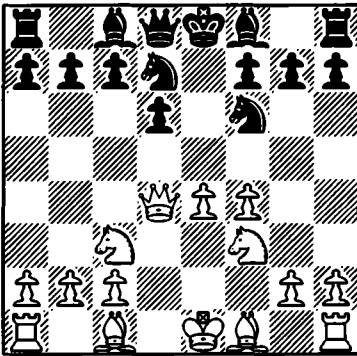


the bishop is going to be repelled by h2-h3 , when the queen can be rerouted and White can claim a little something in my view. Instead, 8 d3 ! h5 ! etc., is the weird main line suggested in *The Lion*, with the statement that Black equalizes. Make up your own mind!

b) 6... e7 ! was chosen by the great Aaron Nimzowitsch, in his encounter versus Behting, Riga 1910. It is a bit passive, however, and gives White an edge. The position is similar to the one

arising after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♗e7, which was treated in Chapters 3-4. In that line it would be unusual to continue with 6...♘bd7, which limits Black's future choices.

c) Events take a very satisfactory turn for Black after 6...g6, e.g. 7 ♗d3 ♗g7 8 0-0 0-0 followed by ...♗e8 and ...♘c5, with counterplay against e4.



After 6 ♗xd4 we shall consider:

C31: 6...♘c5

C32: 6...c6

6...g6? is a bit of an overkill if Black wishes to provoke his opponent! 7 e5! (7 ♗c4?!, intending 7...♗g7? 8 e5 ♘g4 [or 8...♗e7 9 0-0] 9 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 10 ♘g5+ ♗e8 11 ♘e6 ♗e7 12 ♘d5, fails to the intermezzo 7...♘b6) 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 ♗c5 9 ♗a4 (we will see later on in this chapter that a twin variation exists, with a black pawn on c6 rather than g6; in that case the d7-knight isn't pinned and the correct continuation for White is 9 ♗h4) 9...♘h5 (if 9...♗e7? 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♘d5 wins) 10 ♗h6 followed by 0-0-0

and Black's position is vulnerable.

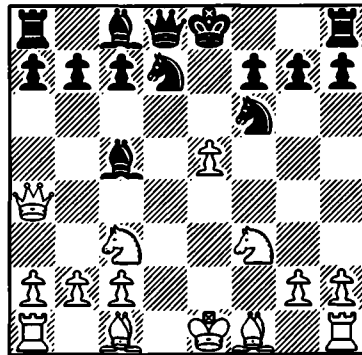
That leaves...

6...♗e7?

...but this leads to a quick debacle for various reasons:

7 e5 dxe5 8 fxe5 ♗c5 9 ♗a4

Again this pin! Alternatively, there is 9 ♗c4!? ♗e7?! (after this the following sequence is forced, but withdrawing the horse to its stable is not a happy prospect) 10 ♗e2 ♘g4 11 ♘d5 ♗f2+ 12 ♗xf2 ♘xf2 13 ♘e7 ♘xh1 14 ♘d5 and White was winning in Martin Gonzalez-Ortega Ruiz, Spanish Ch., Linares 1998: Black can't defend c7 properly, but above all he will lose his errant knight on h1.



9...♘h5 10 ♗g5

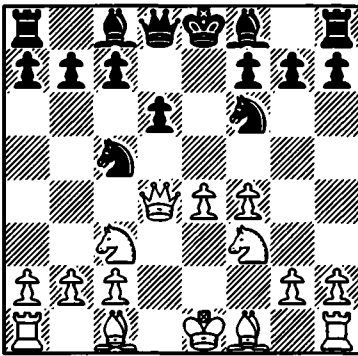
10 g4! wins a piece immediately. White may have feared 10...0-0 11 gxh5 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♗e8 13 ♗f4 ♗h4+ 14 ♗d2, but Black hardly has enough here.

10...f6 11 exf6 ♘hxf6 12 0-0-0 0-0 13 ♗c4+ ♗h8 14 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 15 ♗xc5

White has a decisive advantage, F.Castaldo-V.Colin, Mitropa Cup, Ay-mavilles 2000.

C31) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♝c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♟f3 exd4 6 ♞xd4 ♟c5

This line, which includes the idea of 7...♟fxe4 8 ♟xe4 ♞e7, is still rather unexplored. Beliavsky assesses 6...♟c5 as dubious in the annotations to his game with Ponomarev in *Chess Informant* (see Line C312). But curiously, he indicates no moment where he may have stood worse later on!



White's two main options are:

C311: 7 ♟c4

C312: 7 ♟e3

Or:

7 e5

7 f5?! may be playable, but after either 7...♞e7 or 7...♟cxe4 8 ♟xe4 ♞e7 9 ♟d3 d5, Black has nothing to worry about.

7...♟e6 8 ♞c4

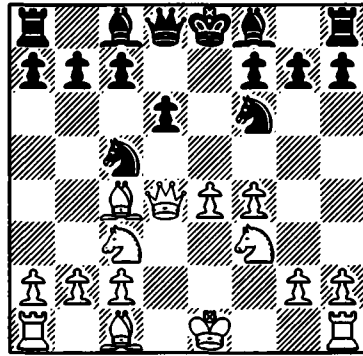
After 8 ♞d3 ♟c5 9 ♞d4 ♟e6 a draw was agreed in Prie-Okhotnik, Laragne-Monteglin 2001. White can of course deviate, but it is questionable whether he stands any better.

8...dxe5 9 fxe5 ♟d7 10 ♟e3

(I.Cosma-Ianov, Bijeljina 2001) and now 10...♟b6 11 ♟xb6 axb6 12 ♞d1 ♟d7 looks fine for Black. In the game White had some pressure after 10...♟c5 11 ♟xc5 ♟xc5 12 ♞d1 ♟d7 13 ♞b4 ♞e7 14 ♞xe7+ ♟xe7 15 ♟d5+ etc.

C311) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♝c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♟f3 exd4 6 ♞xd4 ♟c5 7 ♟c4

This is probably sufficient to claim a small plus.



7...♟e7

Or 7...♟e6 8 0-0 ♟e7 (8...c6!?) and now:

a) White was successful with 9 ♟xe6 ♟xe6 10 ♞c4 c6 11 ♟g5 in the game Wells-Gonzalez Zamora, Oviedo (rapid) 1993. After 11...d5!? 12 exd5 ♟xd5 (not 12...♟xg5? 13 fxg5 ♟xd5 14 ♟xd5 ♞xd5 15 ♞xd5 cxd5 16 ♟e3, followed by ♞ad1, ♞f5, and d5 is lost) 13 ♟xe6 fxe6 14 ♞e1 ♞d6, e6 is weak but the knight is excellently placed.

b) 9 ♟g5!? (I.Sudakova-Mirzoeva, Kolontaevo 1998) is interesting.

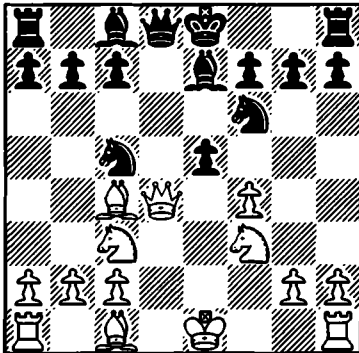
c) 9 b4 ♟xc4 (9...♟a6 10 ♟xe6 fxe6 11 b5 ♟c5 12 ♟a3 b6 13 ♞ad1 was more pleasant for White in Milliet-A.Muller,

Val d'Iserre 2004) 10 ♜xc4 ♞cd7 11 e5 ♞b6 (11...dxe5 is more precise as White had the option of 13 ♞d1 later on) 12 ♜e2 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♞fd5 and Black was okay in Dishman-A.Salem, British Ch., Eastbourne 1991.

8 e5!

This energetic approach maintains some pressure; whereas 8 0-0?! eases Black's task: 8...0-0 9 e5 (or 9 b4?! ♞cxe4 10 ♞xe4 d5, Luckis-P.Trifunovic, Mar del Plata 1950) 9...dxe5 10 fxe5 ♜xd4+ 11 ♞xd4 ♞g4 12 ♞f3 ♞e6 (it's equal) 13 ♞xe6 ♞xe6 14 ♞e4 f5 15 exf6 ♞xf6 16 ♞xf6+ ♞xf6 17 ♞e3 ½-½ Weitzer-M.Shvartz, German League 2001.

8...dxe5



9 ♜xd8+

9 fxe5 ♜xd4 10 ♞xd4 ♞fd7! 11 ♞f4 c6 12 0-0-0 ♞b6 is approximately level. But not 10...d4?! 11 ♞f3 f6 (11...d7 doesn't solve all Black's problems after 12 ♞b5 ♞d8 13 e6 fxe6 14 ♞xe6 ♞b6 15 ♞xc8 ♞xc8 16 ♞g5), which was played in J.Campbell-N.Grant, correspondence 1985, and here 12 ♞b5 ♞d8 13 exf6 ♞xf6 14 0-0 would have been no joy for Black.

9...♞xd8 10 fxe5 ♞fe4 11 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 12 0-0

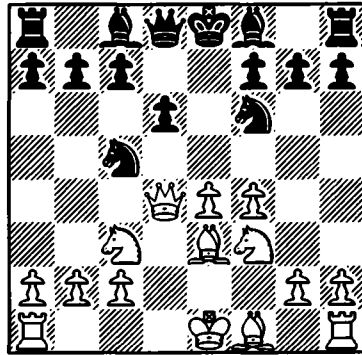
Threatening ♞xf7+ ...♞xf7; ♞g5+. 12 ♞f1!? was also possible.

12...♞f8 13 ♞e3

White has a slight, but enduring edge.

C312) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♞f3 exd4 6 ♜xd4 ♞c5 7 ♞e3

The critical set-up. By accelerating long castling, White threatens to lay down the law.



7...g6

Other continuations are, frankly, either bad or not to be recommended as they leave White with an easy game:

a) 7...♜e7?! 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 ♞g4 10 ♞g5.

b) 7...dxe6?! 8 ♜d2.

c) 7...c6 8 0-0-0 ♜c7 9 h3 ♞e7 10 g4 (C.Sanchez-Perelman, Buenos Aires 1996) with a one-sided position.

d) 7...♞e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 e5 (or 9 h3 when White plans either e5 or g4, Spangenberg-Tempone, Buenos Aires 1999) 9...d4 10 ♞g1 ♞e6 11 h3 ♞h6 12 g4. The White attack is well on its way

and the knight on h6 looks pretty grim, Brailsford-Jaworowski, correspondence 1998.

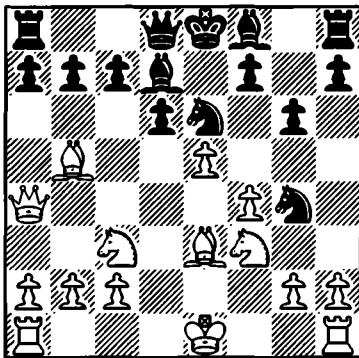
8 0-0-0!

Just as in Prié-Okhotnik, 8 e5 seems to be too hasty after 8...d6 (if 8...dxe5? 9 ♖xd8+ [9 ♗xe5+ d6 is less convincing, but maybe 9 fxe5!?] 9...cxd8 10 0-0-0+ c8 11 dxe5 or 11 fxe5 d4 12 ♖g1 with not a very appetizing position for Black in both cases) and now:

a) After 9 ♗c4!? the position remains balanced. Black can choose between 9...dxe5, 9...d5 and 9...d4, and I would be surprised if none of these is satisfactory!

b) 9 ♗d2 d4 10 ♖g1 ♖h6! (10...dxe5?! 11 ♖xd8+ dxd8 12 h3 d6 13 fxe5 proved uncomfortable for Black in R.Sultanov-Khokhiev, Dagomys 2004) 11 g3 dxe5 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♖xd8+ cxd8 14 fxe5 is roughly even.

c) 9 ♗a4+ ♖d7 10 ♖b5 d4



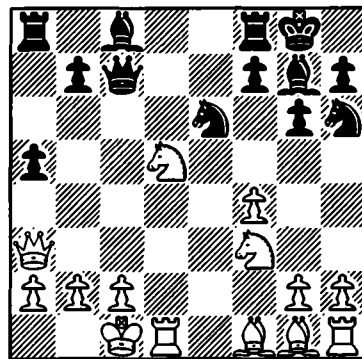
11 ♖xd7+ (the ending is level after this cautious choice; following 11 ♖g1 c6 the game remains complicated, but then Black may end up being better) 11...♗xd7 12 ♖xd7+ cxd7 13 ♖d2 f5

(13...c6? 14 h3 d6 15 d4 is bad for Black) 14 h3 d6 15 0-0-0 c6! 16 d2 (16 exd6 ♖xd6 17 d5+ c7 doesn't bring much either) 16...d7 (16...d5?! 17 d4) 17 ♖e3 (or 17 d4 dxe5 18 fxe5 ♖c5) 17...c7 (not 17...d5? 18 c4 and Black is in serious trouble, for instance 18...d7 19 d3 c6 20 cxd5+ dxd5 21 dxd5 cxd5 22 d4+ c7 23 d5) 18 d4 ♖e8 19 dxe6+ ♗xe6 20 ♖d4 (not 20 d4?! ♖e8 21 e6 d8 and the e-pawn has a reprieve) 20...♗g8 21 ♖he1 dxe5 22 dxe5 dxe5 23 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 24 ♖xe5+ c8 25 c4 ♖c5 26 c2 d8 27 ♗d3 ½-½ was Ponomariov-Beliavsky, Slovenian Team Ch. 1999. It seems that the balance was never broken, and splitting the point was thus a fair outcome.

8...♖g7 9 e5 d4 10 ♖g1 d6

10...0-0 was stronger, but even so White retains the upper hand after 11 h3 d6 12 g4, etc.

11 ♖b4 a5 12 ♗a3 d6 13 exd6 0-0 14 dxc7 ♗xc7 15 d5



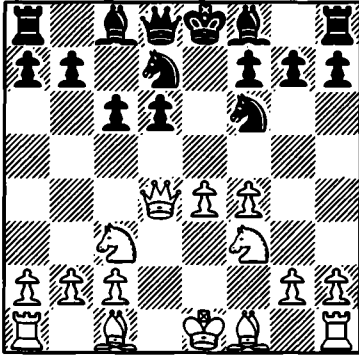
The agony is brief for Black.

15...♗b8 16 d6 dxf4 17 dxa8 ♗xa8 18 ♖d4 b5 19 ♖xg7 c7 20 ♗c3+ c8

21 ♖e3 ♗b8 22 ♜d4

1-0 Y.Yakovich-J.Johansson, Stockholm 1996.

C32) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♟f3 exd4 6 ♗xd4 c6



This is Black's main move. Now we will look at:

C321: 7 e5

C322: 7 ♠d2

C323: 7 ♠e3 d5 8 e5

C324: 7 ♠e3 d5 8 exd5

Alternatively:

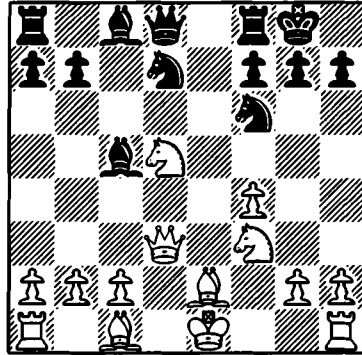
a) 7 ♠c4?! d5 8 exd5 ♠c5 9 ♗d3 0-0 and, with the white king having to stay in the middle, Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

b) With 7 ♠e2?! the transparent idea is to castle kingside. Black has two valid options at his disposal:

b1) 7...♗b6 8 ♗xb6?! (this exchange is anything but forced and rather favours Black) 8...axb6 9 ♞d4 b5 10 ♠f3 g6 and Black already stood better in S.Djuric-Peyrat, French League 1993.

b2) 7...d5 8 exd5 (or 8 e5) 8...♠c5 9

♗d3 cxd5 (after 9...0-0!? 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 ♠d2 White achieves 0-0-0 more easily than in the line 7 ♠c4?!, but following 11...a5 and 12...♠a6 the position remains unclear) 10 ♞xd5 0-0 with good compensation for the pawn.

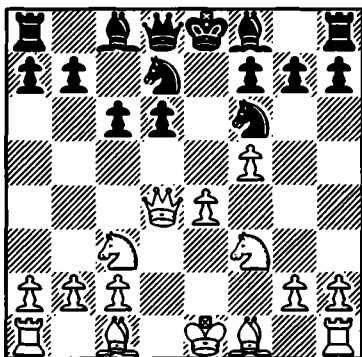


Indeed, the white king is stuck in the centre and the squares around it have been weakened.

c) 7 a4?! (White is mistaken about his opponent's intentions: Black was threatening ...d5, not ...b5, and this move only creates weaknesses) 7...d5! (7...♞c5!?) 8 e5 ♠c5 9 ♗d3 ♟g4 10 ♞d1 ♗e7! (to continue ...f6 or profit from the pin after 11 h3 ♟gf6) 11 ♞e3 ♠xe3 12 ♠xe3 ♞xe3 (12...f6! with an edge) 13 ♗xe3 ♗b4+ 14 ♟f2 ♞c5 (or 14...♗xb2!? 15 ♠d3 with compensation) 15 ♗d4. Now the game was level, until our reciprocal blindness: 15...♞e4+ 16 ♟g1 ♗e7 17 ♠d3 ♠f5 18 a5 0-0 19 h3 ♟g3 20 ♠xf5?? ♞xf5?? (20...♞e2+!) 21 ♗d3 (Bologan-Bauer, Bastia rapid 1999) and Viorel eventually, as usual, won the game.

d) In my opinion the idea of 7 f5 is rather dubious, since White concedes

the important e5-square. His space advantage and the weak d6-pawn should, however, keep the position balanced.



d1) The thematic 7...d5!? is the best move if 8 e5 doesn't work: 8 e5 (8 exd5?! ♠c5 is an even worse – yes, it is possible! – version of 7 ♠c4) 8...♠c5 9 ♚f4 ♘h5 (9...♚e7? 10 ♠e2 ♘h5 11 ♚g5! ♚xg5 12 ♘xg5 underlines the awkward placement of the knight) 10 ♚g4 g6 with a messy position.

d2) 7...♚b6 is safer and quite satisfactory, and 8 ♠e2 ♠e7 is equal.

C321) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♘f3 exd4 6 ♚xd4 c6 7 e5

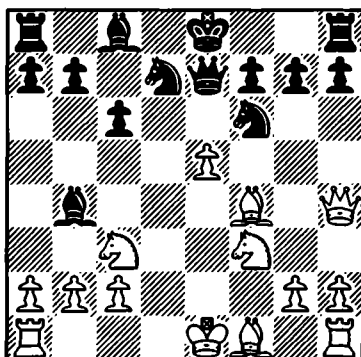
This direct play doesn't promise White much.

7...dxe5 8 fxe5 ♠c5 9 ♚h4

9 ♚f4! ♚e7 10 ♠e2 ♘d5, with mutual chances, seems better.

9...♚e7 10 ♠f4 ♠b4!

10...♘g4, mentioned in *The Lion*, is okay as well: 11 ♚xe7+ ♘xe7 12 ♘e4 ♠e3 with equality; while 11 ♚xg4?? loses on the spot to 11...♘xe5 12 ♚xc8+ (12 ♚xg7? ♘xf3+ 13 ♘d1 ♚e1 mate) 12...♚xc8 13 ♠xe5 f6.



11 0-0-0

White also experiences some difficulties after 11 ♠c4 ♘e4 12 ♚xe7+ ♘xe7, Jaenig-Bauer, Metz 2000.

11...♠xc3 12 exf6 ♠xf6 13 ♚g3 0-0 14 ♠d6 ♚e3+ 15 ♘b1 ♚b6!

15...♚d8?! 16 ♠c7 ♚f8 17 ♠d6 is only a draw.

16 b3 ♚e8

...and Black has a healthy extra pawn.

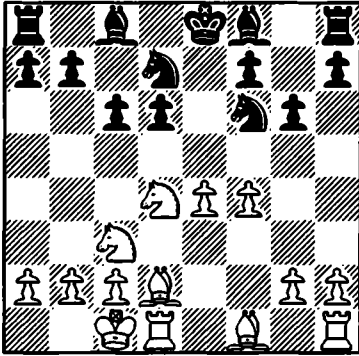
C322) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♘f3 exd4 6 ♚xd4 c6 7 ♠d2!? ♚b6

The dominant white queen is annoying for Black, and it is therefore quite natural to get rid of it, if possible.

The advance 7...d5? would this time miss the target, as White is ready for long castling: 8 exd5 ♠c5 9 ♚d3 0-0 (9...♘g4 10 ♘e4!) 10 0-0-0 when Black's compensation for the pawn is rather meagre.

8 0-0-0 ♚xd4 9 ♘xd4 g6

Black plays this more to protect himself against ♘f5 than to fianchetto the bishop.



10 ♞f3

10 ♞e3 following the same goal, i.e. attacking d6, is valid too: 10...♞c5 11 ♞e1 ♞e7 and White may be a tad better.

On the other hand, rushing with 10 e5? fails after 10...dxe5 11 fxe5 ♞xe5 12 ♞e1 ♞fd7 13 ♞db5 cxb5 14 ♞xb5 ♟d8 and Black wins.

10...♞h6!

An important intermediate move, since on the careless 10...♞g7 White has 11 ♞e3.

11 g3

Here 11 ♞e3? is met by 11...♞g4!, demonstrating the point of 10...♞h6: f4 is hanging if the bishop moves off the c1-h6 diagonal.

11...0-0

Now Black will find time to counter-attack e4, e.g. 12 ♞e3 ♞e8.

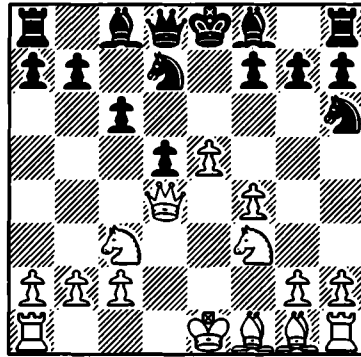
C323) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♞f3 exd4 6 ♞xd4 c6 7 ♞e3 d5

7...♞e7?! is too passive, as the game Shirov-Ftacnik, European Club Cup 1998, illustrates: 8 g4! d5 9 g5 ♞c5 10 ♞d3 dxe4 11 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 12 ♞xe4+ ♞e7

13 ♞xe7+ ♟xe7 14 ♞d4! ♞xd4 15 ♞xd4 with a clear plus for White, due to his space advantage and the insecure black king.

7...♞b6?! is also inadvisable. After 8 0-0-0 ♞xd4 9 ♞xd4 White has all the trumps.

8 e5 ♞g4 9 ♞g1 ♞h6



A prophylactic retreat.

9...♞b6?! 10 ♞xb6 axb6 (10...♞xb6 is no better) 11 h3 ♞h6 12 g4 (Wells-Oratovsky, European Club Cup 1999) gives White a clear advantage.

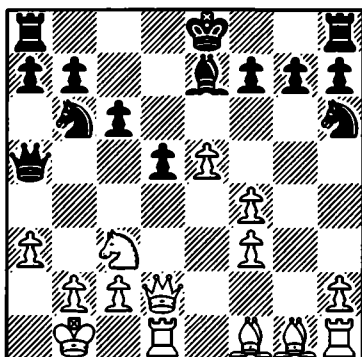
9...♞c5?! is too greedy! After 10 ♞d2 ♞xg1 11 ♞xg1 ♞b6 12 0-0-0 ♞xh2, both 13 ♞e2 and 13 ♞d4 offer a tangible initiative for White.

10 ♞d2

Or:

a) 10 h3?! would miss the mark, on account of 10...♞f5 and ...♞g3. Generally, if Black manages to stabilize his knight on f5, by means of ...h5, he will be fine.

b) 10 0-0-0 ♞a5 11 ♟b1 ♞b6 (11...♞f5!? was unclear in Lobzhanidze-Summerscale, Koop Tjuchem 1996) 12 a3 ♞g4 13 ♞d2 ♞xf3 14 gxf3 ♞e7.



Black has the better pawn structure, White the bishop pair and the g-file. Dynamic play is thus required from White in order to compensate for the long-term weaknesses. We are following W.Watson-Bauer, German League 1996, which now becomes entertaining: 15 ♔d3 g6 16 ♔d4 (16 h4!? was worth considering, but 16...0-0-0 17 h5 ♘c4 passes the initiative to Black) 16...c5 17 ♔f2 (17 ♔b5+?! ♚f8 18 ♔f2 d4 would lose a piece) 17...♞d8 18 f5! (the tactical stage begins) 18...♙xf5 19 ♔xf5 gxf5 20 ♚h6 d4 21 e6! ♞f8! (21...dxc3? 22 exf7+ ♚xf7 23 ♚h5+ with a decisive assault) 22 ♞hg1! ♘c4 (22...dxc3? would once again be suicidal: 23 exf7+ ♞xf7 24 ♞g8+ ♔f8 25 ♚e6+ ♞e7 26 ♞xf8+ ♚xf8 27 ♞xd8+ ♚g7 28 ♞g8 mate; the text move combines attack and defence) 23 exf7+ ♞xf7 24 ♞g8+ ♚d7 25 ♞xd8+ ♚xd8 26 ♘d5 ♚f8 27 ♚h5 ♚c6 28 ♘f4 ♔d6 29 ♘e6 ♚e8 30 ♞e1 ♚d7 31 ♔g3 etc. White soon overstepped the time-limit in a slightly inferior position.

10...♖b4

10...♚a5, followed by ...♘b6 or ...♘c5, is possible too.

11 a3 ♚a5 12 0-0-0

12 ♔d4?!/!? is seemingly a suspicious move. Both 12...♘f5 13 0-0-0 ♘xd4 14 axb4 ♚a1+ 15 ♘b1 ♘xf3 16 gxf3, and 12...c5!? 13 ♚d1! cxd4 14 axb4 ♚xb4 15 ♞a4!? (15 ♘xd4) 15...♚xb2 16 ♘xd5 0-0 lead to positions with unclear consequences.

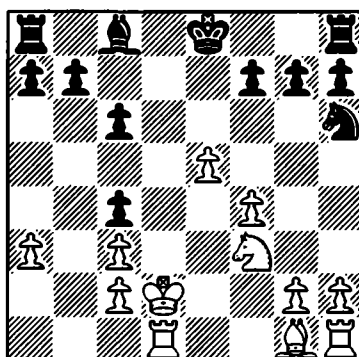
12...♔xc3 13 ♚xc3 ♚xc3 14 bxc3 ♘b6

I replayed the same ending some years later. The game in question was blitz (3 minutes each) versus Boris Gelfand. I knew the position, he probably didn't, but that didn't prevent him from crushing me!

15 ♚d2

Here 15 h3! ♘f5 16 ♔f2 h5 17 ♔d3 leads to an edge to White, who is ready to play g4.

15...♘c4+ 16 ♔xc4 dxc4



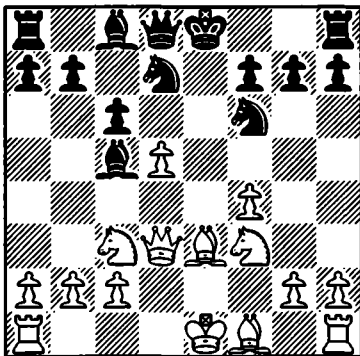
In this equal position, White should play 17 h3!. In J.Koch-Bauer, French Ch., Auxerre 1996, White, looking for a plan, erred with 17 ♘d4?! and after 17...♔d7 18 ♞e1 0-0-0 19 ♚c1 c5 20 ♘f3 White's pieces hadn't progressed, whereas Black had completed his development and now stood slightly better.

C324) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟bd7 4 f4 e5 5 ♟f3 exd4 6 ♟xd4 c6 7 ♟e3 d5 8 exd5

After 8 0-0-0?! ♟c5 9 ♟d3 ♟e7 10 e5 ♟g4 the position remains balanced. And 9 ♟d2 ♟b4 10 exd5 ♟xd5 is also equal: ...0-0 or ...♟a5 will come soon, when Black has solved his opening problems.

8...♟c5 9 ♟d3!

9 ♟d2 looks suspicious, but matters aren't so clear: 9...♟e7 10 ♟d4 ♟g4 (10...♟xd5 11 ♟xd5 cxd5 and here 12 ♟f5 should be slightly better for White) 11 0-0-0! ♟xe3 (11...♟xe3?! 12 ♟e1 0-0 13 ♟xe3 ♟f6) 12 ♟e1 ♟xd4 13 ♟d1 ♟xe1 14 ♟xe1+ and now 14...♟d8 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 ♟a5+ ♟b6 17 ♟g5+ ♟gf6 18 ♟xg7, or 14...♟f8 15 dxc6 (15 d6!?) 15...bxc6 16 ♟e4. In both cases Black has rook, bishop and knight versus queen and two pawns, but he experiences difficulties coordinating his forces.



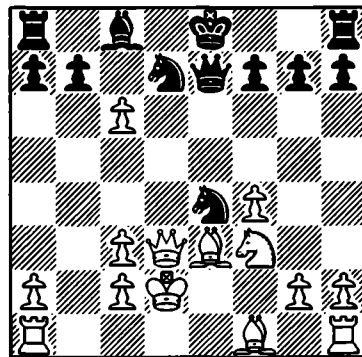
9...♟e7

9...cxd5?! would lose dynamism and concede the advantage without a fight; But 9...0-0?! also seems insufficient. This move is actually considered to be the

main line by Janssen and Van Rekom in *The Lion*, who attached a question mark to 9...♟e7. After 9...0-0, 10 0-0-0?! is the only continuation examined in the above-mentioned book, concluding that 10...♟b6! 11 ♟xc5 ♟xc5 12 ♟d4 cxd5 is okay for Black, which is true. However, I don't clearly sense Black's compensation after 10 dxc6! ♟e8 (10...bxc6 11 ♟xc5 ♟xc5 12 ♟xd8 ♟xd8 13 ♟e5 with a sound extra pawn; or 10...♟xe3 11 cxd7 ♟b6 12 dxc8 ♟ ♟axc8 13 ♟d1 when Black certainly has some compensation for the piece, but I doubt it's enough) 11 ♟e5 ♟xe3 12 cxd7 ♟xf4 13 dxe8 ♟+ ♟xe8 14 ♟e2 ♟xe5 15 0-0 and White's extra exchange should slowly decide the outcome.

10 ♟d4

10 ♟d2?! is risky after 10...♟b4 (10...♟xe3+?, reaching a dreadful ending after 11 ♟xe3+ ♟xe3+ 12 ♟xe3 cxd5 13 ♟d4, would be a sign of surrender) 11 dxc6 (11 ♟e1?! ♟e4+ 12 ♟d1 ♟xc3 13 bxc3 cxd5 is excellent for Black) 11...♟xc3+ 12 bxc3 ♟e4+!...



...preventing ♟e1 and keeping the initiative.

And 12...bxc6!? (Geo.Timoshenko-Oratovsky, Cappelle la Grande 2000) is reasonable too: 13 ♖e1 0-0 14 ♔d4 ♗a3 15 c4 ♗a5+ 16 ♛c3 ♗f5 17 g3 c5 (not 17...♗e4+?, which runs into 18 ♜xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♔d3 and ♔xg7 with a huge attack) 18 ♔xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♔d3 ♗h3 or 19...♗d7, with full compensation.

10...♗b6

Boudre-Belkhodja, Créon 2000, saw 10...♗d5!? 11 ♗xd5 cxd5 when White stood a bit better, but not more: 12 0-0-0 0-0 (12...♗f6!?) 13 ♗f5 ♗f6 14 g3 ♗b6 15 ♗h6+ gxh6 (or 15...♗xh6 16 ♔xc5 ♗d8 17 ♔e2) 16 ♔xc5 ♔f5 17 ♗d4 ♗c6 18 c3?! (stronger was 18 ♔d3! ♔xd3 19 ♜xd3 ♜fc8 20 ♜c3 with an edge: if 20...♗a4? 21 ♔f8!) 18...♜fc8 19 ♔a3 ♗c4 20 ♔xc4 dxc4 21 ♜he1 ♜e8 22 ♗c5 ♔g4 23 ♗xc6 bxc6 24 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 25 ♗d6 ♜e1+ 26 ♖c2 ♜e2+ and peace was agreed.

11 dxc6!

One who says 'A', must say 'B'.

11 0-0-0?! (Sax-Bauer, European Club Cup 2000) is inconsistent and Black was better after 11...♗bxd5 12 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 13 ♔d2 0-0.

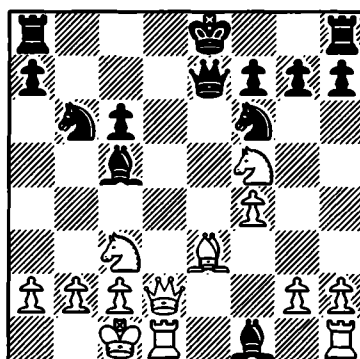
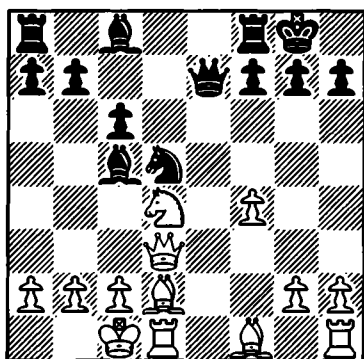
Here, with more than one hour spent (against 15 minutes) and with an inferior position, my opponent generously offered a draw! The game continued 14 ♗b3 ♔b6 15 ♗g3 (or 15 c4 ♗b4 16 ♗e2 ♔f5!, threatening ...♗xa2 mate and forcing 17 ♔xb4 ♗xb4 when Black has the two bishops, while a draught remains around White's king) 15...♔f5 16 ♔d3 ♗f6 17 ♔xf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗f3 ♜fe8 19 ♜he1 (19 g4?! ♗e4 and Black has good chances to benefit from White's kingside weaknesses) 19...h5! (preventing g2-g4) 20 c4? (20 g3) 20...♗f6 21 ♔c3 ♗g4 22 h3 ♗e3 (the drawbacks of White's position begin to tell) 23 ♗d2 ♜ad8 24 g4 hxg4 25 hxg4 ♗xg4 26 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 27 ♜g2 ♔e3+ 28 ♗d2 ♔xf4! 29 b3 ♔xd2+ 0-1.

11...bxc6 12 ♔e2

12 0-0-0!? would temporarily sacrifice material after 12...♔a6 13 ♗d2 ♔xf1, but White has a card up his sleeve:

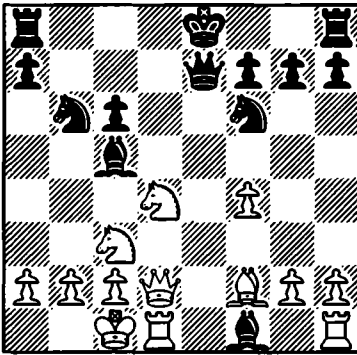
a) 14 ♜hxf1? ♗c4 15 ♗d3 ♗xe3+ 16 ♗xe3+ ♗xe3 17 ♜fe1 0-0-0! wins for Black.

b) 14 ♗f5!?...



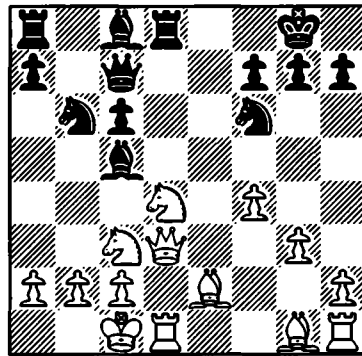
...is playable: 14...Qc4!! (the acrobatics continue; not 14...Qxe3? 15 Qxe3 and, because of the double threat of Qf5 and Nhe1, Black will have to give back material: 15...Qc4 16 Qxc4 Qxc4 17 Nhe1 Qe6 18 f5 and White is much better) 15 Qxc5 Qxc5 16 Qd4 (the best; not 16 Qe1+? Qf8 17 Qxf1 Qb4 18 Qa4 [forced] 18...Qxa4 19 Qd4 Qb5 [the final point: f5 is still hanging!]) 20 Qxc4 Qxf5 21 Qxc6 Nc8 with only two pawns for the knight) 16...Qxd4 17 Qxd4 c5 18 Nxc4 Qxc4 19 Qd6+ Qe7 20 Qxc4 and Black stands slightly better, even if his opponent has fair chances to draw.

b) 14 Qf2!!, threatening simply Nc1 and Nxf1.



14...Qc4 (14...Qxd4?! is worse: 15 Qxd4 Qc4 16 Nhe1 Qe6 17 f5 with a sizeable plus) 15 Qe1 Qxd4 (if 15...Qxg2? 16 Qf5! wins) 16 Qxe7+ Qxe7 17 Qxd4 c5 (to avoid having the knight remain en prise) 18 Qd1 Qxg2 19 Qxc5+ Qe6 20 Nhg1 (or 20 Nhe1+) and Black is walking on a tightrope here, but I believe he should hold.
12...Qa6

12...0-0?! 13 Qg1! Qc7 14 g3 (14 Qe6!? Qxe6 15 Qxc5 Nfd8 16 Qg3 was better for White in Stefanova-Jobava, Saraybahce 2002, but possibly still playable for Black after 16...Qbd5!) 14...Qd8! (14...Qh3?! 15 Qe6! gains the bishop pair while solving the problem of ...Qg2; after 15...fxe6 16 Qxc5 Nfd8 17 Qd4 the pin was temporary, thanks to the resource Qe5, and White had a clear plus in J.Howell-Jansa, Lazne Bohdanec 1995; but 14...Qbd5!?, as in Z.Erdelyi-Mensch, Budapest 2001, also deserves attention) 15 0-0-0.

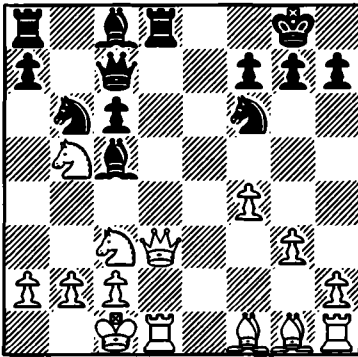


A very similar position was reached in the miniature J.Polgar-Rivas Pastor, Dos Hermanas 1993, with the significant difference that the bishop stood on f1 and White had the move. Polgar's opponent had erred with 11...0-0 12 0-0-0 bxc6 13 Qg1 Qc7 14 g3 Qd8?? and Judit didn't miss (of course!) the decisive 15 Qdb5!.

(see following diagram)

In the position after 15 0-0-0, Black can improve on that game by playing 15...Qb7. He threatens to take on d4 (which previously failed to 15...Qxd4?

16 ♖xd4 c5 17 ♜e5) and after 16 ♜f5, 16...♗b4 offers adequate compensation, mainly due to the x-ray ♗b7-♞h1.



13 ♜d2 ♖g4!?

13...♖bd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖f5 ♜xe3 16 ♖xe7 ♜xd2+ 17 ♖xd2 ♖xe7 18 ♜xa6 ♖xf4 19 ♞he1+ ♖e6 20 ♜c4 was Fressinet-Belkhodja, French Ch., Marseilles 2001. Black eventually held this grim ending, but as he is facing a tough task without winning chances, I'd rather suggest 13...♖g4.

14 ♜xg4

14 ♜g1 ♖c4 15 ♖f5 ♜xg1! 16 ♞xg1 ♜c5 17 ♜d4 ♜xf5 is unclear after 18 0-0-0!; and note that 18 ♜xg7? loses 18...♜xf4!. Instead, 18 ♜xc4? ♞d8 19 0-0-0! ♞xd4 20 ♞ge1+ was played in Santo Roman-Bauer, Narbonne 2003, when, rather than the game continuation 20...♖f8 21 ♞xd4 g6 22 ♜xa6 ♖xh2 with only a small Black plus, I missed the gorgeous 20...♜e5!!.

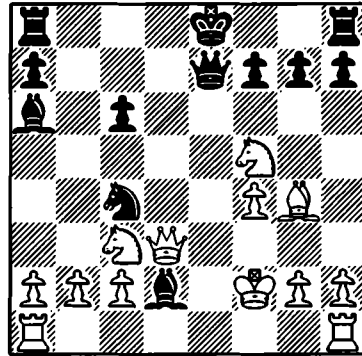
14...♖c4 15 ♖f5!

15 ♖xc6? ♜xe3 16 ♜e2 ♜c5 is bad for White.

15...♜xe3 16 ♜d3

Or 16 ♜e2.

16...♜d2+ 17 ♖f2



Now both 17...♜c7 and 17...♜c5+ 18 ♖g3 need tests. This position is not for the faint-hearted!.

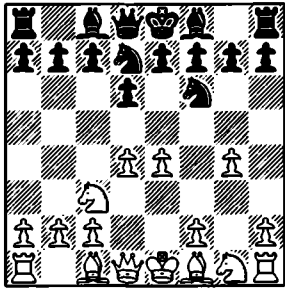
Conclusion

The main line 4 f4 (along with 4 g4 of the following chapter) offers tactical complications and double-edged games. This is also true for the plan ♜e3, f3, ♜d2, which often leads to opposite-side castling and assaults on the kings.

4 g3 is quieter, but Black seems to have time for completing his development by playing ...♜e7, ...0-0, ...♞e8, ...♜f8 on the kingside, and ...b6 (or ...b5) and ...♜b7 on the queenside. He then sometimes threatens the capture with ...exd4, followed by ...c5, putting pressure on the e4-pawn. In that case White would rather have his pawn on g4, enabling him to continue with ♖g3.

As a general rule I would like to stress that Black should refrain from an early capture ...exd4, if that doesn't give him anything tangible (such as a quick ...c5, winning e4).

Chapter Nine



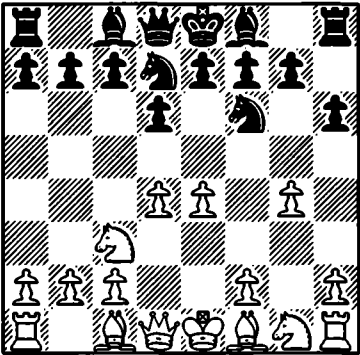
3 Nc3 Nbd7 4 g4

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 Qbd7 4 g4

White's most aggressive option here.

4...h6

It makes sense to prevent g4-g5, as 4...e5?! concedes too much space. After 5 g5, both 5...Qg8 and 5...exd4 6 Wxd4 Qg4 7 h3 (7 f4!?) 7...Qge5 8 f4 are equally bad for Black.



After 4...h6 we shall look at:

- A: 5 Qf3
- B: 5 Qe3
- C: 5 h3

Alternatives are not as promising:

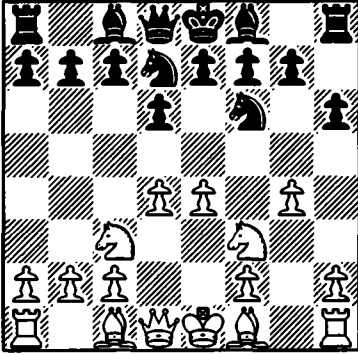
a) 5 g5?! hxg5 6 Qxg5 c6! intends ...Wb6/...Wa5 and ...e5. Black's pawn structure already guarantees him a slight edge, for example: 7 f4 Wb6 8 e5 (8 Bb1 e5 is fine for Black) 8...Wxb2 9 Qge2 Qd5 10 Qxd5 cxd5 (threatening f6!) 11 e6?! fxe6 12 Bb1 Wa3 and White had nowhere enough compensation for the two pawns, Berend-Bauer, Dudenlunge (rapid) 1997.

6...c5?! is much worse: 7 d5 Wa5 8 Qd2 a6 9 f4 Wc7 10 a4 Qh5 11 Wf3 when Black was lacking space and was gradually outplayed Santo Roman-Grimberg, French Ch., Toulouse 1995. 6...e5 followed by ...Qe7, on the other hand, is acceptable.

b) 5 h4?! intends to recapture on g5 with the pawn after Qg2, but for this privilege White must use up at least one tempo. As a consequence this move doesn't really make sense: 5...e5 6 Qe3 (for 6 g5 hxg5 7 Qxg5, cf. 5 g5?! with h2-h4 played instead of a developing move) 6...c6 7 Qg2 Wb6!,

opening move) 6...c6 7 ♖g2 ♜b6!, intending to meet 8 ♜b1 with 8...♗xg4! 9 ♜xg4 exd4.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♖c3 ♗bd7 4 g4 h6 5 ♗f3



Almost a novelty! This move had been tried once only before, in the encounter Dementiev-Sergievsky, Moscow 1966. In the main text we are following the game **Vaisser-Bauer, French Ch., Besancon 1999**.

5...e5

I quickly rejected ...♗xg4 as being too dangerous, which is confirmed by the following continuation: 5...♗xg4? 6 h3 ♗gf6 7 e5 ♗h7 8 e6 fxe6 9 ♖d3. I stopped here, assuming that my position was 'not cool!' Oratovsky carries on a bit with 9...♝f7 (9...♗df6?? 10 ♖g6+ ♝d7 11 ♗e5+) 10 ♗h4 ♗df6 11 ♗g6 ♜g8 12 ♜g1 with the nasty threat of ♗e5+ (or ♗h8+) and ♖g6 mate.

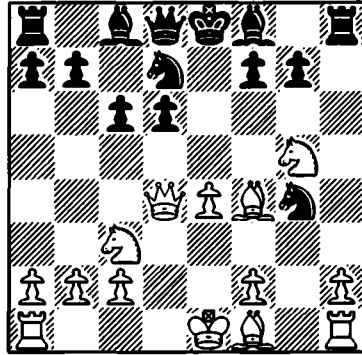
6 g5

White has obviously compromised himself and there is no way back. For 6 ♜g1 see Chapter 10.

6...hxg5 7 ♗xg5 exd4 8 ♜xd4 c6 9 ♖f4

9 ♖c4?! ♗e5 10 ♖b3? ♗h7 deflects the knight from its defensive function, the control of f3.

9...♗g4



Profiting from the immunity of d6, since the g5-knight is hanging. Black plans to transfer a knight to e5 before repelling the enemy pieces.

10 ♖e2

If 10 0-0-0 ♜b6 11 ♜xb6 (11 ♖c4 ♗de5 12 f3 ♜xd4 13 ♜xd4 ♗xc4 14 ♜xc4 ♗e5 followed by ...f6) 11...axb6 12 ♜d2 ♗de5 13 f3 f6 is slightly better for Black.

10...♜b6

Black has two pawn islands; his opponent has three. White should thus look for tactics and can't be too happy with the trade of queens.

11 ♜d1

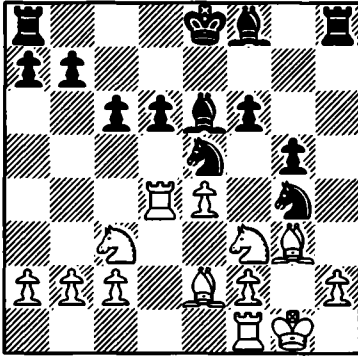
Or 11 ♜xb6 ♗xb6 (covering g4) 12 ♖xg4 (to prevent the knight from becoming a 'monster' on e5) 12...♖xg4 13 ♜g1 ♖h5! and Black keeps an edge.

11...♜xd4 12 ♜xd4 ♗de5 13 ♖g3 f6 14 ♗f3 ♖e6 15 0-0

15 ♗d2!?, intending to chase the knights by playing f3 and/or f4, was

probably a better defence than the game continuation, since Black's knights can't occupy e5 simultaneously.

15...g5!



Securing the outpost on e5.

16 Nfd1

Now, or at move 20, it was necessary to improve the knight's prospects by carrying out the manoeuvre Qc3-d1-e3.

16...Qxf3+ 17 Qxf3 Qe5 18 Qe2 Qe7 19 a4 a5 20 b4?

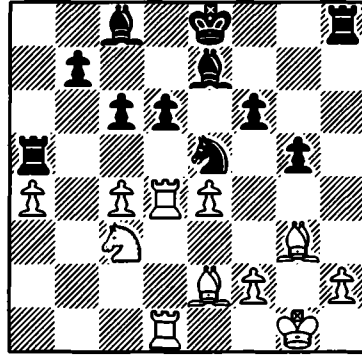
Seeking counterplay, but White falls out of the frying pan and into the fire. Seeing that he had blundered, my opponent offered to split the point!

Instead, 20 Nf1, with the idea Qd1-e3, was stronger.

20...axb4 21 Nxb4 Qc8! 22 Nbd4 Na5 23 Qb1 Nc5

This manoeuvre was designed to prevent the activation of the white knight. After 23...Qd8!? 24 Qd2 I had the feeling that White would gain counter-chances by playing Qb3, a5, c4-c5, but this is deceptive and following 24...Qc7 25 Qb3 Na7 26 a5 Qe6 Black has a large advantage.

24 c4 Na5 25 Qc3



Now that the knight was stuck covering a4, I was able to transfer the king to c7 and attack the weakness on c4.

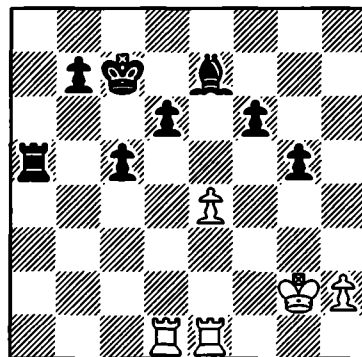
25...Qd8 26 f3 Qc7 27 Qe1 Na8 28 a5 Qe6 29 Qa4

Losing a pawn. 29 Nf1 was more tenacious.

29...c5 30 Nd4 Qxc4 31 Qb6

If 31 Qxc4 Qxc4 32 Na2 Qxa5 33 Qc3 (or 33 Qxc5 dxc5 34 Nxa5 Nxa5 35 Qxa5+ Qc6 and Black wins) 33...Qc6 34 Qd5 Qd8 35 Nda1 b6 with a clear advantage.

31...Qxe2 32 Qxa8+ Nxa8 33 Nxe2 Qxf3+ 34 Qg2 Qxe1+ 35 Nxe1 Nxa5



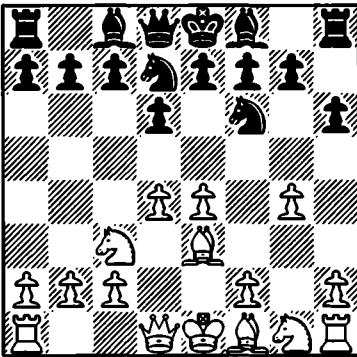
With three pawns for the exchange, the rest isn't too difficult.

36 ♖a1 ♜b5 37 ♜eb1 ♜xb1 38 ♜xb1 ♜c6 39 ♜f3 c4 40 ♜e3 b5 41 ♜f1 ♙d8 42 ♜d4 ♙b6+ 43 ♜c3 ♙a5+ 44 ♜c2 b4 45 ♜xf6 b3+ 46 ♜b2 ♜c5 47 ♜a3

Or 47 ♜f5+ ♜b4 48 ♜xg5 c3+ 49 ♜b1 ♙b6 50 ♜g3 ♙d4 51 h4 c2+ 52 ♜c1 ♜a3. 47...♙d2 48 ♜f5+ ♜d4 49 ♜d5+ ♜c3 50 ♜xd6 ♙c1+ 51 ♜a4 b2 52 ♜b6 ♙e3 53 ♜b5 ♙c5 54 e5 ♙e7 0-1

The transition from the opening to the queenless middlegame was brief and in Black's favour. With such an animal on e5 Black was fine, and he was able to profit from the g-pawn's advance.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟bd7 4 g4 h6 5 ♙e3



A clever move order if White intends to continue aggressively with the f3, ♜d2, 0-0 set-up. Indeed, White has provoked ...h6, which will help him open files on the kingside.

5...c6

5...e5 first is more common:

a) After 6 f3 c6 7 ♜d2 ♙e7 8 ♟ge2

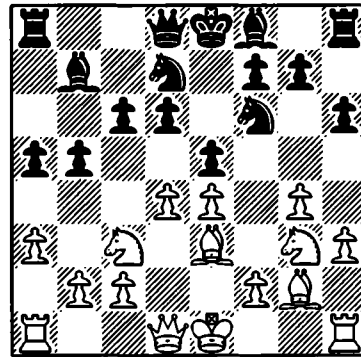
♜c7 9 0-0-0 b5 the position was tense and offered chances for both sides in Hamdouchi-Campora, Santo Antonio 1999.

b) 6 h3 c6 7 a4 and now:

b1) 7...♙e7 8 ♟ge2 d5! (the passive 8...♟f8?! 9 f4 ♟e6 10 f5 ♟g5 11 ♙g2 was clearly better for White in Kasimdzhanov-J.Petrov, World Junior Ch., Halle 1995) 9 exd5 cxd5 10 dxe5 ♟xe5 with level chances.

b2) In comparison with the standard position (♙g2 instead of ♙e3), Black has an extra option in 7...d5!?. After 8 exd5 cxd5 9 dxe5 ♟xe5 he has to accept an isolated pawn, but the moves a4 and g4 have generated weaknesses in White's camp.

6 ♙g2 e5 7 h3 b5 8 a3! ♙b7 9 ♟ge2 a5 10 ♟g3



10...exd4?

Bad timing: Black doesn't attack e4 sufficiently and thus isn't ready for this exchange. Instead, he should play either 10...g6! with the idea 11 0-0 h5, or 10...b4!?.

11 ♜xd4 c5 12 ♜d2 b4?

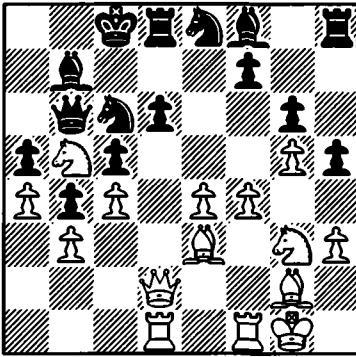
12...♙c6 13 0-0 g6 doesn't lose by

force, but Black's prospects are pretty grim!

13 ♗b5 ♗e5 14 b3 ♜b6 15 a4 0-0-0 16 c4 g6

The alternative 16...h5 17 g5 h4 18 gxf6 hxg3 19 fxg3 gxf6 20 0-0 is clearly better for White.

17 0-0 h5 18 g5 ♗e8 19 f4 ♗c6 20 ♖ad1



Black is now lost from a strategic point of view: he lacks space and has no satisfactory means of creating counterplay.

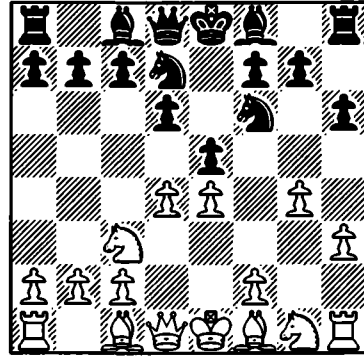
20...♗g7 21 ♜f2 ♗b8 22 h4 ♗a6 23 ♖d3 f6 24 f5! fxg5 25 ♗xg5 ♗f6 26 ♜f4 d5 27 exd5 ♖he8 28 fxg6 ♗g4 29 ♗xh5 ♗e5 30 ♗h3+ ♗b8 31 ♗xg7 1-0

(Eliet-Philippe, French League 2000)
This was a massacre, due mainly to Black's erroneous 10th move. He prematurely released the central tension and in doing so lost any hope of counterplay.

C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 g4 h6 5 h3

Covering g4 so that White can develop the g1-knight.

5...e5



Now White can play:

C1: 6 ♗g2

C2: 6 ♗ge2

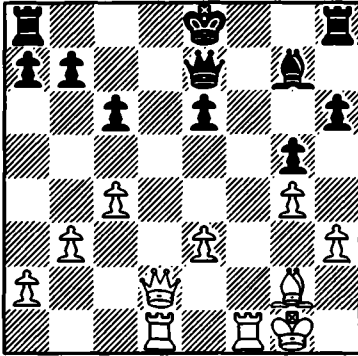
C1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 g4 h6 5 h3 e5 6 ♗g2

Preventing the idea of 6...b5, and offering Black an opportunity to go wrong!

6...c6

6...exd4?! again releases the central tension too early, as the white queen will be ideally placed. Topalov-Izeta Txabarri, Madrid 1993, continued 7 ♜xd4 g6 8 ♗e3 ♗g7 9 ♜d2! (preventing ...0-0, which would suit Black well) 9...♗b6 10 b3 d5 11 ♖d1 c6 12 ♗ge2 ♗e6 13 ♗f4 g5?! (in order not to lose d5 or enter an inferior endgame after 13...dxe4 14 ♜xd8+ ♖xd8 15 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 16 ♗xe6+ fxe6 17 ♗xe4 which, given the turn of events, was the lesser evil) 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 0-0 ♜e7 (15...♜d7 intends ...0-0-0, but 16 a4! forbids this due to 16...0-0-0? 17 a5 ♗a8 18 ♗xa7) 16 exd5 ♗bx5 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 (17...cxd5 18 f4! with a powerful attack was also a

disaster for Black) 18 c4 ♖xe3 19 fxe3!.



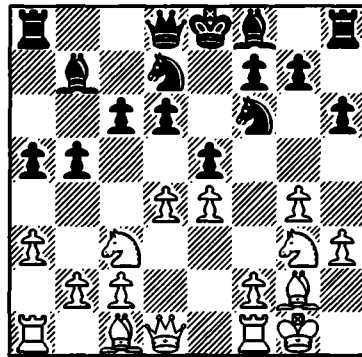
In this almost symmetrical position Black is lost on account of his weak king. There followed 19...♖f8 20 ♖d3 ♖f6 21 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 22 ♖g6+ ♖f7 23 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♖d7+ ♖e7 25 ♖xb7 ♖d8 26 ♖xc6 ♖d1+ 27 ♖g2 ♖d2+ 28 ♖f3 ♖xa2 29 ♖e4 ♖f6 30 ♖e8 ♖a5 31 b4 ♖a3 32 c5 a5 33 c6 ♖c3 34 bxa5 ♖c5 35 ♖f7+ ♖g6 36 ♖f5+ ♖g7 37 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 38 a6 1-0.

7 ♖ge2 b5 8 a3!

8 ♖g3 g6 9 ♖e3 ♖b7 10 0-0?! (this was the last chance to play a3) 10...h5 11 g5 ♖h7 12 h4 f6 13 ♖xh5 b4 (the reason why I would have preferred to insert the move pair a3, ...a5, as in the main text, becomes apparent: White would have played axb4 ...axb4, ♖xa8, forbidding long castling...) 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 ♖a4 fxg5 16 hxg5 ♖xg5 17 ♖g3 ♖f6 18 ♖g4 ♖f7 19 ♖fd1 ♖c8 (...and making this impossible) 20 ♖f3 ♖h4 21 ♖f1 ♖f6 22 ♖g3 ♖h5 23 ♖d2 ♖e7 24 ♖h2 ♖xh2+ 25 ♖xh2 ♖d6 26 ♖e2 ♖a6 27 ♖ee1 ♖b5 28 b3 ♖xa4 29 bxa4 ♖c4 30 ♖c1 ♖c5 31 ♖f1 ♖d6 32 ♖e2 ♖dxe4 and Black won a few moves later in

A.Ivanov-Kacheishvili, Philadelphia 1998.

8...♖b7 9 0-0 a5 10 ♖g3



10...g6

10...♖c7 11 ♖e3 (11 ♖ce2!?) 11...g6 12 f4 h5?! (customary in this type of position, but inappropriate here; better was 12...exd4 13 ♖xd4 ♖g7 with mutual chances) 13 g5 h4 14 gxf6? (14 ♖ge2! was much stronger, leading to a clear plus for White after 14...♖h5 [14...♖h7!?] 15 d5 or 15 f5) 14...hxg3 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 d5 ♖b6! 17 ♖f3 ♖c4 18 ♖c1 ♖c5+ 19 ♖h1 ♖f2! and Black seized the initiative in Fernandez Romero-Bauer, San Sebastian 2006.

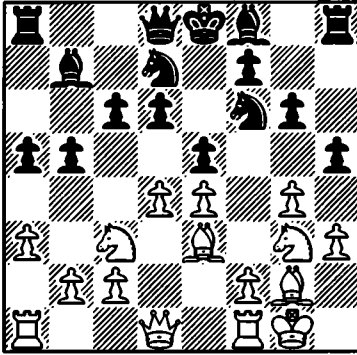
10...g6 seems a tad better, as Black can hardly do without this move in the long run.

11 ♖e3

11 f4!? needs further tests and could well reveal itself to be more effective: 11...♖g7 (11...exd4?! is tempting, but 12 ♖xd4 d5 13 ♖h2 ♖c5 14 ♖d1 d4 15 ♖ce2, and 13 ♖f2 d4 14 ♖ce2 c5 15 ♖d1 are probably in White's favour) 12 ♖e3 exd4 (12...♖e7) 13 ♖xd4 0-0 with a complex game, in which Black is ready

to meet the breakthrough 14 e5 with 14...dxe5 15 fxe5 ♞e8.

11...h5!



Forcing White to weaken his kingside, before opening it up. The game **Fontaine-Mensch, French League 2001**, continued as follows:

12 g5

Otherwise 12...hxg4 13 hxg4 ♞h7, followed by ...♞h4.

12...♞h7 13 h4 f6 14 dxe5

Or immediately 14 ♞xh5, which doesn't seem to change much.

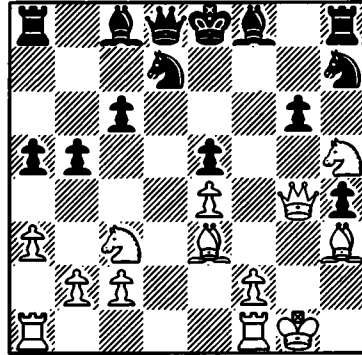
14...dxe5 15 ♞xh5 fxg5 16 ♠h3 ♠c8

16...♞c7, planning to castle long, was worth considering, but the text move is correct. Here is Mensch's analysis: (16...♞c7) 17 ♠xg5 ♞xg5 18 ♞xd7+ (keeping queens on the board would be dangerous for White: i.e. 18 ♠xd7+? ♞e7 19 hxg5 ♞xh5 and the white monarch is exposed) 18...♞xd7 19 ♠xd7+ ♞xd7 (or 19...♞e7!?) 20 ♞f6+ ♞e6 21 hxg5 ♠e7 with an equal position.

17 ♞f3 gxh4??

A decisive mistake in a balanced position. Stronger is 17...♞e7! 18 ♠xg5

♞xg5 19 ♠xd7+ ♞d8! 20 hxg5 ♞xg5+ 21 ♞g3 ♞xg3+! (21...♞xh5 22 ♞g2 ♠xd7 23 ♞h1 ♠h3+ 24 ♞xh3 ♞xh3+ 25 ♞xh3 ♞xh3 26 ♞xh3 would also be adequate) 22 ♞xg3 ♠xd7 with an edge for Black. **18 ♞g4!**



18...♞e7

After 18...gxh5? the swift 19 ♞g6+ ♞e7 20 ♞e6 mate would have shortened the agony.

19 ♞xg6+ ♞f7 20 ♞xc6 ♞xh5 21 ♞xa8 ♞d8 22 ♠xd7 ♞xd7 23 ♞ad1+ ♠d6 24 ♞h2 ♞f6 25 f3 ♞g8 26 ♞xb5 ♞e8 27 ♞xd6 ♞xd6 28 ♞xd6+ ♞e7 29 ♞a7+ ♞xd6 30 ♠c5+ ♞c6 31 ♞b6+ 1-0

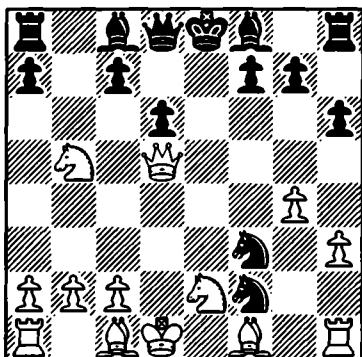
C2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 g4 h6 5 h3 e5 6 ♞ge2

Delaying ♠g2 and playing for d4-d5.

6...c6

6...b5!? profits from the fact that e4 is not covered by a bishop on g2: 7 ♠g2 ♠b7 8 a3 c6 5 h3 e5 6 ♞ge2 b5 and Black has avoided the line with 7 a4.

And 7 ♞xb5 ♞xe4 is more or less okay for Black: if 8 dxe5 ♞xe5 9 ♞d5?? ♞f3+ 10 ♞d1 ♞xf2 mate...



...is amusing, isn't it?

7...b7?!, on the other hand, is probably dubious on account of 8 f3 d5 (after 8...cxe4? 9 fxe4 ♖h4+ 10 ♔d2 e4 11 ♜g1 and Black has no real compensation for the sacrificed piece) 9 exd5! e4xd5 10 e2g2 with the same diagnosis as after 8...cxe4.

7 e3

7 a4 slows down Black's counterplay on the queenside, thus gaining time for operations on the other wing. I don't think there is much difference between playing a4 now, or waiting for Black's ...b5 and answering with a3; White must move his a-pawn sooner or later:

a) 7...a5?! 8 e2g2 e7e7 9 e3c3 d7h7 10 0-0 e5g5 11 f4 was clearly better for White in Damaso-Strikovic, Dos Hermanas (online blitz) 2004.

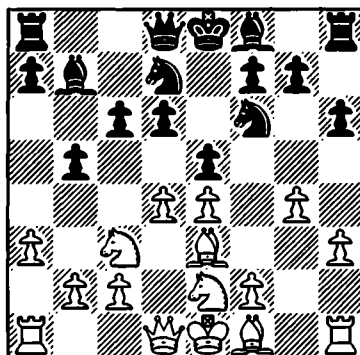
b) 7...d5?! 8 exd5 cxd5 9 dxe5 cxe5 10 e2g2 is slightly better for White.

c) 7...e5?! 8 e2g2 0-0 (or 8...c7f8 9 f4 d6g6 10 0-0 with an edge for White) 9 0-0 ♞e8 10 e3 with a slight plus for White, who has an improved version of a g3 system (Shengelia-Chibukhchian,

Batumi 2001).

d) 7...b6 is more urgent than 7...e7, even though with the latter move Black can consider the manoeuvre ...c7f8-g6, preceded or not by ...g5: 8 e2g2 (8 e3e3 e7b7 9 e2g2 ♜c7 10 0-0 a6 11 ♜d2 g5 was unclear in P.Herb-Schrepp, German League 1998) 8...e7b7 with a similar position to Ivanov-Kacheishvili and Fontaine-Mensch.

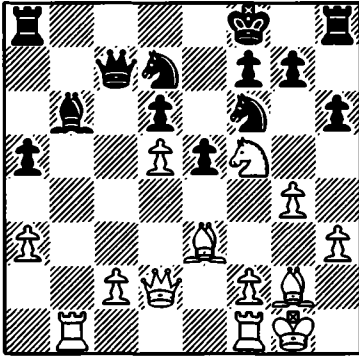
7...b5 8 a3 e7b7



9 d3

Hector-Bauer, European Team Ch., Leon 2001, continued 9 e2g2 a5 10 d5 b4 (I rejected 10...b8 due to 11 b4, fearing that b5 might become a concern after 0-0, ♜d3, dxc6 etc.) 11 dxc6 e4xc6 12 d5d5 ♜b8 (this is identical to the main text, except that the knight stands on e2 and the bishop on g2, rather than g3 and f1 respectively: on one hand White can castle more quickly, but on the other he would have preferred his bishop to be on c4) 13 ♜d2 bxa3! (logical, but I don't see an alternative anyway) 14 bxa3 (a surprise, as I expected 14 b3 a4 15 b4 dxd5 16 exd5 e7b5 when everything is in order for Black; Hector's move aims

at exploiting the open b-file at the cost of a shattered pawn structure) 14...♙xd5 15 exd5 ♙e7 16 0-0 (here 16 ♘g3 seemed critical to me: 16...♙d8 17 ♘f5 ♘f8 18 0-0 ♙b6 19 ♖ab1 ♗c7...



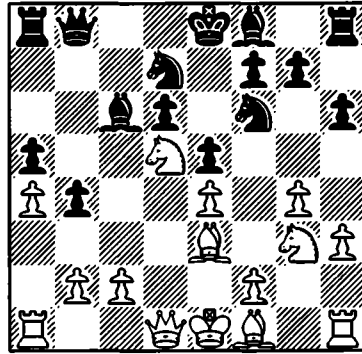
...and Black has nothing to complain about: after the bishop swap the d7-knight may jump to c5, while the f5-knight can be driven back by...g6) 16...0-0 17 ♘g3 ♖c8 18 ♙xh6!? (enough for a draw but not more) 18...gxh6 19 ♗xh6 ♖c4 (19...♙f8? keeps the extra piece but the white attack is too dangerous: 20 ♗g5+ ♘h8 21 ♗h4+ ♘h7 22 ♙e4 ♘d6 23 ♙d3 with threats ♘e4 and g5) 20 ♘f5? (20 ♗g5+ ♘h8 [20...♘f8 21 ♗h6+ ♘e8? - 21...♘g8! - 22 g5 ♘g8 23 ♗g7 with a big edge] 21 ♗h4+!, and as 21...♘h7? drops the e7-bishop, Black has to consent to a draw with 21...♘g8) 20...♙f8 21 ♗g5+ ♘h8 22 ♖fb1 ♗a7 (eyeing f2) 23 ♖b5 ♖b8 24 ♙f1 ♖f4 and I converted my advantage on move 40. 9...a5 10 d5 b4 11 dxc6 ♙xc6 12 ♘d5 ♗b8!

12...♘xd5?! is usually a desirable swap (compare pawn structures), but it's realized in unfavourable circum-

stances here, and 13 exd5 ♙b7 14 ♙b5 offers an edge to White; or 12...♙xd5? 13 exd5 ♗b8 14 a4.

13 a4

Black was intending ...bxa3. White's choice keeps the game more complicated than 13 axb4!? axb4 14 ♖xa8 ♙xa8 15 ♙c4, reaching a simplified position in which Black must still be precise: 15...♘xd5 (15...g6?! 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 ♗f3 ♙e7 18 g5 hxg5 19 ♙xg5 ♗d8 20 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 21 ♗b3 and a pawn falls, although Black gains some play in return) 16 ♙xd5 ♘f6 17 ♙xa8 ♗xa8 18 ♗d3 ♗c6 19 0-0 h5 20 ♖a1 hxg4 21 ♖a6 ♗b7 22 ♖a7 ♗c6 and White should perhaps repeat moves, even if he looks better. (23 ♗b3!? d5 24 hxg4 ♙d6 would be double-edged.)



13...♗b7

13...♙xd5?! 14 exd5 ♗b7 is met by 15 ♙c4 with the idea of embedding the bishop on c6, after having overprotected d5 by means of ♗d3 and ♖d1.

14 ♙c4 g6

Removing f5 from the white knight and preparing ...♙g7. The position is level and will remain so for a while.

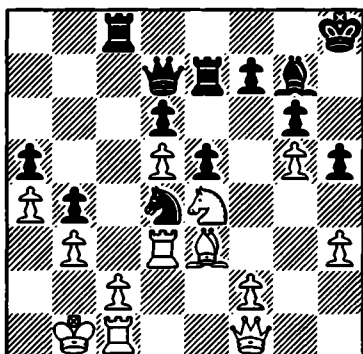
The game **Dgebuadze-Belkhodja, Capelle la Grande 2001**, continued:

15 ♖d3 ♙xd5 16 ♙xd5 ♜xd5 17 exd5
 ♜f6 18 ♙d1 ♙g7 19 ♖d2 ♖d7 20 b3 h5
 21 g5 ♜g8 22 ♜e4 ♜e7 23 ♖d3

Both camps have carried out their manoeuvres. The position is rather closed and has a drawish character.

23...♜f5 24 ♜d2 0-0 25 ♜c1 ♜fc8 26
 ♜b1 ♙ab8 27 ♖e2 ♖e7 28 ♙d3 ♙b7 29
 ♜c1 ♖d7 30 ♖f1 ♙h8 31 ♖e2 ♙f8 32
 ♜f6 ♖d8 33 ♙g1 ♙g7 34 ♜e4 ♙e7 35
 ♜c1 ♖d7 36 ♖f1 ♜d4

...and Black takes his chance!



37 ♙xd4 exd4 38 ♖g2 ♙e5 39 f4 ♙ee8
 40 ♜cd1 ♖e7 41 ♜d2

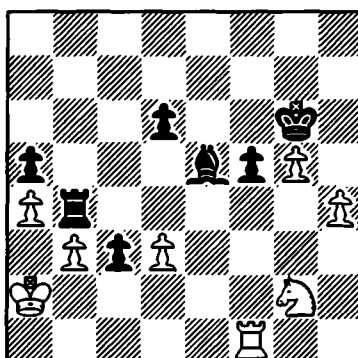
Or 41 ♜xd4!? ♙xd4 42 ♜xd4 with compensation.

41...♙g8 42 ♖f3 ♜c3 43 ♜xc3 bxc3 44
 ♜c4 ♖c7 45 f5 ♙b8 46 ♜a2 ♙b4 47 ♜a3
 ♙e5 48 fxc6 fxc6 49 ♜b5 ♖e7 50 h4
 ♙g7 51 ♖d3 ♙h7 52 ♜f1 ♖e5 53 ♜c7
 ♙b7 54 ♜e6 ♖xd5 55 ♜f4

Here 55 ♜xg7! ♜xg7 (55...♙xc7?? ♜f6)
 56 ♜f4, followed by 57 ♜xd4, would have favoured White because of the weak c3- and d6-pawns.

55...♖f5 56 ♖xf5 gxf5 57 ♜xh5 d3 58

cxd3 ♙e5 59 ♜f4 ♙b4 60 ♜g2 ♙g6



Now White's pieces are bound to passivity, rendering the defence tough.

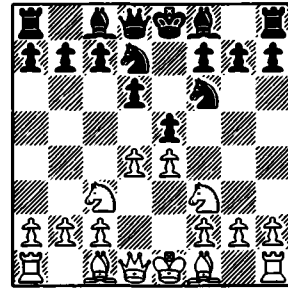
61 ♜e1 ♜xh4 62 ♜f3 ♙b4 63 ♜c1 ♙g7
 64 d4 ♙xd4 65 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 66 ♜xc3
 ♙xc5 67 ♜c8 f4 68 ♙g8+ ♙f5 69 ♜b2 f3
 70 ♜f8+ ♙g4 71 ♙g8+ ♙h3 72 ♙h8+
 ♙g3 73 ♜c3 f2 74 ♙xd4 f1 ♖ 75 ♙g8+
 ♙h4 76 ♙h8+ ♙g5 77 ♙b8 ♖a6 78 ♜d5
 ♙f6 79 ♜f8+ ♙e7 80 ♙b8 ♜d7 0-1

Conclusion

The aggressive approach with 4 g4, profiting from the temporarily closed c8-h3 diagonal, usually leads to complex positions with few early exchanges. After Black's best move, 4...h6, White should objectively refrain from sacrificing his g-pawn, à la Shirov, and instead opt for a more flexible set-up with h3, ♙g2, ♜ge2-g3, ♙e3 etc. In general Black is well advised not to release the central tension with ...exd4, unless he has a good reason and a concrete follow-up.

In summary, Chapters 8 and 9 have shown that Black finds adequate counterplay in the lines arising after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7.

Chapter Ten



Introduction and 5 g4

1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 c3 b7 4 f3 e5

The third and final section of this book deals with the main position of the Philidor Defence, which can be reached via the various move orders from Parts 1 and 2: 1 e4 e5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 f6 4 c3 d7, or 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 c3 e5 4 f3 b7, or 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 c3 b7 4 f3 e5.

The overwhelmingly popular choice for White from this position is 5 c4, which is the subject of Chapters 11-14. In this chapter we will take a look at the less common moves, including the dangerous 5 g4. White can play:

A: 5 g3

B: 5 g4

Alternatives do not hit really the target:

a) 5 e2?! is too mild to give White a chance to fight for an edge. Why should he restrict his bishop to e2 when it is obviously better placed on c4 - ?

The same remark applies to 5 d3.

b) 5 dx5?! prematurely releases the central tension, thus losing any chance to claim an edge. 5...dx5 6 c4 b4 7 0-0 c6 is fine for Black. 7...0-0 is equally sufficient to equalize, but is less ambitious!

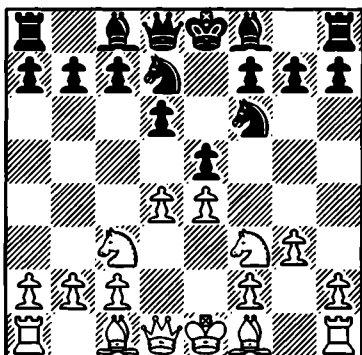
c) 5 g5?! is a falsely aggressive move that has no strategic foundation. Black equalizes by simply finishing his development, e.g. 5...e7, ...c6, ...0-0, etc. Here's an example where he even quickly takes the ascendancy: 5...c6 6 d2 e7 7 a4 0-0 8 c4 exd4 9 xd4 c5 10 e5 dx5 11 xe5 (11 xd8 xd8 12 dx5 e6, with an equal position, was better) 11...e6 12 xf6 xf6 13 xc5 e7 14 d4 xd4 15 xd4 xc4 and the pair of bishops dictated in S.Rocha-Oratovsky, Lisbon 2000.

d) 5 d5?! would be excellent if White could follow up with c2-c4. Indeed, after ...c6 and a subsequent ...cxd5, it would be desirable to recapture with cxd5. Here, however, while Black continues

with ...c6, ...♙e7 and ...0-0 (and then ...♘c5 or ...cxd5, depending on the situation), White doesn't have any real plan.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 g3

This is almost an inaccuracy, given that the fianchetto is less effective with a knight placed on the f3-square rather than e2.



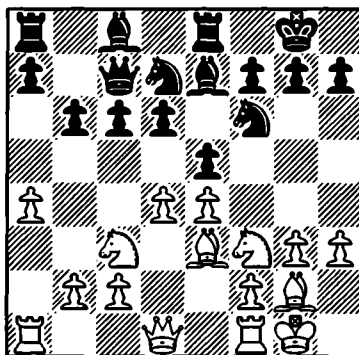
5...♙e7

The creative 5...b6!? was tested in Telljohann-Kosten, German League 1997. Weakening c6 looks unsound at first sight, but it seems that White can't benefit from this. There followed 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♙b5 ♙d6 (7...♙b4!? 8 ♘xe5 ♖e7 is unclear) 8 ♙c6 ♙a6!? (an exchange sacrifice that suits Kosten's active style well) 9 ♙g5 (cautious; taking up the gauntlet would have forced White to switch to defence after 9 ♙xa8 ♖xa8 10 ♘d2 0-0 or 10...♙b4!?, when Black's pieces are very active) 9...0-0 10 ♙xd7 ♖xd7 11 ♙xf6 gxf6 12 ♘h4 with an unclear position, the game eventually ending in a draw.

6 ♙g2 0-0 7 0-0 c6 8 a4 ♖c7?!

This was foolish. The automatic ...♗e8 and ...♙f8 was, of course, more to the point, aiming to put pressure on e4 in some cases. Black would then have a comfortable game, since the white f-pawn can't move.

9 h3 b6 10 ♙e3 ♗e8



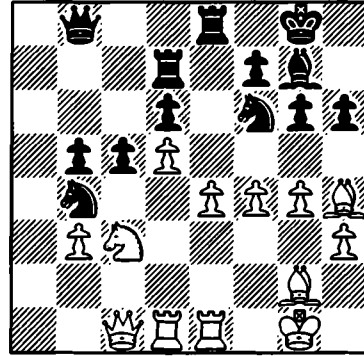
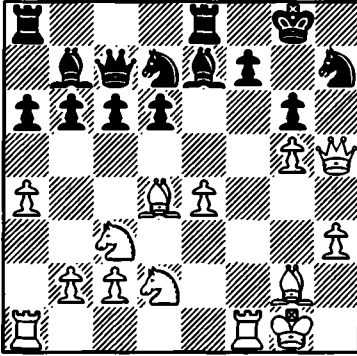
11 ♘d2!

Planning to jump to c4 in the right circumstances, but above all to allow the f4-push.

11...a6 12 g4 h6 13 f4 ♙b7 14 ♘e2

White keeps some flexibility in his position. The direct 14 g5 doesn't succeed, but only if Black remains very careful:

a) After 14...exd4? 15 ♙xd4 (not 15 gxf6? ♙xf6) 15...hxg5 16 fxg5 ♘h7 Black has gained the important square e5. He is ready to install a knight there, while leading the White attack isn't that easy. Nevertheless, White is practically winning here! 17 ♖h5 ♘xg5 18 h4 c5 19 hxg5 cxd4 20 ♖xf7+ ♗h8 21 ♘d5 ♙xd5 22 ♖h5+ ♗g8 23 exd5 and ♙e4 is going to cause devastation. Note that 17...g6? is met by...



...18 ♖xh7+!! ♔xh7 19 ♜xf7+ ♕g8 20 ♜g7+ ♕f8 21 ♜f1+.

b) 14...exf4!? 15 ♙xf4 hxg5 16 ♙xg5 and now 16...c5!, aiming to gain the e5-square, is a vital move, after which Black is okay.

c) 14...hxg5 15 fxg5 ♘h7 16 ♗h5 g6 with a double-edged position.
14...♙f8 15 ♘g3 exd4 16 ♙xd4 c5 17 ♙f2 ♜ad8?

A mistake which will enable White to prevent the ...d5-thrust forever. Instead, 17...d5 18 e5 ♘h7 is messy: Black will get rid of the e-pawn by playing ...f6, while the pile of white pieces on the kingside isn't that frightening.
18 c4! ♘b8 19 ♜e1 ♘c6 20 ♘b1 ♘a5 21 ♗c2 g6 22 b3 ♙g7 23 ♘c3

This is like a Benoni (White having a pawn on c4 rather than d5) that has gone wrong for Black. White's prospects are better both in the centre (d5 is weak) and on the kingside. *Galdunts-Bauer, Bischwiller 1997*, continued:
23...♘c6 24 ♜ad1 ♗b8 25 ♘ge2 ♘b4 26 ♗b1 ♗a8 27 ♙h4 ♜d7 28 ♘d5 ♙xd5 29 cxd5 b5 30 axb5 axb5 31 ♘c3 ♗b8 32 ♗c1

32...c4?

Black should play 32...♜a7, with the idea of exchanging knights with ...♘a2. This would diminish the pressure on b5 and simultaneously increase the pressure on e4.

33 bxc4 bxc4 34 ♙f1 ♗c8 35 ♙f2 ♜de7 36 ♘b5 ♗b8

After 36...♘e4 37 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 38 ♘xd6, the c4-pawn falls, leaving White with an extra passed pawn.

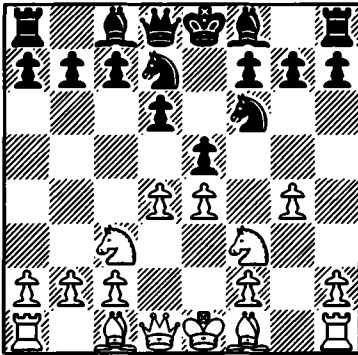
37 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 38 e5 ♗b8 39 exf6 ♜xe1 40 ♙xe1 ♙xf6 41 ♗xc4 ♘xd5

A practical decision, but Sergey was up the task.

42 ♗xd5 ♗xf4 43 ♗d2 ♗e5 44 ♙f2 ♕g7 45 ♗d6 h5 46 ♗xe5 ♜xe5 47 ♕g2 hxg4 48 hxg4 ♜a5 49 ♜d7 ♜a4 50 ♙e2 ♙e5 51 ♙d1 ♜b4 52 ♙c5 ♜f4 53 ♜d5 ♙c3 54 ♕g3 ♜e4 55 ♜d7 ♙e5+ 56 ♕f3 ♜f4+ 57 ♕e3 ♜f1 58 ♙b3 ♙b2 59 ♙c4 ♜f6 60 ♕e4 ♙c3 61 ♜b7 ♙a1 62 ♙e3 ♙c3 63 ♙g5 ♜f2 64 ♙f4 g5 65 ♙e3 ♜b2 66 ♜xf7+ ♕g6 67 ♜f5 1-0

My error on move eight led to an unappealing position. My opponent found the correct plan (11 ♘d2 and 13 f4), and never let the advantage slip.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 g4



A wild attempt to disturb Black's serene set-up. As is usually the case in similar circumstances, Black has the choice between taking up the gauntlet (5...♞xg4), a solid alternative (5...h6), and... panic (the rest)!

We shall consider:

- B1: 5...h6**
- B2: 5...g6!?**
- B3: 5...♞xg4!?**

Or:

5...exd4?!

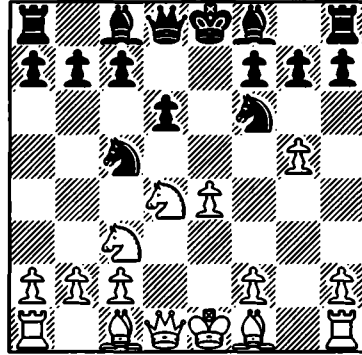
Giving up the centre isn't an advisable reaction to White's aggressive move. Forecasting g4-g5, Black hurries to make d7 available for the f6-knight, but this passive approach cedes the initiative without a fight.

6 ♞xd4

6 ♞xd4?! (Kochetkova-Chelushkina, Saint Vincent 2005) is unjustified. After 6...♞xg4, followed by ...♞de5 or ...♞ge5, White has absolutely nothing for the sacrificed pawn.

6...♞c5 7 g5

Logical, but 7 ♠b5+!? and 7 f3 are interesting too; for example, 7 f3 ♞xg4!?! 8 fxg4 ♞h4+ 9 ♖d2 ♞g5+ 10 ♜e2 ♠xg4+ 11 ♟f3 with an edge.



7...♞fd7

7...♞fxe4?! leads to at least a pleasant ending for White after 8 ♞e2 d5 (8...♞e7? 9 ♞d5 loses on the spot) 9 f3 ♞e6! 10 ♞xe6 ♞xc3 11 ♞xg7+ ♖d7 12 ♞e5! ♞e7 13 ♠h3+ ♖d8 14 ♞xe7+ ♜xe7 15 ♞f5+ ♠xf5 16 ♠xf5.

8 ♠e3

This was played in Gongora Reyes-Moldovan, Marin 2004. I don't see how Black will manage to generate counter-chances.

B1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 g4

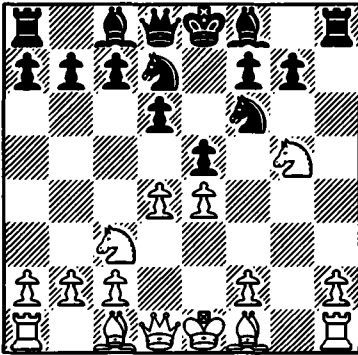
It's worth noticing that the move order 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 g4 h6 5 ♟f3 e5 leads to the same position but forces Black into the 5...h6 line.

5...h6 6 g5

On 6 ♠g1, Black should play the useful 6...c6!, rather than 6...exd4?!

6...hxg5 7 ♞xg5

7 ♖xg5!? ♗e7 8 ♜d2 c6 (8...exd4?! is again misguided: 9 ♜xd4 ♜c5 10 f3 and here the combination 10...♜fxe4 11 ♗xe7 ♜xd2 12 ♗xd8 ♜xf1 13 ♗xc7 culminates in a White edge) 9 0-0-0 b5 (D.Recuerdo Guerra-F.Remoli Sargues, Mondariz 2004), and now White could have netted a pawn with 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 d5! b4 12 dxc6 bxc3 13 cxd7+ ♗xd7 14 ♜xc3, although the position would remain unclear. Instead 9...♜a5 or 9...♜c7 is more solid and gives a roughly equal position.

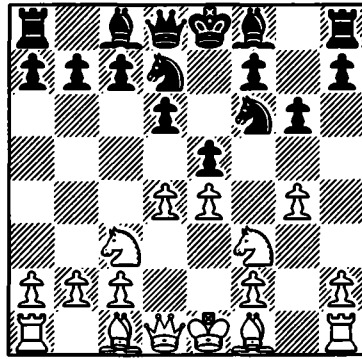


After 7 ♜xg5, I believe 7...exd4! 8 ♜xd4 c6 (cf. Vaisser-Bauer, Chapter 9, Line A) to be the best reply, but 7...c6 looks fairly acceptable as well: 8 dxe5 9 f4 (R.James-I.Heppell, Paignton 2004), and here 9...♜h7! is a powerful resource: 10 ♜f3 (not 10 ♜xh7?? ♜h4+) 10...♜xf3+ 11 ♜xf3 ♜h4+ 12 ♜g3 ♜f6 with fine play for Black.

But 7...♗e7? (B.Filipovic-A.Jurkovic, Zadar 2003) is probably too risky: 8 ♗c4 0-0 9 ♗g1 c6 10 d5 b5 11 ♗b3 b4 12 dxc6 bxc3 13 cxd7 cxb2 (13...♗xd7) 14 dxc8 ♜bxc1 and here 15 ♗xf7+! would have won on the spot.

B2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 g4 g6!?

A reasonable move, even though it is probably not the best reply to 5 g4. Black is mixing prophylaxis (the knight won't be hanging on h5) and constructive development (putting the bishop on g7).



6 g5

6 h3 and 6 ♗c4 are interesting, if less logical options. For example, 6 ♗c4 and now:

a) 6...♗g7?! gives White realistic chances to emerge out of the opening with an edge: 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 g5 ♜h5 9 ♗e3; or 8 ♗e3 (N.Ristic-V.Rabrenovic, Serbian Team Ch. 2004), with the idea 8...♜xg4 9 ♗xf7+ ♜xf7 10 ♜g5+.

b) 6...exd4! 7 ♜xd4 (7 ♜xd4 ♜e5) 7...♗g7 8 ♗xf7+? (P.Roth-C.Weiss, Austrian Ch., Hartberg 2004) is wrong, since after 8...♜xf7 9 ♜g5+ ♜e8 10 ♜e6 ♜e5 Black keeps his extra piece.

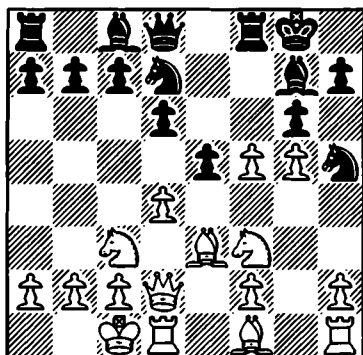
6...♜h5 7 ♗e3 ♗g7 8 ♜d2 0-0 9 0-0-0 f5?!

If 9...c6? 10 dxe5! dxe5 11 ♜d6 (but not 11 ♗h3? ♜a5 12 ♗xd7 ♜d8 and suddenly Black's game is acceptable)

11...♖a5 12 ♘d2 and White was much better, mainly because the enemy queen had no suitable square, in Abergel-Beudaert, Evry 2005.

A sounder option, crucial for the validity of 5...g6, is 9...♘b6! intending 10 dxe5 ♕g4 11 ♖e2. Now both 11...♘c4 12 ♖xc4 ♖xf3 13 exd6 and 11...♖xf3 12 ♖xf3 ♘c4 13 ♗e2 ♘xe3 14 ♗xe3 ♖xe5 15 ♖xh5 ♖xc3 look playable for Black.

10 exf5



10...♖xf5

10...gx5?! is clearly inadequate after 11 dxe5 dxe5 (or 11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 13 ♖c4+ ♖h8 14 f4 ♖g7 15 ♖e2 and Black faces major problems) 12 ♖c4+ ♖h8 13 ♖e6 ♗e7 14 ♖xd7, when both 14...f4 15 ♖xc8 fxe3 16 ♗xe3 and 14...♖d8 15 ♘d5 ♗xd7 16 ♘xc7 are equally disastrous for Black.

11 ♖e2

The simplest, but 11 dxe5 (Lastin-Azmaiparashvili, FIDE World Ch., Tripoli [rapid] 2004) was no picnic for Black either: 11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 13 ♖c4+ ♖h8 14 ♖b1 (14 ♘e2!?) 14...♖d7 (here 14...♘f4! was probably stronger: 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♖xd5 c6 17

♖e4 ♖f7 18 ♖d4 and then 18...♗c7, 18...♗e7 or 18...♗f8 may be tenable) 15 ♖he1 ♖c6 (or 15...♘f4 16 ♖d4!, intending 16...♗xg5 17 ♘e4 ♗e7 18 ♘g3 with a clear plus) 16 ♖e6 ♖f3! (otherwise f2-f4 comes with great effect) 17 ♖g4 ♖xe3 (a nice exchange sacrifice, dictated by necessity) 18 ♗xe3 ♘f4 19 ♖f3 ♗xg5 20 ♘d5 (20 ♖xc6! bxc6 21 ♗e4 would still have left White on top) 20...♖xd5! 21 ♖xd5 c6 22 ♖h1 ♗f6 and so on.

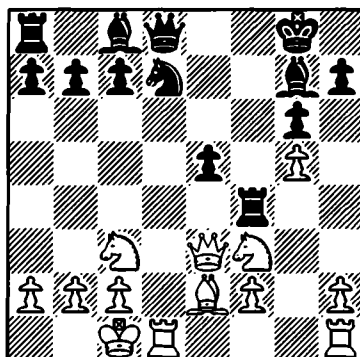
11...♘f4 12 ♖xf4 ♖xf4

12...exf4 13 h4 ♘f8 14 h5 isn't glorious for Black either. Even without his dark-squared bishop, White can create serious attacking chances.

13 dxe5 dxe5

13...♗f8 is no improvement because of 14 e6! (not 14 ♘d5? ♖xf3 15 ♘xc7 ♖xe5 with complications) 14...♖xc3 15 bxc3! (the queen should focus on the f4-rook; not 15 ♗xc3? ♘c5) 15...♖xf3 16 e7 ♗xe7 17 ♖xf3 and Black can resign.

14 ♗e3



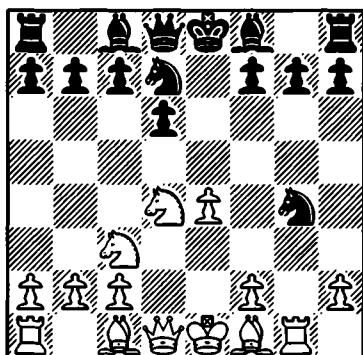
White enjoys great superiority in this position. Indeed, Black has big problems finishing his development, and his king is quite vulnerable.

B3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♜c3 ♟bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 g4 ♟xg4!? 6 ♜g1

6 ♜c4? is bad on account of the simple 6...exd4 (Sanchez Dolado-Galzagorri Uli, Erandio 2003), when 7 ♜xf7+? fails to 7...♜xf7 8 ♟g5+ ♜g8 9 ♜xg4 ♟f6 or 9...♟e5.

6...♟g6

In the event of 6...exd4!?, White gets sufficient compensation for the pawn after 7 ♟xd4 (or even 7 ♜xd4!? ♟ge5 8 ♜e2 ♟xf3+ 9 ♜xf3 ♟e5 10 ♜e2 when White is ready for ♜e3, 0-0-0 and then f4 or ♟d5, Garcia Benavides-Suuronen, Calvia 2004) and now:



a) 7...♟ge5? leads to unnecessary problems for Black after 8 ♜g5, with a further split:

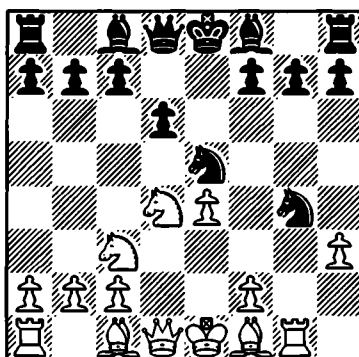
a1) 8...f6? 9 ♟e6 ♜e7 10 ♟d5 wins.

a2) 8...♟f6 9 ♜xf6 gxf6 (ugly, but forced, as 9...♜xf6? allows 10 ♟d5 ♜d8 11 ♟b5) 10 ♜h5 or 10 f4, and it is obvious that White's position is to be preferred.

a3) 8...♜e7 9 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 10 ♟d5 ♜d8 11 ♟b5 0-0 12 ♟bxc7 ♜b8, and now 13 ♜e2 followed by 0-0-0 looks promising;

b) 7...♟g6 8 ♜g5 (8 ♜e3 g6 9 ♜d2 ♟e5 10 ♜e2 ♜g7 11 0-0-0, B.Vujic-R.Appel, German League 2004, also deserves consideration) 8...g6 9 ♟d5 c6 10 ♟xf6+ ♟xf6 11 ♜f3 ♜e7 12 0-0-0 ♟h5 13 ♜e3! with a strong initiative (rather than 13 ♜xe3?! ♜xe7, which made Black's life much easier in Topchess2-Strikovics, playchess.com blitz 2004).

c) 7...♟de5 8 h3



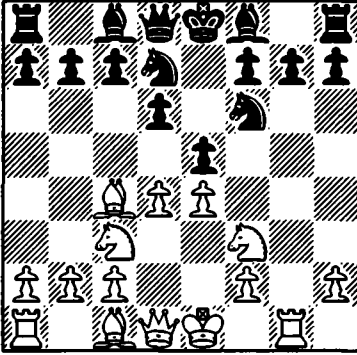
and now:

c1) 8...♟f6 9 f4 (9 ♜e3!?) 9...♟g6 (or 9...♟c6 10 ♜e3 ♜d7 11 ♜f3, Pitl-Kunin, Bad Wörishofen 2004) 10 ♜e3 ♜d7 11 ♜f3 was played in Renteria Becerra-Campora, Calvia 2004. The f3-square is the best place for her majesty: 11 ♜d2?! c5 12 ♟f3 ♜c6 13 ♜c4 (M.Llaneza Vega-Iglesias Valle, Oviedo 2004) allowed Black the opportunity of 13...♟xe4! 14 ♟xe4 d5.

c2) 8...c5 is playable too, although I personally wouldn't be keen on weakening the d5-square for no particular reason. Then 9 hxg4 cxd4 10 ♟d5! is unclear, whereas 10 ♟b5?! (Moranda-Lubczynski, Krakow 2005) is well met by 10...d5! intending 11 exd5? ♜e7.

In conclusion, we can state that after 6...exd4 Black's game becomes quite cramped in all lines.

7 ♖c4



7...h6

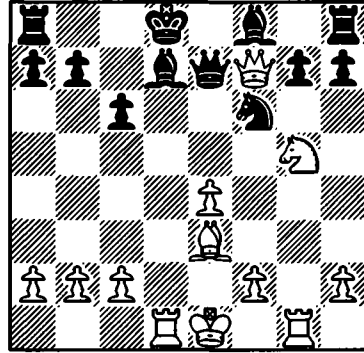
The other way to parry ♗g5 is once more the central swap. After 7...exd4 8 ♜xd4 ♚b6 9 e5 ♜e7 (9...♗xc4!? is good too) 10 ♙e3 dxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♗xc4 12 ♗xc4 ♙e6 Black had a clear edge in S.Solovjov-Kirillova, St Petersburg 2004.

9 ♗g5! is more appropriate and analysed in detail by Solovjov: 9...♗xc4 (9...d5!?! is possible too, though there is no need to give back the pawn) 10 ♜xc4 ♜e7 (10...♗d7!? 11 ♗d5! ♗xd5 12 exd5 h6 13 ♗f3 – or 13 ♗e4!? – with some compensation, but I doubt Black can be worse) and now:

a) 11 ♙e3?! c6 12 0-0-0 h6 (after 12...♗g4!? 13 ♜e2 ♗xe3 14 ♜xe3 White's activity and big lead in development provide him with some compensation, but I prefer Black here) 13 ♗f3 ♙e6 14 ♜a4!? ♙g4! (14...a5 is less cautious: 15 ♗d4 b5 [15...♙d7] 16 ♗cxb5 cxb5 17 ♗xb5 ♙d7 18 ♜xd6, and it transpires that White has at least

enough for the piece here) 15 e5 ♙xf3 16 exf6 ♜xf6 17 ♜d4 g5 18 h4. In this position Solovjov claims that White has compensation for the two pawns, but after 18...♙e7 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 ♙xg5 ♜g6! he is in fact in dire straits.

b) 11 ♗b5! leads to wild complications that, apparently, should peter out into a drawish ending after 11...c6 12 ♗xd6+ ♜xd6 13 ♜xf7+ ♚d8 14 ♙e3 (14 ♙d2? ♙d7 15 0-0-0 ♚c8 enables Black to sit on his extra material) 14...♙d7! 15 ♜d1 ♜e7 and now:



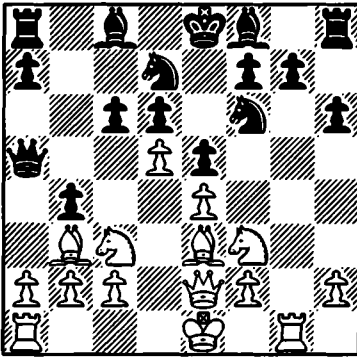
b1) 16 ♙c5? is erroneous: 16...♜xf7 17 ♗xf7+ ♚c7 (after 17...♚e8? White can turn the tables and, following 18 ♗xh8 ♙xc5 19 ♜xg7, it is Black who must fight for a draw) 18 ♙d4 ♙b4+ 19 c3 ♜he8 20 ♙e5+ ♜xe5 21 ♗xe5 ♙f8 when, with two minor pieces for rook and pawn, Black is in the driver's seat.

b2) 16 e5! ♗d5 17 e6 ♙e8 (17...♙c8!?) 18 ♜xe7+ ♚xe7 19 ♙c5+ ♚f6 20 ♙xf8 ♙h5 21 ♗e4+ ♚xe6 22 ♙xg7 ♙xd1 23 ♗c5+ ♚f5 24 ♙xh8 ♙xc2 with equality is a long sequence, but it's unclear whether either side can beneficially deviate at any point.

8 ♙e3 c6 9 dxe5

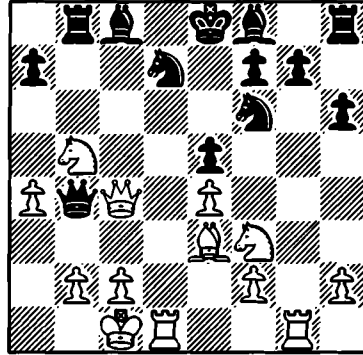
Alternatively:

a) 9 ♜e2?? b5 10 ♙b3 ♜a5! (10...a5 11 0-0-0 ♜c7 was also adequate in O.Boguslavsky-Mietzner, Dresden 2004) 11 d5? (11 0-0-0 was a tad better, but no picnic for White either after 11... ♙a6 12 ♜b1 c5) 11...b4



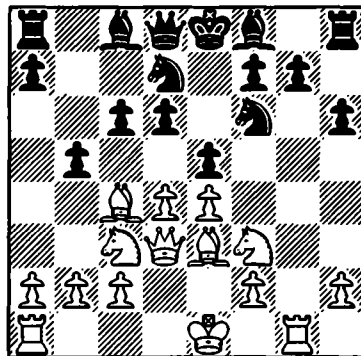
...with a huge advantage to Black in C.Balogh-Gyimesi, Hungarian Championship, Budapest 2004.

b) White's first attempt in this position was 9 ♜d3?! , as played in Shirov-Azmaiparashvili, Bled Olympiad 2002: 9... ♜c7?! 10 0-0-0 b5 (maybe Black can afford the preparatory 10...a6!?!; after 11 dxe5 ♜xe5 12 ♜xe5 dxe5 13 ♜a4 [L.Perez Rodriguez-Moldovan, Pontevedra 2004] Black should have gone for 13...b5! with obscure consequences after 14 ♜b6 ♜b8 15 ♜xc8 or 14 ♙b6 ♜e7 , but not 14...bxc4? 15 ♜xc4!) 11 ♙xb5! (an opportunity that Shirov doesn't miss!) 11...cxb5 12 dxe5 (12 ♜xb5 comes to the same) 12...dxe5 (12... ♜xe5? loses to 13 ♜xe5 dxe5 14 ♜xb5 ♜a5 15 ♜c4!) 13 ♜xb5 ♜a5 14 ♜c4 ♜b8 15 a4! ♜b4!



16 ♜xe5! (16 ♜c7 would have brought a neat draw by repetition after 16... ♜xa4 17 ♜xe5+ ♙e7 [17... ♜xe5?? 18 ♜c7+ ♙e7 19 ♙c5 mate] 18 ♜xd7! ♜xd7 19 ♜d6+ ♜d8 20 ♜xf7+ ♙e8) 16... ♜xc4 17 ♜xc4 when, with soon three pawns and the initiative for the piece, White was better.

Going back to move nine, however, analysis has shown that inserting ...b5 is a clever idea: 9...b5!



b1) 10 ♙xf7+? ♙xf7 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♜xe5+ ♜xe5 (12... ♙g8 13 ♜xc6 ♜c7 14 ♜xb5 looks less convincing) 13 ♜xd8 ♜f3+ 14 ♜d1 (not 14 ♙e2? ♜xg1+ 15 ♜xg1 ♙g4+) 14... ♜xg1 , and if White

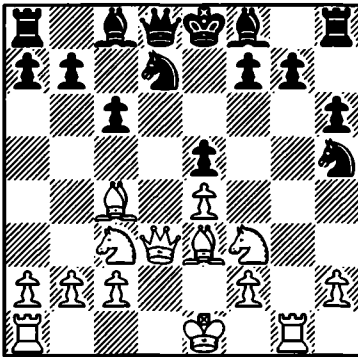
doesn't find anything concrete quickly, the rook, bishop and knight will prove to be superior to the queen and pawn.

b2) 10 ♖b3 ♜c7 (rushing with 10...a5? is suicide: 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 a4 b4 13 ♜c4 ♜e7 14 ♜xc6 and White stood much better in M.Markovic-Runic, Serbian Team Ch. 2004) 11 0-0-0 a5 and Black is clearly better.

9...dxe5 10 ♜d3 ♖h5

Planning ...♜f6 followed, at some point, by ...♖f4, ...♗c5 and/or ...b5.

The nonchalant 10...♜c7? was severely punished in Shirov-M.Klinova, Gibraltar 2006: 11 ♖xf7+! ♜xf7 12 ♜c4+ ♜e7 13 ♖h4 ♖b6 (or 13...♗g8 14 ♖g6+ ♜d8 15 0-0-0 ♜a5 16 f4 with a raging attack) 14 ♖g6+ ♜e8 15 ♖xb6 axb6 16 ♖xh8 g5 17 ♖g6 ♖c5 18 0-0-0 and Black resigned. However, 10...b5! (cf. 9 ♜d3 b5) looks stronger and could well refute this whole line.



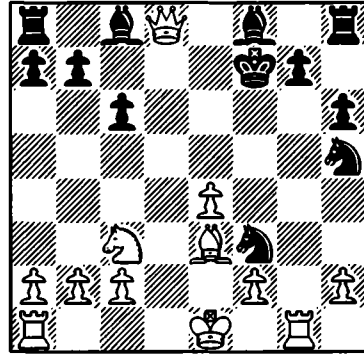
With 10...♖h5 we are following the game **Shirov-J.Shaw, Gibraltar 2005**. White had to react urgently, and Shirov obliged with...

11 ♖xf7+! ♜xf7 12 ♖xe5+ ♖xe5!

Forced, but excellent. 12...♜e8? 13

♖g6, followed by 0-0-0, leaves Black with a hard defensive task.

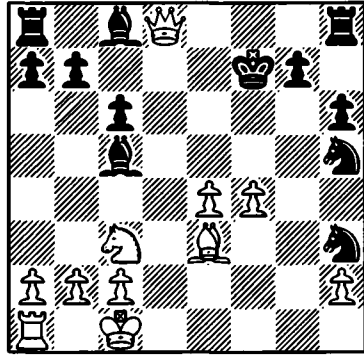
13 ♜xd8 ♖f3+



14 ♜d1

14 ♜e2? ♖xg1+ 15 ♜xg1 ♖g4+.

14...♖xg1 15 ♜c1 ♖h3 16 f4 ♖c5!



17 ♜c7+

17 ♜xh8? ♖xe3+ 18 ♜b1 ♖3xf4.

17...♖e7 18 ♖c5 ♜e8 19 f5 ♜f8

19...♖g5!?

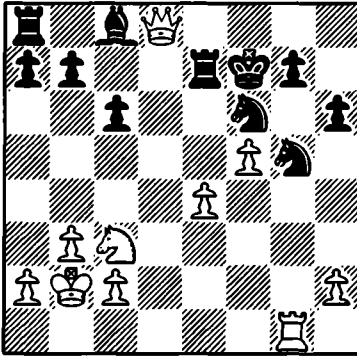
20 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 21 ♜d8+ ♜f7 22 b3

22 ♜d6?! is worse because the following sacrifice enables Black to free himself: 22...♖xf5! 23 exf5 ♜e1+ 24 ♖d1 ♖f2 25 ♜d7+ (if 25 ♜c7+ ♜e8! 26 ♜d2 ♜e7, or 25 ♜g6+ ♜g8 26 ♜d2 ♖f4! or 26

♖xh5? ♜d8!) 25...♔g8 26 ♖d2 ♜ee8! 27 ♘xf2 ♜ad8 28 ♖xd8 ♜xd8+ 29 ♘d3 ♘f4 and the f-pawn will fall.

22...♘f6 23 ♖b2 ♘g5 24 ♜g1

Preparing h2-h4 followed by ♜xg7+.



24...♜d7

If first 24...b6? then 25 e5! ♜xe5 26 h4 ♘f3 27 ♜g3 ♜xf5 28 ♖c7+ ♔d7 29 ♘e4! ♘e5 30 ♘d6+ ♖e6 31 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 32 ♜xg7 is good for White.

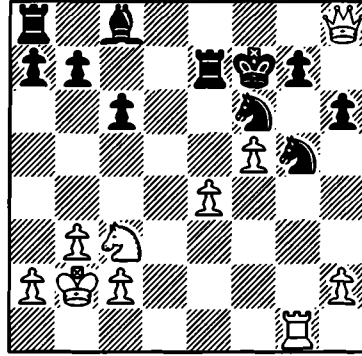
25 ♖h8

Intending h4 or e5 and wins.

25...♜e7

Threatening to trap the queen, and

leading to a repetition of moves.

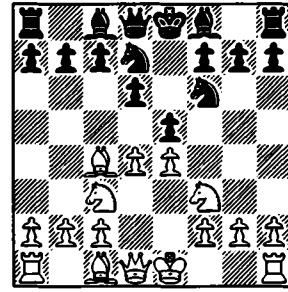


26 ♖d8 ♜d7 27 ♖h8 ♜e7 ½-½

Conclusion

The gambit 5 g4, tried several times by Shirov, looks basically unsound to me. It artificially livens up the game, but analysis has shown that Black can achieve a good position by declining the challenge, with 5...h6, and also with the principled 5...♘g4. The idea of 5...g6, on the other hand, doesn't seem suitable and rather justifies White's play.

Chapter Eleven



5 ♖c4: Introduction and ♙xf7+ Lines

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♙e7

This natural bishop move, preparing short castling, is played in the vast majority of games after 5 ♖c4. It's easy to see why, as alternatives are unappealing:

a) 5...c6? loses material after 6 dxe5 ♗xe5 (or 6...dxe5 7 ♘g5) 7 ♗xe5 dxe5 8 ♙xf7+.

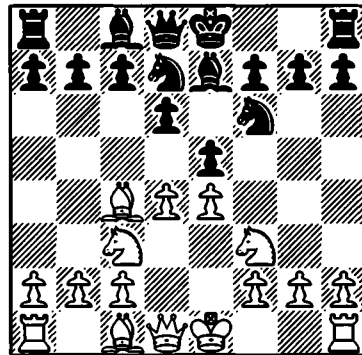
b) 5...♗b6?! 6 ♙b3 is good for White (compare this with a similar position from Chapter 1 where the c3- and f6-knights are still at home).

c) Giving up the centre by playing 5...exd4?! 6 ♗xd4 is on principle dubious. In comparison with the variations examined in Chapter 1, Black has lost the active possibility of ...♗c6.

d) 5...h6?! is possible, as the complications resulting from 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♙xf7+ ♗xf7 8 ♗xe5+ ♗g8 aren't necessarily unfavourable for Black.

However, 5...♙e7 develops a piece and (as I was told when I was a begin-

ner!) is therefore stronger. Furthermore, the bishop move is 'compulsory', whereas Black can usually do without ...h6.



After 5...♙e7, White normally castles short, and this is the subject of Chapters 12-14. In this chapter, we will take a look at sharp lines involving an early ♙xf7+. White can play:

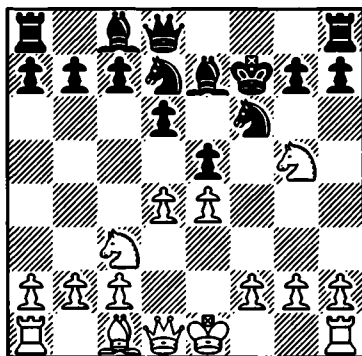
A: 6 ♙xf7+?!

B: 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 ♙xf7+

C: 6 ♗g5 0-0 7 ♙xf7+

The unforced retreat with 6 ♖b3?! is imprecise. After 6...exd4 7 ♜xd4 (or 7 ♜xd4 ♜c5) 7...♜c5, the best White has is 8 ♖c4, when he has lost precious time. In these circumstances (and in contrast to 5...exd4?!), releasing the central tension is justified for Black and the position after 8...0-0 is equal.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 ♖xf7+?!
 6...♜xf7 7 ♜g5+



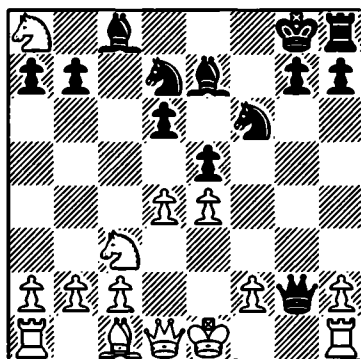
7...♜g8!

Venturing the king to g6 is inadvisable and above all unnecessary, since 7...♜g8 is an excellent move. But note that going to g6 is possible if White exchanges on e5 first (see Line B).

8 ♜e6 ♜e8 9 ♜xc7 ♜g6 10 ♜xa8?

Stronger is 10 0-0! when, after 10...♜b8, White has two pawns and some initiative for the piece. Nevertheless, by playing correctly Black has nothing to fear and should even stand a bit better.

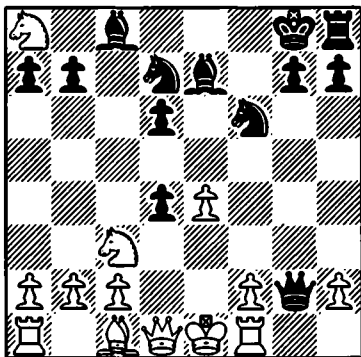
10...♜xg2



11 ♜f1

11 ♜e2 is even worse: 11...exd4! 12 ♜g1 (or 12 ♜xd4 ♜e5 and, as with 11 ♜f1, this key move enables the knight and bishop to join the attack; White already cannot avoid heavy material losses) 12...♜xh2! (but not 12...♜h3? 13 ♜xd4 ♜e5 14 ♜e3 ♖g4+ 15 ♜xg4 ♜xg4+ 16 f3) 13 ♜xd4 ♜e5 14 ♜g3 ♜h5 15 ♜f3 h6 16 ♜d5 ♖g4 17 ♜xe7+ ♜h7 and Black wins.

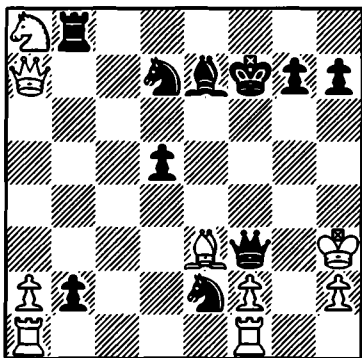
11...exd4!



12 ♜xd4

On 12 ♜e2?! the punishment would be even more severe: 12...dxc3! 13 ♜c4+ d5 14 ♜xc8+ ♜f7 15 ♜xb7 (15 ♜xh8?!

leaves the queen further from the action) 15...♖xe4+ 16 ♔e3 ♜b8 17 ♗xa7 cxb2 18 ♕d2 ♗b4+ 19 c3 ♘e4+ 20 ♕e2 ♘xc3+ 21 ♕f3 ♗e4+ 22 ♕g3 ♘e2+ 23 ♕h3 ♗f3 mate, I.Rabinovich-Ilyin Zhenevsky, Moscow 1922.



White could, of course, have defended more tenaciously, but the final outcome was always clear.

12...♘e5 13 f4 ♘fg4

With the nasty threat of ...♗h4+ (and not 13...♘f3+??, which loses to 14 ♜xf3 ♗xf3 15 ♗c4+).

14 ♗d5+ ♘f7 15 ♗c4

Keeping an eye on the f1-rook.

15...♗h4+ 16 ♕d1 ♔e6 17 ♗e2

Or 17 ♗b5 ♔d7 18 ♗e2 etc.

17...♘f2+

17...♘e3+? seems attractive, but it enables White to gain some counterplay after 18 ♔xe3 ♔g4 19 ♜g1 ♔xe2+ 20 ♘e2 ♗e4 21 ♔d4.

18 ♜xf2 ♔xf2 19 f5

Else ...♔g4 comes with great effect!

19...♗g1+ 20 ♕d2 ♘e5 21 ♘d1 ♔e1+ 22 ♗xe1 ♗d4+

0-1 W.Heidenfeld-J.Wolpert, Johannesburg 1955.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♔c4 ♔e7 6 dxe5

This move tries to improve on the variations arising after 6 ♔xf7+ or 6 ♘g5. Although Black loses the option of ...exd4 followed by ...♘e5, he acquires other defensive resources.

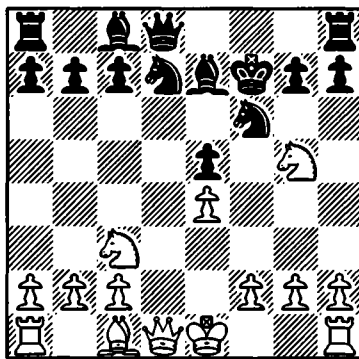
6...dxe5

6...♘e5 is of course valid too, and after 7 ♔e2 White's edge is symbolic.

7 ♔xf7+

7 ♘g5 is analogous to 6 ♘g5, with new possibilities for Black: 7...0-0 8 ♔xf7+ ♜xf7 9 ♘e6 ♗e8 10 ♘xc7 ♗d8 11 ♘xa8 b5 or 11...♗b4!?, with a decent game for Black in both cases.

7...♕xf7 8 ♘g5+



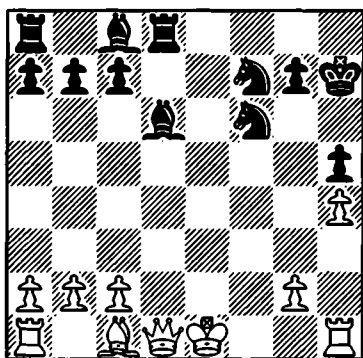
8...♕g6!

More ambitious than 8...♕g8 9 ♘e6 ♗e8 10 ♘xc7 ♗g6 11 ♘xa8 ♗xg2 12 ♜f1 ♘c5 13 ♗e2 ♔h3 14 ♔e3 ♗xf1+ 15 ♗xf1 ♔xf1 16 ♕xf1 ♕f7 (or 16...♘g4), when Black will regain the pawn in a roughly level ending.

In comparison with 6 ♔xf7+ ♕xf7 7 ♘g5+ ♕g6, Black has moves like ...♘c5, ...♔d6, and ...♔c5 at his disposal. This radically alters the deal in his favour.

9 f4

9 h4?! is condemned both by Kosten and Van Rekom/Janssen. Old analysis by Voronov and Keres, given in the books of the aforementioned authors, runs as follows: 9...h5 10 f4 exf4 11 ♖e2 ♖d6 12 e5 ♖xe5 13 ♖xf4+ ♖h6 14 ♖f7+ ♖xf7 15 ♖e6+ ♖h7 16 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 and Black has a winning advantage.



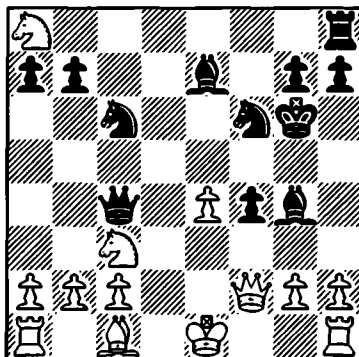
I see no reason to dispute this verdict. In this position the three minor pieces are much stronger than the white queen; they will unite to cause White's king all kinds of problems!

9...exf4 10 ♖e6 ♖g8 11 ♖xc7 ♖e5!

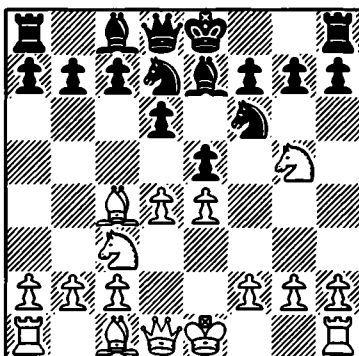
Returning material for the sake of the initiative, which would remain in White's hands after the passive 11...♖b8.

12 ♖xa8 ♖g4 13 ♖d4 ♖c6! 14 ♖f2 ♖c4

This is stronger than the immediate capture of the knight. Black is planning to play ...♖c5 or ...♖b4 and allows his opponent no respite. He has a clearly superior position, as you could easily verify by trying to defend the White side!



C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 ♖g5!?



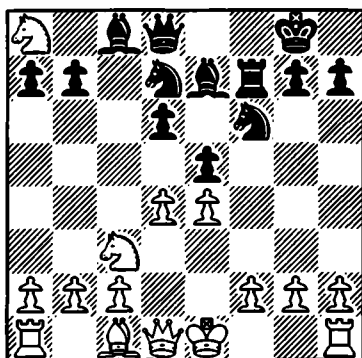
This is much more interesting than 6 ♖xf7+. White will win material by force, but at the cost of falling behind in development, so Black must play dynamically in order not to let his opponent consolidate. As a general rule, Black should try to avoid entering an endgame and concentrate his pieces for an assault against the white king.

6...0-0

After the erroneous 6...d5?, White has a pleasant choice between 7 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 8 ♖xd5 ♖xg5 9 ♖h5 etc., when he will emerge with the bishop pair,

and the probably even stronger 7 exd5, which wins at least a pawn: 7...0-0 8 0-0 ♖b6 9 dxe5 ♕e8?! 10 ♖h5 h6 11 ♜xf7 ♝xf7 12 ♖b3, followed by d6.

7 ♖xf7+ ♝xf7 8 ♕e6 ♜e8 9 ♜xc7 ♜d8 10 ♜xa8



After this forced sequence of moves, White is an exchange and two pawns up, but his knight on a8 is bound to be devoured. Black has three sensible tries:

C1: 10...b6!?

C2: 10...exd4?!

C3: 10...b5

C1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 ♜g5!? 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ ♝xf7 8 ♕e6 ♜e8 9 ♜xc7 ♜d8 10 ♜xa8 b6!?

This move follows the same objective as 10...b5, with the drawback that White will grab the pawn before his knight dies. White now should continue with either 11 ♖e3 or 11 dxe5, and we will look at:

C11: 11 ♖e3

C12: 11 dxe5 ♕xe5

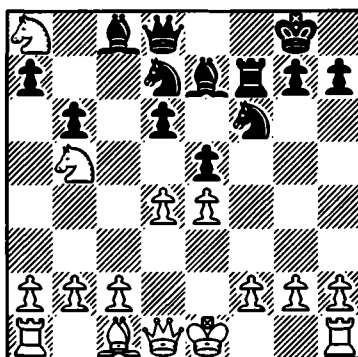
C13: 11 dxe5 dxe5

Firstly, let's briefly check out the alternatives:

a) 11 ♜xb6? ♜xb6 (J.Claesen-Vandevoort, Ghent 1989) merely helps Black to activate his queen.

b) 11 0-0?! is also inaccurate, since after 11...♖a6 Black gains an important tempo by attacking the rook.

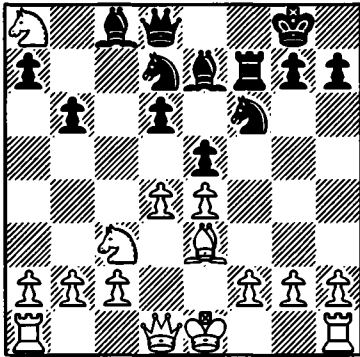
c) Finally, 11 ♜b5?! is a suspicious attempt to rescue the other knight. Black can now virtually force a draw, though it's unclear whether he stands better:



c1) 11...a6 12 ♜ac7 axb5 13 ♕e6 ♜e8 14 ♜c7 is the aforementioned draw, while 12...♜f8!? 13 dxe5 ♕xe4 represents a valid try to carry on the battle.

c2) 11...♕xe4!? 12 0-0 (12 f3?! ♖h4+ 13 g3 ♜xg3 14 hxg3 ♖xg3+, followed by 15...♖b7, is perilous for White) 12...a6 (not 12...♖b7? 13 ♜ac7!) 13 ♜ac7 is similar to 11...a6.

C11) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 ♜g5!? 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ ♝xf7 8 ♕e6 ♜e8 9 ♜xc7 ♜d8 10 ♜xa8 b6 11 ♖e3



11...♖a6

11...♖b7!? seems playable as well, although preventing 0-0 looks more to the point than attacking e4: 12 ♖xb6 (if 12 d5 ♜xa8 13 f3 then 13...♗h5 is a good way to initiate play) 12...♜xb6 (maybe 12...axb6!? 13 f3 and now either 13...d5 or 13...♖a6 with decent compensation for the material) 13 0-0! ♜xb2 (Black's best bet; worse was 13...♗xe4? 14 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 15 dxe5, as in R.Ryan-Kujovic, Parsippany 2004, when in view of the threat e5-e6, White was able to consolidate) 14 ♜b1 ♜xc3 15 ♜xb7 with an edge to White.

Note in this line that the tempting 13 dxe5 doesn't bring White much after 13...♜xb2 14 ♖d2 (or 14 e6 ♜xc3+ 15 ♖d2 ♜c4 16 exf7+ ♜xf7 when Black is active and much better developed; he will surely collect one or two pawns, restoring the material balance, especially as 17 f3? is met by 17...♗xe4 18 fxe4 ♖h4+) 14...♗xe4 15 ♜b1 ♜a3 16 ♜xb7 (16 ♗xe4 is no improvement: after 16...♖xe4 17 e6 ♜f5 18 exd7 ♖xg2 Black has plenty of play for the exchange) 16...♗xc3 17 ♜g4 ♜c5 18 ♖e3

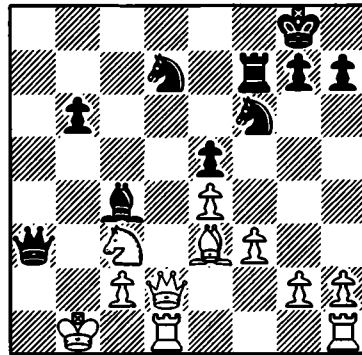
♗xe5 19 ♖xc5 ♗xg4 20 ♖xa7 ♗xa2 with approximate equality.

12 ♖xb6

12 d5!? ♜xa8 13 a4 was unclear in S.Sulskis-Abbasifar, Dubai 2002.

Or 12 dxe5 and now:

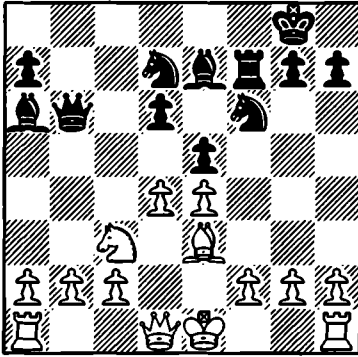
a) 12...dxe5 13 ♖xb6 axb6 14 f3 (14 ♜d2 ♗g4) 14...♖b4 15 ♜d2 ♜f8! (stronger than 15...♜c8 16 a3 ♖f8 17 0-0-0, A.Lavrov-Lunev, Lipetsk 1993, which was probably better for White, but still quite complex) 16 0-0-0 ♖c4 17 ♜b1 ♜a8! 18 a3 ♖xa3 19 bxa3 ♜xa3...



...and here White's wisest seems 20 ♜c1! ♜xc3 21 ♖d2 ♜d4 22 ♖e3 with a draw by repetition.

b) 12...♗xe5 also deserves attention: 13 ♖xb6 axb6 14 ♜d4 (14 ♖d4?! was seen in S.Grun-J.Kappler, German League 1993, when instead of 14...♜a8, Black could have gained the upper hand by playing 14...♗fg4!) 14...♗c4 15 h3 ♗xe3 16 fxe3?! (½-½ Velcheva-N.Kostic, Bucharest 1999) 16...♗d7! with a small advantage for Black. In place of 16 fxe3?!, critical was 16 ♜xe3 d5 17 0-0-0 ♖c5, followed by ...d4.

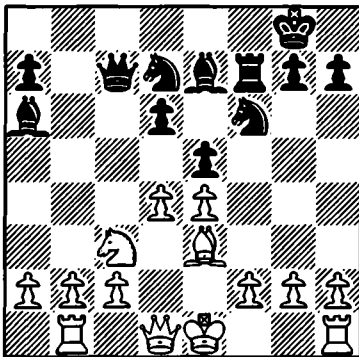
12...♜xb6



13 ♖b1

13 dxe5? is bad due to 13...♗xb2 14 e6 ♗xc3+ (but not 14...♙f8? 15 ♔d4, as in Von Kiedrowski-Deuker, German League 1994, when the threat of 16 ♘d5 ♗b7 17 ♚b1 wins material) 15 ♔d2 ♗e5 16 exf7+ ♘xf7 with a fine game for Black.

13...♗c7



(C.Ludwig-J.Johansen, correspondence 2001). In the final position White stands much better from a materialistic point of view, but being unable to castle is a serious concern.

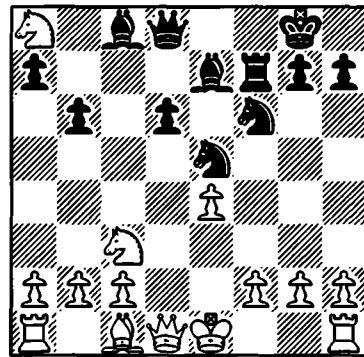
C12) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4

♘f3 e5 5 ♔c4 ♔e7 6 ♘g5!? 0-0 7 ♔xf7+ ♚xf7 8 ♘e6 ♗e8 9 ♘xc7 ♗d8 10 ♘xa8 b6 11 dxe5

At this point Black has an important choice to make, as both recaptures have their pros and cons. Indeed, taking the pawn back with the knight looks more dynamic, as a further jump to g4 is then in the air. On the other hand, Black could also increase his e7-bishop's scope and get rid of the backward pawn on d6. Let's look more closely at how play can develop:

11...♘e5

The alternative 11...dxe5 is seen in Line C13 below.



Now it is White's turn to choose between several possibilities, amongst which developing the c1-bishop is best:

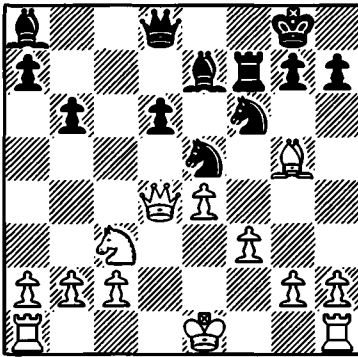
12 ♔f4

12 ♘xb6?! ♗xb6 (as in M.Ursic-A.Srebrnic, Bled 2004) and 12 ♘d5?! only help Black to activate his pieces. After the latter move, 12...♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♔h4, followed by ...♔b7, reaches a position in which Black can already count on some advantage.

12 f4?!, weakening the kingside,

doesn't look good either: 12...♖c6 13 ♖d5 ♖xd5 14 exd5 ♖a5 and Black is fine.

Regarding other options for White, that leaves 12 ♖e3 and 12 ♖g5 ♖b7 (or 12...♖a6!?, Kalaitzoglou-Hadzimanolis, Athens 2004) 13 f3 (13 f4? is still inadvisable on account of 13...♖xe4! 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 16 fxe5 ♖xg2 when White was in serious trouble in C.Evans-Dobrin, correspondence 2000) 13...♖xa8 14 ♖d4 with unclear play.



White stands a trifle better from a materialistic point of view, but Black can hope to generate some play, for instance after 14...♖c8, intending 15 0-0-0?! ♖xe4!.

12...♖d7

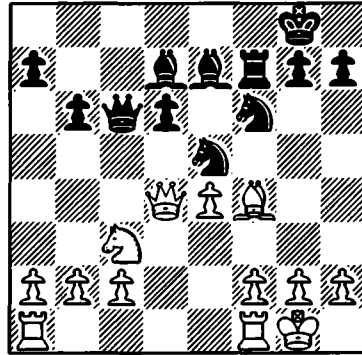
12...♖g6!? is a valid option too, for example:

a) 13 ♖g3 ♖b7 14 f3 ♖xa8 15 ♖d4 ♖h5, or 15...d5 16 0-0-0 ♖c5 17 ♖a4 which was assessed as unclear by Lalic and Okhotnik in *Carpathian Warrior*.

b) 13 ♖e3 ♖b7 (13...♖a6 also leads to a position that is difficult to assess after 14 ♖xb6 axb6 15 ♖d4 ♖h4 16 0-0-0 ♖xg2 17 ♖xb6 ♖c8, Karaklajic-

Andonov, Belgrade 1991) 14 ♖xb6 axb6 15 f3 d5 16 0-0 ♖d6 with attacking prospects for Black on the kingside.

13 ♖d4 ♖xa8 14 0-0 ♖c6



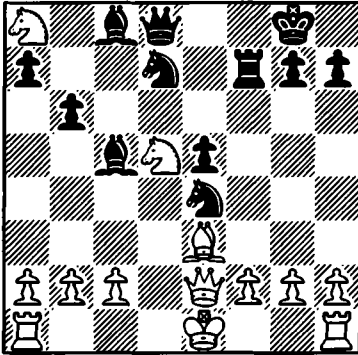
This analysis is taken from *Carpathian Warrior*. Lalic and Okhotnik continue a bit further, stating that Black is okay, and I fully agree with this conclusion.

C13) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 ♖g5!? 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 8 ♖e6 ♖e8 9 ♖xc7 ♖d8 10 ♖xa8 b6 11 dxex5 dxex5 12 ♖d5

12 f4 is justified for tactical reasons because Black can hardly avoid the ensuing swap of queens: 12...♖b7 13 fxe5 ♖xe5 14 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 15 ♖f4 ♖fd7 16 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 17 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 18 0-0-0 ♖f2 when Black's activity compensates for his material deficit, leaving a balanced endgame.

12...♖xd5

a) 12...♖c5!? (Prie-F.Saez, Laragne 2002) is interesting too: 13 ♖e3 ♖xe4 (in the event of 13...♖xe3 14 ♖xe3 ♖a6 15 f3 ♖xa8 16 ♖d6, White can count on a slight edge) 14 ♖e2...



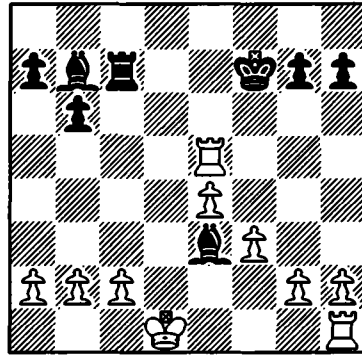
...and now instead of 14...♞h4?? 15 0-0, which left White well ahead on material for no compensation, Black should have preferred 14...♘df6 15 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 16 ♙xc5 bxc5 17 0-0 e4!, followed by the knight recapture while White grabs on c5. Despite White's nominal material edge, Black's active pieces should guarantee a roughly level position.

b) 12...♘e4 13 ♘xe7+ (if 13 ♙e3 Black can transpose to Prie-Saez by playing 13...♙c5 or opt for 13...♙d6) 13...♞xe7 14 0-0 (14 ♙e3 is also quite comfortable for Black: 14...♘dc5 15 b4 ♘e6 [15...♘a4!]) 16 0-0 ♙b7 17 ♘xb6 axb6 and Black was by no means worse in S.Faccia-A.Bianchi, Venice 2005) 14...♙a6! (a little, and rather obvious, finesse over 14...♙b7? 15 ♘c7, which quickly ended in a White victory in Genius 4-Borsavolgyi, Debrecen 1997) 15 ♙e1 ♙b7 16 f3 (16...♘xf2 can't be allowed) 16...♘ef6 17 ♘xb6 (17 ♘c7? ♞c5+) 17...axb6 and, as in Faccia-Bianchi, Black can be satisfied with the outcome of the opening.

13 ♞xd5 ♙a6

Preventing 0-0 again. The following ten move sequence is sensible, if not forced:

14 ♙e3 ♞b8 15 0-0-0 ♘f6 16 ♞c6 ♙b7 17 ♞c7 ♞xa8 18 f3 ♙c5 19 ♙d8+ ♘e8 20 ♙xa8 ♙xe3+ 21 ♘d1 ♙xc7 22 ♙xe8+ ♘f7 23 ♙xe5



For the moment White has a rook and three pawns for the enemy pair of bishops. The problem is that his rook is sort of trapped in the middle of the board, and if White has to give it up for one of the bishops, he will stand worse. Thus 23...g6 is at least equal for Black, who was in fact successful in a practical game with 23...♙d7+ (Computer Gandalf-Cifuentes Parada, AEGON tournament, The Hague 1995).

C2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 ♘g5!? 0-0 7 ♙xf7+ ♙xf7 8 ♘e6 ♞e8 9 ♘xc7 ♞d8 10 ♙xa8 exd4?!

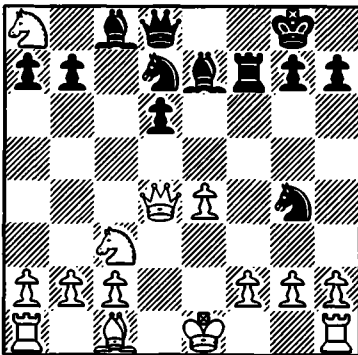
A recommendation by the authors of *The Lion*, already proposed by Tony Kosten in *Winning with the Philidor*. The idea consists of quickly attacking f2. According to both sources a logical

course of events now seems to be:

11 ♜xd4 ♘g4

Clearing the path to c5 for the e7-bishop by playing 11...d5? would be a nice freeing move. Unfortunately, White easily copes with the assault and gets a decisive advantage: 12 ♘xd5 ♖c5 (or 12...♘xd5 13 ♜xd5) 13 ♘xf6+ ♜xf6 14 ♜d5+ ♖h8 15 0-0 (M.Sadeghi-I.Badjarani, Tehran 2005).

11...♗e5? (Busic-M.Müller, German League 1997) is probably too slow, and White can even afford to spend some time rescuing the horse with 12 ♜xa7. After 12...♘fg4 13 0-0 ♖h4 14 f3, I see no effective way for Black to continue his attack.



After the knight sally, 11...♘g4, White has a broad choice of candidate moves. Apart from the obvious main line, 12 0-0, three other moves deserve thorough analysis, namely: a) 12 ♘d1, b) 12 ♜xa7 and c) 12 ♖e3. Even if these options can be dismissed as inferior to 12 0-0, being respectively: a) passive, b) very greedy, c) an invitation for a future ...♘xe3, their consequences remain unclear. 12 f3?, on the other hand, is

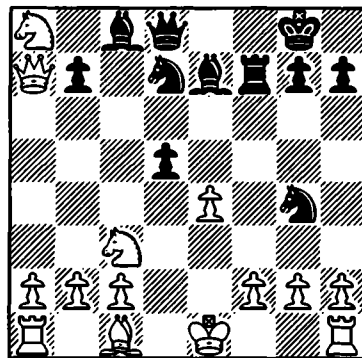
quite bad due to 12...♖h4+ 13 g3 ♘xh2! and Black seizes the advantage.

12 0-0!

Or:

a) 12 ♘d1 ♗c5 13 0-0 (13 ♗e3!? is playable too: 13...♘xf2 14 0-0 ♖f6 15 ♜b4 ♘fxe4 16 ♘d5 ♖e6 17 ♘ac7 ♜xc7 18 ♘xc7 ♜xc7 and Black's activity compensates for his small material deficit) 13...♖f6 14 ♜c4 ♖e6 15 ♜e2 ♖e5 (15...♜xa8 is also fine) 16 h3 (Therkildsen-Depyl, French League 2002) and now instead of 16...♜h4?!, something like 16...♘h2 17 ♜e1 ♖xh3 18 f4 ♖g4 19 ♜f2 ♗e6 would have resulted in a complete mess.

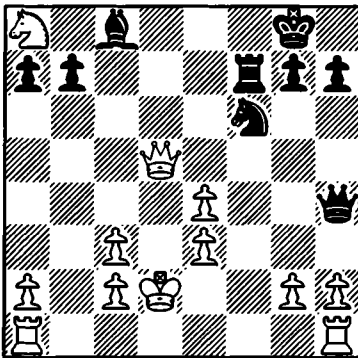
b) 12 ♜xa7 was seen in P.Fabri-Van Reem, correspondence 2000. As 12...♖h4?! 13 g3 ♜xf2 14 ♜f1 ♖xh2 15 ♖f4 ♖f6 16 0-0-0 left White very much on top, Black should probably have tried 12...d5!, when the following lines illustrate his attacking potential:



13 ♘xd5 ♖c5 14 ♜a4 ♖xf2+ 15 ♖e2 ♗c5 16 ♖g5 ♘f6 17 ♖xf6 ♖g4+ 18 ♖f1 ♖h4 19 ♜c4 ♘xe4 20 ♜xe4 ♜xf6+ 21 ♘f4 ♜d2 with mate to follow shortly; or 13 f3 ♖c5 14 ♜a4 ♖f2+ 15 ♖e2 ♗c5

16 ♖b4 dxe4.

c) 12 ♙e3 ♙f6 (Whitaker-Chajes, Philadelphia 1923, saw Black rushing to swap 12...♗xe3? 13 ♜xe3 and then 13...♙g5 14 ♜xa7 ♗e5, but despite his flash victory, I doubt Black would have enough compensation after the strong 15 ♗d5! when White stops ...♙f4, and simply threatens 0-0 followed by f4) 13 ♜xd6 (13 ♜d3?! ♗de5 14 ♜d5 ♗xe3 15 fxe3 was L.Owens-Schalkwijk, correspondence 2001, and now after 15...♙d7!, intending ...♙c6 and ...♜xa8, Black has a pleasant position) 13...♗xe3 14 fxe3 ♙e5 (14...♙xc3+? 15 bxc3 ♜h4+ 16 ♜g3 ♜xe4 17 0-0-0 is better for White, as the second player lacks adequate compensation) 15 ♜d5 ♜h4+ 16 ♗d2 ♙xc3+! (16...♜f2+?! looks inaccurate, since after 17 ♗e2 ♗f6 18 ♜xe5 ♜d7+ 19 ♗c1 ♜xe3+ 20 ♗b1 ♜xe2 21 b3 the white monarch will feel safe 'in fianchetto') 17 bxc3 ♗f6.



I believe Black has enough for the exchange and two pawns here. Indeed, several factors speak in his favour, such as the vulnerable enemy king, the cornered knight and White's temporary

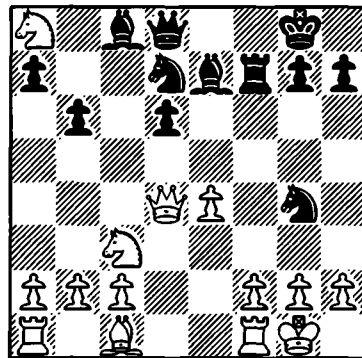
lack of piece coordination. That said, further investigation is needed in order to assess this position definitively.

12...b6

12...♙f6 also fails to equalize. White now has 13 ♜d1, 13 ♜c4, and 13 ♜xa7!?, the first two being sounder and good enough for a stable edge:

a) 13 ♜d1 ♙xc3 14 ♜xg4 ♙f6 15 ♜d1 ♗f8 16 ♙e3 (16 f4) 16...♙e6 17 ♙xa7 ♜xa8 18 ♙d4 etc., Salmon-Pupols, Seattle 1986.

b) 13 ♜c4 ♗c5 (after 13...♗de5?! 14 ♜b3! White is ready to repel the knight by means of f3, while he still has the option of ♜xb7 in the event of ...♙d7) 14 ♗d5 ♙e6 15 f3 ♗e5 16 ♗xf6+ ♜xf6 17 ♜d4 and Black will have to jettison another pawn, namely d6, in order to capture the knight and avoid the pin ♙g5. With a rook and three pawns for a pair of minor pieces, White's material advantage will then be decisive.



13 ♗b5!

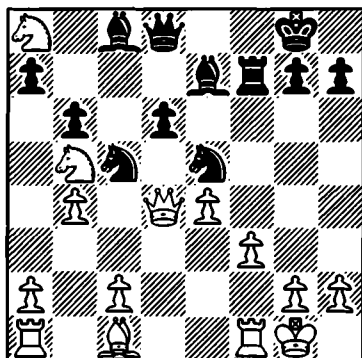
13 h3?! is less striking, and leads somewhat logically to an endgame: 13...♗ge5 14 ♗d5 ♙a6 15 ♗xe7+ ♜xe7 16 ♜d1 ♜xa8 17 ♜xd6 ♜xe4 18 ♜d5+

♙xd5 19 ♜xd5. Even though Black can hold this final position, it does seem obvious to me that White is on top.

13...♘c5

13...♗a6?? is met by 14 ♘ac7.

14 f3 ♘e5 15 b4



15...♘c6

The alternative 15...♗f6 brings tactical complications which are, however, in White's favour: 16 ♙d1 ♗a6 17 ♘ac7 ♜xc7 18 ♘xc7 etc., and White will end up with at least one or two extra pawns.

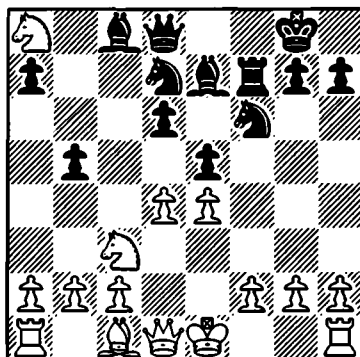
16 ♙d2 ♘e6 17 ♜d1

...and d6 drops, leaving White with a rook and three pawns for knight and bishop – again a technically winning position.

C3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♗e7 6 ♘g5! 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 8 ♘e6 ♗e8 9 ♘xc7 ♙d8 10 ♘xa8 b5

A much more dynamic approach than 10...b6. Black acquires the additional option of ...b4 and intends to regain the a8-knight 'for free' (White can't grab the b- pawn). In some lines,

though, when White plays 0-0, Black can't win a tempo with ...♗a6.



11 dxe5

As was the case after 10...b6, White has several options at this juncture:

a) 11 a3 ♗b7 12 d5 ♖xa8 13 ♙e2 a6 14 0-0 and the game was in equilibrium, S.Jackson-Rellstab, London 1979. 12...♙xa8 is a bit better, as the bishop eventually has to come back to b7 anyway, while the queen may find a more useful post than d8 (perhaps c8 or f8).

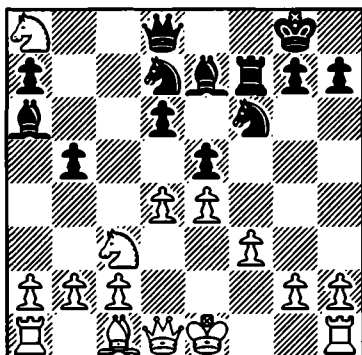
b) 11 ♘xb5? is simply bad. After 11...♙a5+ 12 ♘c3 ♘xe4 13 0-0 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♗b7 (Gunina-M.Fominykh, Smolensk 2001), because of White's spoiled pawn structure, Black's minor pieces are stronger than the rook and two pawns. Or 13 ♗d2 ♘xf2 14 ♘e4 ♙d5 15 ♘xf2 ♙xg2 (M.Snuerink-G.Van Vliet, Hengelo 2002) and White's position collapses, as the bishops can join the attack from h4 and a6 respectively.

c) 11 0-0 ♗b7 (not 11...b4?!, when the knight comes to rescue its colleague after 12 ♘b5) 12 ♘xb5 ♖xa8 13 f3 (if 13 d5 ♘xe4) and now both 13...d5 and the al-

ternative 13...♖b6 give Black decent play, e.g. 13...♖b6 14 c4 a6 15 ♖c3 exd4 16 ♖d5 ♖xd5 17 cxd5 ♖f6.

d) On 11 ♖e2 or 11 ♖d3, the simplest reply is 11...a6. (11...b4?! 12 ♖b5 is again erroneous.)

e) The solid 11 f3 is best answered by 11...♙a6! (but not 11...♙b7? 12 ♖xb5 ♙xa8 13 d5!, as in A.Ericson-W.Schoenmann, correspondence 1964, when White will have time to consolidate with ♖e2, ♖c3, and if needed ♙b1 before he castles).



For example, 12 dxe5 ♖xe5 13 ♖d5 (13 f4 is no improvement after 13...♖xa8! 14 fxe5 ♖xe4 when, due to the numerous threats of ...♙h4+, ...♖f2 and ...♖xc3, White is in major trouble) 13...♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♙h4+ 15 ♖d1 ♙b7 16 ♖xb5 ♙c6 17 ♖b3 d5! and the white monarch was struggling in Canneva-Leignel, French League 2003.

11...♖xe5

If Black recaptures with 11...dxe5, the following lines are possible:

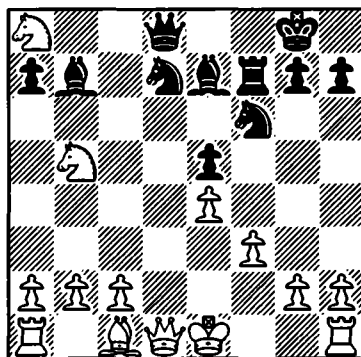
a) 12 ♙g5 ♙b7 13 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 14 ♖xb5 ♖a5+ 15 ♖c3 ♖c5 (not 15...♙xe4? 16 ♖c7! ♙xg2 17 ♙g1 and White keeps

his extra material, Negulescu-Shumikina, Bucharest 1993) 16 f3 ♙xa8 is unclear.

b) 12 ♖xb5? ♖a5+ 13 ♖c3 ♖xe4! 14 ♖d5 ♙c5 15 ♖xe4 ♙xf2+ 16 ♖d1 ♖f6 17 ♖c4 ♙g4+ 18 ♖e2 ♖d8+ 19 ♙d2 ♖xa8 was winning for Black in Brodda-Secula, correspondence 1996, as White is powerless to prevent ...♖xg2, collecting back the invested exchange with a raging attack.

c) 12 a4 ♙b7 13 axb5 ♖xe4 14 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 15 0-0 ♙c5, or 12...b4 13 ♖b5 ♖xe4 14 ♙e3 a6 with a very acceptable position for Black in either case.

d) 12 f3?! ♙b7, intending to meet 13 ♖xb5...



...with 13...♖xe4! 14 fxe4 ♙b4+! and 15...♖h4, winning.

e) 12 f4?! b4! 13 ♖d5 ♖xe4 14 ♖ac7 ♙c5 is good for Black.

f) 12 ♖d5 ♙d6 with mutual chances in Seelinger-Schmaltz, German League 1992.

12 0-0

Exploiting the drawback of ...b7-b5. Apart from 12 f4?! ♙g4, and of course 12 ♖xb5, which clearly passes

the initiative to Black, the alternatives are similar to those after 10...b6 and offer chances for both sides:

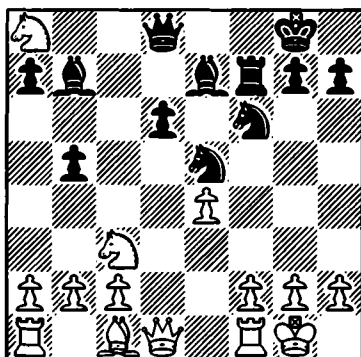
a) 12 ♖f4 ♖d7!.

b) 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♖d7.

c) 12 ♖g5 ♖b7, Bessat-Leignel, Bethune 2002

d) 12 ♘xb5 ♗a5+ 13 ♘c3 ♘xe4 14 ♗d5 ♘c5, D.Fricke-Velker, correspondence 1990.

12...♖b7



13 ♘xb5

13 f4?! is too committal: 13...♘ed7 14 ♘xb5 (14 e5?! dxe5 15 fxe5 ♖c5+ 16 ♖h1 ♗xa8, followed by ...♘xe5 and wins) 14...♖xa8 15 ♖e3 ♗b8! 16 c4 a6 17 ♘c3 ♘xe4 gave Black a slight edge in Pilnik-Najdorf, Buenos Aires 1941.

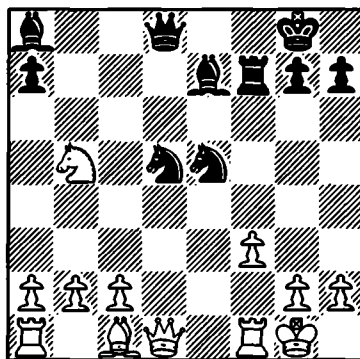
13...♖xa8 14 f3 d5

Or 14...♗b6+ 15 ♘d4 and only then 15...d5.

15 exd5

So far we have been following A.Huber-Schmidt Schaeffer, German League 1997.

15...♘xd5

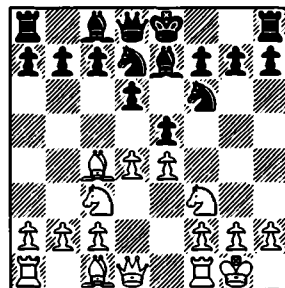


White has a rook and three pawns for only two minor pieces. Here, however, he is behind in development and Black's pieces are very active, so I would assess this position as unclear.

Conclusion

The only real test for Black in this chapter is 6 ♘g5 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ (Line C). Black has a good score in the variation starting with 10...b6, because he often succeeds in finding worthwhile compensation for the small material deficit. Looking at the alternatives, 10...b5 is unclear, whereas 10...exd4?! seems inadequate to me.

Chapter Twelve



Main Line:

7 ♔e2 and 7 a4

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5
5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0

With 6 0-0 we finally reach the main line of the Philidor Hanham. Typically, after a dozen or so moves the arising positions are still quite rich as, usually, all of the pieces have remained on the board. Moreover, the pawn structure isn't yet fixed, so several plans are possible because of this.

Black essentially chooses between a plan that aims to expand on the queenside by means of ...b5, and one that secures the c5-square for his knight. This second plan is implemented by the move ...a5, preceded or not by the exchange ...exd4.

As for White, he can determine the pawn structure by playing either d5 or dxe5, the latter usually being efficient only if the knight manoeuvre ♘f3-h4-f5 can follow.

With the central swap dxe5 being a constant theme (White can carry it out at any moment), I will mention it only

when it's of particular interest. The natural recapture is ...dxe5, 'levelling' the pawn structure. The other capture, ...♘xe5, is sometimes compulsory, notably to prevent the manoeuvre ♘f3-h4-f5. Its drawback, however, is to concede a spatial advantage to White.

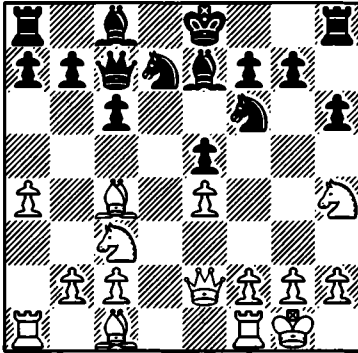
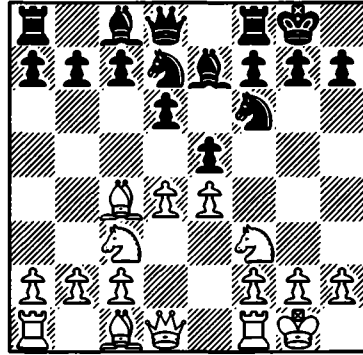
The great flexibility of the Philidor Defence means that there are many inversions of moves orders. It is often possible, for instance, to start with the routine retreat ♙a2, and then follow up with a developing move, or vice-versa. The same goes with the moves a4-a5 from White (when Black has neither played ...a5 himself, nor ...b6) and h2-h3. As these inversions of moves aren't generally that relevant, and as it would be tedious to examine them in detail, I will try in the following three chapters to expose the hidden ideas, while avoid repetitions.

6...0-0

6...h6?!/? is an appropriate idea if Black doesn't rush to castle. Indeed, he

can sometimes consider a plan like ...c6, ...♞c7, ...g5, followed ...♟f8-g6. But as the centre isn't totally blocked, this kind of action seems suspicious to me. White shouldn't try to refute Black's concept, but instead just play 'normal' moves (such as ♖e1, a4, b3, ♖b2). In a practical game I believe that Black can foster reasonable hopes of success. What follows here, though, is an example of Black mistreating the opening: 6...h6 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♞e2 c6 9 a4 ♞c7 10 ♟h4

17 ♞ae1! ♖e6 18 ♟d5+ cxd5 19 exd5 ♟e4 20 ♞h4+ 1-0 D.Frolov-Borsavolgyi, Budapest 1996.



10...g6?! (10...♟b6!?, followed by 11...a5, was much safer) 11 f4 exf4? (on 11...♟h7!? White should refrain from playing the tempting 12 ♖xf7+?, which seems to lead only to a draw after 12...♟xf7 13 fxe5+ ♟g7 14 ♟xg6 ♟xg6 15 ♞g4+ ♟g5 16 ♞f5+ ♟g7 17 ♖xg5 ♞f8 18 ♖xh6+ ♟xh6 19 ♞h3+ ♟g7 20 ♞g4+ with perpetual check; instead 12 ♟f3 exf4 13 ♖xf4!, intending 13...♞xf4 14 ♟d4, remains favourable for White) 12 ♖xf4 ♟e5 (if 12...♞b6+? 13 ♟h1 ♞xb2 14 e5 ♞xc3 15 exf6 ♞xf6 16 ♖g3 and Black is dead meat) 13 ♟f3 ♖d6 14 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 15 ♟xe5 ♞xe5 16 ♞f2 ♟e7

After 6...0-0 White's main move is 7 ♖e1, which is dealt with in Chapters 13 and 14. Here we will look at White's two chief alternatives:

A: 7 a4

B: 7 ♞e2

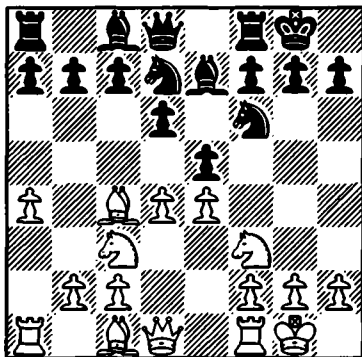
Other options are unappealing:

a) 7 ♖g5?! h6 8 ♖h4 c6 9 a4 ♟h5 was equal in Philippe-Shirazi, Paris 1999. Black eases his game by swapping the bishops, gaining in the process the squares f4 for his knight and f6 for his queen.

b) 7 h3?! (Nisipeanu-Bauer, Bastia 2001) is a rare example of such an early inaccuracy from the Romanian GM, probably caused by the exhausting schedule of the tournament: 7...c6 8 a4 ♟xe4! 9 ♖xf7+ (if 9 ♟xe4 d5 10 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 11 dxe5 dxe4 or 11...dxc4 12 ♟d6 with a level position) 9...♞xf7 10 ♟xe4 exd4 11 ♟fg5 (otherwise White could end up worse) 11...♖xg5 12 ♖xg5 ♞f8

13 ♖xd4 d5 with equality. 7 ♔e3?! would allow the same 'trick'.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♟bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 a4



This move usually leads to a transposition to either 7 ♖e2 or 7 ♜e1. White avoids the line 7 ♖e2 exd4, but does allow the same idea with the inclusion of a4 and ...c6. As Black's best replies here are 7...a5 or 7...c6, and because White can hardly do without ♖e2 or ♜e1, 7 a4 has no real independent significance.

7...c6

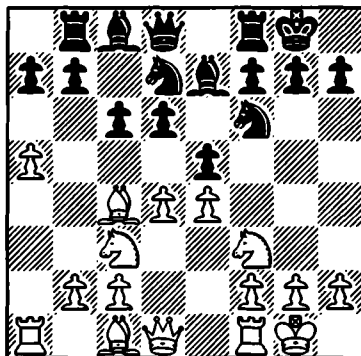
This offers a transposition to the main lines.

In the event of 7...a6, 8 a5 deserves consideration. After 8...exd4, 9 ♖xd4! favours White, as in the encounters Topalov-Rivas Pastor, Dos Hermanas 1994 and Emms-R.Hartoch, Isle of Man 1996. 9 ♟xd4?!, on the other hand, would be unsuitable on account of 9...♟e5 10 ♙a2 c5 followed by 11...♟c6, 11...♙e6 or ...♙xf5, depending where the knight retreats. The weak a5-pawn ensures Black of a comfortable game.

The only drawback of 7...a5 is that it implies Black won't be following the plan including ...b6.

8 ♙a2

Black can now answer 8 a5?! with 8...♜b8, with the idea of ...b5.



For example, 9 ♖e2 b5 10 axb6 axb6 11 d5 ♙b7 12 ♜d1 (12 dxc6 ♙xc6 threatens ...b5 when, if White captures, Black can regain the pawn by taking on e4) 12...b5 and ...b4 equalizes.

8...♟xe4 is analogous to 7 h3 c6 8 a4 ♟xe4. The difference, white pawns on a5 and h2 in one case, on a4 and h3 in the other, is not important.

8...a5

8...b6!? also deserves consideration, as the thematic 9 dxe5?! dxe5 10 ♟h4 fails to bring White anything concrete. Black can then choose between 10...♟c5 11 ♖f3 ♟e6 12 ♟f5 ♟d4, and even 10...♟xe4 11 ♟xe4 ♙xh4. In the latter case, 12 ♖h5 ♙e7 13 ♜d1 offers decent compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more.

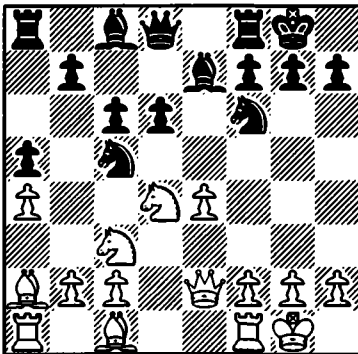
9 ♖e2

9 ♜e1 transposes to Line D2 of Chapter 13.

9...exd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖c5!

We are following the recent game **Yu Shaoteng-Bauer, France-China match, Paris 2006**.

Several weeks earlier I chose the inaccurate 10...♗e8?! and suffered a 'clean' loss after 11 ♖e3 ♖f8 12 f3 ♖e5 (12...d5 fails to 13 exd5 ♖c5 14 ♗ad1 or 14 ♗f2 and White retains the edge) 13 ♖h1 (Ulibin-Bauer, Bienne 2006). White enjoys a space advantage and can slowly reinforce his position without worrying about any kind of counterplay from Black.



11 ♗d1!

The immediate 11 h3?! ♗e8 12 ♗f3 ♖e6 13 ♖xe6 fxe6 left Black with a comfortable equality in Kazhgaleyev-Elbilia, Paris 2006.

11...♗b6 12 h3

In the event of 12 e5?! dxe5 13 ♗xe5 ♗e8 14 ♖f5 ♖xf5 15 ♗xf5 ♗ad8, the activity of Black's pieces outweighs White's pair of bishops.

12...♖e6?

12...♗e8! was to be preferred, with a balanced position after 13 ♗f3 ♖d8 or 13...♖e6. Indeed, White now missed an

opportunity to claim a noticeable advantage.

13 ♖xe6?!

13 ♖e3! was the move I feared during the game, and 13...♖xa2 14 ♗xa2 ♗c7 15 ♖f5 ♗fe8 16 ♖g5 promises a pleasant plus for White. But 13...♖xa2 is the lesser evil since 13...♗xb2?! 14 ♖xe6 is pretty annoying: 14...♖xe6? 15 ♖xe6 ♗xc3 16 ♖d4 or 15...fxe6 16 ♗d3 and the queen is trapped, while after 14...fxe6 15 ♖d4 ♗b6 16 ♖xe6+ ♖h8 17 ♗ab1 ♗a7 Black's position might still be holdable, but it looks quite grim.

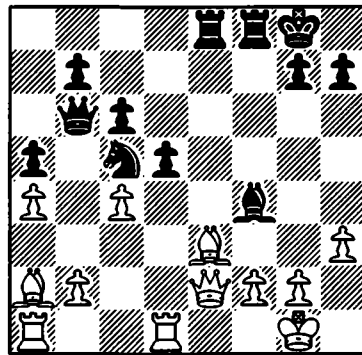
13...fxe6 14 e5

14 ♖e3 d5 15 ♖d4 also led to an equal game.

14...♖d5 15 exd6 ♖xd6 16 ♖xd5

If 16 ♖e3!? ♖xc3 17 bxc3 ♗c7 or 16...♖xe3!?

16...exd5 17 c4 ♗ae8 18 ♖e3 ♖f4



19 ♖xc5

Both my opponent and I thought 19 cxd5!? to be erroneous, but in fact it's another path to a draw: 19...♖xe3 20 d6+ (not 20 dxc6+? ♖h8 21 fxe3 ♖b3! intending 22 ♖xb3 ♗xe3 with a deadly discovered check to follow), and now

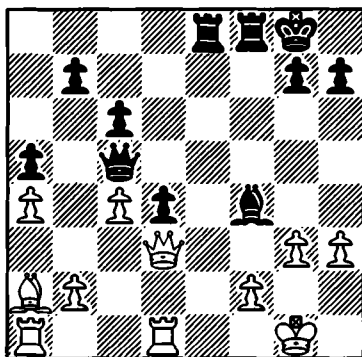
20...♔h8? is bad in view of 21 fxe3 ♘b3 22 d7 ♜xe3 23 d8♚ ♜xd8 24 ♜xd8+ ♚xd8 25 ♚xe3! ♘xa1 26 ♚c5, when the cornered knight is bound to be devoured. Correct is 20...♘b3! 21 ♚c4+ (or 21 ♙xb3+ ♔h8 22 ♔h1 ♙d4 23 ♚d3 c5) 21...♔h8 22 ♚xb3 ♜xf2 23 ♔h1 ♚xb3 24 ♙xb3 ♜d8 with a probable draw.

19...♚xc5 20 ♚d3 d4

20...♙e3 gets Black nowhere after 21 cxd5 ♜xf2 22 ♔h1.

21 g3?

The fatal mistake. 21 ♜e1? ♚b4! would not have solved White's problems either, but the far from obvious 21 ♜f1! would have pushed any danger away. White would then continue with ♜ae1 and ♙b1.



21...♙e3!! 22 ♜f1 ♜xf2

22...♚g5 worked as well, contrary to what I figured during our mutual time-trouble: 23 ♔g2 (or 23 c5+ ♔h8 24 fxe3 ♚xg3+ 25 ♔h1 ♚hx3+ 26 ♔g1 ♚g3+ 27 ♔h1 ♜f3!) 23...♙xf2 24 c5+ ♔h8 25 ♙b1 g6 26 ♜xf2 ♚d5+! was the move I missed; instead 26...♜xf2+?? 27 ♔xf2 ♜e3? 28 ♚xd4+ would allow White to turn the tables.

23 ♜xf2 ♙xf2+ 24 ♔xf2 ♜e3 25 ♚f1 ♚e5

White's monarch is too weak and succumbs to the assault.

26 c5+ ♔h8 27 ♔g2 ♜xg3+ 28 ♔h1 ♚e4+ 29 ♔h2 ♜f3 30 ♚e1 ♜e3 31 ♚f1 ♜e2+ 32 ♔g3 ♚e5+ 0-1

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♚e2

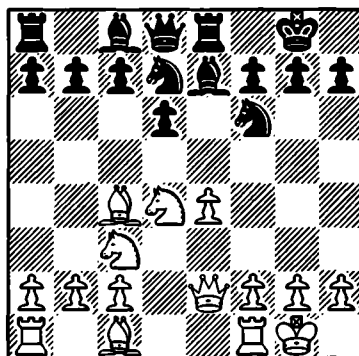
Now we will consider:

B1: 7...exd4

B2: 7...c6

B1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♚e2 exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♘e5

8...♜e8?? would lose on the spot:



9 ♙xf7+! ♔xf7 10 ♘e6!! ♔xe6 11 ♚c4+ d5 12 exd5+ ♔f7 (12...♔f5 13 ♚d3+ ♔e5 14 ♜e1+ ♔d6 15 ♙f4+ is even worse, or if 12...♘d5 13 ♘xd5 with a deadly discovery check to follow) 13 d6+ ♔f8 14 dxc7. The queen is captured meaning that White will have an overwhelming material advantage.

9 ♙b3 c5

The critical follow-up, which justifies Black's decision to release the central tension.

10 ♖f5

10 ♖f3?! ♗g4 isn't that bad for White, but his opponent has no reason to complain either.

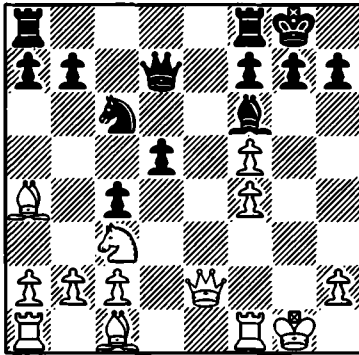
10...♗xf5 11 exf5 ♖d7

A controversial position: if it turns out to be good for Black, then 7 ♖e2 deserves a question mark and 7...exd4 is its refutation.

12 f4!

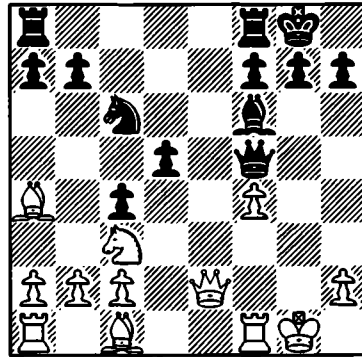
12 ♖d5 ♖ae8 and 12 ♗f4 ♖c6 are totally satisfactory for Black, notably because of the weak f5-pawn.

12...♖c6 13 g4 d5 14 g5 c4 15 gxf6 ♗xf6 16 ♗a4



This is the critical position: Black has sacrificed a piece for two pawns and the initiative. Meanwhile White's kingside is weakened, his bishop is out of play on a4, and finishing development will not be easy for him. Kosten considered this position to be favourable for Black, but practice doesn't reflect this judgement.

16...♖xf5



17 ♖g2!

Stronger than both 17 ♗xc6 and 17 ♖e1, the only moves examined by the British Grandmaster.

17 ♖f3?! is a worse version of White's main queen move: 17...♖e7! (17...♖ad8? 18 ♖e2 b5 19 ♗xb5 ♖d4 20 ♖xd4 ♗xd4+ 21 ♖h1 ♖xc2 22 f5 and Black's compensation soon vanished in Nisipeanu-Miltner, German League 1996; 17...a6!?) 18 ♖d1 b5 19 ♗xb5 ♖fb8 and now the greedy 20 ♗a4 ♖b4 21 ♖a3 leaves the white king too lonely after 21...♖g6+ 22 ♖f2 ♗h4+ 23 ♖e2 ♖f5! with a very dangerous initiative: if 24 ♖xb4? ♖d4+ 25 ♖d2 ♖g2+ wins.

17...♖e7 18 ♖d1

With the idea of c3 and ♗c2, but Black strikes first.

18...b5 19 ♗xb5 ♖fb8

Regaining the piece.

20 a4

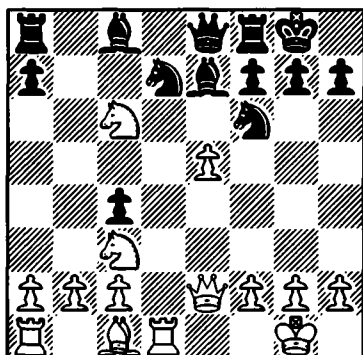
20 ♗a4? is worse: 20...♖b4 21 ♖e3 ♖e6 22 f5 ♖d6.

20...a6 21 ♖e3 ♗d4 22 ♖h1 ♗xe3 23 ♗xe3 axb5 24 axb5

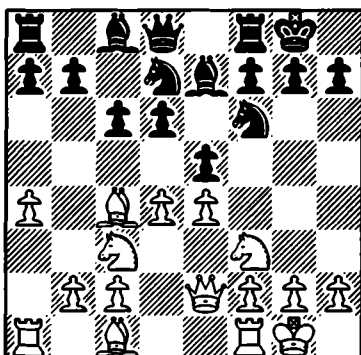
...was unclear in Bezemer-Rebers, Dutch League 2001.

B2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♚e2 c6 8 a4

8 ♜d1 seems more precise because the ...b5 push is prevented anyway. Indeed, after 8...b5 9 dxe5 dxe5 (or 9...bxc4 10 exd6 with a clear advantage) 10 ♞xe5 bxc4 11 ♞xc6 ♚e8 12 e5...



...White regains the piece with a sound extra pawn. In the majority of games with 8 ♜d1, Black plays 8...♚c7 but he can try the more ambitious 8...exd4 9 ♞xd4 (9 ♜xd4? b5, followed by ...c5-c4) 9...♞e8, when it is doubtful whether the rook belongs on d1.



After 8 a4 we will look at the following options for Black:

B21: Black avoids ...exd4

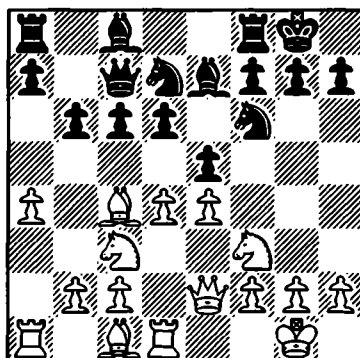
B22: 8...exd4 9 ♞xd4 without 9...♞e8

B23: 8...exd4 9 ♞xd4 ♞e8

B21) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♚e2 c6 8 a4 b6

Just like ...a7-a5, this is a routine move in the Philidor. 8...h6 and 8...♚c7 represent other possibilities, but they offer White the opportunity to play a4-a5. Therefore 8...a5, followed by either ...h6 or ...♚c7, restricts White's choice and is more accurate. Here's an illustration: 9 ♜d1 ♚e8!? (9...♚c7 is more common) 10 h3 (directed against ...♞b6 and ...♙g4) 10...♙d8 11 ♙e3 (11 b3!?) 11...♚e7 12 ♞a3 (peculiar, but Black had no problems anyway) 12...exd4 13 ♙xd4 ♞e5 14 ♞xe5 dxe5 15 ♙e3 ♙c7 with an equal position, Hamdouchi-Manouck, French League 1993.

9 ♜d1 ♚c7

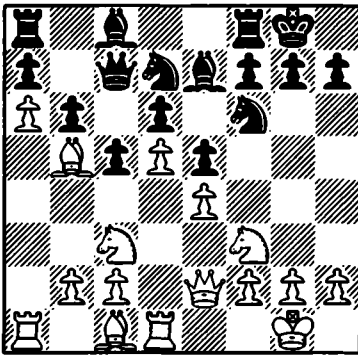


10 d5

10 h3 and 10 ♙g5 would both call for the answer 10...a6, which enables Black to react to d4-d5 by playing ...c5. **10...cxd5**

10...c5?! 11 ♖h4 a6 12 ♖f5 ♖e8 13 ♖d3!? ♖f8 14 ♖g3 ♖g6 15 ♖g5 h6 16 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 17 ♖d2 ♖f4 18 ♖f1 ♖b7 19 ♖b1 ♖d7 20 b4 cxb4 21 ♖xb4 ♖ec8 was unclear in J.Polgar-Izeta Txabarri, Dos Hermanas 1993. All the pawns on the queenside are weak at present! The most vulnerable seems to be b6, but the c-file provides Black with counterplay.

11 a5! is a more positional treatment which ensures White better prospects (but it is well known that Judit has an inclination for the direct attack!), for example 11...bxa5 12 ♖b5 ♖b6 13 ♖d2 etc., or 11...♖b7 12 a6! ♖c8 13 ♖b5...



...when the threat of ♖c6 and ♖b5 forces the retreat ...♖b8 and White has a noticeable spatial plus.

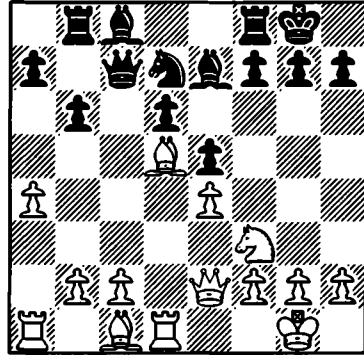
10...♖b7!? is equally possible, but after 11 dxc6 ♖xc6 12 ♖b5 ♖b7 13 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♖xe4 15 ♖g5 the edge remains with White.

11 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖b8?!

12...♖b7! 13 a5 ♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 is slightly better for White according to Donev; this seems a superficial assessment to me, since after 14...♖c6! 15 ♖d1 ♖fc8 16 c3 ♖c5 17 ♖d2 ♖g5 Black has

enough counterplay. 14...♖f6?!, on the other hand, is too hasty, and after 15 ♖d1 ♖c6 16 ♖g5! White's position is obviously superior.

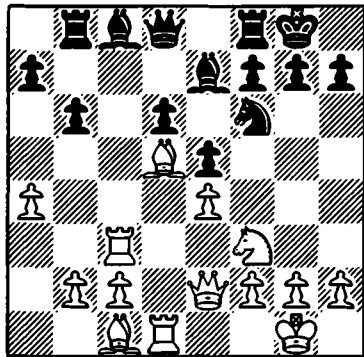
12...♖b8?! was played in **Izeta-Seret, Pampelune 1993**, which continued:



13 ♖a3 ♖f6

White keeps an edge after 13...♖c5 14 ♖e3, or 14 ♖c3 a5 15 b3, with the idea 15...♖a6? 16 ♖xc5! ♖xe2 17 ♖xc7 ♖xd1 18 ♖xe7 and White is winning.

14 ♖c3 ♖d8



15 ♖b3

15 ♖c6 ♖d7 16 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 17 b3 ♖c8 18 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 19 ♖a3 ♖c5 20 ♖d2 20 ♖xc5!?, aiming for a 'good knight

versus bad bishop' position, is also interesting.

15...♖b7

After 15...♖g4 16 h3 ♕xf3 17 ♖xf3 White keeps a small plus thanks to the pair of bishops. Or if 15...♖e8 16 ♖g5 and once again White will firmly control the crucial d5-square.

16 ♖xe5 ♖xe4

16...♖e8 17 ♖f3 ♖xe4 18 ♖e3 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3 can be compared to 15...♖g4.

17 ♖c6 ♖xc6

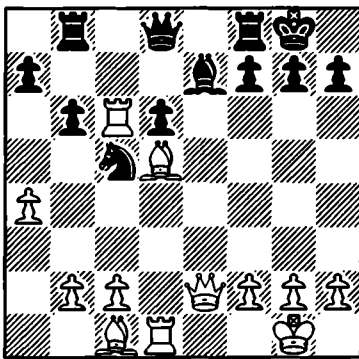
After 17...♖xc3? 18 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 19 bxc3 ♖e8 20 ♖e1 d5 21 ♖a3 White will keep the two pieces for the rook. The pin along the e-file is temporary, and anyway, Black can't attack the knight enough times.

18 ♖xc6 ♖c5

18...♖f6?! 19 ♖g5 ♖e8 20 ♖c4 d5 is much better for White.

19 ♖d5

19 ♖f4 ♖b7 and only then 20 ♖d5 was possible too, but not 20 ♖xd6? ♖d7 21 ♖e5 ♖b7.



19...♖d7

19...♖xa4 20 ♖a6 ♖c5 21 ♖xa7 ♖b7 22 ♖a3 is again slightly better for

White, who has the pair of bishops and targets on b6 and d6. One may note that the c6-rook, though temporarily well placed: it puts pressure on the b- and d-pawns, while it can't be effectively attacked.

20 b3 ♖h8 21 ♖b2 f5

If 21...♖be8!? 22 ♖f3 or 22 ♖h5 maintains White's supremacy.

22 ♖f3 ♖bd8?! 23 a5!

Creating a second weakness in Black's camp and thus increasing the advantage.

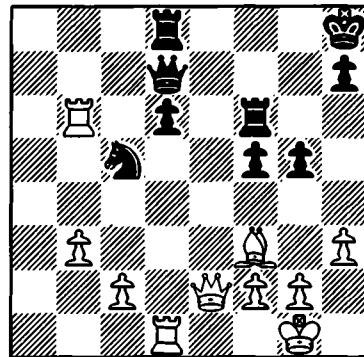
23...♖f6?!

23...bxa5? loses to 24 ♖xc5 dxc5 25 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 26 ♖c6!. Instead, the move 23...♖b8! would have kept material, if not positional, parity.

24 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 25 axb6 axb6 26 ♖xb6 g5?!

Here 26...♖e6 27 ♖d2 ♖e4 28 ♖d4 would, at least, not have exposed Black's king.

27 h3



27...♖g8?

27...♖e6 28 ♖d2 ♖e7 was more menacing but a pawn is missing anyway.

28 ♖dx6! 1-0

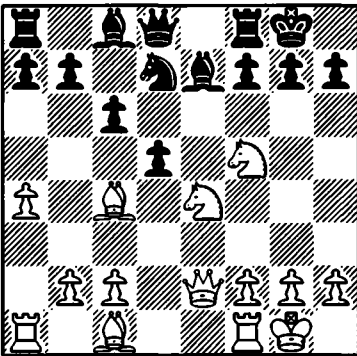
In this game White took control of the d5-square and never let it slip. Black, for his part, didn't find enough activity to compensate for both his weak d-pawn and the opponent's pair of bishops.

B22) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e2 c6 8 a4 exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘c5!?

Intending 10...♘ce4 11 ♘e4 d5 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6. The drawback of this move is that White's queen can move to f3 without being dislodged by a subsequent ...♗e5.

Alternatively:

a) 9...♘xe4?! is tricky, but bad after 10 ♘e4 (10 ♖xe4!? d5 11 ♗xd5 [not 11 ♘xd5?? cxd5 12 ♖xd5 ♘b6 13 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 and Black nets a piece] 11...♘f6 12 ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 13 ♖d3 ♘g4 with some compensation for the pawn, but not more) 10...d5 11 ♘f5 and now we have:



a1) 11...dxe4 12 ♗d1 ♗f6 13 ♖xe4 with nasty pressure for White.

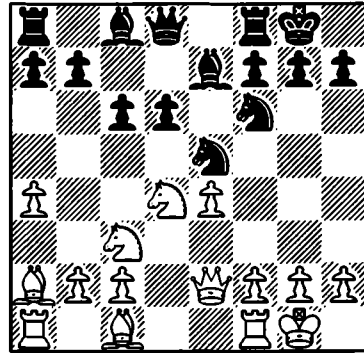
a2) 11...dxc4? 12 ♗h6! ♘f6 (if 12...gxf6 13 ♖g4+ ♗g5 14 ♘xf6+ ♘g7 15 ♘f5+ ♘g6 16 ♗ad1 and the attack

decides, for instance: 16...♗e8 17 ♘eg3, or 16...♗e5 17 ♗d6+! ♗e6 18 ♖g3 ♘xf5 19 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 20 ♖g7) 13 ♘eg3 ♗xf5 14 ♘xf5 gxf6 15 ♘xe7+ ♘g7 16 ♖e5 ♖b8 17 ♘f5+ ♘g6 18 ♘d6 ♘g7 19 ♗fe1 ♗d8 20 ♗ad1 ♗d7 21 ♗d4 ♖c7 22 ♗g4+ 1-0 Tseshkovsky-Lutikov, USSR Ch, Alma Ata 1962.

b) 9...♗e5?! and now:

b1) 10 ♗b3?! c5 11 ♘b5 a6 12 ♘a3 ♗e6 is unclear. White can also play 11 ♘f5 (the sister line of 7 ♖e2 exd4 8 ♘xd4 ♗e5 9 ♗b3 c5 10 ♘f5) and this remains double-edged and difficult to assess: 11...♗xf5 12 exf5 ♖d7 13 f4 (13 ♘d5 is possible too) 13...♘c6 14 g4 d5 (14...♘d4? 15 ♖g2 ♘xb3 16 cxb3 is better for White) 15 g5 c4 16 gxf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗a2 ♖xf5 with two pawns and a mighty initiative for the piece.

b2) 10 ♗a2! is similar to 10 ♗b3, but with some nuances that favour White:



for example, 10...c5 11 ♘f5 ♗xf5 12 exf5 and White has the better of it. Black can't afford to sacrifice a knight, as in the line with 10 ♗b3?!, since he won't have the crucial tempo ...c5-c4 at his disposal.

10 ♖a2

10 f3 and 10 ♖d1 are worthy of consideration too.

10...a5 11 ♜f3 ♜b6 12 ♜b3

12 ♜f5!? ♖xf5 13 ♜xf5 was the alternative.

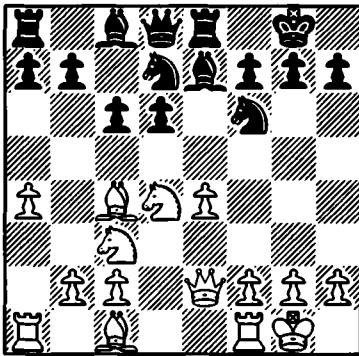
12...♜a6 13 ♖e3 ♜c7 14 ♜d2

Or 14 ♜d4!?

14...♜b4 15 ♖b3 ♖e6

Black has solved his opening problems, M.Kaminski-Cifuentes Parada, Polanica Zdroj 1992.

B23) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 e5 4 ♜f3 ♜bd7 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e2 c6 8 a4 exd4 9 ♜xd4 ♞e8



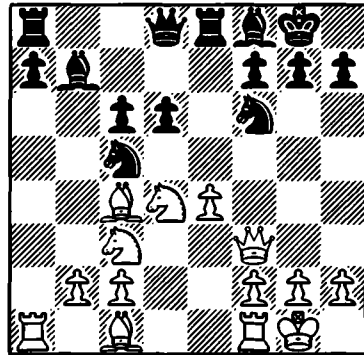
10 ♖a2

White has some alternatives here:

a) In contrast to 9 ♖xf7+ in Line B1, 10 ♖xf7+?? fails after the inclusion of the moves a4 and ...c6: 10...♜xf7 11 ♜e6 (or 11 ♜c4+ d5 12 exd5 ♜b6+ and White only has one pawn for the piece) 11...♜xe6 12 ♜c4+ d5 13 exd5+ cxd5 14 ♞e1+ ♜f7 15 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♜xd5+ ♜f8 and two pieces are missing!

b) 10 a5?! is poor after 10...♖f8 (10...d5!? 11 exd5 ♖c5 12 ♜d1 ♜e5 13

♖e2 ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 was equal in Inkirov-Garrel, Toulouse 2000) 11 a6 ♜c5 (11...d5!?) 12 axb7 ♖xb7 13 ♜f3 (Zelcic-Malaniuk, Katowice 1992).



At this stage Black could simply have picked up the e4-pawn, whereas the game took quite a different turn: 13...♜d7?! 14 ♜f5 ♜cxe4 15 ♜xe4 ♞xe4 16 ♖d3 ♞e5 17 ♖g5 ♖e7?? (17...♜d5! is still better for Black) 18 ♜h3 (the threats on h7 and the queen – ♖xf6 and ♜h6+ – are already decisive) 18...♖c8 19 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 (19...♞xe7 20 ♜h4 wasn't too appealing either) 20 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 21 ♞xa7! and Black resigned.

Other continuations allow immediate equalization: 10 ♜d1 d5 11 exd5 ♜b6 and 12...♜bxd5; or 10 ♖g5 ♜d5 11 ♖xe7 ♜xc3 12 ♖xd8 ♜xe2+ 13 ♖xe2 ♞xd8; or finally 10 ♖f4 ♖f8 11 ♜f3 ♜e5 12 ♖xe5 dxe5 (12...♞xe5!?) 13 ♜f5 ♖xf5 14 ♜xf5 ♜d7.

10...♖f8

Practice has seen Black obtaining good results in this given position. Black is now considering ...d5 or ...♜c5, which explains what follows.

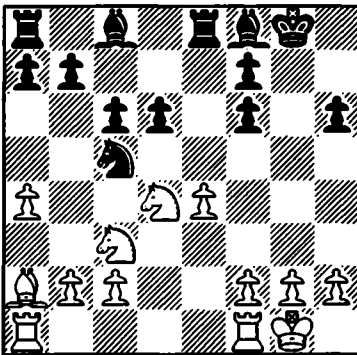
11 ♜f3

Luring the knight to e5, which will diminish the pressure on e4.

11 f3 obviously allows 11...d5, but things aren't that clear-cut after 12 ♖f2. If Black then captures on e4, White will obtain a semi-open f-file, and above all the a2-bishop will be woken up. Instead 12 ♖h1 c5 13 ♘f5 d4 14 ♘d1 ♘e5 15 ♘g3 ♙e6 16 ♙xe6 ♜xe6 17 b3 was P.Enders-Beckemeyer, German League 1996, and now instead of 17...c4!?, the simplest was 17...d3 18 cxd3 ♖xd3 with a slight edge to Black because of his opponent's weakened queenside.

11...♘e5

This is normal, but 11...♘c5!?, precisely the move that White discouraged his opponent from playing, is okay too: 12 ♙g5 (or 12 ♜e1 d5!) 12...h6 13 ♙xf6 (if 13 ♙h4? g5 14 ♙g3 ♙g4 15 ♖e3 ♘fxe4) 13...♖xf6 14 ♖xf6 gx6 is unclear.

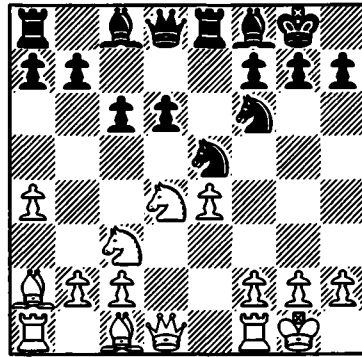


The damaged kingside pawn structure is counterbalanced by Black's pair of bishops.

12 ♖d1

12 ♖g3 ♘h5 13 ♖e3 is another possibility, but her majesty may feel un-

comfortable on e3. A repetition of moves by 13...♘f6 (13...♖h4!?) 14 ♖g3 is then quite logical.



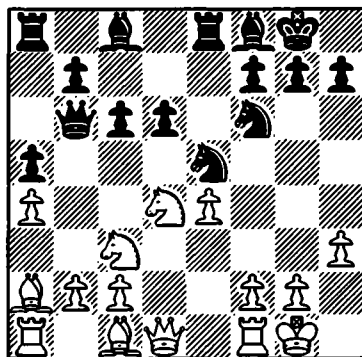
12...a5!

On the direct 12...♖b6? White would reply 13 a5, when the pawn is taboo in view of ♙xf7+.

13 ♜e1?!

Or:

a) Black meets 13 h3 with 13...♖b6!, impeding White's development (the c1-bishop must defend b2 for the time being), while preparing to connect the rooks. If Black finds time to play ...♙d7, ...♜ad8, ...♙c8, all his pieces will be harmoniously placed.



Play could continue:

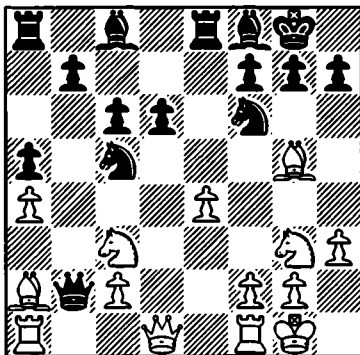
a1) 14 f4 ♖g6 15 ♜e1 d5! with the initiative.

a2) 14 ♜e1? ♙xh3! (another cool effect of 13...♞b6!) 15 gxh3 ♞xd4.

a3) 14 ♙e3 ♞b4! (not 14...♞xb2? 15 ♖de2! intending ♞b1-b3).

a4) 14 ♖de2 ♖ed7 (the reciprocal knight manoeuvre keeps the balance; 14...♙e6!?, with a level position, also had its merits) 15 ♖g3 ♖c5 16 ♙g5!, and now 16...♖xe4!? 17 ♖gxe4 ♖xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♜xe4 19 ♙xf7+ ♖h8! just about kept the balance in Wedberg-V.Nevednichy, Manila Olympiad 1992. 19...♖xf7? leads, as one may suspect, to a quick defeat: 20 ♞f3+ ♖g6 21 ♞xe4+ ♖xg5 22 h4+ ♖f6 23 ♞f4+ ♖e7 24 ♜fe1+ ♙e6 25 ♞f5.

Going back to move sixteen, Black could have played 16...♞xb2!, providing an exception to the rule stating that one should not be too greedy. While apparently risky, this move is in fact quite correct, as the following variations demonstrate:



a41) 17 ♙xf6 gx6 18 ♞f3 ♜e5 (not 18...f5? [intending ...♙g7] 19 exf5! d5 20

♖h5 ♖h8 21 ♖f6 ♜e7 22 ♙b3!, followed by ♜a2, trapping the queen) 19 ♖h5 ♙e7 20 h4!? (20 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 21 ♞xf6 ♙e6 is complex too) 20...♙e6 21 ♞g3+ ♖f8 22 ♞g7+ ♖e8 is unclear.

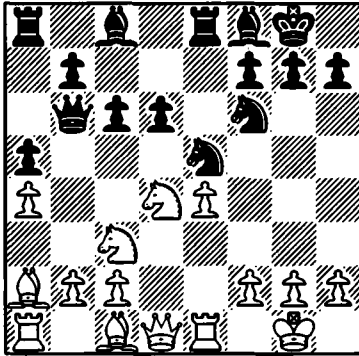
a42) 17 ♞f3!? ♙e7 (not 17...♞xc2?? 18 ♙c4 and the threat of 19 ♜a2 is unstoppable) 18 ♖h5 (18 ♜fb1!? ♞xc2 19 ♙c4 ♙e6 20 ♜c1 [not 20 ♜a2? ♞xb1+ 21 ♖xb1 ♙xc4] 20...♞b2 21 ♜cb1 ♞c2 is equal; if instead 21...♞xa1?! 22 ♜xa1 ♙xc4 23 ♖f5 and White is worse materially speaking, but his activity on the kingside compensates for this deficit) 18...♖cd7 19 ♜fb1 ♞xc2! and the position is unclear because Black has the resource ...♖e5 to give the queen the d3-square. For example, 20 ♜c1 ♞b2 (not 20...♖e5?! 21 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 22 ♙xf7+! ♖xf7 23 ♜xc2) 21 ♜cb1 with a draw by repetition.

b) 13 f4?! would be desirable for White, even though it makes e4-pawn vulnerable. The problem is that it seems to fail tactically: 13...♞b6! 14 ♖h1 (14 fxe5 is even worse: 14...dxe5 15 ♙e3 [or 15 ♜xf6 gx6] 15...♙c5 with a clear advantage for Black; while 14 h3 reaches 13 h3 ♞b6 14 f4) 14...♖eg4 15 ♞d3 (or 15 h3 ♖xe4!) 15...d5 16 e5 ♙c5 with an advantage to Black. 16 exd5 generates more complications, but again in Black's favour: for example, 16...♜e1 17 ♖g1 ♙c5 18 ♖ce2 ♙f5, or 18 ♜xe1 ♙xd4+ 19 ♖f1 ♙xc3 and Black should win.

c) 13 ♙g5! is suggested by Glek.

Returning to 13 ♜e1!?, a move that allows Black to claim an edge, **Glek-Bologan, Moscow 1991**, continued as follows:

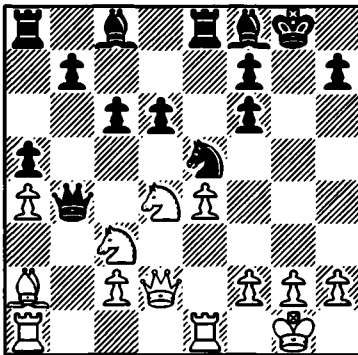
13... ♖b6!



14 ♗g5!?

Or 14 h3? ♗xh3!. The move 14 ♖b1 doesn't solve the problem either, as Black seizes the initiative with 14...d5! 15 exd5 ♗g4!. Now 16 ♖d2 or 16 ♗ce2 is answered by 16...♖ad8, while both 16 ♗de2 ♗c5 and 16 f3 ♗xf3 are disastrous for White.

14... ♖xb2 15 ♖d2 ♖b4! 16 ♗xf6 gxf6



17 ♖ab1

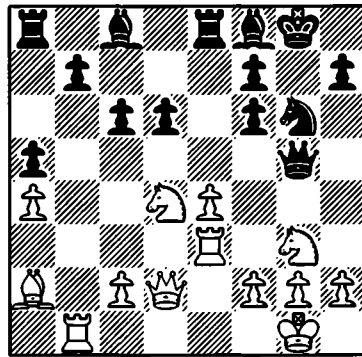
Black's kingside is destroyed, but the edge remains with him anyway, despite White's positional compensation for the pawn.

17 ♗e3 ♗h8 18 ♗g3 ♖c5 was also

slightly better for Black in Oral-Neuman, Czech League 2001.

17... ♖c5 18 ♗ce2 ♗g6 19 ♗g3 ♖g5 20 ♗e3!?

Missing a first opportunity to get back into the game with 20 ♖d1 ♗f4 21 ♗e3 h5 22 h4!. The pawn is indirectly protected in view of ♗gf5 and ♗g3, winning the black queen; while on the normal follow-up 22... ♖g4 23 ♖xg4+ hxg4 24 ♗df5 ♗e5! 25 c4, Black's advantage is reduced.



20...h5?!

Played in order to deny the white rook the g3-square after ...h5-h4, but the strange-looking 20... ♗h4!, controlling f5 while keeping an eye on g2, was much stronger.

21 ♖d1?!

Here 21 ♗f3! profits from the unfortunate placement of Black's queen, and 21... ♖h6 (not 21... ♖c5?? 22 ♗c3 ♖a7 23 ♗xh5) 22 ♗f5 ♗xf5 23 exf5 ♗xe3 24 fxe3 ♗e5 25 ♗xe5 fxe5 26 ♖xb7 d5 is unclear.

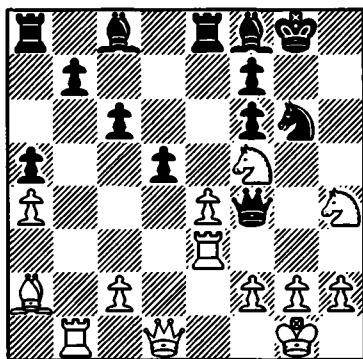
21...h4 22 ♗gf5 d5!

Black now has an obvious advantage.

23 ♖f3 ♗f4!?

Or 23...♗h5!? 24 ♖3xh4 ♗xd1+ 25 ♗xd1 ♖xh4 26 ♖xh4 dxe4, with an extra pawn and the pair of bishops.

24 ♖3xh4!?



24...♗xe4?!

24...♖xh4! was stronger: 25 g3! (not 25 ♗g3+? ♖g6 26 ♗h5 ♗xf5 27 exf5 ♗e4! followed by 28...♗e5, winning) 25...♗c7 (or 25...♗g5!? 26 f4 ♗xf5 27 exf5 ♗c5 28 gxh4 ♗xf5 and Black will have a bishop and a rook for the queen, as well as positional trumps: the a2-bishop is out of play and the white king is quite weak) 26 gxh4 ♗xf5 27 exf5 ♗xe3 28 fxe3 ♗c5 with a better position for Black.

25 ♖xg6 ♗xf5 26 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♗d2?!

28 c4!? would have provided more active counterplay, but after 28...d4!? (or 28...dxc4 29 ♗c1 b5 30 axb5 cxb5 31 ♗xb5 ♗e6) 29 ♗d2 c5!? 30 ♗h6+ ♖e7 Black stays on top.

28...♖g7 29 ♗e1?! ♗xa4 30 c4 ♗b4 31

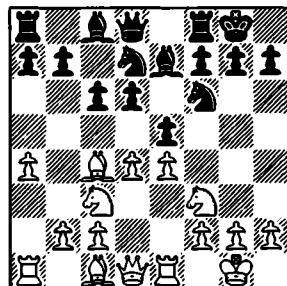
♗e3 ♗f5 32 cxd5 cxd5 33 ♗xd5 ♗d8 34 ♗a2 ♗d3 35 ♗c1 ♗d2 36 ♗c4 ♗c2 0-1

Conclusion

Black should treat the rare 7 a4 in a similar way to the main line, i.e. 7 ♗e1 c6 8 a4, which we will discuss in the final two chapters. After 7...c6 White can still try to lure his opponent onto rather unexplored territory by playing 8 ♗a2, but if Black answers 8...a5, or even 8...b6, then moving a major piece to the e-file becomes the only sensible continuation. I believe Black equalizes then by playing ...exd4 followed by ...♖c5, which leads to the conclusion that 8 ♗a2 is inferior to 8 b3 (cf. 7 ♗e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 b3).

By choosing 7 ♗e2 White intends to bring his rook to d1. As we have seen, Black has two possible ways to react. The first option is the straightforward ...exd4, preceded (or not) by 7...c6 8 a4. Black then finds himself at another junction: he can either carry on by playing ...♗e8, intending to exploit the placement of the white queen on e2, or use a quite specific method of counterplay with ...♖e5 and, after the retreat ♗b3, continuing with ...c5. The other way to handle the position is more common for the Philidor Hanham. Black continues 'normally' with ...c6, ...b6, and ...♗c7 when White plays ♗d1. While the first reaction is more active, in my opinion both seem in order and offer mutual chances.

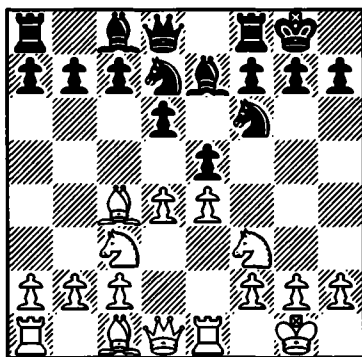
Chapter Thirteen



Main Line:

8 ♖e1 without 8...b6

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♘c3 ♟bd7 4 ♟f3 e5
5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♝e1



7 ♝e1 is the best move here. White parries the equalizing threat of 7...c6 8 a4 ♟xe4 followed by ...d5, while placing his rook on a more useful square. Developing the c1-bishop may look more natural, but one soon realizes that it has no useful post at the moment.

7...c6

Black intends to acquire space on the queenside by playing ...b5. At the

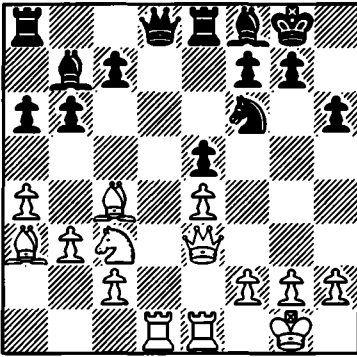
same time, pushing the c-pawn vacates c7 for the queen and controls d5.

Alternatively:

a) The extremely rare 7...b6 is less logical, but quite valid too. Indeed, Black loses a tempo if his opponent allows him to play the desirable ...a6 and ...b6-b5, but I don't see how White can profit from this. In other lines, Black solves his opening problems if he achieves the ...b5 push, and here White should still attempt to prevent it, tempo loss or no tempo loss.

Here's an original example and a nice display by Black: 7...b6 8 a4 (or 8 ♟d5!? ♙b7 9 ♟xe7+ ♚xe7 10 d5 c6) 8...a6 9 b3 ♙b7 10 ♙a3 (closing the centre by playing d4-d5 is another option, but in comparison with the Leko-Bauer game - Chapter 14, Line D1 - White will find it significantly harder to open lines on the queenside) 10...h6 11 ♚d2 ♝e8 12 ♝ad1 ♙f8 (12...b5!?) 13 dxex5 (13 d5 was also possible: ...exd4 was becoming a threat, since the b7-bishop is,

for once, not blocked by the c-pawn; one should also note that d6 is not weakened here) 13...♟xe5 14 ♞xe5 dxe5 15 ♚e3

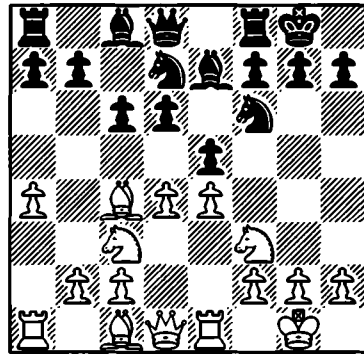


15...♟xa3! (a very good practical decision; Black doesn't risk anything and can play for a win at leisure) 16 ♞xd8 ♞axd8 17 ♞d5 ♟xd5 18 exd5 a5 19 ♚g3?! (White starts to err around here; 19 ♞d1 ♟c5 20 ♚e2 ♞e7 21 g3 e4 22 ♚g2 looked like a better set-up) 19...♟d6 20 ♞e2 e4 21 ♚c3 ♞e5 22 ♚e1 ♟c5 23 c3 ♞xd5 24 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 25 ♚xe4 ♞xc3 26 ♚f3 ♞d1+ 27 ♟f1 ♞d2 28 h3 ♞xf2 29 ♚a8+ ♚h7 30 ♟d3+ g6 when Black was much better and eventually converted his advantage in Bles-Landa, Leeuwarden 1997.

b) 7...a6!? follows the same objective and merely represents an inversion of move order. However, this move does imply that Black won't play a line that includes ...a5. Also, after 8 a4 c6?! (if 8...b6 9 d5!?) White can play 9 a5!, when the 9...b5 push would now leave a weak pawn on a6 after the en passant capture 10 axb6.

8 a4

Preventing the aforementioned expansion on the queenside. Generally speaking, if Black succeeds in pushing with ...b5, he solves all his problems, as shown by the following example: 8 ♟b3?! b5 9 d5 (9 a3 is better) 9...b4 10 dxc6 bxc3 11 cxd7 ♟b7! 12 ♚d3 cxb2 13 ♟xb2 ♚xd7 when Black has two pawns islands versus three, giving him a slight structural advantage.



After 8 a4 we will concentrate on the following moves:

A: 8...exd4

B: 8...♞e8

C: 8...♚c7

D: 8...a5

Black's most common move, 8...b6, is the subject of Chapter 14.

8...♚e8?!, attributed to the English analyst L.M.Pickett, prepares a very aesthetic manoeuvre that aims to transfer the dark-squared bishop to a better diagonal via ...♟d8-c7 or ...♟d8-b6. Its drawback is rather obvious: Black remains passive, and after 9 h3 ♟d8 10 a5 ♟c7 11 d5 White has a clear plus. My

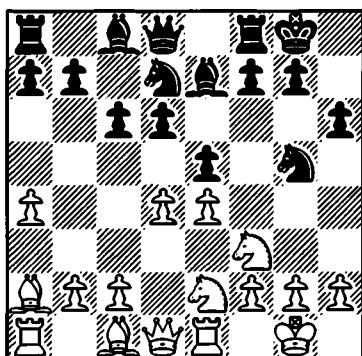
suggestion is that 8...♖e8 should be used with moderation and preferably for rapidplay games!

That just leaves:

8...h6

A rare move which seems designed to prepare ...♖h7-g5, while its drawback consists of allowing an eventual ♖h4-g6. The most common White follow-ups are 9 ♖a2, 9 b3 and 9 a5, and in my opinion White can count on an advantage after any of them. For example:

9 ♖a2 ♖h7 10 ♖e2 ♖g5



11 ♖xg5 ♖xg5

11...hxg5!/? accepts a slight ruining of the pawn structure in order to prevent f2-f4. B.Filipovic-V.Spasov, Becici 1994, continued 12 c3 ♖f6 13 ♖e3 ♖e7 14 ♖g3 g6 15 d5 with an edge for White.

12 f4 exf4 13 ♖xf4

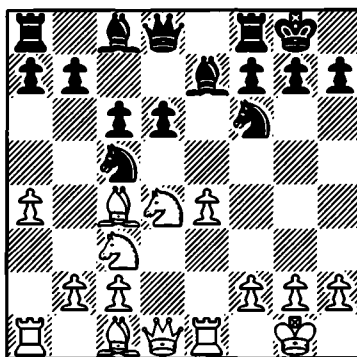
White has a small plus, Slobodjan-Federau, Berlin 1997.

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 a4 c6 8 ♖e1 exd4!/?/?!

This swap is traditionally preceded by 8...a5, but does it really make a difference?

9 ♖xd4 ♖c5

If 9...d5!/? 10 exd5 ♖b6 11 ♖b3 ♖bxd5 12 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♖xd5 cxd5 14 ♖f4 gives White a slight, but risk-free advantage thanks to Black's isolated pawn.



10 a5!

The attempt to refute Black's move order. As ...a5 can hardly be postponed for long, it is possible to transpose to Line D by either 10 b3 or 10 h3.

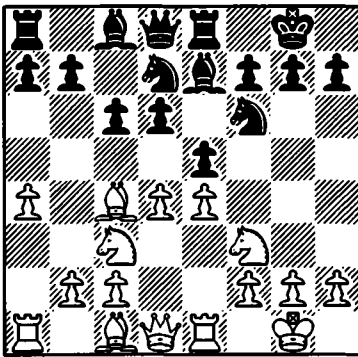
It should also be noted that 10 ♖a2 a5 11 ♖f3 ♖b6 12 ♖b3 ♖xb3 13 ♖xb3 ♖e6 would be analogous to the encounter Ye-Hamdouchi (see Line D11), with the queen on f3 instead of the pawn on h3. This favours White a bit, but not enough to claim an edge, as the game Slobodjan-Oratovsky, Fuerth 1998, demonstrates: 14 ♖e3 ♖c7 15 ♖a2?! (15 ♖xe6 fxe6 16 ♖h3) 15...♖xa2 16 ♖xa2 ♖d7 17 ♖e2 ♖f6 18 ♖c4 ♖fe8 19 f3 (or 19 ♖d5 ♖d8 20 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 followed by ...d5 with an edge for Black – the presence of the rook on a2 is a serious

handicap for White) 19...♙e5 20 g3? d5 21 exd5 ♙xg3! and Black won about 20 moves later.

10...♜c7 11 h3 ♜e8 12 ♙g5 h6 13 ♙h4

(Z.Ilicic-Denoth, Budapest 1990). White holds a lasting advantage, and above all his opponent lacks a constructive plan.

B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 a4 c6 8 ♜e1 ♜e8



9 a5

9 ♙xf7+ is worth considering, but is less devastating than usual! The position after 9...♜xf7 10 ♘g5+ ♜g8 11 ♘e6 ♜a5 12 ♙d2 ♙d8 (on 12...♘f8?! White seems to gain the upper hand, though it is not trivial: 13 ♘d5 cxd5 14 ♙xa5 ♙xe6 15 exd5 ♙xd5 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 ♜xe5 ♙c6 18 ♜d4 and the queen and two pawns should outweigh the three minor pieces) 13 ♘d5 cxd5 14 ♙xa5 ♙xa5 15 b4 ♜xe6 16 exd5 ♘xd5 17 bxa5 ♘f7f6 or 17...♘f4 is unclear.

9...♙f8!?

An interesting innovation in place of the customary 9...h6.

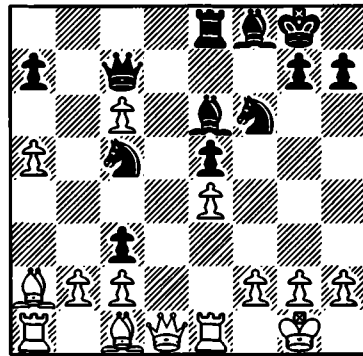
9...♜b8 (??) is a typical reaction if White plays a4-a5 before Black has touched his b-pawn. Unfortunately for Black, the above-mentioned combination now becomes crystal-clear: 10 ♙xf7+! ♜xf7 11 ♘g5+ ♜g8 12 ♘e6 and the queen is trapped.

10 d5 b5!?

A dynamic measure is needed to avoid drifting into passivity. The game **Ivanchuk-Azmaiparashvili, Montecatini Terme 2000**, continued:

11 ♙b3

After 11 ♙a2 b4 12 dxc6 bxc3 13 ♘g5 ♘c5 14 ♘xf7 ♜c7 15 ♘xd6+ ♙e6 16 ♘xe8 ♜xe8...



...White has a rook and three pawns for the two knights, but c6 is bound to fall and Black's pieces are quite active. All in all, the position is messy.

11...cxd5 12 ♘xd5

12 ♙xd5! ♜b8 13 ♘g5 (13 b4!?) 13...♘xd5 14 ♜xd5 ♜f6 15 ♘xb5 ♙b7 16 ♜d2 h6 17 ♘f3 ♙xe4 18 ♜xe4 ♜xb5 offered mutual chances.

12...h6 13 c3

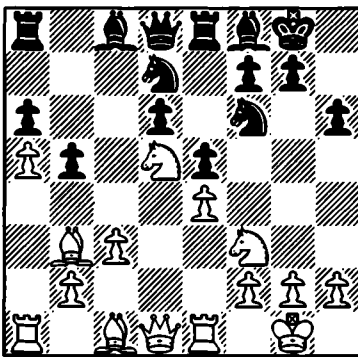
White can also play 13 ♙g5!? (Ivanchuk's idea, according to his oppo-

ment's comments in *Chess Informant*) 13...hxg5 14 ♖xg5 ♜e6! 15 ♜f3 and now 15...♗e7!, freeing the f8-square for the knight (or for the king, if it needs to run away at some stage), or 15...♖c5 16 ♜h3 ♗e7 17 ♗a2, with unclear consequences in both cases.

13...a6?

This is too slow, and White could have gained a clear plus, as indicated by Azmaiparashvili on move 18.

13...♗b7 14 a6 ♗c6 15 ♖b4 ♗xe4?! 16 ♜xe4 ♖xe4 17 ♜d5 ♖df6 18 ♜xf7+ ♖h8 19 ♖h4 (19 ♖d5!?) gives White a dangerous attack. 15...♜c7, with just a small edge for White, is more solid.



14 ♗e3 ♗b7 15 ♗b6 ♖xb6 16 ♖xb6 ♜b8 17 ♜d3 ♗c6 18 ♖h4?!

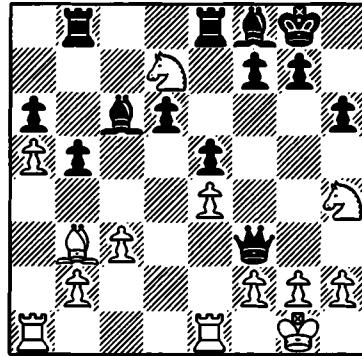
Here White should play 18 ♖d2!, preparing ♖f1, f2-f3 and ♖e3.

18...♖d7 19 ♜f3 ♜f6 20 ♖xd7

20 ♗d5 ♜xf3 21 ♖xf3 ♖xb6 22 ♗xc6 ♜ec8 23 axb6 ♜xc6 24 ♜xa6 ♜xb6 is still better for White, but probably holdable for Black, as the white knight is far away from reaching the dominant d5 outpost.

20...♗xd7!

Instead, 20...♜xf3? is met by...



...21 ♖xb8!! (a very nice intermezzo) 21...♜f6 22 ♖xc6 ♜xh4 23 ♗d5. Black position is problematic: he has no targets to attack; his bishop is very bad; and White can hit a6 with ♖b4, and f7 with ♜e3-f3.

21 ♜xf6 gxh4 22 ♗d5 ♜ec8 23 ♜ed1 ♗e7?!

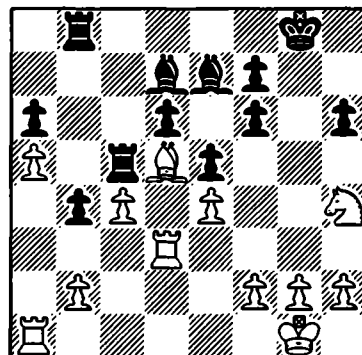
23...b4 24 c4 b3, followed by ...♗e6, would have created some counterplay.

24 ♜d3 b4? 25 c4

After 25 ♖g6! ♗f8 26 ♜g3 Black must give up f7 by playing 26...♖h7.

25...♜c5?!

Better was 25...♗d8.



26 b3?

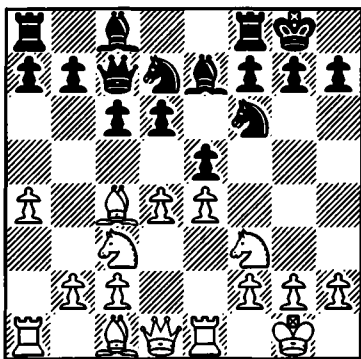
Instead, 26 ♖g6 ♗f8 27 ♜g3 ♗g7 and Black's defensive task remains grim, even following 28 ♜e7+ ♖f8 29 ♜f5 ♗xf5 30 exf5 when the difference in activity between the two bishops is clear to see. White can consider ♜b3, ♜a4xb4, followed by ♜b7xf7.

After 26 b3 Black is able to erect a kind of fortress.

26...♗d8 27 ♜d2 ♜xa5 28 ♜xa5 ♗xa5 29 ♜a2 ♗b6 30 ♜xa6 ♗c5 31 ♖f1 ♖g7 32 ♖e2 ♜c8 ½-½

C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♜c7

Moving her majesty so early isn't always necessary, and this is why 8...♜c7 is less popular than either 8...a5 or 8...b6.



We will now consider the following moves for White:

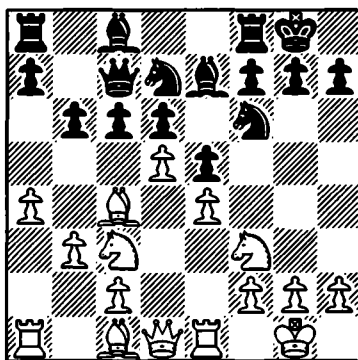
- C1: 9 b3**
- C2: 9 ♗a2**
- C3: 9 a5**
- C4: 9 h3**

9 ♗g5?! is not a great move. As so often in the Philidor Defence, a hasty development of the dark-squared bishop doesn't bring White much joy. Black can react in two ways: the first option is 9...♜b6 10 ♗b3 ♗g4 when the pressure on d4 forces simplifications after 11 dxe5 or 11 a5 ♜bd7 12 d5 ♜c5; the second approach is 9...h6 10 ♗h4 ♜e8, with the idea of ...♜f8-g6. In this case, too, both sides have their chances.

C1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♜c7 9 b3 b6

If Black is reluctant to weaken the squares d5 and c6, 9...♜b6!? is a reasonably valid alternative (this is probably the reason why White usually chooses 9 h3). After 10 ♗e2 (to meet 10...a5 with 11 h3) 11...♗g4, the game is approximately level.

10 d5



10...cxd5!?

10...c5 11 a5! offers White a definite initiative on the queenside.

11 ♗xd5!

If 11 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 12 ♗xd5 ♜b8, fol-

lowed by ...♟f6 and ...♟b7, offers reciprocal chances.

11...♟b7

11...♟xc3?? loses an exchange to the obvious 12 ♟d2.

12 ♟b5

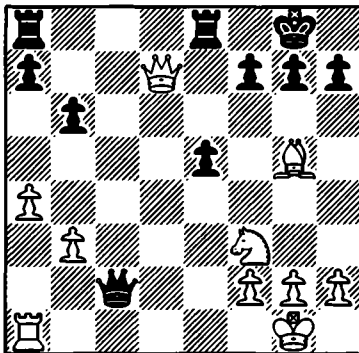
Freeing the path of the c-pawn.

12...♟b8 13 ♟xb7 ♟xb7 14 ♟g5 ♜fe8!

Now the threat to e4 is real because the bishop on e7 is protected. 14...♟c6? 15 c4 would be much better for White.

15 h3

White should probably play 15 ♟xd6! ♟xd6 16 ♟xd6 ♟xe4 17 ♜xe4 ♟xe4 18 ♟xd7 ♟xc2.



In this particular position the two minor pieces are only marginally superior to the rook and pawn. Indeed, b3 is weak and Black can get active by playing ...f6 and ...♜ad8. White should stand a trifle better, but probably not more.

15...♟xe4 16 ♟xe7 ♜xe7 17 ♜xe4

17 ♟xd6 ♟xd6 18 ♟xd6 ♜e6 is equal.

17...♟xe4 18 ♟xd6 ♜ae8 19 ♟c7

This position was reached in Morozvich-Tischbierek, German League

2000. Now 19...♟c5! 20 ♟xe8 ♜xe8 21 ♜e1 ♟xc2 22 ♜xe5 ♜f8 is equal according to Tischbierek, an opinion that I share.

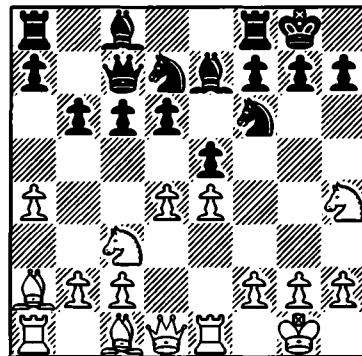
C2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♟c4 ♟e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♟c7 9 ♟a2 b6

9...♜e8 is possible; White probably continues with 10 h3 (cf. Line C4).

10 ♟h4?!

A dubious idea which doesn't work; 10 h3 and 10 ♟g5, completing development, are more natural.

With the bishop on a2, the move 10 d5?! is also unsuitable. After 10...♟b7 11 dxc6 ♟xc6 12 ♟g5 a6, counterplay based on ...b5 is imminent, as shown in the encounter Kruszynski-O.Eismont, Berlin 1997: 13 ♟e2 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♟xb5 ♟b7 16 ♟c3 ♟xb2 17 ♟c4 ♟b7 and Black could be satisfied with the outcome of the opening.



With 10 ♟h4?! we are following Hjartarson-Malaniuk, Tilburg 1993.

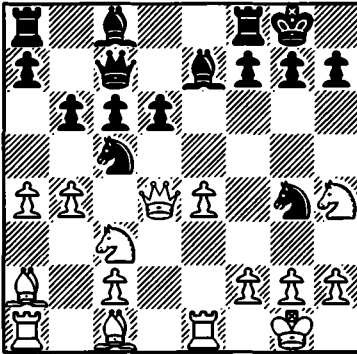
10...exd4 11 ♟xd4

11 ♟f5!? dxc3 12 ♟xe7+ ♟h8 is unclear.

11...♖c5! 12 b4?!

After 12 h3!? a5 13 ♖f3 it becomes apparent that White has spent all these tempi to encourage his opponent to play 10...exd4. Black has thus obtained an improved version of Line D11, in which he voluntarily releases the tension in the centre. Indeed, in that case the white knight usually occupies the d4-square (where it eyes f5) and the queen usually stands on f3, a much more effective placement. After 13...♗fd7 14 ♖f4 ♗e6 15 ♖xe6 fxe6 16 ♖g3 ♖c5 (16...e5?? 17 ♛c4+ ♖h8 18 ♖d5) 17 e5 d5 White had no constructive plan, and Black stood better in Smirin-Dorfman (played during the same tournament as our main game!).

12...♗g4!



The drawbacks of the impetuous 12 b4 are underlined: White has problems on the a1-h8 diagonal.

13 ♖f3

Or 13 bxc5?? dxc5 and h2 explodes!

13...♖f6

13...♖xa4!? 14 ♖xa4 (if 14 ♖xf7+ ♛xf7 15 ♛xa4 ♗e5 16 ♗xe5 dxe5 17 ♛c4 b5 18 ♗xb5 ♛b6 is winning for Black)

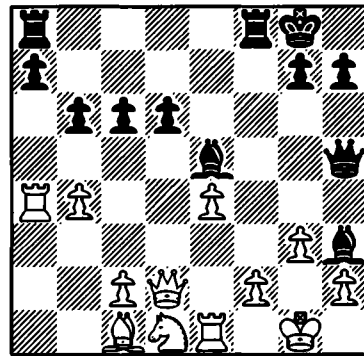
14...♖f6 15 e5 ♗xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♛xe5 dxe5 18 ♛e4 ♖h8 was less accurate. Black stands better positionally, and the easiest way to emphasize the advantage is to keep the material 'balanced'.

14 ♛d2 ♖xa4 15 ♖xf7+ ♛xf7 16 ♛xa4 ♗e5! 17 ♗xe5 ♖xe5

The smoke clears, with Black enjoying the bishop pair and attacking prospects on the kingside. Furthermore, White's pieces lack coordination.

18 ♖d1 ♛h5 19 g3 ♖h3

Not 19...♛f3?! 20 ♛g5 as the trade of queens would greatly ease White's defence.



20 ♛a3

After 20 f4 the best way to exploit White's lack of king cover is with 20...♛f3! 21 ♗e3 (if 21 ♛a3 ♖d4+ wins; or 21 fxe5?? ♛f1+ 22 ♛xf1 ♛xf1 mate; but 21 c3!? – controlling d4 – 21...♖xf4 22 gxf4 ♛xf4 remains complicated on account of the resource 23 ♛a2+ ♛f7 24 ♗e3) 21...♖xf4 22 gxf4 ♛xf4 23 ♛e2 ♛xe4, when Black already has three pawns for the piece and White's king is disastrously exposed.

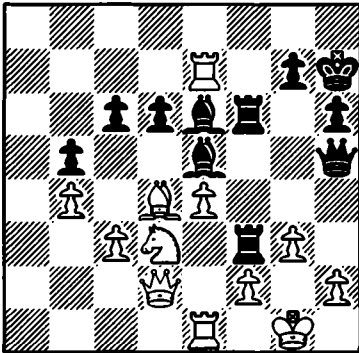
20...♖f3 21 ♖e2 ♖af8 22 ♖xa7 b5 23 c3
Or 23 ♖a3 ♖g4.
23...h6?!

Instead, 23...♖g6! 24 ♖a8 ♖xg3+ re-gains the pawn, while keeping the positional trumps.

24 ♖e3 ♖g4

And here 24...♖g6! 25 ♖d4 h5, followed by ...h4, maintains attacking chances. After 24...♖g4 White starts to gain the upper hand.

25 ♖d2 ♖h7 26 ♖b2! ♖h3 27 ♖d3 ♖f6
28 ♖d4 ♖h5 29 ♖e7 ♖e6



30 ♖xe5

30 ♖e3! was better: 30...♖xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♖f3 (if 31...♖d1+ 32 ♖e1 [not 32 ♖g2?? ♖c4 33 ♖e1 ♖e2] 32...♖c4 33 f4 ♖xf4 34 ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 35 gx4 with a clear advantage to White in view of his extra pawn) 32 ♖d2 ♖xd4 33 cxd4 ♖c4 34 ♖b2 when Black has compensation for the pawn, but objectively he can only hope for a draw. Also 34 ♖e1 ♖h3 would not be winning for Black, as indicated by Malaniuk, because the simple 35 ♖g2 avoids mate.

30...dxe5 31 h4 ♖g4 32 ♖e3

32 ♖xe5?? ♖xg3+ 33 fxg3 ♖xg3+ 34

♖h1 ♖f2 is a decisive attack for Black.

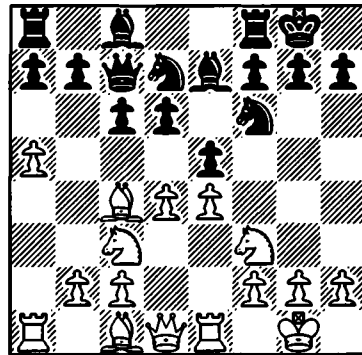
32...♖xe3 33 ♖xe3 ♖f3 34 ♖d2 ♖xe4
35 ♖c5??

35 ♖xe6 ♖xd3 36 ♖xe5 ♖xg3+ 37 fxg3 ♖xe5 would have been equal.

35...♖b1+ 36 ♖h2 ♖d5 0-1

The white monarch succumbs.

C3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3
e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4
♖c7 9 a5!?



This is probably sufficient to fight for an opening advantage.

9...♖b8 10 d5

10 ♖g5?! is, like the same idea one move earlier, ineffective. The inclusion of 9 a5 ♖b8 eliminates the possibility of ...♖b6, but the other Black reply (10...h6) remains quite satisfactory:

a) 10...b5?! 11 axb6 axb6 (11...♖xb6 looks better) 12 d5 b5 13 dxc6 ♖xc6 (13...bxc4 14 cxd7 ♖xd7 15 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16 ♖d5 isn't appealing) 14 ♖d5 ♖d8 15 ♖b3 with a decent edge for White.

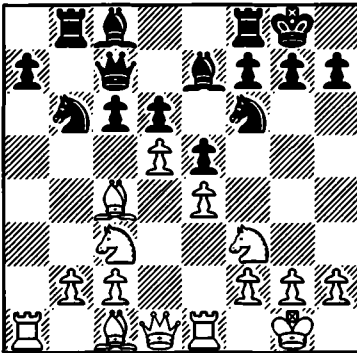
b) 10...h6 11 ♖h4 ♖e8 12 ♖g3 (preventing the manoeuvre ...♖f8-g6 due to the pressure exerted on e5) 12...b5 (12...♖h5? runs into 13 dxe5 ♖xg3 14 e6

fxe6 15 ♖xe6+ ♜h8 16 hxg3 with a clear plus for White; 13...dxe5? is even worse: 14 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 15 ♜xe5+ ♜xe5 16 ♜xh5+ ♜f6 17 f4 and White wins) 13 axb6 axb6 with approximate equality, since 14 d5?! has become harmless because of 14...b5 15 dx6 bxc4 16 cxd7 ♖xd7 with an edge for Black.

10...b5

An energetic counter-attack aimed at giving Black some breathing space; not 10...cxd5?! 11 ♖xd5.

11 axb6 ♜xb6



12 ♖f1!

After 12 ♖b3? cxd5, given that White can't insist on ending up with a piece on d5, he should recapture with the e-pawn as soon as possible. Indeed, trading a pair of knights would let Black's f-pawn roll. But 13 ♜xd5 ♜fxd5 14 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xd5 ♜xc2 16 ♜xa7 ♖e6 is at least equal for Black, while 13 exd5 ♖d7 gives Black a small advantage, as the b3-bishop bites on granite.

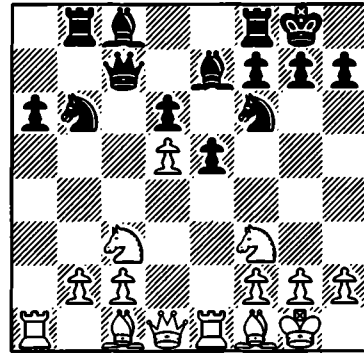
12...cxd5 13 exd5

13 ♜b5!? (Nevednichy-Vatter, Bad Wörishofen 2000) is possible too. The position resulting from 13...♜d8 14

exd5 ♜bxd5 15 ♜xa7 ♖d7 or 15...♖b7 is, however, unclear.

13...a6

13...♖d7 is valid too, but 13...♜b7 14 ♜a5 ♖g4?! 15 h3 ♖h5 16 g4 ♖g6 17 ♜h4 led to trouble for Black in Ye Jiangchuan-Cifuentes Parada, Tilburg 1994.



14 ♖g5

14 ♖xa6?! is punished by the pinning 14...♜a8, and after the forced sequence 15 ♜d3 ♜a7 16 ♜b5 ♖xa6 17 ♜xa7 ♖xd3 18 cxd3 ♜fxd5, Black has no reason to complain.

14...♜bd7

(Mkrtchian-Gelashvili, Batumi 2001). Now 15 ♜a2 seems to be slightly in White's favour.

C4) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♜c7 9 h3

White's most popular choice. Now we will consider:

C41: 9...♜e8

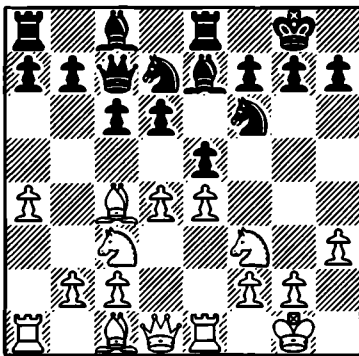
C42: 9...h6

C43: 9...b6

Despite quite acceptable results for Black, I dislike 9...exd4?!. Indeed, the queen isn't optimally placed on c7, and a move such as ...a5 would have been more useful: 10 ♘xd4 ♜e8 (or 10...a5 11 ♘f5 and White robs Black of the bishop pair) 11 ♙f4 or 11 a5!? and White keeps an edge.

C4) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♝c7 9 h3 ♞e8

A rare continuation, but a quite playable one.



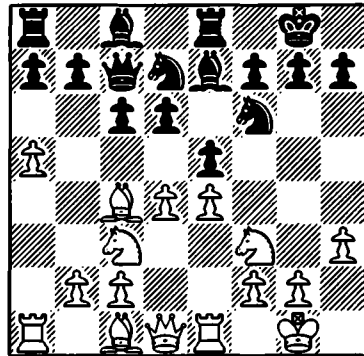
10 a5

White has this extra possibility when Black avoids playing ...a5 or ...b6. The drawback of such a move is that the pawn itself may become weak, and that it allows the plan of ...♞b8 followed by ...b5.

After 10 ♘g5 ♞f8 White can repeat moves, by playing 11 ♘f3, or wait until the knight gets expelled with ...h6. The small risk of such a strategy is that Black may manage to do without ...h6 and the knight may become misplaced. 11 ♙a2 h6 12 ♘f3 is slightly better for

White, but 11...exd4!? 12 ♝xd4 ♘c5 is interesting.

As usual, the moves 10 b3!? and 10 ♙a2 are possible and maintain a small plus.



10...♙f8

Or 10...♞b8!? 11 d5 b5 12 axb6 ♘xb6 13 ♙f1 with an edge for White.

11 ♘g5

It may be a clever idea to provoke ...h6, so that White has the manoeuvre ♘f3-h4-g6 at his disposal.

11...♜e7 12 ♙e3

Owing to his spatial advantage White stands better, but Black's position is solid.

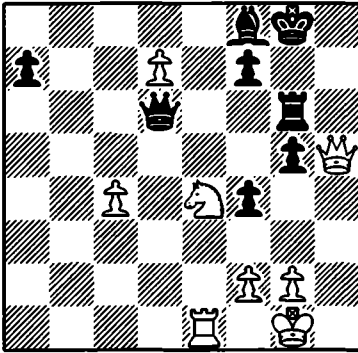
C42) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 ♝c7 9 h3 h6

The weakness of g6 created by 9...h6 doesn't call for a direct refutation. White has the choice between two different approaches:

a) To continue normally with his development, by playing 10 ♙e3, 10 a5 or even 10 ♙a2. These three sensible continuations are of equal value and

promise White a slight plus.

One example: 10 ♖e3 ♜e8 11 a5 ♙f8 12 d5 ♟c5 13 ♟d2 ♙d7 14 b4 cxd5 15 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 16 ♙xd5 ♟e6 17 c4 ♟f4 18 ♙xf4 exf4 19 a6 ♙c6 20 axb7 ♙xb7 21 ♙xb7 ♟xb7 22 ♜b1 g5 23 h4 ♜e6 24 ♟h5 ♜g6 25 hxg5 hxg5 26 e5 ♜e8 27 exd6 ♙xe1+ 28 ♙xe1 ♟xb4 29 d7 ♟d6 30 ♟e4...



...and Black resigned in Kramnik-Zvjaginsev, USSR Junior Ch., Leningrad 1990, in view of 30...♟xd7 31 ♟xg6+ fxc6 32 ♟f6+.

b) To try to profit from the above-mentioned weakening, either by playing the move in the main text below, or by 10 ♟h4. In the latter case, 10...♜e8 (10...exd4 11 ♟xd4 ♟e5 deserves attention too) 11 dxe5 (11 ♟g6 ♙d8 is unclear) 11...♟xe5 12 ♙a2 offers reciprocal chances.

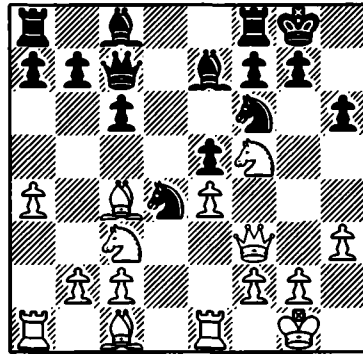
10 dxe5 ♟xe5!

This is stronger than 10...dxe5?! 11 ♟h4 ♟c5 and now:

a) 12 ♟g6?! ♜d8 13 ♟xe7+ ♟xe7 14 ♟f3 ♟e6! (14...♙e6?! 15 ♙f1 is better for White: the black knight is less active on c5 than on d4, and the pair of bishops

isn't totally counterbalanced) 15 ♟g3 ♟f4! 16 ♙xf4 ♟h5 with an equal position.

b) 12 ♟f3! ♟e6 (or 12...♙e6 13 ♙xe6 ♟xe6 14 ♟f5, Keres-Penrose, Hastings 1957/58, and now 14...♟h7 15 ♙e3 with an edge, or 14...♟d4?! 15 ♟g3 ♟h5 [if 15...♟xf5 16 exf5 nets e5 or h6] 16 ♟g4 and the complications favour White) 13 ♟f5



13...♟d4 14 ♟xd4! (14 ♟g3!? leads to obscure complications after 14...♙xf5 15 exf5 ♟xc2 16 ♙xh6 ♟h5 17 ♟g6 ♟xe1! [not 17...♟xa1? 18 ♟xh5 ♟d6 19 ♙xg7! ♟xg7 20 ♜e4 ♟h6 21 f6+! ♟xf6 22 ♜g4+ and White wins] 18 ♟xh5 ♟d6 19 ♙xg7 ♟xg7 20 ♜xe1) 14...exd4 15 ♟e2 and White has the better prospects.

11 ♙a2

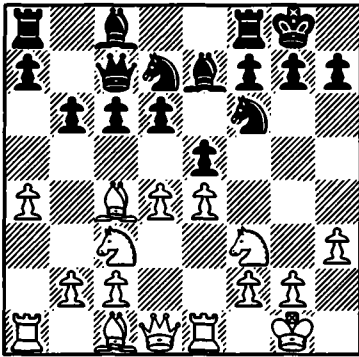
After 11 ♟xe5 dxe5 Black has no worries as he has avoided a knight's incursion into f5. Tatai-Dominguez Rueda, El Corte Ingles 1990, continued 11 ♙f1 ♜d8 (lining up the ...d5 thrust) 12 ♟e2 ♜e8 13 ♟d4 d5 14 ♙f4 ♙c5 15 ♟f3?! (15 ♟b3 is equal) 15...♙d6 16 ♟xe5 ♙xe5 17 ♙xe5 and a draw was

agreed, though 17...♗xe5 gives Black the edge here.

11...♖xf3+ 12 ♗xf3 ♖e6

The position is level.

C43) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♗bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♗e1 c6 8 a4 ♗c7 9 h3 b6



10 ♖g5

White has many alternatives here:

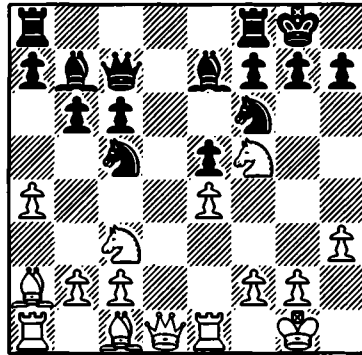
a) 10 d5 ♖b7 11 dxc6 (after the prophylactic 11 ♗e2!?, the queen isn't tied down to protecting c2, and thus in the event of a mass swap on d5 White would always be able to recapture with a piece) 11...♗xc6 12 ♖g5 ♖xe4 (as in the game Morozevich-Tischbierek [see Line C1], Black uses tactical measures to hold the balance) 13 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 14 ♖xe4 ♗xc4 15 ♖xe7 ♗xe4 16 ♗xd6 ♖c5 17 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 18 ♗d2 f6 19 a5 b5 20 ♗d1 a6 21 ♗c3 ♗c4 and a draw was agreed in J.Benjamin-L.Christiansen, US Championship, Chandler 1997.

b) 10 ♗e2 a6 11 ♖a2 ♗b8! 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♖h4 ♖c5 was level in Leko-Tischbierek, Munich 1992.

c) With 10 ♖a2 White is intending

to exchange on e5 without allowing ...♖xe5xf3 and ...♖e6. He then plans the traditional transportation of his knight to f5. Now Black can play:

c1) 10...♖b7?!. As in the variation where the black queen stays on its initial square, which we will examine later on, the move ...♖b7 is dubious. Here's why: 11 dxe5 dxe5 (or 11...♖xe5 12 ♖d4, threatening ♖f5 and f4, when White stands much better) 12 ♖h4 ♖c5 13 ♖f5



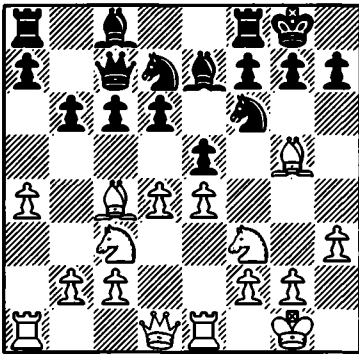
13...♖e6 14 ♖e3 (directed against ...♖d4, but 14 ♗f3! ♖d4 15 ♖xd4 exd4 16 ♖f4 ♗c8 17 ♖e2 c5 18 ♖g3 was surely stronger) 14...♗ad8 15 ♗f3 ♖d4 16 ♖xd4 exd4 17 ♖e2 c5?? (17...♖b4! would have enabled Black to stay in the game) 18 ♗g3! 1-0 Mahdi-Palatnik, Cattolica 1993.

c2) 10...a6 11 ♖h4 exd4! 12 ♖f5 (12 ♗xd4!? ♖e5 13 f4 ♖g6 offers mutual chances) 12...dxc3 13 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 with an unclear position. Alternatively, 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♖h4 doesn't promise much: after either ...♖c5 or ...g6, intending 13 ♖h6 ♗d8 14 ♖f3 ♖c5, Black will prevent ♖g5 and equalize.

d) If White chooses to continue with 10 b3 then h3 is useless. The position is level after 10...♖b7 11 ♖b2 a6 12 ♖d3 (with the idea of ♜e2-g3) 12...♜fe8 followed by ...♗f8, ...g6 and ...♖g7.

e) 10 ♖e3?! is inferior to 10 ♖g5. The e4-pawn is not covered by the rook anymore, which means that a later ...b5-b4 will gain in strength. Moreover, provoking the weakening ...h6 with ♖g5 may prove to be useful.

With 10 ♖g5 we are following **Akopian-Lima, Biel Interzonal 1993**, which continued:



10...♖b7

Or 10...a6 11 d5 ♖b7 (11...c5!? 12 ♜h4 should be compared to Polgar-Izeta, Line B21 in Chapter 12) 12 dxc6 ♖xc6 13 ♜e2 when in comparison with Benjamin-Christiansen (see the previous note), the c4-bishop is protected and thus the tactical simplifications don't work anymore. After 13...♖b7 14 ♜ad1 ♜fc8 15 b3 White stood a bit better in Piket-Ree, Dutch Ch., Hilversum 1990.

The move couple 10...h6 11 ♖h4 can be inserted if Black doesn't fear 11

♖xf6!? ♜xf6 12 d5.

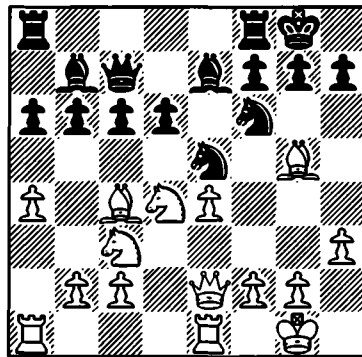
Finally, there is 10...♜e8!?, after which the critical follow-up again seems to be 11 d5. In comparison to 10...a6, the e7-bishop is defended, but b5 isn't controlled, but then again the a6-pawn isn't hanging after ♜e2, but... but... In brief, 10...♜e8!? is interesting!

11 ♜e2

11 d5!? must be a consideration here; while in the event of 11 dxe5, 11...♜xe5! is the correct reply. Indeed, the bishop isn't covering f5, so 11...dxe5?! 12 ♜h4 is annoying. Trust me, the correct recapture on e5 will become a reflex action!

11...a6 12 dxe5! dxe5?!

Akopian assesses 12...♜xe5! 13 ♜d4 as with an edge for White, but practice has seen two examples that invalidate this judgement:

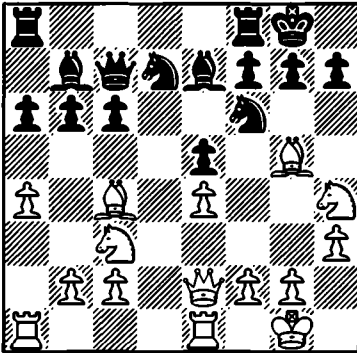


13...b5 14 ♖a2 b4 (and 14...h6 15 ♖h4 ♜fe8 16 ♜f5 ♜ad8 17 ♜e3 ♖c8 18 ♜xe7+ ♜xe7 19 ♜b6 ♖xh3! was agreed drawn in V.Potkin-Zablotsky, St Petersburg 2001, just when the game was becoming entertaining!) 15 ♜b1 h6 16 ♖c1 (undeveloping all the pieces!)

16...♗fe8 and Black quickly took over the initiative in Yagupov-Hasangatin, Russian Team Ch., Moscow 1994.

Instead of 13 ♖d4 White has tried two other moves, but without much success in either case: 13 ♖xe5 dxe5 14 ♖ad1 b5 with equality, Vehi Bach-Cifuentes Parada, Platja d'Aro 1994; and 13 ♖b3 ♖xf3+ (13...b5; 13...♗fe8) 14 ♗xf3 ♖ae8 15 ♖f4 ♖d7 with maybe even an edge for Black, A.Moroz-Sufiyarov, Decin 1997.

13 ♖h4!



Now Black will have to endure the typical irritation linked with the intrusion of a knight on f5.

13...b5

13...g6? 14 ♖h6 ♗fe8 15 ♖xf7+! ♖xf7 16 ♗c4+ is a recurrent tactical motif with the bishop on c4 or a2. Black can't even defend effectively by giving back the piece with 16...♖d5, since the queen is misplaced after 17 ♖xd5.

14 ♖f5 ♖d8 15 ♖a2

With the idea of ♖ad1 and ♖d6.

15...g6

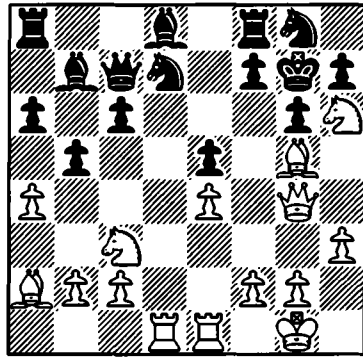
15...b4 is met by 16 ♖b1, intending ♖d2. Another defensive plan is

15...♖c5, when Black is considering both ...♖e6, and ...b4 followed by ...♖xe4.

16 ♖h6+ ♖g7 17 ♖ad1 ♖g8

The only move according to Akopian, although 17...b4 18 ♖b1 ♖c5 seems interesting to me as well.

18 ♗g4!



18...♖c5?

A mistake, after which Black is lost. He should look to note 'c' for an improvement:

a) 18...♖df6 19 ♗h4 and Black is almost paralyzed.

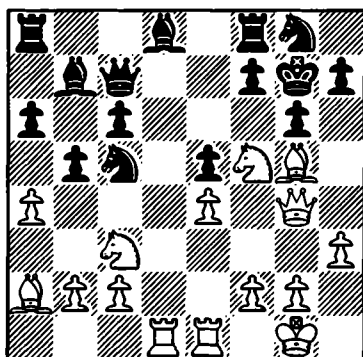
b) 18...♖xh6 19 ♖xh6+ ♖xh6 20 ♖xd7 and f7 drops, not to mention the problems with the black king.

c) 18...♖xg5! (compulsory) 19 ♖xg8! (not 19 ♖xf7? ♖xf7 20 ♖xf7 ♖df6! 21 ♗xg5 ♖xf7 and the white rooks have no square on which to penetrate along the d-file, so Black stands a bit better; while if 19 ♖xd7 ♖xh6 20 ♖xc7 ♖xg4 21 ♖xb7 ♖f6 22 ♖d1 ♖ab8! with an equal position; or if in this second line 21 hxg4 ♖ab8 22 ♖d1 ♖d8! 23 ♖cd7 ♖a5!, followed by ...♖c8 chasing the rook, and gaining an edge due to the two

bishops) 19...♘c5! (the best, although 19...♘b6 isn't that clear-cut after 20 a5 ♙d8 or 20...h6, or 20 ♖xg5 ♜xg8 21 a5; but 19...♞ad8?! 20 ♖xg5 ♜xg8 21 ♖e7 is very good for White) 20 b4 (20 ♖xg5 ♞xg8) 20...♙d8 21 bxc5 ♙c8 22 ♖g3 ♞xg8 23 ♞d6 ♞e8 24 ♞ed1 when the possession of the d-file grants White a strong initiative.

Going back a bit, 20...♘xa4 seems stronger given the following variation: 21 ♘xa4 bxa4 (21...♜xg8? allows White to direct his forces towards the enemy king: 22 ♘c5 ♙d8 23 ♞d7 ♙c8 24 ♞ed1! ♙xd7 25 ♞xd7 ♖c8 26 ♖f3 ♜h8 27 ♞xf7 ♙h4 28 ♘e6 ♞xf7 29 ♖xf7 ♖g8 30 ♖c7 ♙f6 31 ♘g5 and White wins) 22 ♞d7 ♙c8 or 22...♖c8!? and the position is very murky.

19 ♘f5+!



19...♘h8

19...gxf5? loses to 20 ♙xd8+ fxg4 21 ♙xc7 gxh3 22 ♙xe5+ f6 23 ♙d6.

20 ♘d6 b4 21 ♙e3! bxc3 22 ♙xc5 ♙e7 23 ♖g3! cxb2

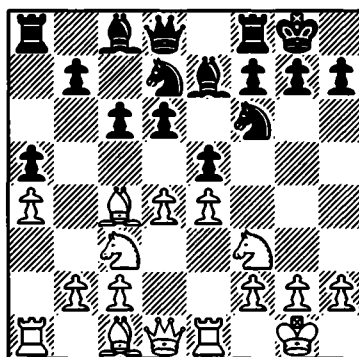
After 23...♞ad8 24 ♖xc3 ♙xd6 25 ♞xd6 ♞d6 26 ♖xe5+ White will have two extra pawns.

24 ♖xe5+ ♙f6 25 ♖g3 ♙c8 26 e5 ♙g7 27 ♖b3 ♙e6

Or 27...♞b8 28 ♘xf7+ ♞xf7 29 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 30 ♙xf7 ♙xe5 (30...♙f5 31 ♙b3) 31 ♞xe5 b1♖ 32 ♞xb1 ♞xb1+ 33 ♜h2 and ♙d4 will finish the job.

28 ♖xb2 ♞ab8 29 ♖a3 ♞fd8 30 a5 ♖e7 31 ♙xe6 ♖xe6 32 ♖f3 ♘h6 33 ♖xc6 ♘f5 34 ♖c7 1-0

D) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♙e1 c6 8 a4 a5



This treatment of the position radically differs from that after 8...b6. Black renounces his counterplay based on ...b5 in order to ensure a stable square on c5 for his d7-knight after a capture on d4. He will continue his development with a plan such as ...♘c5, ...♞e8, ...♙f8, ...♖b6, and subsequently ...♙d7, ...♞ad8, ...♙c8.

The most effective way for White to counter this idea consists of fianchettoing the dark-squared bishop and then attacking on the kingside by means of ♖f3(-g3) and ♘f5.

After 8...a5 we will concentrate on the replies:

D1: 9 h3

D2: 9 ♖a2

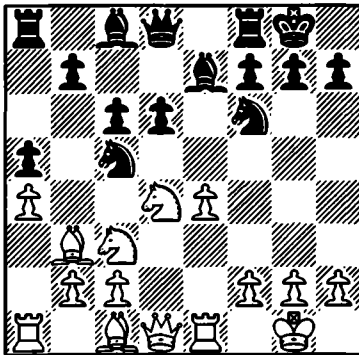
D3: 9 b3

Firstly, let's look at less frequent alternatives:

9 ♖e2

Or:

a) 9 ♖b3?! constitutes a loss of time as the bishop will be attacked after 9...exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5...



...when White has nothing better than to return with 11 ♖c4, and now 11...♗b6 is equal.

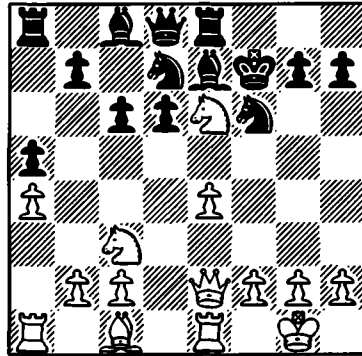
b) 9 ♖g5?! h6 10 ♖h4 (or 10 ♖e3 ♘g4) 10...♘h5 11 ♖xe7 ♗xe7 doesn't cause Black any particular problems, especially after 12 ♘e5?! dxe5 13 ♗xh5 exd4.

Going back to 9 ♖e2, with the white rook already standing on e1, the queen move doesn't appear very logical. Black has two ways to deal with it: maintain the tension with 9...♗c7 (or even 9...h6 or 9...♞e8); or release it to reach a position similar to the one that arose in Glek-Bologan (Chapter 12, Line B23), by playing...

9...exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♞e8

...followed by 11...♖f8, ...♘c5 etc.

The inclusion of ♞e1 and ...a5 hasn't changed much. The sacrifice 11 ♖xf7+?? ♗xf7 12 ♘e6...



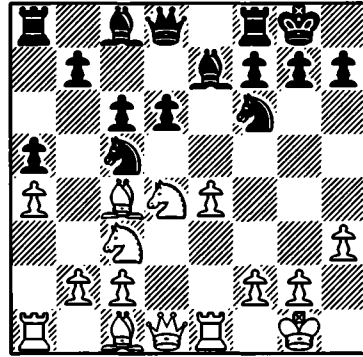
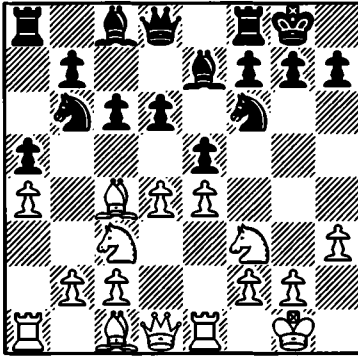
...is still faulty, because of 12...♗b6, winning for Black. But not 12...♗e6?? 13 ♗c4+ d5 14 exd5+ (double check this time!) 14...♗f7 15 dxc6+ ♖g6 16 c7 ♗xc7 17 ♗xc7 ♖d6 (a lucky point that avoids immediate defeat) 18 ♞xe8 ♖xc7 with a definite advantage for White.

D1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♞e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 h3 exd4

Or:

a) 9...♗e8, although playable, suffers from the same drawback as when played one move earlier. 10 ♖a2 ♖d8 11 ♘h4!? (targeting f5 and then d6; 11 ♖e3 and 11 ♖g5 are also natural and good) 11...exd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗e5 13 ♘f3 ♗xd4 14 ♘xd4 with an edge for White in Van Riemsdijk-Agdamus, Brazilian Ch., Americana 1995.

b) 9...♘b6, followed by 10...♘fd7, has been employed lately.



One recent example continued with the sequence 10 ♖d3 ♜fd7 11 ♙e3 ♜e8 12 ♜d2 (Baramidze-Bezold, Pulvermuehle 2006) when White has more space and has slightly the better position.

c) 9...h6 10 ♙e3 ♜e8 11 ♜b1!? (an original plan, which is duly rewarded; 11 d5!? ♜b6 12 ♙b3 cxd5 13 ♙xb6 ♜xb6 14 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 15 ♜xd5 ♙e6 16 ♜d3 ♜ac8 17 ♜ad1 ♜c6 was between unclear and slightly better for White in Mi.Tseitlin-Shirazi, Bagneux 1994) 11...♜h7 12 ♜a2 ♜f8 13 ♜ad1 ♜c7 14 ♜e2 ♜g5 15 ♜xg5 ♙xg5 16 ♜g3 ♙xe3 17 ♜xe3 with a small plus for White, due to his more space and better posted pieces, Rytshagov-Nevednichy, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

After 9...exd4 White has a choice of recaptures:

D11: 10 ♜xd4

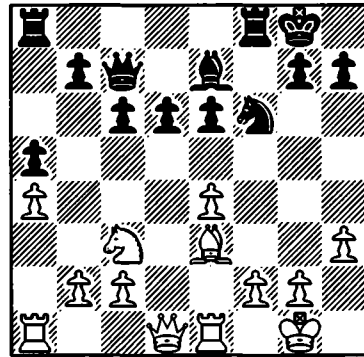
D12: 10 ♜xd4

D11) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 h3 exd4 10 ♜xd4 ♜c5

11 ♙f4

This is the main line of the 9 h3 system. Alternatively:

a) 11 ♙a2?! is an unfortunate mix of two ideas, and it deprives White of the possibility b3, ♙b2, because the bishop would then be ridiculous on a2. For example, 11...♜b6 (11...♙e6!?) 12 ♜b3 ♜xb3 13 ♙xb3 ♙e6 14 ♙e3 (14 ♜d5 is equal) 14...♜c7 15 ♙xe6?! fxe6...



...and Black converted his advantage on move 55 in Ye Jiangchuan-Hamdouchi, Cannes (rapid) 2001.

The direct 12 e5! may be more to the point: 12...dxe5 13 ♜xe5 ♙d6 14 ♜e1 ♜d8 15 ♜f3 (on 15 ♙g5?! Black can consent

to the ruining of his pawn structure for the sake of dynamism: 15...♗e6 16 ♖xf6 gxf6 17 ♖g4+ [otherwise White is going to lose material] 17...♗g5 18 ♗f5 ♖xb2 19 ♗e4 ♖xf5 20 ♖xf5 ♗e4 21 ♖xe4 ♖b4! 22 ♖xf7+ ♗g7 and Black is fine) 15...♗xa4 16 ♗xa4 ♖xd4 17 ♖g5; or 15...♗cd7 16 ♗f5 ♗e5 17 ♗h6+ ♗f8 18 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♗xf7, in both cases with an strong initiative for White. Black can probably improve after 12 e5, but he is clearly on the defensive.

b) For 11 b3 see Line D32.

c) 11 ♖f3 ♖e6 (the pseudo-sacrifice 11...♗xc4!? seems to equalize at once: 12 ♗xe4 d5 13 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 14 ♖d3 [14 ♖d1?! is dubious: 14...dxc4 15 ♗e6 ♖xe6 16 ♖xd8 ♖axd8 and Black stands better] 14...♖xd4 15 ♖xh7+ ♗xh7 16 ♖d3+; but Black's prospects are no worse after the more complex 11...♖e6) 12 ♖f1 d5 (12...♖b6!?) 13 exd5 ♗xd5 with equality, since 14 ♗xe6 fxe6 15 ♖g4 ♖d6 provides Black with enough dynamism.

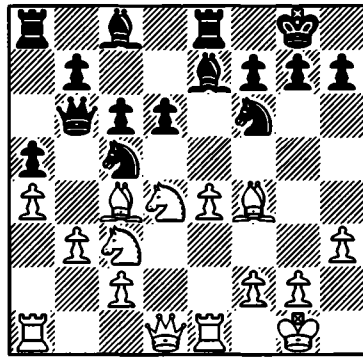
d) Even the peculiar 11 ♖f1, seen in Anand-J.Costa, Biel 1988, deserves consideration. White's idea seems to be to discourage ...♖e6, as well as the possible equalizer ...♗xe4 and ...d5. After 11...♖e8 12 ♖f3 (or 12 b3!? ♖f8 13 f3) 12...♖b6 13 b3 ♖b4 (13...♗xc4?! 14 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 15 ♖xe4 ♖xh3 16 ♖d3 g6 17 ♖f4 should be somewhat better for White) 14 ♖c4 ♗cd7!, Black keeps the balance.

11...♖e6!

Black has tried various methods of counterplay, amongst which 11...♖e6 is the most popular. However, Black has

a wide choice here, and we will first deal with his less standard replies:

a) 11...♖b6!? 12 b3 (12 ♖d2!? ♖d7 13 ♗b3 may be a trifle better for White, whereas 12 ♖f3 allowed Black a comfortable equalization after 12...♖e6 13 ♖f1 d5 14 exd5 ♗xd5 15 ♖e5 ♗d7 16 ♗f5 ♗xe5 17 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 18 ♖xe5 ♗g6 in Dervishi-V.Georgiev, Durres 2001) 12...♖e8 (and 12...♖e6!? 13 ♖f1 ♖ad8, I.Vitic-O.Bitic, Croatian Team Ch. 2003, is interesting too) and now:



a1) 13 ♖f3 ♗cd7 14 ♗f5 ♗e5 15 ♖xe5 dxe5 16 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 17 ♖ad1 ♖e6 18 ♖xe6 (Hracek-Piket, Moscow Olympiad 1994) 18...♖xe6 is level.

a2) 13 ♗f3?! ♖e6 14 ♗d2 ♖ad8 is also level, Dreev-Arizmendi Martinez, Albox (rapid) 2003.

a3) 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♖xe5 (or 14 ♖xe5 ♗cd7 15 ♖e3 ♗f8 16 ♖d2 ♗g6) 14...♗cd7 15 ♖g3 (worse is 15 ♗f5?! ♗xe5 16 ♖xe5 ♖b4 with a small edge to Black in S.Ahmed-Magem Badals, Dhaka 2003) 15...♗f8 16 ♖d3 ♗g6, when the white pieces are bit better placed, but Black should be able to equalize soon.

a4) 13 ♖h2!? (possibly a clever semi-waiting move) 13...♗f8 14 ♛f3 was Kosteniuk-Strikovic, Dos Hermanas blitz 2004. White stood better later on and went on to win, but perhaps 14...♟cd7 15 ♟f5 ♟e5 16 ♖xe5 ♜xe5 17 ♟h6+ gxh6 18 ♛xf6 ♖e6 is alright for Black.

After any of the following, rather passive attempts, White should keep a slight plus:

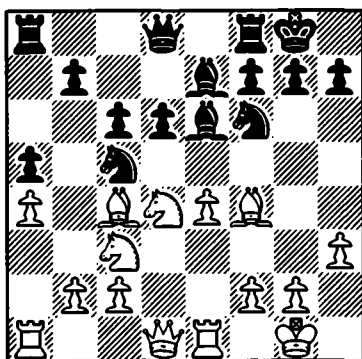
b) 11...♟fd7?! 12 ♟f5 ♟e5 13 ♟xe7+ ♛xe7 14 ♖f1 (Sermek-D.Novak, Croatian Team Ch. 2000) and White has the two bishops for nothing.

c) 11...♜e8 12 ♛f3 ♖f8 13 ♜ad1, Tukmakov-Planinec, Amsterdam 1974.

d) 11...♟e8 12 ♛d2 ♟e6 13 ♖e3 ♟xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖e6 15 ♖f1 f5, Skripchenko-O.Bartosik, Bratislava 1993.

d) 11...♟e6 12 ♖h2 ♟xd4 13 ♛xd4 ♟e8 14 ♜ad1 ♖e6, Ganguly-Elbilia, Turin Olympiad 2006.

Returning to 11...♖e6:



12 ♟xe6

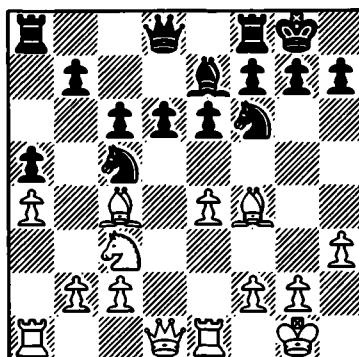
Or:

a) 12 ♖f1 ♛b6 (12...d5!?) 13 ♛f3 (13 b3 ♜ad8 14 ♛f3 d5 was equal in Kutu-

zovic-Topalovic, Pula 2002) 13...d5 brings us back to Dervishi-V.Georgiev (see 11...♛b6), but 13...♜ad8 14 ♜ad1 ♛b4 (Tseshkovsky-Jenetl, Krasnodar 2001) is a valid option as well.

b) 12 ♖xe6 fxe6 13 e5 is not too demanding for Black: 13...♟d5 14 exd6 (14 ♟xd5 exd5 15 ♖g3 ♖h4 was equal in Baramidze-Belikov, Dortmund match 2003, as is 15...dxe5 16 ♖xe5 ♖h4 17 ♟f3; while after 15 ♛g4?! h5 16 ♛g3 ♖h4 or 15 exd6 ♖xd6 16 ♖xd6 ♛xd6, White even ends up worse) 14...♟xf4 (if 14...♖xd6?! 15 ♖xd6 ♛xd6 16 ♟e4 ♟xe4 17 ♜xe4 with an edge) 15 dxe7 ♛xe7 16 ♛g4. Now 16...♜f6, intending ...♜af8, ...♜g6, and 17 ♟f5 ♛c7, seems the most precise, but even 16...♛f6 or 16...♜ad8 is playable.

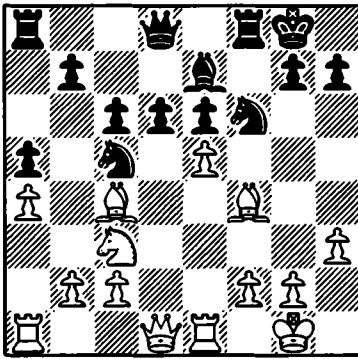
12...fxe6



13 e5

Or 13 ♛e2 ♛b6 (13...♟fd7 14 ♛e3 d5 was also fine for Black in V.Karasev-Shabanov, Satka 2004) 14 e5 (14 ♛e3 d5 15 exd5 ♟xd5 16 ♖xd5 exd5 17 ♛xe7 ♜xf4 was at least equal for Black in Beliavsky-Oratovsky, Bugojno 1999) 14...♟d5 15 ♖xd5 cxd5 16 exd6 ♖xd6

17 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 with a roughly equal game. 15...cxd5 is the most solid, but 15...exd5 16 exd6 ♖f6 17 ♖ab1 ♖ad8 also deserves consideration. Black will continue with ...♜b4 and maybe grab on c3. His pieces control many important squares, though it is still unclear how he will deal with the d6-pawn.



13...d5

13...♘d5 leads to positions similar to those after 12 ♖xe6. The difference, the survival of the c4-bishop rather than the d4-knight, doesn't alter the assessment. After 14 exd6 ♘xf4 (or 14...♖xd6!? 15 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 16 ♘e4 ♘xe4 17 ♖xe4, Reeh-Miltner, German League 2005, and I don't think White can claim an edge here, as the bishop is not as effective as a knight on d4 would be) 15 dxe7 ♜xe7, Black has enough activity to compensate for the weakness on e6. He will probably follow up by playing ...♖f6, then double on the f-file, and/or continue with ...♗g6, ...♜g5 and so on. His knight on d5 does a good job of blocking the bishop's attack on e6.

13...♘fd7!? is a possibility for Black

which is unavailable after 12 ♖xe6. Following 14 exd6 ♖xf4 15 dxe7 ♜xe7 Black should be okay.

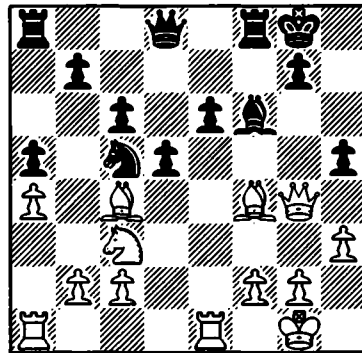
The text move is interesting, but also more dangerous for Black.

14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 ♜g4!

15 ♖e3 d4 is equal.

15...h5!

After the faulty 15...dxc4?, the right way is 16 ♖ad1! ♜b6 (or 16...♜e8 17 ♖d6 ♖e7 18 ♜xc4 and the Philidor specialist was quite lucky to escape against a much lower-rated opponent in Alford-N.Mitkov, Mexico City 2006) 17 ♖e3! and Black experiences trouble in every case, e.g. 17...♜xb2 (or 17...♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♖f5 19 ♖d7!) 18 ♖xc5 ♖xc3 19 ♜xe6+ ♘h8 20 ♖b1! ♜xc2 21 ♖xf8 ♖xe1 (if 21...♖xf8 22 ♜f7!) 22 ♖xg7+ ♘xg7 23 ♖xb7+ and mate follows.



16 ♜f3

After 16 ♜g3 dxc4 17 ♖ad1 ♜b6 (17...♜e8?! 18 ♖d6 ♖e7 19 ♖e5 gave White a noticeable edge in Godena-N.Mitkov, Calvia Olympiad 2004) 18 ♖e3 (or 18 ♖d6 ♖f7) 18...♜b4, intending 19 ♘a2 ♘e4!, the position is unclear.

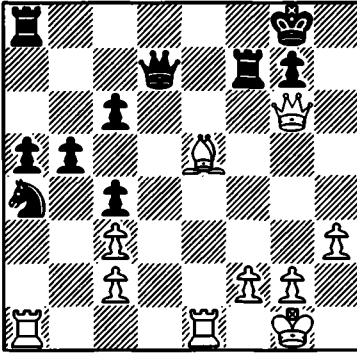
16 ♜xh5? is wrong: 16...♖xc3 17

bxc3 (or 17 ♖g5 ♜f5!) 17...♜xf4 18 ♖d3 ♜h4 with a great advantage to Black, whose pawn structure is clearly favourable.

16...dxc4 17 ♜xh5 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♝xa4

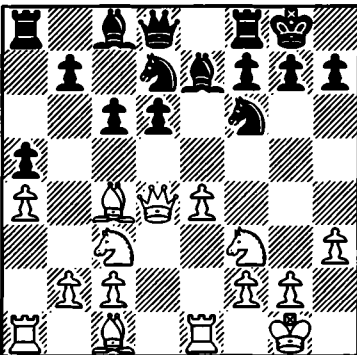
Maybe 18...♜f5 19 ♜g4 b5.

19 ♜g4 b5 20 ♜xe6+ ♜f7 21 ♖e5 ♜d7
22 ♜g6



This looks promising for White, but after 22...♜b6 followed by ...♜d5, and ...♜f5 if needed, Black also has his trumps.

D12) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♝f6 3 ♝c3 ♝bd7 4 ♝f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 h3 exd4 10 ♜xd4

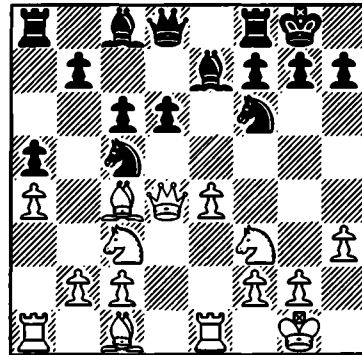


Under the present circumstances this is an interesting alternative to 10 ♝xd4. White can concentrate his forces towards the d6 weakness thanks to his opponent's previous move, which at least gives him an easy plan.

10...♝c5

After 10...♜b6?! I would rate Black's equalizing chances much lower: 11 ♖e3 (or 11 ♖f4) 11...♜b4 12 ♖d2 ♜c5 13 ♖f4 ♝e8 (or 13...♜xd4 14 ♝xd4 ♝e5 15 ♖b3) 14 ♜ad1 ♜xd4 15 ♝xd4 and White enjoyed a persistent edge in Bologan-B.Damljanovic, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

In the event of 10...♜b6!?, to follow up with ...d5, White's bishop would stay on the a2-g8 diagonal. Indeed, 11 ♖b3 d5 12 exd5 ♝fxd5 13 ♝xd5 ♝xd5 14 ♖xd5 cxd5 is slightly better for White, as the bishops don't fully compensate for the isolani.



11 ♖f4

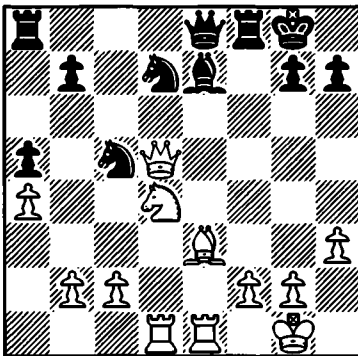
Aiming at d6, this is the most consistent follow-up to 10 ♜xd4.

Here are some other minor options for White:

a) 11 b3 ♝cx4!? (11...♖e6) 12 ♜xe4

(12 ♖xe4 d5 is roughly equal after 13 ♖ed2 dxc4 14 ♗xd8 ♙xd8 15 ♖xc4) 12...♖xe4 13 ♖xe4 d5 14 ♙b2 f6 15 ♖d1 and now, rather than 15...♗e8? 16 ♖e1 ♗f7 (or 16...dxc4 17 ♖d6) 17 ♙d3 with a quick White victory in Arakhamia-Giertz, Geneva 1990, Black should have opted for either 15...♖h8 16 ♖eg5 ♙f5 17 ♙d3 ♙xd3 18 ♖xd3 c5, or 15...♗c7 16 ♙d3 dxe4 17 ♗xe4 f5 with dynamical equilibrium in both cases.

b) 11 ♙e3!? ♙e6 (11...♖xc4?! was insufficient for equality in H.Bastian-Wahls, German League 1988, after 12 ♖xe4 d5 13 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 14 ♗f4 dxc4 15 ♖ad1 ♗e7 16 ♗xc4 ♙e6 17 ♙c5 ♙xc4 18 ♙xe7, as Black faced the prospect of either conceding the seventh rank or allowing his pawn structure to be damaged) 12 ♖ad1 (or 12 ♙xe6!?, intending 12...fxe6 13 e5) 12...♖fd7 13 ♙xe6 fxe6 14 ♗c4 ♗e8 15 ♖d4 d5 16 exd5 exd5 17 ♖xd5 cxd5 18 ♗xd5+



...and now instead of 18...♖h8?! 19 ♖f5 (Savic-Damljanovic, Herceg Novi 2002), 18...♗f7 19 ♖f5 ♙d8 would have been fine for Black.

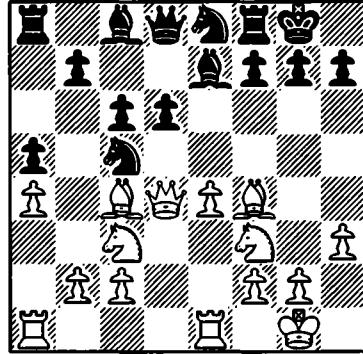
c) 11 e5?! brought White nothing af-

ter 11...dxe5 12 ♗xe5 ♙e6 in Manca-N.Mitkov, Saint Vincent 2003.

11...♙e6

Or:

a) The seemingly passive 11...♖e8 is playable, too.



Black is intending 12...♖e6, when 13 ♙xe6 fxe6 14 e5 d5 would be fine for him. Another plan consists of ...♖h8 followed by ...f5, which explains White's next: 12 ♗e3! ♙e6 13 ♙f1 ♗b6 14 ♖ad1 ♖d8 (14...♗xb2?? loses, of course, to 15 ♖b1 ♗a3 16 ♖d5, or 15...♗xc2 16 ♖d4) 15 b3 with a slight edge to White, Chebotarev-Dudukin, Serpukhov 2004.

b) 11...♖e6 12 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 (12...fxe6? 13 e5 supplies an argument for 11...♖e8; after 13...♖d5 14 exd6 ♖xf4 15 dxe7 ♗xe7 16 ♖e3 White has a nice plus linked with the weak e-pawn and the bad c8-bishop) 13 ♖ad1 d5 (or 13...♖e8 14 ♗e3 ♗c7 15 ♖d2 ♖d8 16 ♖ed1 and White was pressing in M.Pavlovic-Miltner, Biel 2003) 14 exd5 cxd5 (14...♖xd5 would not have solved the problems after 15 ♙e5, or 15 ♖xd5!? with the tricky idea 15...♙xd5?? 16 ♗e3)

15 ♖g5 ♙f5 16 ♛e5 ♙xc2 17 ♛xe7 ♛xe7
18 ♜xe7 ♙xd1 19 ♜xd1 when Black had chances to hold, but obviously it was White who was having all the fun in Kaidanov-V.Georgiev, Chicago 2002.

12 ♜ad1 ♛b6

12...♜e8 (Isonzo-N.Mitkov, Saint Vincent 2003) is probably worse, but it's also more complicated!

13 ♙xe6

After 13 b3!? ♙xc4 14 ♛xc4 (as in Luther-N.Mitkov, Plovdiv 2003) White may be a tad better, but not more.

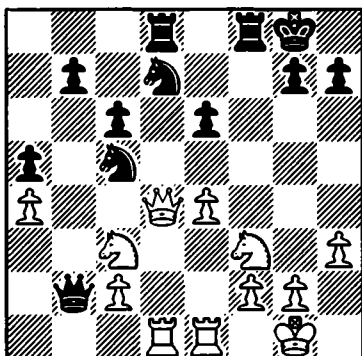
13...fxe6 14 ♙xd6

Or 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♛xe5 (after 15 ♙xe5 ♜ad8 16 ♛h4 ♛b4 Black was close to equality in Pikula-N.Mitkov, Pfaeffikon 2003) 15...♜d5 (15...♛xb2? 16 ♜d5! ♛xe5 17 ♜xe7+ ♖f7 18 ♜xe5 and Black found it hard to conveniently regain the piece in Battsetseg-Sheremetieva, Manila Olympiad 1992) 16 ♜xd5 exd5! and Black is okay.

14...♙xd6 15 ♛xd6 ♜ad8 16 ♛e5!

16 ♛e7 ♜de8 17 ♛d6 ♜d8 18 ♛e7 ♜de8 was agreed drawn in Sermek-N.Mitkov, Bled Olympiad 2002.

16...♜fd7 17 ♛d4 ♛xb2



18 ♛e3!

18 ♜b1 ♛xc2 19 ♜e2 (19 ♜ed1?! ♜b3 was already in Black's favour in S.Cela-A.Kizov, Bar 2006) 19...♛d3 20 ♛xd3 ♜xd3 21 ♜xb7 ♜7c5 is equal.

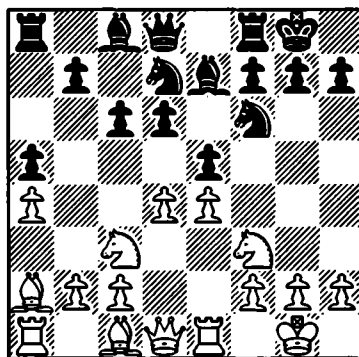
18...♛a3

After 18...♛b6 19 ♜d6 (Korneev-Mietzner, Böblingen 2003) it is difficult for Black to move, since his knights and queen are somewhat tangled.

19 ♜b1

(Nedev-Tratar, European Ch., Istanbul 2003). Black's position, though very playable, is more difficult to handle.

D2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 ♙a2



Now Black can play:

D21: 9...h6

D22: 9...exd4

Or:

9...♜e8

Black usually can't manage without the preparatory ...h6 if he wishes to continue with this rook move.

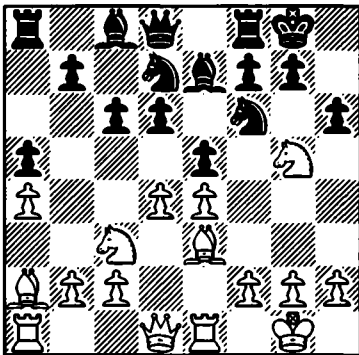
The drawback of 9...♛b6?! is the

possibility of 10 h3 exd4 11 ♖xd4! ♖b4 (swapping queens provides White with an easy position – compare with Bologan-Damljanovic in Line D12) 12 ♖f4 ♗e5 13 ♖xe5 dxe5 14 ♖xe5 and Black's compensation was missing in Mukhametov-Genba, Moscow 1996. 12...♗h5 leads to complications that turn out well for White: 13 ♖e3 ♖f6 14 ♖d2 ♖xb2? (14...♗e5!) 15 ♗d4 (the queen is trapped and must run away as quickly as possible) 15...♖b4 16 ♖ab1 ♖c5 17 ♗de2 ♖xc3 (if 17...♖e5 18 g4 wins) 18 ♗xc3 ♖e5 19 g4 ♗hf6 20 ♖f4 with already a close-to-decisive advantage for White. The thematic 9...♖c7 is possible, though.

10 ♗g5

White can keep an edge after 10 h3 ♖f8 (10...h6 would return to Yakovich-Genba, Line D21) 11 ♖e3 or 11 ♗g5 ♖e7 12 ♖e3.

10...♖f8 11 ♖e3 h6



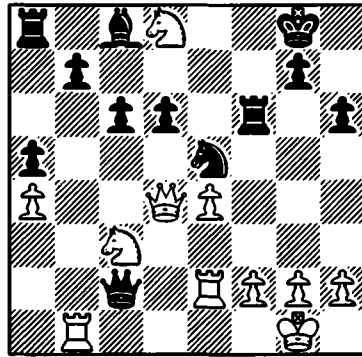
12 ♖xf7+?!

A suspicious attempt to exploit Black's ninth move. Events now take a forced turn, but everything is okay from Black standpoint.

12...♖xf7 13 ♗e6 ♖b6 14 dxe5 ♖xb2 15 exf6 ♖xf6 16 ♖d4 ♖xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♗e5 18 ♗d8 ♖f6

The creative 18...♖f3! 19 ♗e2 ♖xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♖f8 21 ♗8e6 ♖xe6 22 ♗xe6 ♖f6 23 ♗d4 is slightly better for Black, since he has fewer pawn islands.

19 ♖ab1 ♖xc2 20 ♖e2



20...♗f3+

This sacrifice forces a draw in spectacular fashion.

Black could carry on the struggle by playing 20...♖d3!? 21 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 22 ♗xb7, but the position remains in equilibrium.

21 gxf3 ♖g6+ 22 ♖h1 ♖xb1+

Or immediately 22...♖h3.

23 ♗xb1 ♖h3 24 ♖b6 ♖g2+ ½-½

Kharlov-S.Pedersen, Aalborg 1993.

D21) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 ♖a2 h6 10 h3 ♖e8 11 ♖e3 ♖f8 12 ♗d2!

We are following Yakovich-Genba, Perm 1997.

12...♖c7?!

A mistake. 12...♗b6 13 ♖f3 (13 f4!?)

13...♙e6 14 d5 cxd5 15 exd5 ♙d7, or 12...exd4!? 13 ♙xd4 ♘c5 14 ♚f3 ♙e6 was better.

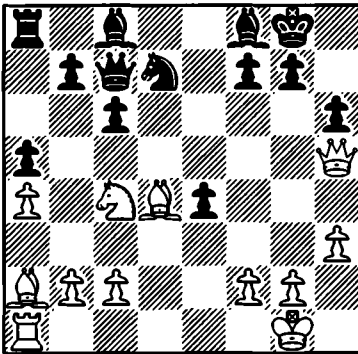
13 ♘c4 exd4 14 ♙xd4 ♘xe4? 15 ♘xe4 d5 16 ♚h5?!

16 ♘b6! would have won more quickly after 16...♘xb6 17 ♘f6+.

16...♞xe4

Two other possibilities couldn't save Black: if 16...g6 17 ♚h4 dxe4 18 ♘b6! ♘xb6 19 ♚f6 and White wins, while 16...dxe4 17 ♘d6 is similar to the game continuation.

17 ♞xe4 dxe4



18 ♘d6! ♚xd6 19 ♚xf7+ ♔h7 20 ♚g8+ ♔g6 21 ♙f7+! ♔f5

Or 21...♔g5 22 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 23 ♚xg7+ ♔f5 24 ♙g6+! ♔e6 (24...♚xg6 25 g4+ ♔g5 26 h4+) 25 ♚f7+ ♔e5 26 ♚f5+ ♔d4 27 ♞d1+ and White wins.

22 ♚h7+ ♔g5

22...g6 is no improvement as after 23 ♙xg6+ ♚xg6 24 g4+ White wins the queen.

23 h4+ ♔xh4 24 ♚xe4+ ♔g5 25 f4+ ♔h4 26 ♙f2+ 1-0

Mate follows with 26...♔g4 27 ♙h5+ ♔xh5 28 ♚f5+ g5 29 g4.

D22) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♞e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 ♙a2 exd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c5

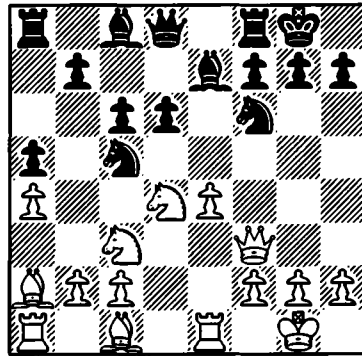
After this common move White is again at a crossroads. Apart from 11 ♙f4 and 11 ♚f3, he has tried many unconvincing moves: 11 ♘f5?!, 11 f3 and 11 ♙g5 to name a few.

11 ♙f4

Or:

a) For 11 h3?! see Line D11.

b) With 11 ♚f3 White would like to bring his knight to f5, but without having to recapture with the e-pawn in the event of ...♙xf5. Indeed, Black would then continue by playing ...d5 and, rather than his doubled pawns, it would be the bishop on a2 that would cause a headache.



Black can play:

b1) 11...♙e6?! 12 ♘f5 (12 ♙e3 should also guarantee a slight edge) 12...♙xf5 13 ♚xf5 when, in comparison with 11...♚b6 12 ♘f5 etc., Black has lost a whole tempo, his queen being quite annoying for White on b6.

b2) In contrast to Sermek-D.Novak (see Line D11) 11...♘fd7?! is quite in-

teresting here. After 12 ♖f5 ♖e5 13 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 14 ♗g3 ♖e6 (as in R.Watanabe-Scarella, Bariloche 1991) the difference is that White can't hide his bishop on f1.

b3) 11...♗b6! is the best reply in my opinion:

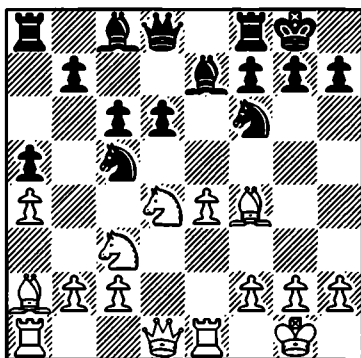
b31) 12 ♖g5 ♖h8 (12...♗b4!?) 13 e5?! dxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♖g4 15 ♗f4 ♖e6 16 ♖xe6 fxe6 (Teran Alvarez-Oratovsky, Mancha Real 2000), and White experiences trouble parrying the numerous threats (b2, f2 and ...♖d6).

b32) 12 ♖b3 ♖xb3 13 ♖xb3 ♖e6 14 ♖e3 ♗c7 transposes to Slobodjan-Oratovsky (Line A) and is equal.

b33) 12 ♖f5 ♖xf5 13 ♗xf5 ♗ae8 (M.Bilic-O.Biti, Croatian Ch., Zagreb 2002) and White can't finish his development properly since b2 is hanging. This should give Black a kind of dynamic equality, provided that he acts energetically (moves like ...♗b4, ...♖d8, ...♗e5/...d5 come to mind).

c) On 11 ♖g5 Black can consider 11...♗b6 or 11...♖e6!?

Returning to 11 ♖f4.



11...♖e6

Once more this move seems to be adequate.

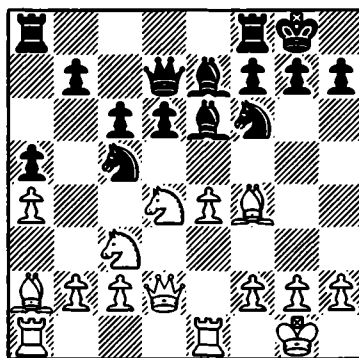
After 11...♖e6?! (Asrian-Doostkam, Dubai 2004) I would suggest the retreat 12 ♖e3, when White keeps an edge.

11...♗b6 has also been played: 12 ♗d2 ♗e8 13 ♖b3! (13 ♖h1 ♖g4 [13...♗b4!?) 14 f3 ♖e5 was not too scary for Black in Daurelle-Piot, Clichy 2001) 13...♖f8 14 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 15 ♖e3 ♗h5 16 ♖d4 ♖g4?! (16...♗g6) 17 h3 ♖e5 18 f4 with a pleasant edge for White, Rodriguez Cespedes-L.Brunner, World Team Ch., Lucerne 1989.

12 ♗d2

In the event of 12 ♖xe6 fxe6 13 e5 ♖d5 14 ♖xd5, Black should avoid 14...exd5? 15 exd6 ♖xd6 16 ♖xd5+ ♖h8 17 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 18 ♖f3 (Sprenger-Lobzhanidze, Belgian League 2005) and rather opt for 14...cxd5, when his position is quite acceptable.

12...♗d7

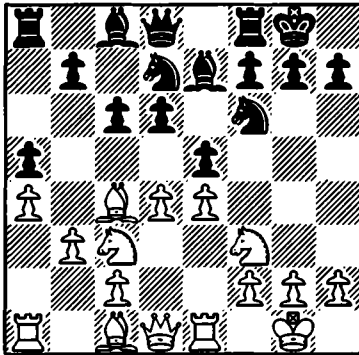


...was roughly equal, Gaponenko-Mietzner, German League 2005.

D3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♗e1 c6 8 a4 a5

9 b3

This quiet pawn move currently seems to be the most promising continuation for White.



9...exd4

Or:

a) 9...♞c7?! 10 ♖b2 h6 (or 10...♞e8 11 ♜d2 h6 12 ♜f1 ♜f8 13 h3 ♜6h7 14 d5 g5 15 ♞ad1 ♜g6 16 ♜h2 h5 17 g3 with a small advantage) 11 h3 ♞e8 12 ♜d2 ♜f8 13 ♞ad1 ♜g6 14 d5! ♞d8 15 ♖a3 ♜f4 16 ♜f1 ♜e8 (16...cxd5) 17 ♜h2 g5 18 g3 ♜g6 (if 18...♜xh3 19 ♖xh3 g4 20 ♖g2 gxf3 21 ♖xf3 with a clear plus) 19 ♜e3 ♜f6 20 ♜d2 ♖d7 21 ♜c4 c5 22 ♜b5 ♖xb5 23 axb5 ♜e8?! (23...b6) was Shirov-Tischbierek, German League 1992, and now 24 b6! ♜d7 25 ♖b2 a4 26 ♞a1 leaves White with a clear advantage.

b) 9...h6 10 ♖a3 ♞e8 11 h3 ♜c7 (11...♜h7!?) 12 ♜d2 ♜b6 13 ♜f1 ♖e6 14 ♞ad1 ♖f8 (or 14...♞ad8 15 ♜b1! ♜c8 16 c4 with an edge for White) 15 ♜b1!? exd4 16 ♜xd4 d5 17 exd5 ♖xd5 18 ♞xe8 ♜xe8 19 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 20 c4 ♖e4 21 ♜c3 ♜f6 (Kundin-Erenburg, Givataim 1998) and 22 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 23 ♜e1! ♜c5 24 ♜f5 ♜e6 25 ♜c3 ♜f4 26 ♖d3 keeps an edge.

After 9...exd4 we will consider:

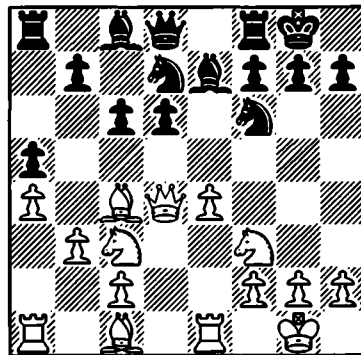
D31: 10 ♜xd4

D32: 10 ♜xd4 ♜c5

D33: 10 ♜xd4 ♜b6

D31) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 a4 a5 8 ♞e1 c6 9 b3 exd4 10 ♜xd4

Although less natural, the recapture with the queen is playable and gives White chances to obtain an opening advantage.



10...♜e5!

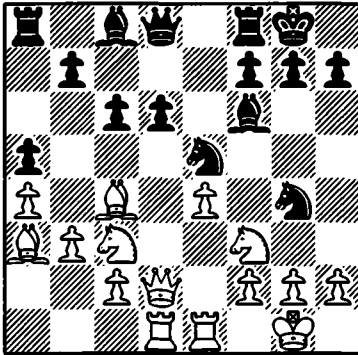
This knight sally, based on a tactical point, seems to solve all of Black's problems. Alternatively:

a) 10...♜g4 plans to install the e7-bishop on its best diagonal. White can play:

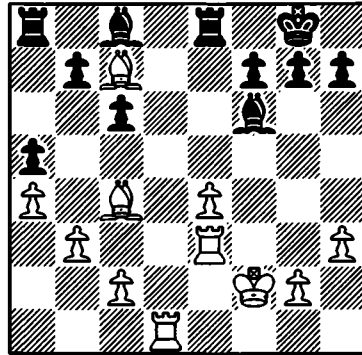
a1) 11 h3 ♜ge5 12 ♜xe5 dxe5 is equal. 12 ♖e2?! is worse: 12...♜xf3+ 13 ♖xf3 ♖f6 14 ♜d2 ♖e5 and, with ...♜c5, ...f5, and/or ...♜f6 arriving, Black was already slightly better in N.Medvegy-Oratovsky, Budapest 1999.

a2) 11 ♖b2 ♜de5 12 ♜xe5 dxe5 13 ♜xd8 ♞xd8 is again equal.

a3) 11 ♖a3! ♙f6 12 ♗d2 ♜de5 13 ♜ad1! is astonishing!



♙f6 19 ♙xd6 ♜e8 20 ♙c7 when the ending was a bit unpleasant for Black.



White allows both 13...♜xc4 and ...♜xf3+, but then his position would be better in both cases as d6 would fall. Instead, 13 ♙e2 ♗b6 14 ♜f1 ♜xf3+ 15 ♙xf3 ♗d4 16 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 17 ♙b2 ♜e5 is equal, while after 13 ♙f1?! ♗b6 or 13 ♜xe5?! ♙xe5 14 h3 ♗f6 (Leib-Oratovsky, Mondariz Balneario 2002) Black seizes the initiative.

Back to 13 ♜ad1, and Hamdouchi-Oratovsky, Mancha Real 2000, continued 13...♗b6 (13...♜xf3+?! loses d6 for nothing: 14 gxf3 ♜e5 15 ♙e2; or 14...♙xe5? 15 fxe4 ♙xh2+ 16 ♜g2 and White won in Gutierrez Lopez-Milla de Marco, Malaga 2004) 14 ♜xe5! (or 14 ♙xd6!? ♜d8 15 ♜e2 [Kabisch-Miltner, German League 2002] and after the computer-style 15...♜d7! Black holds the balance) 14...♙xe5 15 h3 ♜xf2 (worse is 15...♙xc3?! 16 ♗xc3 ♗xf2+ [16...♜xf2? 17 ♗d4 ♗xd4 18 ♜xd4 and the knight is trapped] 17 ♜h1 ♗h4 18 ♙b2 and White collects the pawn back on d6 with excellent attacking chances) 16 ♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 17 ♜xf2 ♙xc3 18 ♜e3

Swapping the light-squared bishops would allow an invasion of the seventh rank, while the a5-pawn requires constant protection.

b) 10...♜b6?! 11 ♙f1 d5 (Baron Rodriguez-Comas Fabrego, Lorca 2005) offers mutual chances.

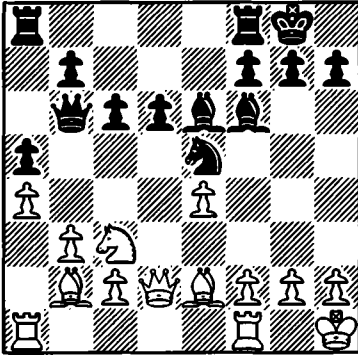
c) The automatic 10...♜c5?!, on the other hand, doesn't meet the demands of the position, and White achieved a nice edge after 11 ♙b2 ♜h8 12 ♜ad1 in Del Rio Angelis-Teran Alvarez, Spanish Team Ch. 2001.

11 ♙a3

The most recent try.

After 11 ♙e2 ♜fg4 12 h3 ♜xf3+ 13 ♙xf3 ♜e5 14 ♙e2 f5 Black was by no means worse in Degraeve-N.Mitkov, Bled Olympiad 2002. Instead 12 ♙b2 ♙f6 13 ♗d2 ♗b6 (or 13...♜xf3+!? 14 ♙xf3 ♙e5) 14 ♜f1 ♜xf3+ (14...♙e6 and 14...♜d8, Glavina Rossi-Oratovsky, Spanish Team Ch. 2004, are satisfactory too) 15 ♙xf3 ♜e5 16 ♙e2 ♙e6 17 ♜h1 (or 17 ♗xd6?! ♜ad8 18 ♗a3 ♜d2 and Black's activity is more than sufficient

to compensate for the pawn) was played in Lahno-Nedev, Istanbul 2003.



Now instead of the hasty jump 17...♖c4?!, Black should have played 17...♜ad8 first, when the game would have remained roughly level.

In the event of the obvious 11 ♖xe5 dxe5 12 ♗xe5, Black has slightly the upper hand: 12...♗g4 13 ♗f4 (not 13 ♗g3?? ♙h4) 13...♙d6 14 e5 ♖xe5 15 ♙a3! (15 ♗xe5? ♗c7 loses material) 15...♖xc4 and so on.

11...♖xc4

The alternative is 11...♖xf3+!? 12 gxf3 and now:

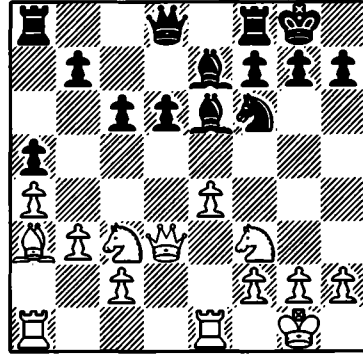
a) 12...♙e8?! 13 ♜ad1 d5 14 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 15 exd5 ♗xe1+ 16 ♗xe1 ♗xe1+ 17 ♖g2 and as moving the bishop allows the nasty 18 ♗b6, it seems that Black is in trouble.

b) 12...♙e6?! 13 ♜ad1 ♙xc4 14 bxc4! c5 15 ♗e3 leads to a position where White has more weaknesses than Black, but also many more active possibilities (♖b5, ♖d5, f4, etc.) so his prospects are very good.

c) After 12...♗c7! 13 ♜ad1 ♜d8, for the moment Black is on the defensive.

In comparison with the 12...♙e6?! line, however, he has kept some elasticity, and, after 14...♙e6, the freeing ...d5 thrust comes into the equation.

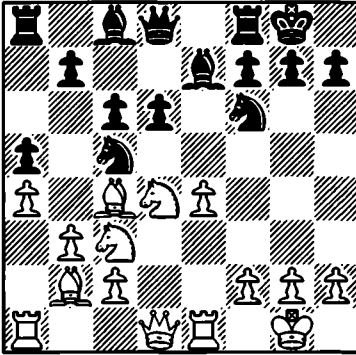
12 ♗xc4 ♙e6 13 ♗d3



In Jones-M.Roos, Cork 2004, Black accepted an isolated pawn with 13...d5?! 14 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 15 exd5 ♜ad8 16 ♖g5 cxd5, and here White can enjoy a persistent and risk-free advantage with 17 ♖b5!? or the game's 17 ♙e2. Instead, 13...♗c7 14 ♜ad1 ♜ad8 15 ♖d4 may be pleasant for White, owing to his space advantage, but not more than that.

D32) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♖bd7 4 ♖f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♙e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 b3 exd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖c5 11 ♙b2

Or 11 h3!? ♙e8 12 ♙b2 ♙f8 13 ♗f3 ♖cd7 14 ♙f1 ♖e5 15 ♗g3 ♖h5 (previously 15...♖g6 was preferred) 16 ♗e3 ♖f6 (a tacit peace offer, but White was in a fighting mood) 17 ♜ad1 g6 18 f4 ♖ed7 19 ♗f2 ♗c7 20 g4 ♖c5 21 ♙g2 ♙a6 22 ♖h1 ♙g7 23 ♙a3 ♖fd7 24 ♗d2 ♗d8 25 ♖de2 ♗h4 and now the players agreed a draw, De Firmian-Gulko, US Ch., Seattle 2000.



11...♖e8

The classical plan which targets the e4-pawn.

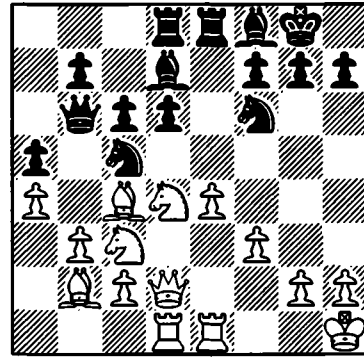
11...♗e6!? is another possibility.

I don't really understand the idea behind 11...♖h8!?, but this caused Shirov serious problems in his game against Hicham Hamdouchi: 12 ♖d2 (12 h3 ♖fd7 13 ♖f5 ♖e5 14 ♖xe7 ♖xc4 was perhaps one of the hidden points of 11...♖h8) 12...♖g4 13 ♖ad1 ♖b6 14 ♗f1 (prophylaxis against ...♖e5) 14...♗f6 15 h3 ♖e5 16 ♖e3 (16 f4 ♖e6! is equal; this is better than 16...♖ed3 17 ♗xd3 ♗xd4+ 18 ♖h1 when White will continue with ♖d5 or ♗c4) 16...♖g6 was Shirov-Hamdouchi, Spanish Team Ch. 2000, and now instead of Shirov's 17 ♖f5?!, the move 17 ♖db5! underlines the drawbacks of Black's idea: 17...cxb5 18 ♖d5 ♖d8 19 ♖xf6 bxa4 (or 19...gxf6 20 ♖xc5 dxc5 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♗xf6+ ♖g8 23 ♗xd8 bxa4 24 ♗b6 with a big plus) 20 ♖h5 f6 21 ♖xf6! and Black's position becomes critical.

12 ♖d2 ♗f8 13 f3 ♖b6 14 ♖h1 ♗d7 15 ♖ad1 ♖ad8

Or 15...♖e5!? 16 ♖de2 (16 ♖ce2?

♖xa4 17 ♗a1 ♖c5 18 ♖f5? ♖fxe4 19 fxe4 ♖xe4) 16...♖ee8 17 ♖f4 with an edge for White.

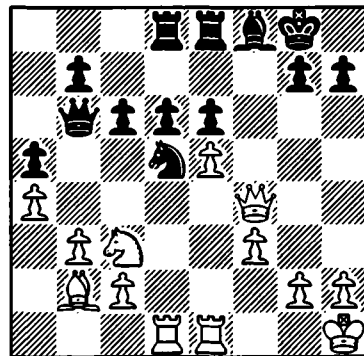


After 15...♖ad8, White stands better, but Black's position remains solid. Concrete operations now begin.

16 ♖f4 ♖e6 17 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 18 ♗xe6 fxe6

18...♖xe6?! 19 ♖e2 d5?! (19...♖d7) 20 ♖d4 ♖ee8 21 ♖f5 is very bad for Black.

19 e5 ♖d5

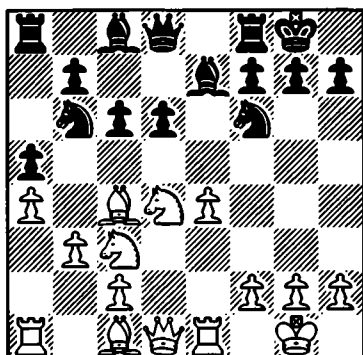


(Shirov-Beliavsky, German League 2000). After 20 ♖xd5! cxd5 (or 20...exd5 21 e6 ♖c7 22 ♖g4, with the idea of f4-f5) 21 exd6 ♖xd6 22 ♗e5 ♖c6 23 ♖e2, Black has three pawn islands against

his opponent's two, but the backward pawn on e6 constitutes his only real weakness, and thus his position remains perfectly defensible.

D33) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♞e1 c6 8 a4 a5 9 b3 exd4 10 ♞xd4 ♞b6

The latest trend for Black in this complex variation. The text move aims for more activity than the old jump to c5. It's true the knight often ends up misplaced on b6, but now White must pay attention to the mobile c- and d-pawn duo.



11 ♙d3!

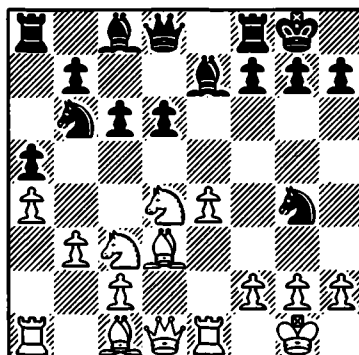
Practice has shown that the timid 11 ♙f1! is insufficient: 11...d5 12 e5 (or 12 exd5 ♞bxd5 13 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 with equality, N.Djukic-Damljanovic, Herceg Novi 2002) 12...♞e8 (but 12...♞g4? is wrong: 13 h3 ♙b4 14 ♞d3 [14 ♞f3? is a mistake due to 14...♞xf2!, J.Pinheiro-Milla de Marco, Orense 2002] 14...c5 15 hxg4 cxd4 16 ♞xd4 and White was clearly better in N.Kosintseva-Voiska, European Ch., Istanbul 2003; however, 12...♞e4! should equalize too: 13 ♞xe4

dx4 14 ♙b2 f5 15 exf6 ♙xf6 16 ♞b1 ♞d6, or 16...♞e8!? 17 g3 ♞d5, Y.Quezada-J.Maiwald, Havana 2004, with a roughly level position in both cases) 13 ♙d3 (if 13 ♞h5 g6 14 ♞h6 ♞g7 15 ♙d3 Black is a tempo up compared to 11 ♙d3!, and 15...c5 16 ♞f3 ♞e6 gave Black counterplay in De la Paz-Pecorelli Garcia, Havana 2003) 13...g6 14 ♙h6 ♞g7 15 ♞ce2 with equal chances, Moreno Carnero-Bologan, Pamplona 2001.

11...d5!

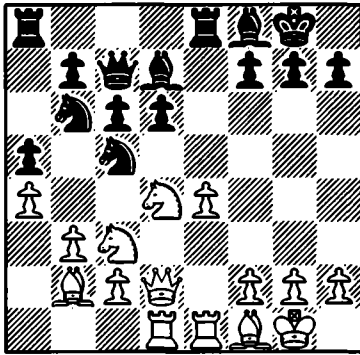
Or:

a) 11...♞g4 is interesting, if rather artificial:



12 ♙e2 ♙f6 13 ♙b2 (13 f3 ♞e5 14 f4 ♞g6 15 ♙e3 d5 looks fine for Black) 13...♙e5 (13...♞xh2? 14 ♞xh2 ♙e5+ 15 ♞g1 ♞f6 fails to 16 ♙f3 ♙xd4 17 ♞d5!, when the lesser evil is 17...cxd5, as 17...♙xf2+? 18 ♞xf2 ♞h4+ 19 g3 ♞h2+ 20 ♙g2 is curtains) 14 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 15 ♞xg4 ♙xd4 16 ♞ad1 c5 17 ♞xd4!? cxd4 18 ♞b5 was Pavasovic-A.Maier, Salzburg 2004. White will probably grab the two d-pawns and transfer his knight to f5, with plenty of compensation for the exchange.

b) 11...♟f7 would reach similar positions to those that result from 10...♟c5. For example, 12 ♙f1 ♟c5 13 ♙a3! (after the less accurate 13 ♙b2?! Huzman indicates how Black can gain counterplay: 13...♞e8 14 ♚f3 ♙f6 15 ♞ad1 ♙e5, or 14 ♚d2 ♙g5 15 f4 ♙f6 with the idea 16 ♞ad1 ♙g4) 13...♞e8 14 ♚d2 ♙f8 (at present the desirable 14...♙g5!? runs into 15 f4 ♙f6 16 e5 ♙e7 17 ♚f2 when Huzman asserts that White is clearly better; this assessment is questionable, however, since after 17...dxe5 18 fxe5 ♚c7!? or 18 ♞xe5 ♟bd7 19 ♞e2 ♙f8 Black doesn't seem to be in such a bad way) 15 ♞ad1 ♙d7 (15...♚f6!? 16 ♙b2 ♙d7 17 f3 is an edge for White) 16 ♙b2 ♚c7.



Now instead of 17 ♚f4, as in Kasparov-A.Huzman, Izmir 2004, Huzman suggests the improvement 17 g3.

12 e5 ♟e8

12...♟g4? is inappropriate and led to a quick loss in G.Feher-Rat, Zalakaros 2003, after 13 ♟f5 ♙xf5 (if 13...♟xe5?! 14 ♞xe5 ♙f6 15 ♚e1) 14 ♙xf5 ♙b4 15 ♚xg4 ♙xc3 16 ♚h3 g6 17 ♚xc3 gxf5 18 ♚g3+ ♟h8 19 ♙g5 f6 20 exf6 1-0.

13 ♚h5

13 f4?! ♙b4 14 ♙d2 c5 (B.Muhren-Bosboom Lanchava, Wijk aan Zee 2005) and 13 ♙b2 g6 14 ♟h1 ♟g7 (Zaragatski-Papa, Deizisau 2003) are less testing for Black.

13...g6 14 ♚h6 ♟g7 15 ♟f3

Or 15 ♟ce2!? (Felgaer-Strikovic, Santa Cruz de la Palma 2005).

15...♟e6 16 ♟e2 ♞e8 17 ♙b2 ♟g5 18 ♟ed4 ♟xf3+ 19 ♟xf3 ♙f8 20 ♚f4

(Van den Heever-K.Solomon, South African Ch. 2005). White is a bit better here, but there is plenty to play for.

Conclusion

Positions in the final three chapters are characterized by a White space advantage. The first player has more latitude, but also more chances to go wrong!

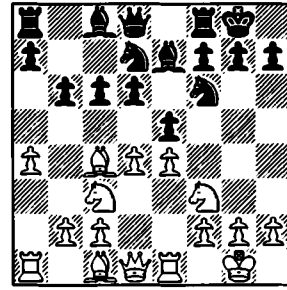
If Black plays with ...a7-a5, the most promising plan for White includes the fianchetto of the dark-squared bishop.

If Black delays the swap with ...exd4 and confines himself to a defensive position (as for example, in Shirov-Tischbierek – Line D3), then d4-d5 followed by pressure on d6 gives White a clear advantage.

When Black exchanges on d4, the traditional recapture is with the knight. After the swap of minor pieces on e6, White usually tries to break Black's pawn structure by playing e4-e5.

Some rather recent examples have shown that 10 ♚xd4 may be sufficient to claim an advantage against imprecise play by Black (see Hamdouchi-Oratovsky in Line D31).

Chapter Fourteen



Main Line: 8 ♖e1 b6

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5
5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 b6

While 8...a5 aims to secure the c5-outpost for a knight, 8...b6 follows a much more ambitious plan in my view. Black believes in his ability to 'hold' the centre and repel an eventual king-side attack from White, while preparing counterplay on the queenside by means of ...a6 and ...b5.

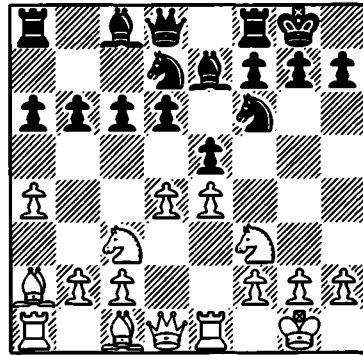
Now we will look at five different replies from White:

- A: 9 ♙a2
- B: 9 h3
- C: 9 ♙g5
- D: 9 b3
- E: 9 d5

A) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♞c3 ♞bd7 4 ♟f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 ♙a2

A prophylactic move, designed to avoid the loss of tempo entailed after dxe5 ♞xe5 (trading knights would

bring White nothing).
9...a6



10 ♙e3!?

This is an idea of Glek's which deserves attention, but it shouldn't scare Black.

A more recent game continued 10 h3 ♞b8 11 ♙g5 b5 12 axb5 axb5 13 b4 ♞e8 14 ♞b1 ♞c7 15 ♟h4 exd4 16 ♞xd4 ♟f8 17 ♞d3 ♙e6 18 ♙xe6 fxe6 with an equal position, G.Guseinov-P.Eljanov, Turin Olympiad 2006.

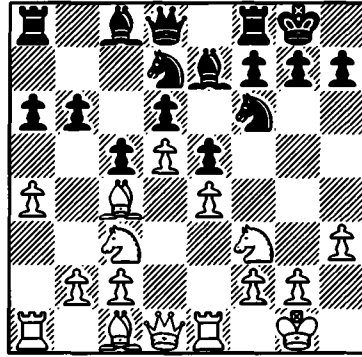
10...♞c7

Or 10...♗g4!? 11 ♖d2 ♗b7 (against 11...♗g6 Glek suggests the follow-up 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♖h4, but here the simple 13...♗c5 looks equal to me) 12 ♗e2! d5 13 ♗g3 dxe4 14 ♖xe4 ♗df6 15 ♖e1 (Glek-De Graaff, Holland 1998). The f6-knight occupies its colleague's place, while White threatens not only to grab e5, but also h2-h3 and/or ♗f5.

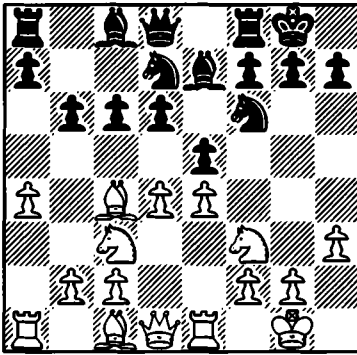
11 ♖h4 exd4 12 ♖xd4 ♗e5 13 ♗f5 ♖xf5 14 exf5 ♖fe8

This was played in Glek-Mensch, Paris 2000. Black, who will try to play ...d5, is okay here.

♗b7, the insertion of the moves h3 and ...a6 favours White when compared to the 9 d5 cxd5 variation) and now:



B) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 e5 5 ♖c4 ♖e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 h3



9...a6

9...♗b7?! is inaccurate on account of 10 ♖a2!, with the idea of 11 dxe5 and 12 ♖h4. This motif will appear again on next move. 10 dxe5?!, on the other hand, would return the favour as Black could answer with 10...♗xe5.

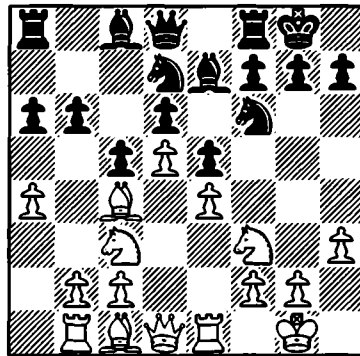
10 ♖a2

Or:

a) 10 d5 c5 (after 10...cxd5?! 11 ♗xd5

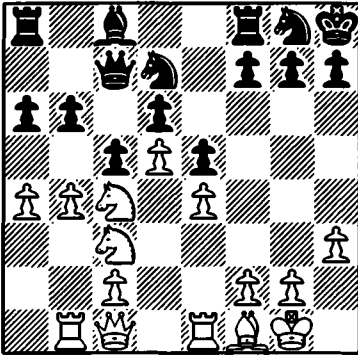
a1) With 11 ♖f1 White is considering ♗d2-c4, followed by ♖b1 and b4, to open the queenside. From Black's perspective, he plans either play on the queenside, by means of ...♗c7, ...♖b8 and ...b5, or, more ordinarily, on the kingside with ...g6 and ...f5.

a2) After 11 ♖b1



Black started to implement the 'King's Indian' idea in another way in Ye Jiangchuan-Cifuentes Parada, Koop Tjuchem 1996: 11...♗h8 12 ♖f1 ♗g8 13 ♗d2, but then changed his mind by

playing 13...♔g5!? (13...g6 14 ♖c4 f5 was the alternative) 14 ♖c4 ♙xc1 15 ♗xc1 ♗c7 16 b4...



...reaching a position in which White enjoyed a slight initiative.

b) 10 ♙e3 is interesting, provided that White maintains the central tension. The encounter R.Weill-Mensch, French League 2000, continued 10...♙b7 11 dxe5?! (11 ♖h4) 11...dxe5 12 ♖h4?! g6? (12...b5! 13 ♙d3 [otherwise ...b4 and ...♖xe4] 13...♖c5 and Black has no worries; 12...♖xe4!? deserves consideration too, even though White has compensation after 13 ♖xe4 ♙xh4 14 ♖d6) 13 ♙h6 ♗e8 14 ♗f3 reaching a position where Black was tied down. This explains why 10...♗b8! is an adequate reply after 9 h3 a6 10 ♙a2.

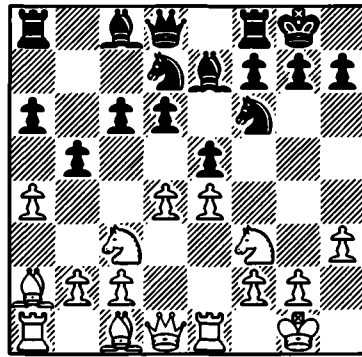
c) In the event of 10 ♙g5 ♙b7 11 dxe5 (11 ♙b3), safest is 11...♖xe5. Instead 11...dxe5 12 ♖h4 b5 13 ♙a2!? provokes complications after 13...h6 14 ♙e3 (14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♖f5 is level) 14...b4 (not 14...♖xe4? 15 ♖xe4 ♙xh4 16 ♗g4 with too many threats: ♙xh6, ♗ad1, ♖d6) 15 ♖b1 ♖xe4 16 ♖g6 ♗e8 17 ♙xh6 ♖df6 18 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 19 ♙e3

♗ad8 20 ♗e2 c5, when the activity of Black's pieces counterbalances the pair of bishops.

10...♗b8!

A strange-looking move, the idea of which is transparent: pushing with ...b5 while allowing the light-squared bishop to control the square f5. In fact, alternatives show that 10...♗b8 must be played:

a) 10...b5? would, of course, be a gross blunder:



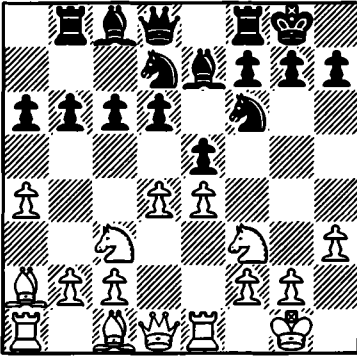
11 axb5 axb5?? (but after 11...cxb5 White has a strong point on d5, as well as a sounder pawn structure) 12 ♙xf7+ and White wins.

b) 10...♙b7?! and now:

b1) 11 ♖h4!? brought White success in Kobalia-Plachetka, Cappelle la Grande 1999, after 11...exd4 12 ♗xd4 d5 13 e5 ♙c5 14 ♗d3 ♖e4 15 ♖xe4 dxe4? 16 ♗xe4 ♙xf2+ 17 ♖xf2 ♖c5 18 ♗f3 ♖xe4+ 19 ♗xe4 c5 20 ♗g4 ♙c8 21 ♗g3, when the bishop and knight pairing was far superior to the rook and pawn. However, 15...♗xh4! gives Black excellent chances to equalize.

b2) 11 dxe5! dxe5 (or 11...♖xe5 12

♗d4) 12 ♗h4 ♗xe4? 13 ♖xe4 ♗xh4 14 ♖xh4 ♗xh4 15 ♗xd7 with a large advantage for White.



Here are some options for White following 10...♗b8:

a) After 11 ♗g5 White maintains his space advantage, but Black has avoided the nasty manoeuvre ♗h4-f5 and the position offers mutual chances.

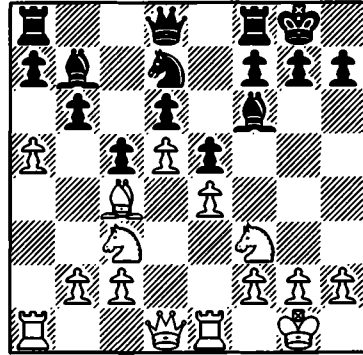
b) 11 ♗d3!? (protecting e4, in order to redeploy the c3-knight) 11...b5 12 axb5 axb5 13 ♗e2 c5 14 c3 exd4! (not 14...c4? 15 ♗c2 ♖a8 16 ♗g3 ♗b7 17 b3 cxb3 18 ♗xb3 and White dominated in Hamdouchi-Bauer, Aubervilliers rapid 2000) 15 cxd4 c4 16 ♗c2 (16 ♗e3 is met by 16...♗b7, or 16...d5 with counterplay in the centre) 16...d5 and Black is not worse.

c) 11 dxe5?! dxe5 12 ♗h4 ♗c5 is equal. If the knight happens to land on f5 it will be eliminated, while Black can himself prepare ...♗e6-d4.

C) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 ♗g5 a6

9...♗b7?! would again be an inaccu-

racy, in view of 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 d5 c5 12 a5.



Black can't answer by playing ...b5, and as a consequence he will either have to accept a weak pawn on a6, after 12...a6 13 axb6, or the trade of light-squared bishops after ♗d3 and ♗a6. Black must also be ready for the closing of the queenside, should White play a6, which would possibly leave the second player with a cramped position.

10 ♗xf6

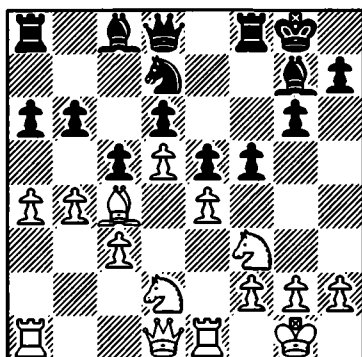
10 dxe5 ♗xe5 11 ♗xe5 dxe5, or 10 ♗e2 h6 11 ♗h4 ♗h5, and 10 ♗d2 ♗b7 11 ♖ad1 b5 or 11...♗c7, all reach equal positions.

10...♗xf6 11 d5 c5

In contrast to the note to Black's ninth move, White has conceded the bishops in far less favourable circumstances. Chances are level, with White planning to open the queenside (with a later b4), while Black will find counterplay linked with ...g6, ...♗g7 and ...f5.

12 ♗f1

After 12 ♗b1!? g6 13 c3 ♗g7 14 ♗bd2 f5 15 b4 (Kharlov-A.Panchenko, Rostov 1993)...



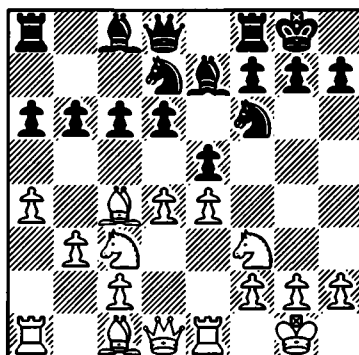
...each side is following his objective and chances remain level.

12...a6 13 g3 g6 14 a3 a6

The position is equal, A.Onischuk-Bauer, European Team Ch., Batumi 1999.

D) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 c3 bd7 4 f3 e5 5 a4 e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 b3

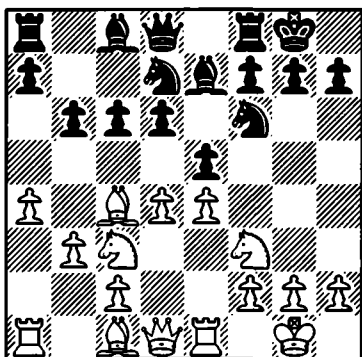
9...c7?! is met by 10 d5!, but here 9...a6 is interesting. Now 10 d5 cxd5 11 Qxd5 transposes to Line E31, whereas 10 a5 b5 11 a6 is not to be feared, as 11...bxc4 12 axb7 Bb8 is okay for Black. The drawback of 9...a6 would be that the bishop is not covering f5 in the event of Qh4-f5. However, this idea loses some punch with the bishop on b2, so it seems to me that 9...a6 is superior to 9...a6.



After 9...a6 White normally chooses between:

- D1: 10 d5**
- D2: 10 a6**

After 10 a3?! a6 Black threatens 11...b5, followed by 12...exd4 13 Qxd4 b4 14 axb4 c5, winning. Following 11 a6 b5 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 a6 e8 the position is equal.



This continuation, less common than the direct 9 d5, doesn't lack interest. White counts on his space advantage and intends to continue with a6, a3, Qe2-g3, and c2-c4.
9...a6

D1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 f6 3 c3 bd7 4 f3 e5 5 a4 e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 b3 a6 10 d5 c5 11 Bb1

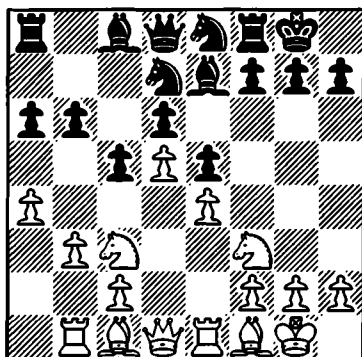
Logical, as White is preparing to open a front on the queenside. This

novelty was introduced in the game **Leko-Bauer, FIDE World Ch., Las Vegas 1999**, which we shall now follow:

11...♗e8

11...♗h8, with the plan of ...♗g8, ...g6 and ...f5, was playable too.

12 ♖f1



12...♞b8?!

This is not necessarily useful. I was hoping to get ...b5 in after ...♗c7, but this was over-optimistic. I should have stuck to the plan of ...g6 and ...f5 without waiting any longer!

13 ♗d2 g6

After 13...♗c7, 14 ♗c4 b5 15 ♗a5 would be bothersome.

14 b4 f5 15 ♗c4 cxb4

15...♗ef6!? was the alternative.

16 ♞xb4 ♗c7 17 ♖a3

White's forces on the queenside seem awkwardly placed, but how to exploit this?

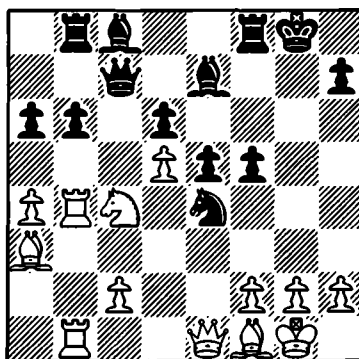
17...♗ef6 18 exf5 gxf5 19 ♗d2 ♗c5

Forcing events by giving up the protection of the b6-pawn. Instead, 19...♗h8 followed by ...♗g8, parrying the threat of ♗g5+ and ♗xf5, deserved attention.

20 ♞b1 ♗ce4

And here, perhaps 20...♗fd7.

21 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 22 ♗e1



White has made progress on the queenside, whereas my counterplay on the other wing has reached a dead end. White thus holds the advantage and a definite initiative.

22...b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 ♗e3

Here 24 ♞xb5 ♞xb5 25 ♞xb5 ♖a6 26 ♞b4 or 26 ♗a5 isn't so clear. Black has compensation for the pawn, but is it sufficient?

Leko's move is based on the principle that the b5-pawn is condemned anyway, so it is more urgent to protect the kingside than grab it at this precise point.

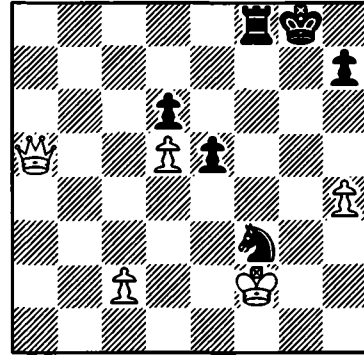
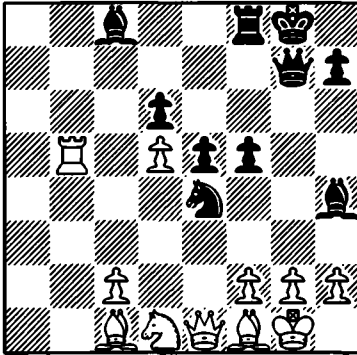
24...♗a7

Eyeing f2, as does my next move.

25 ♖c1 ♖h4?!

I wanted to provoke g2-g3, so that a subsequent ...f4 would gain in strength. The immediate 25...♖d8 (threatening ...♖a5), followed by ...♖b6 in case White captures on b5, was most likely preferable.

26 ♗d1! ♗g7 27 ♞xb5 ♞xb5 28 ♞xb5



White has finally gathered the first fruits of his superior play. His advantage is clear, though not yet decisive.
28...♙a6

What else?

29 ♜b4 ♙xf1 30 ♞xf1 ♙g5 31 ♙xg5 ♜xg5

I would have liked to manage without the two preceding exchanges, but how then to achieve ...f4?

32 f3! ♞a7+?!

32...♞c7 was stronger.

33 ♞f2 ♞a5 34 ♞d2 f4 35 h4 ♜f7 36 ♜f2 ♜h6 37 g4 fxc3 38 ♜g4+??

This could have spoiled everything. Later Peter told me that **38 ♞g5+ ♜h8 39 ♞xh6 gxf2+** and now **40 ♜h2!! f1♜+** **41 ♜h1 ♜g3+ 42 ♜g2 ♞a8 43 ♜b7!** would have finished the job nicely.

38...♜xg4 39 ♞xa5 gxf2+ 40 ♜f1 ♜e3+??

A final mistake. After **40...♜h2+ 41 ♜xf2 ♜xf3...**

(see following diagram)

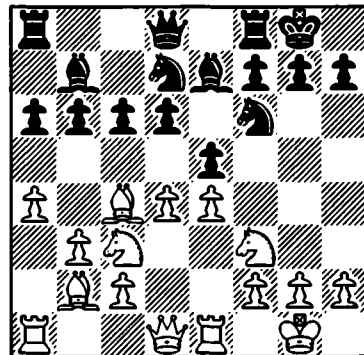
...White no longer has an easy win, as Black will try to construct a fortress with the rook on f6 and the knight on f5.

41 ♜xf2 ♜xc2 42 ♞c7 ♜d4 43 ♞xd6 ♜xf3+ 44 ♜e1 ♜f5 45 ♞c7 ♜f7 46 ♞c8+ ♜g7 47 d6 ♜f8 48 d7 ♜e6 49 ♞e8 1-0
 A tense and interesting game.

D2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 b3 a6 10 ♙b2

The other choice, of course, is to keep the tension with ♙b2, and play for a spatial advantage.

10...♙b7



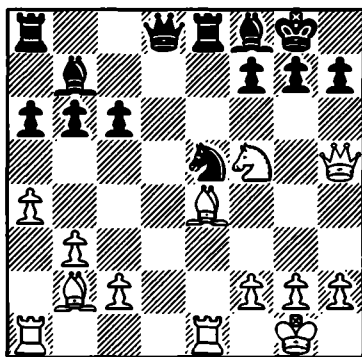
11 ♞d2

Or:

a) **11 ♙d3 ♜e8 (after 11...b5 12 ♜e2 ♜e8 13 ♜g3 ♙f8 14 c4 g6 the position**

resembles something from the Ruy Lopez, rich in possibilities for both sides)

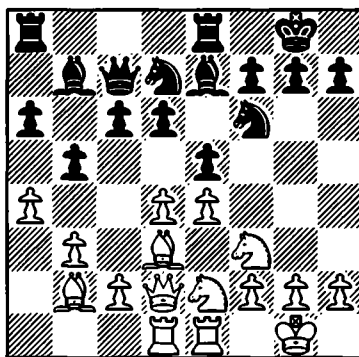
12 ♖e2 d5?! (12...♙f8 13 ♖g3 ♜c7, Godena-Iordachescu, FIDE World Ch., New Delhi 2000, reduces White's edge to a minimum) 13 ♖g3 dxe4 14 ♖xe4 exd4 (14...♖xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♖f6 16 dxe5 ♖xe4 17 ♜xe4 and the extra pawn is worth more than the pair of bishops, or 15...exd4 16 ♖xd4 and the white pieces are better placed) 15 ♖xd4 ♙f8 16 ♖f5 ♖xe4 17 ♙xe4 ♖e5 18 ♜h5...



♜g5 with a crushing attack.

12 ♜ad1 b5 13 ♙d3 ♜fe8 14 ♖e2

Intending to jump to g3 and then f5. Now 14...d5? is again premature: 15 dxe5 dxe4 (or 15...♖xe4 16 ♙xe4 dxe4 17 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 18 ♜xd7 exf3 19 ♜xb7 fxe2 20 ♜xe2) 16 ♙xe4! ♖xe4 17 ♜xd7 ♜b6 18 ♖ed4 c5 19 a5! with a decisive advantage. However, 14...bxa4!, makes sense now that the rook has left its initial place: 15 bxa4 ♙f8 or 15...exd4!? 16 ♖exd4 ♖c5.



...and White was pulling the strings in F.Fiorito-Tempone, Argentine Ch., Villa Martelli 1998.

b) 11 ♙f1?! is too slow, and 11...b5 12 g3 ♜e8 13 ♙g2 ♙f8 gave me an edge in Zakurdjaeva-Bauer, Bad Zwosten 2002. Black is threatening to win the e4-pawn with 14...exd4 15 ♖xd4 b4 16 ♖b1 c5 and ...♙xe4, and it looks as if White has run out of ideas.

11...♜c7

Alternatives are weaker: 11...♖xe4? 12 ♖xe4 d5 13 dxe5 dxc4 14 ♜ad1 ♖c5 15 ♜e2 and ♜xc4 with a clear plus for White, or if 11...exd4? 12 ♖xd4 d5 13 exd5 cxd5 14 ♙d3 ♖c5 15 ♖f5 ♜e8 16

Returning to the position after 14 ♖e2, Henao-Campora, Bogota 1991, continued:

14...♙f8 15 ♖g3 g6

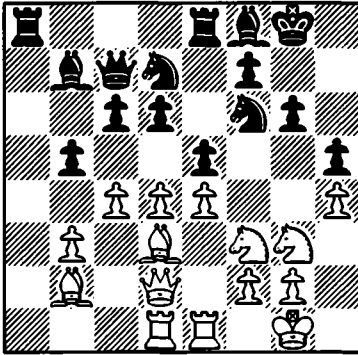
Or 15...exd4!? 16 ♖xd4 c5 17 ♖df5 c4 18 bxc4 bxc4 19 ♙f1 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 (not 20...♜xe4? 21 ♜xe4 ♙xe4 22 ♖h6+! gxh6 23 ♜d4 with a clear plus to White, since 23...c3 24 ♙xc3 ♖e5 25 ♜xe4 hits the a8-rook, so there is no time for ...♜xc3) 21 ♖xd6 ♜xd6 22 ♜xd6 ♙xd6 23 ♜xd6 ♖c5 and Black should hold.

16 h4 h5?!

A weakening move. 16...♙g7 would have kept the balance after 17 h5 ♜ad8

18 hxg6 hxg6, while 16...bxa4 still looks desirable for Black: in this case the a4-pawn would be weaker than its counterpart on a6.

17 axb5 axb5 18 c4!



White enjoys a slight, but pleasant initiative due to his space advantage.

18...exd4 19 Qxd4 bxc4 20 Qxc4 d5

Not 20...Qxe4? 21 Qxe4 d5 when 22 Qf5! is a killer, but 20...Qe5!? 21 Qf1 Na2 was quite bearable for Black.

21 exd5 Nxe1+ 22 Nxe1 cxd5 23 Qd3

All of White's pieces now cluster together towards the black king, even though nothing concrete is threatened as yet.

23...Wb6 24 Qe6!?

Henao attaches an optimistic '!!' to this move.

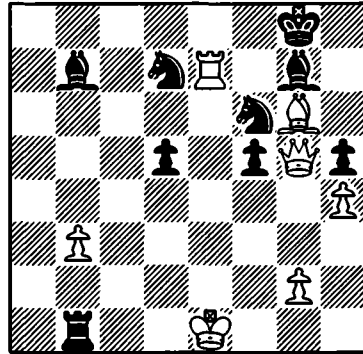
24...fxe6!

If 24...Qb4? 25 Wh6 fxe6 26 Wxg6+ Qf8 27 Qxf6 wins.

25 Wg5 Na2??

Black should play 25...Qg7!. For example: 26 Qxg6 (if 26 Wxg6? Qf8 27 Wg5 Na2! 28 Qf5 exf5 29 Ne7 Qe6! and the material surplus triumphs) 26...Na2! (26...Wxb3? 27 Qxf6 Qxf6 [or

27...Qxf6 28 Wxh5] 28 Nb1 Wc4 29 Nxb7 Wg4 [29...Na1+ 30 Qb1!] 30 Qxh5! Wxg5 31 Qf7+! and 32 hxg5 gives White a definite advantage) 27 Qf5 (threatening Qf7+) 27...exf5 28 Ne7 Wxf2+!! 29 Qxf2 Nxb2+ 30 Qe1 Nb1+ and now:



a) 31 Qf2? Qg4+ and Black wins.

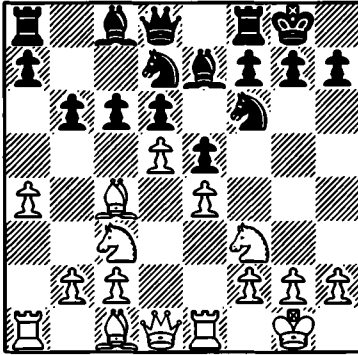
b) Henao stops his analysis after 31 Qd2? Qe4+ 32 Nxe4 dxe4 33 Wxf5, concluding that White stands much better. With hindsight it appears that the contrary is true! i.e. 33...Qf6 34 We6+ Qh8 etc.

c) 31 Qe2!! saves White from defeat: 31...Qa6+ 32 Qd2 Qe4+ 33 Nxe4 dxe4 34 Wxf5 Qh6+ (or 34...e3+ 35 Qc2 Nb2+ 36 Qc1 e2 37 Wd5+ Qh8 38 Wxh5+ Qg8 39 Wd5+ with perpetual check) 35 Qc3 Qg7+ 36 Qb4 Qf8+ 37 Qc3 and the game should logically finish with a repetition of moves.

26 Wxg6+ Qg7 27 Qf5! 1-0

Black resigned, in view of 27...exf5 28 Ne7.

E) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Qf6 3 Qc3 Qbd7 4 Qf3 e5 5 Qc4 Qe7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Ne1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 d5



Now that the b-pawn has made one step forward, this move makes sense. White tries to conquer the d5-square, which would be used as a platform for his pieces. Previously Black would always have been able to recapture with the b7-pawn in the event of an exchange on c6, maintaining control of d5 with a foot soldier.

We shall now consider:

E1: 9...♗b7?!

E2: 9...c5?!

E3: 9...cxd5!

E1) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 d5 ♗b7?!

This is again imprecise.

10 dxc6 ♗xc6 11 ♗g5

11 ♘d5?! is premature: 11...♗c8 12 ♖e2 (12 ♗a6 seems a bit artificial, and after 12...♗b8 13 b4 ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♗b7 Black had obtained a welcome structure in V.Dimitrov-Roesch, Wiesbaden 1990; or 12 c3 ♗b7 13 ♗b3 h6! and White finds it hard to strengthen his position, G.Beikert-A.Sokolov, Viern-

heim 1992) 12...♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 14 ♗xd5 and now:

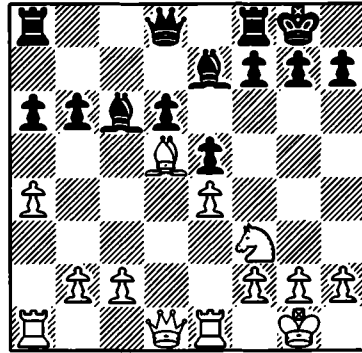
a) 14...♗c5 15 ♗d3 ♗c8 16 ♗e3 (16 c3 ♗c6, with the idea of ...♗c4, is equal) 16...♗c4 17 a5 ♗c6 18 axb6 axb6 19 ♖a7 ♗d8 and the White edge, if it exists, is quite symbolic.

b) 14...♘f6 15 ♗d1 d5?! would be an inferior version of the variation 9...cxd5 10 ♘xd5 ♗b7 11 b3 ♗c8 etc. Indeed, White hasn't compromised himself by playing b2-b3, so the c3-square, as well as the a1-h8 diagonal, isn't weakened (if a diagonal can be said to be weakened, that is!).

11...a6

11...♗c8 and 11...♗c7 12 b3 don't alter the assessment: an edge for White.

12 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 13 ♘d5 ♘d5 14 ♗xd5



White has a small but secure advantage, Jansa-Mokry, Trnava 1987.

E2) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 4 ♘f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 d5 c5?! 10 a5 bxa5

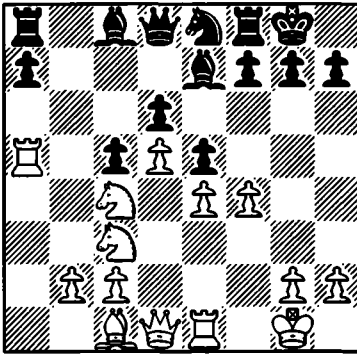
Black can't keep his pawn structure intact with 10...♗b8 or 10...♗b7 for the same reasons explained in the variation

9 $\text{\textcircled{a}}g5$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}b7?!.$ In fact, if the queenside became closed, he would be lacking even more space since, in contrast to the aforementioned variation, no piece has been exchanged here. The game **Miles-Gelashvili, European Ch., Saint Vincent 2000**, well illustrates the drawbacks of Black's ninth move:

11 $\text{\textcircled{d}}d2$

Threatening $\text{\textcircled{d}}b3xa5$.

11... $\text{\textcircled{d}}b6$ 12 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xa5$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}xc4$ 13 $\text{\textcircled{d}}xc4$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}e8$
14 $f4!$



14... $exf4$

Opening the game up for the pair of bishops. 14... $f6$ is passive and no better.

15 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xf4$ $f6$

Preventing the $e5$ -lunge.

16 $\text{\textcircled{w}}d2$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}f7$ 17 $\text{\textcircled{a}}ea1$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}f8$

Black's position seems solid, but it is very passive. It is time to make more progress on the queenside.

18 $\text{\textcircled{a}}5a2!$

Vacating the $a5$ -square for the manoeuvre $\text{\textcircled{d}}a5-c6$.

18... $g5$

An attempt to gain counterplay, which is quickly suppressed.

19 $\text{\textcircled{a}}e3$ $h6$ 20 $\text{\textcircled{a}}f2$

Prophylaxis. On 20 $\text{\textcircled{d}}a5$, Miles maybe feared ... $f5$, or he simply (and rightly!) thought that Black had no useful move after 20 $\text{\textcircled{a}}f2$.

20... $\text{\textcircled{d}}g7?!$

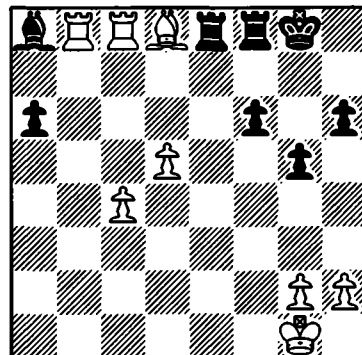
The knight was required to protect $d6$, as the game continuation proves. However, it is difficult to suggest an improvement.

21 $\text{\textcircled{d}}b5$ $a6$ 22 $\text{\textcircled{w}}a5!$

An easy move for Miles who had a predilection for queenless endings. After the exchange, White will not only have his hands free for operations, but furthermore $d6$ will fall.

22... $\text{\textcircled{w}}xa5$ 23 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xa5$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}e8$ 24 $\text{\textcircled{a}}g3$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}b8$ 25
 $\text{\textcircled{d}}bx6$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd6$ 26 $\text{\textcircled{d}}xd6$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}xd6$ 27 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd6$
 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xb2$ 28 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xc5$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}b7$ 29 $c4$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}e2$ 30 $\text{\textcircled{a}}b1$
 $\text{\textcircled{w}}g7$

30... $\text{\textcircled{a}}xe4$ would have lost too: 31 $\text{\textcircled{a}}c7$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}a8$ (or 31... $\text{\textcircled{a}}c8$ 32 $\text{\textcircled{a}}b8$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}e8$ 33 $\text{\textcircled{a}}d6$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}d7$ 34 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xe8+$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xe8$ 35 $\text{\textcircled{a}}c8$) 32 $\text{\textcircled{a}}b8+$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}f8$ 33 $\text{\textcircled{a}}d8!$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}ee8$ (33... $\text{\textcircled{a}}b7$ comes to the same thing: 34 $\text{\textcircled{a}}c7$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}e1+$ 35 $\text{\textcircled{w}}f2$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}b1$ 36 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xb7$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xb7$ 37 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xb7$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd8$ 38 $c5$ and the c -pawn costs a rook) 34 $\text{\textcircled{a}}cc8$



(a very amusing position!) 34... $\text{\textcircled{a}}b7$
35 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xb7$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd8$ 36 $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd8$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}xd8$ 37 $c5$.

31 ♖c7 ♖xc7 32 ♗xc7 ♗c8 33 ♖b8 ♗d7
34 ♗a5 ♗a4 35 c5 ♖xe4 36 c6 ♖c4 37 c7
♗d7 38 ♖d8 ♗f5 39 d6 1-0

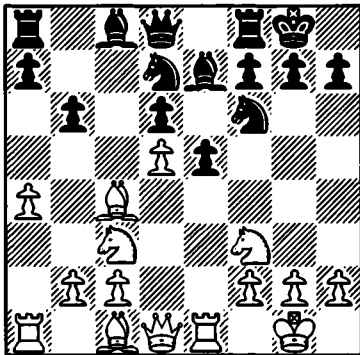
E3) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3
e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4
b6 9 d5 cxd5!

The move 9...cxd5 challenges for the possession of the d5-square, by adding pressure to the e4-pawn. Indeed, practice has shown that White finds it difficult to cover e4 while maintaining a piece on d5.

10 ♗xd5

10 ♗xd5 has been employed, too, but it doesn't promise any advantage: 10...♗xd5 11 ♗xd5 (or 11 ♖xd5 ♖b8 followed by ...♗b7, ...♗f6, or possibly ...f5) 11...♗b7, followed by ...♗f6 to repel the undesirable visitor.

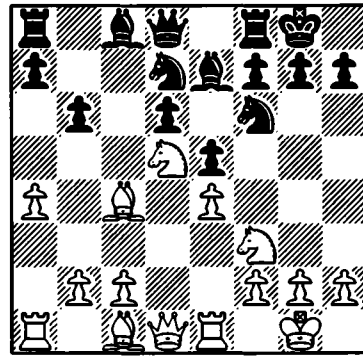
10 exd5?, as played in K.Spraggett-Bauer, French League 2001, accepts exactly the structure White is supposed to avoid!



In mitigation, my opponent had just come back from an exhausting tournament in Spain, and realizing his mistake with 10 exd5, he committed no

other for the rest of the game! 10...♗b7 11 b3 ♗e8 12 ♗b2 a6 13 ♗d2 ♗c7 14 ♗db1 f5 15 ♗a3 (what a trip to dissuade Black from pushing with ...b5!) 15...♗h8 16 ♖e2 ♗f6 17 ♖ad1 e4 18 ♖d2 ♗e5 19 ♗f1 and now 19...♗xd5! would have been the correct way to proceed, but in the heat of the battle I wrongly feared 20 ♗c4 or even 20 ♗xd5 ♗xb2 21 ♗c4. In fact Black would have gained a clear advantage.

Returning to 10 ♗xd5...



...we will consider the following options for Black:

E31: 10...♗b7

E32: 10...♗xd5

E31) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♗f6 3 ♗c3 ♗bd7 4 ♗f3 e5 5 ♗c4 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖e1 c6 8 a4 b6 9 d5 cxd5 10 ♗xd5 ♗b7 11 b3

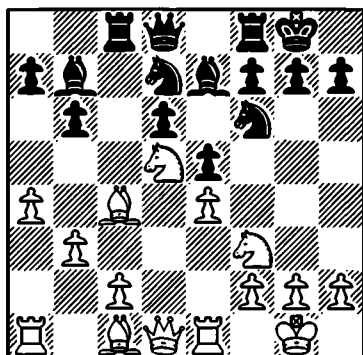
To develop the bishop on a3, from where it will pressure d6. This move has the added benefit of supporting the other bishop on c4.

11 c3!?, avoiding any future nuisance over c2, deserves attention. The manoeuvre ...♖c8-c5, forcing the d5-

knight to declare its intentions, seems an appropriate response.

11 ♖xe7+?! would gain White the two bishops only temporarily, in view of the pressure on e4; 11... ♗xe7 12 ♙g5 h6 13 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 is equal.

11... ♖c8



12 ♖e2

12 ♖a2?! fulfils the same function as 12 ♖e2, but in a more awkward way. Glek-Bauer, Echternach (rapid) 1996, continued 12... ♖xd5 13 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♖f6 15 ♗d1 d5 16 exd5 e4 17 ♖e5 ♖xd5 18 c4 ♖c3 19 ♗xd8 ♖fxd8 20 ♖c2 ♙b4 21 ♖f1? (21 ♖f1 was the only move) 21...f6 22 ♖g4 ♖d3? (spoiling Black's efforts – 22... ♖b1! would have won) 23 ♖e3 ♖cd8 24 g4 ♖d1 25 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 26 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 27 ♖g2 g6 28 ♙e3 ♖b1 29 c5 bxc5 30 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 31 ♖xc5 ♖xb3 32 ♖c7 a5 33 ♖a7 ♖a3 34 ♖xa5 ♖g7 35 h4 h5 36 gxh5 gxh5 and a draw was agreed.

After 12 ♙a3?! ♖xd5 13 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♖xc2 15 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 16 ♗xd6 ♖c5 (Yandemirov-Abramovic, Ljubljana 1995) Black stands a bit better, thanks to his infiltrating rook and

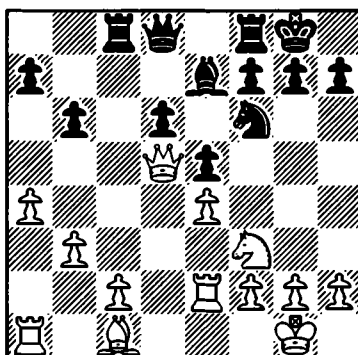
White's weaknesses on the queenside.

12... ♖xd5

The positional sacrifice 12... ♖xc4? 13 bxc4 is strategically interesting but, in the present case, insufficient. White will be able to jettison his a-pawn, by playing a4-a5, thus creating weaknesses in Black's camp.

But 12... ♖c5!? is interesting, the idea being to force White to recapture with the pawn after the swap on d5.

13 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♖f6

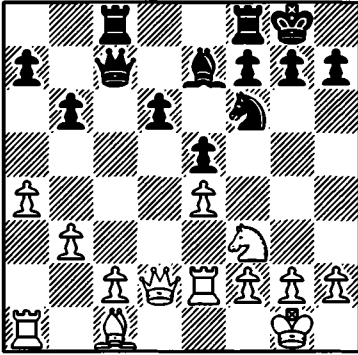


15 ♗d1

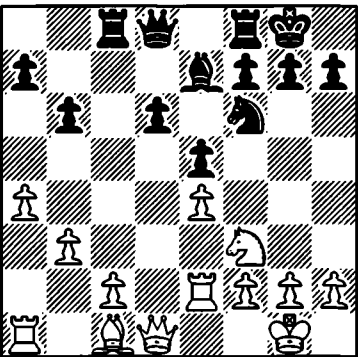
After the unfortunate 15 ♗d2?!, the thematic ...d5-push gains in strength:

a) 15...d5! 16 exd5 e4 17 ♖g5 ♖xd5 18 ♖xe4 f5 19 ♖d6!! (already spotted by Blatny – plus my computer! – in his annotations to the Vaisser-Degraeve game; 19 c4? is met by 19... ♖f4!) 19... ♗xd6 20 ♙a3 and, amazingly, Black can't keep his extra piece. For example, 20... ♖b4 21 ♗e1! ♗g6 22 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 23 ♗xb4 f4 24 f3 ♖xc2 with an equal position.

b) 15... ♖c7!? is playable too, though White may find a clever way to consolidate his space advantage:



16 c4 a6 17 ♖a3 ♜fd8 18 h3 ♜b7 19 ♜ae1 ♙f8 20 ♙b2 b5 21 cxb5 axb5 22 a5 d5? (the source of all the future problems; after 22...b4!, followed by ...♜a8 and ...♜b5, only Black can stand better) 23 ♜xe5 ♜xe4 24 ♜f4 ♜a8 25 ♜g4! (threatening 26 ♜h6+ gxh6 27 ♜xe4 and a big check on the g-file) 25...♜a6 26 ♜d1 ♜e6? (a final mistake in what had become a difficult position; Black should have kept an eye on the d8-rook) 27 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 28 ♜f6+ and Black resigned, Vaissier-Degraeve, French Ch., Besancon 1999.

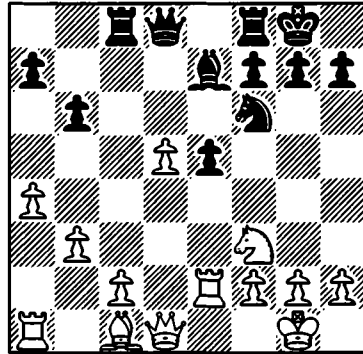


15...d5!

An attempt to force events and free

Black's game at once. Black can also play in the same fashion as in the previous note, but then he runs the risk of ending up in a passive position.

16 exd5



16...♜xd5!

Or:

a) 16...♜xd5?? 17 ♜d2 ♜c3 18 ♜xd8 ♜fxd8 19 ♜f1 ♜d1 20 ♜e1, followed by ♙b2, and White wins.

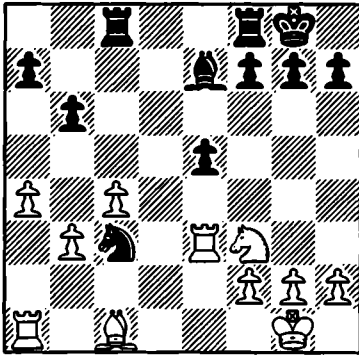
b) 16...e4!? 17 ♜g5 ♜xd5 (17...♜xd5 18 ♜xe4 gave White a healthy extra pawn in Kindermann-Schmaltz, German Ch., Gladenbach 1997; but not 18 ♜d2? ♙xg5! 19 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 20 ♜xd5 ♜fd8) 18 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 19 ♜xe4 f5! 20 c4! (otherwise ...♙f6 comes) 20...fxe4 (20...♜b4? 21 ♙g5 was clearly better for White in Khamatgaleev-Philippe, Budapest 1999) 21 cxd5 ♙c5! (Macieja-Azmaiparashvili, European Team Ch., Plovdiv 2003), and now Huzman indicates the following sequence as best: 22 ♙e3! ♙xe3 23 ♜xe3 (23 fxe3? ♜c3 is equal) 23...♜c2 24 ♜f1 ♜d8 25 ♜xe4 ♜xd5 26 ♜e7 ♜b2 27 ♜xa7 ♜xb3 28 ♜e1 h6 29 g3 and Black has quite a bit of work to do before he earns a draw.

17 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 18 ♜xe5!

18 ♜xe5? is bad due to 18...♙f6, but 18 c4 is a major alternative:

a) After 18...♙f6 19 ♙b2! ♜f4 20 ♜e3 ♜fd8 21 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 22 ♜xe5 Black doesn't have enough play for the sacrificed pawn.

b) 18...♜c3 19 ♜e3 and now:



b1) 19...e4!? 20 ♙b2 ♙c5 21 ♜xc3 exf3 22 ♜xf3 ♜cd8 23 ♙c3 is given as clearly better for White by Huzman in his notes to Macieja-Azmaiparashvili. A fresh example from the advocate of this line seems to prove that Black still has enough defensive resources: 23...a5 24 ♜e1 ♜d7 25 g3 f6 26 ♙g2 ♙f7 27 h4 ♜fd8 28 h5 ♜d3 29 ♜c1 ♙e6 30 ♜e1+ ♙f7 31 ♜c1 ♙e6 32 ♜e1+ ♙f7 ½-½ Asrian-Azmaiparashvili, Greek Team Ch. 2005.

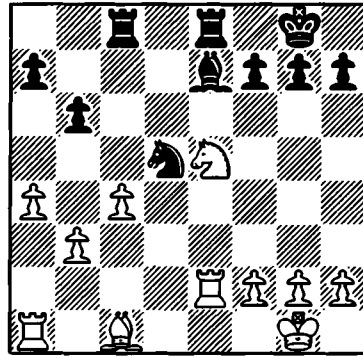
b2) 19...♜d1 20 ♜e1 ♜fd8 21 ♜xe5 ♙c5 (21...♙b4!? is possible too: 22 ♙d2 ♜xd2 [not 22...♙xd2? 23 ♜exd1 ♙c3 24 ♜c6!!] 23 ♜axd1 ♜b2 24 ♜e3 ♙c5 [24...f6!]) 25 ♜f3 ♜e8 26 ♜d3 ♜xb3 27 ♜xc5 ♜xf3 28 gxf3 bxc5 29 ♜d5 ♜c8 30 ♜d7 g6 31 ♜xa7 ♜b8 32 ♜c7 ♜b4 33 ♜xc5 ♜xa4 with a drawish rook ending) 22 ♜a2 f6 (the safest) 23 ♜f3 ♜d3

and Black has full compensation here.

18...♜fe8

18...♜c3!? 19 ♜e1 ♜fd8 20 ♜c4 ♙f6 21 ♙b2 is slightly better for White.

19 c4



19...♜c3

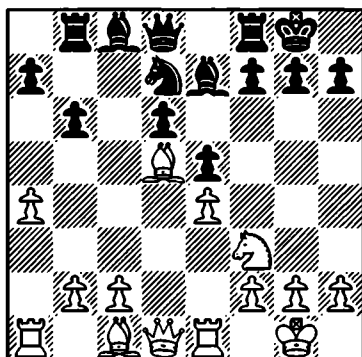
Kasparov-Azmaiparashvili, Crete (rapid match) 2003, continued 19...♙d6 20 ♙b2 ♜f4 21 ♜e1 ♙b4 22 ♜ed1 ♜e2+ 23 ♙f1 ♜c3 24 ♜d3 ♜e4 and here, instead of 25 ♜ad1, White should have preferred 25 ♙d4! ♜d2+ 26 ♙g1 f6 27 ♙e3 with a big advantage.

20 ♜e1 ♙d6 21 ♜f3 ♜xe1+ 22 ♜xe1 ♙e5 23 ♙f1 ♜d8 24 a5 ♜e2 25 ♜b1 ♜c3 26 ♜a1 ♜e2 27 ♜b1 ♜c3 28 ♜a1

½-½ Nevednichy-Azmaiparashvili, Nova Gorica 2005. In conclusion, in this line where Black gives up his e5-pawn, it looks pretty clear that he has excellent drawing chances, but can't win. Therefore, for those looking for more than a point split, I recommend trying their luck in the 10...♜xd5 11 ♙xd5 ♜b8 variation that follows.

E32) 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♜f6 3 ♜c3 ♜bd7 4 ♜f3 e5 5 ♙c4 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 c6 8

a4 b6 9 d5 cxd5 10 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 11 ♗xd5 ♜b8



At first sight Black's position doesn't inspire much confidence, mainly because of the weakened d5-square. However, certain dynamic resources exist, such as the pushes ...a6 and ...b5, or ...f5, as well as ...♖f6 and ...♗b7.

12 ♗d3!

A multi-purpose move: White overprotects e4 and prepares the transfer of his queen to g3, and the knight to e3 or g3, via d2 and f1.

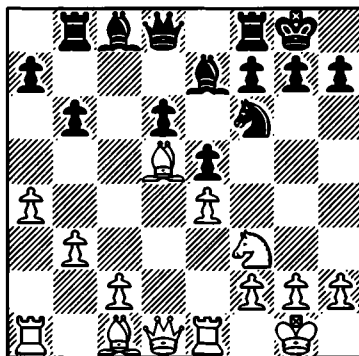
The position after 11...♜b8 is very rich in possibilities and, as well as the text move, White has tried no less than five sensible alternatives:

a) 12 b3 is an approach we are familiar with: White intends to pressure the weakness on d6 by playing ♗a3. For example:

a1) 12...a6 13 ♖d2 ♖f6 14 ♖c4 ♖xd5 15 ♗xd5 ♗b7 (15...♗e6 is adequate too: 16 ♗d3 b5?! 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖e3 ♗c7 and White stood a bit better, Maciejka-A.Panchenko, Pardubice 1994, but 16...f5! is equal) 16 ♗d3 f5 17 exf5 e4 with reciprocal chances in Kulaots-

Seeman, Estonian Ch., Tallinn 2005. If White hangs on to the pawn with 18 ♗h3?!, then 18...d5 19 ♖e3 d4 20 ♖c4 b5 provides Black with considerable activity and ample compensation.

a2) 12...♖f6 with a further split:



a21) 13 ♗c4 ♗b7 14 ♖d2 (14 ♗d3!?) and now 14...♖xe4! followed by 15...d5 equalizes, but certainly not 14...d5? 15 exd5 ♖xd5 16 ♗b2 f6 (Y.Hernandez-S.Agrest, European Ch., Warsaw 2001), when after 17 ♗e3! the pin on the d-file will be lethal.

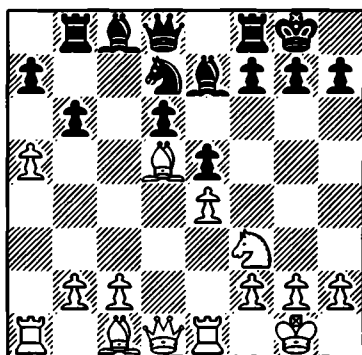
a22) After 13 c4 ♖xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♗b7 15 ♗d3 (O.Bitic-E.Janev, Bosnjaci 2004) Black should carry out the ...f5-thrust, and the best way to prepare this is with 15...♗c8!? 16 ♗a3 ♗e6 17 ♗ad1 ♗bd8, etc.

a23) 13 ♗a3 ♖xd5 (or 13...a6!?) 14 ♗xd5 ♗b7 (14...♗e6 is also good: 15 ♗d3 ♗c7 16 ♖d2 ♗bd8 17 c4 ♗c6 18 ♖b1 f5 with fine play for Black, Krzesaj-Lubczynski, Leba 2004) 15 ♗d3 ♗c7 16 ♗ad1 ♗bd8 17 c4 ♗c8 etc., C.Berczes-Mensch, Budapest 2000. Renouncing plans for ...f5 in order to focus on the queenside may be interesting too:

16...♖fd8 17 c4 ♖c6 18 ♘d2 a6 19 ♘f1 (Kyas-P.Hesse, German League 1992) and here 19...b5 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘e3 would have kept the position balanced.

b) 12 c3 ♘f6 13 ♖b3 ♖b7 14 ♗d3 h6 (Kaiumov-A.Panchenko, Cheliabinsk 1993) is similar to the main text with 12 ♗d3!, except that White has played 14 c3 instead of the more useful 14 ♖d2 or 14 ♘d2.

c) 12 a5 is probably too hasty:



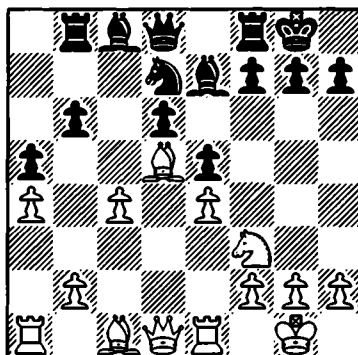
12...♘f6 (12...b5 13 ♖e3 ♗c7, A.Zapata-A.Hoffman, Sao Paulo 2001, and 12...♗c7 13 axb6 ♘xb6 14 ♖b3 h6, Hakki-Khairallah, Beirut 2004, look playable as well) 13 axb6 axb6 was played in Neukirch-Teumer, German League 2002. Now the following sequence seems rather logical: 14 ♖b3 ♖b7 15 ♗d3 ♖a8 16 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 17 ♖g5 ♖xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 19 ♖xe7 ♖e8 20 ♖d5 ♗a1+ 21 ♗f1 ♗xb2 22 ♖xe4 ♖xe7 with approximate equality.

d) 12 c4 and now:

d1) 12...♘f6 13 a5 (13 ♖e3?! looks a bit slow, and after 13...♘d5 14 cxd5 f5 15 exf5 ♖xf5 Black already had the more pleasant position in Lemmers-

Damljanovic, Andorra 2004) 13...♘d5 14 cxd5 b5 15 ♖e3 a6 16 ♖b6 ♗e8, and ...f5 is next on the agenda, W.Rosen-C.Fehmer, German League 2005.

d2) The double-edged 12...a5!? (Bakre-Denoth, Pula 2002) weakens b5, but secures c5 for the knight.



Moreover, if White wants to make progress on the queenside, he will have to play b2-b4, leaving himself with isolated pawns after ...axb4.

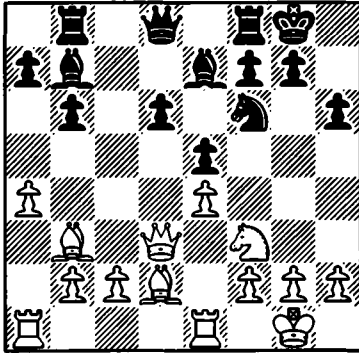
e) The semi-waiting move 12 h3!? is also interesting: 12...♘f6 13 ♖b3 ♖b7 14 ♗d3 ♗c7 (14...d5 doesn't seem entirely satisfactory, as after 15 exd5 e4 16 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♖e8 18 ♗d3 White has a definite advantage, but 14...h6!? is worth consideration) and now instead of 15 ♘h4?! d5! (Sosna-I.Markovic, Moravian Team Ch. 2002) White could have retained a plus with the positional 15 ♖g5.

12...♗h8

Black has other choices here:

a) Black shouldn't be able to solve his problems with 12...♘f6, as practice has shown: 13 ♖b3 (13 ♖c4!?, H.Hunt-Voiska, German League 2003, is similar)

13...h6 (directed against ♗g5xf6, which would reinforce White's control over d5; 13...♗b7 14 ♗g5 ♘h5 15 ♗d2 ♜c7 16 a5 gave White an edge in Cheparinov-C.Garcia Fernandez, Pamplona 2003) 14 ♗d2 (after 14 ♘d2!? ♗b7 15 ♘f1 ♞e8 16 ♘g3 [G.Shahade-Lakdawala, San Francisco 2001] White has nice attacking prospects on the kingside [♘f5, ♜g3 etc.] so the sacrifice 16...d5 17 exd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 19 ♜xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♞xe5 ♘b4 looks like Black's best chance in my view) 14...♗b7



15 ♞ad1! (15 a5?! d5, I.Khamrakulov-C.Garcia Fernandez, Spanish Team Ch. 2006, is also better for White, but less clear) 15...♜c7 16 ♘h4 with a clear plus for White. Other moves are also unappealing: 15...d5 16 ♘xe5 (16 exd5!?) 16...♘xe4?! (16...dxe4 was the lesser evil) 17 ♗xh6! gxh6 18 ♞xe4 dxe4 19 ♜g3+ ♗h7 20 ♞xd8 ♞bx8 21 ♜g4 with a clear advantage in the game Parmentier-Seret, French League 2005; or 15...♞c8 16 ♗b4 and d6 is bound to fall, Reiss-Rebers, Budapest 2001.

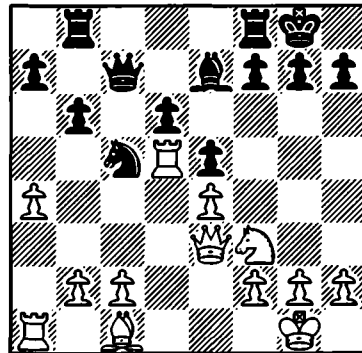
b) 12...♜c7 13 ♗e3 (or 13 ♗d2) 13...♘f6 14 ♗b3 h6 15 ♗d2 with a

slight, but persistent advantage for White, Kindermann-Schmidt Schaeffer, Munich 1993.

c) 12...♘c5 and now:

c1) 13 ♜c4 a5 14 ♗e3 (C.Horvath-Okhotnik, Hungarian League 2000), when instead of 14...♗a6, more logical seems to be 14...♗d7 15 b3 ♗h8, preparing ...f5 and intending to meet 16 ♗xf7 with 16...♘xe4. After 15...♗h8 White holds a small plus, but there is still plenty to play for.

c2) 13 ♜e3 ♗e6 (or 13...a5 14 b3 ♗h8 15 ♘g5 ♘e6 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♘f3, Pavasovic-Srebrnic, Celje 2004, followed by the plan c4, ♗a3, ♞ad1, when White should stand slightly better) 14 ♞d1 ♗xd5 15 ♞xd5 ♜c7, and at this moment everything seems under control from White's point of view.



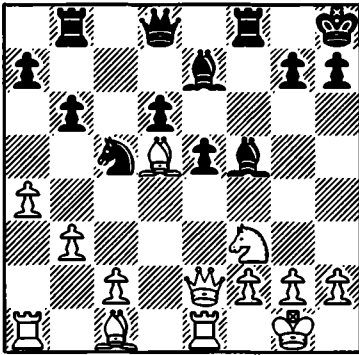
It will, however, prove difficult to conveniently avoid any kind of counterplay, as seen after 11...♞b8 16 b3 ♘d7 17 c4 ♘f6 18 ♞d3 a6 19 ♗a3 b5 20 cxb5 axb5 21 ♞c1 ♜b7 22 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 23 ♞xd6 bxa4 24 bxa4 ♜xe4 25 ♜xe4 ♘xe4 26 ♞dc6 f6 in Lahno-S.Collas, Calvia Olympiad 2004. White was only

marginally better thanks to her passed-pawn, and the game eventually ended peacefully on move 39.

13 b3 ♖c5

13...f5 14 exf5 ♖c5 (14...♗f6?! 15 ♙e6 e4 16 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 17 ♜xe4 favours White) 15 ♜e2 ♙xf5 transposes to the main text.

14 ♜e2 f5 15 exf5 ♙xf5



We have been following the game M.Neubauer-Lima, Brasilia 2003. This position has hardly been tested and isn't easy to assess properly, but I think it offers mutual chances.

Conclusion

White has more than one way to fight 8...b6. There are three main scenarios:

White tries to bring the f3-knight to f5, via h4, in order to launch an attack against the black king.

The retreat ♙c4-a2 is seen as preparation for the exchange on e5 without allowing the equalizing ...♗xe5. On dxe5,

...♗xe5, there would indeed follow ♗d4, and soon after f2-f4. Black should refrain from developing his light-squared bishop on b7 too early. From its initial square, it covers f5 and discourages the invasion of a white knight.

White obtains an outpost on d5, after d4-d5 followed by dxc6 or ...cxd5

White can, in this situation, try to exchange a defender of d5 by playing ♙c1-g5xf6. He will then look for a 'good knight against bad bishop' type of position. For his part, Black should check to see whether tactical resources can permit him to simplify the position, while the ...d5 thrust should also be considered (see Line E31).

If Black doesn't find himself in one of these two favourable scenarios, he will have to try to avoid the 'good knight versus bad bishop'.

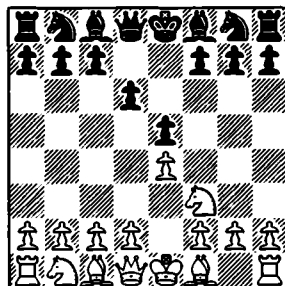
The position becomes closed when Black reacts to d4-d5 by playing ...c6-c5

There are two cases to consider here:

1) Black's a-pawn still stands on a7. In this event a4-a5 usually gives White an indisputable advantage.

2) Black's a-pawn already stands on a6. In this situation a4-a5 makes no sense anymore (Black would answer with ...b6-b5) and White's play is based on opening the queenside by means of b2-b4. Black's customary counterplay is based on the ...f5 push, prepared by ...♗e8 (or ...♜h8, ...♗g8) and ...g6.

Final Thoughts



We have seen throughout this book many qualities of the Philidor:

Its solidity and hidden dynamism

In the past the Philidor has been mistakenly considered to be somewhat passive. It's true that Black's counterplay can be delayed for some time, but it does arrive. This apparent tranquility makes your opponent feel confident, but that is an illusion!

Its wealth of ideas

Many plans can be considered (for both sides), and this avoids the monotony of a stereotypical opening.

Its elasticity

The pawn and piece placements are quite flexible.

Another, similar feature is that it can be difficult to get to grips with the nuances that exist between different move orders. This may be particularly true for

players who are too preoccupied with opening theory. The Philidor Defence 'suffers' from underestimation, as generally speaking White players study it rather superficially.

Some variations, such as the Larsen (Chapter 2) or those resulting from the old-fashioned move order (1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 ♘f6) have become rare birds nowadays. They may be playable, but have proved too difficult to handle in practical games. That said, an early inaccuracy from White often occurs. Thus, when I employed the Larsen Variation in 2002, my opponents twice made the mistake of playing f2-f3 before ♙d2 and 0-0-0 (I didn't exploit this the first time by the way!). To be added to this is the fact that the position often becomes very sharp fairly quickly, which will overthrow your opponent in many cases! This was especially true in the game Brodsky-Nisipeanu (Chapter 4, Line D222), in which White was drawn into the abyss

when he searched for an opening advantage. More recent games featuring 5...♗e7 have demonstrated the validity of Black's concept, making this old variation fashionable again.

Positions from Part 2 of the book are still rather fresh. New ideas may appear and a more thorough examina-

tion may be necessary to determine where Black is facing problems.

As a final note, I can recommend the Philidor to players of a 'lazy' nature, those who attach more importance to the understanding of strategic themes, rather than the memorization of variations.

Index of Variations

Early Deviations

1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4

3 ♟c4 – 10

3... ♟f6

3... ♟g4 – 12

3... ♟c6 – 12

3... ♟e7 – 14

3... ♟d7 – 16

3... f5

4 ♟c4 – 23

4 dxe5 – 26

4 exf5 – 27

4 ♟c3 – 29

4 dxe5 ♟xe4 5 ♟d5 ♟c5 6 ♟g5 ♟e7

6... ♟d7 7 exd6 ♟xd6 8 ♟c3

8... ♟e6+ – 34

8... 0-0 9 0-0-0

9... ♟c6 – 35

9... a6 – 38

7 exd6 ♟xd6 8 ♟c3 ♟e6+ – 39

8... ♟e6 – 41

8... c6 – 41

Larsen's Variation

1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♟xd4

- 4 ♖xd4 ♜f6 – 48 (4...a6 – 49)
4...g6 5 ♜c3 ♙g7 6 ♙e3
6 ♙f4 – 58
6...♜f6 7 ♖d2 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♞e8
8...♜c6 9 f3 ♜xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙e6
11 ♙e3 – 61
11 h4 – 62
11 ♜b1 – 66
11 g4 – 67
9 f3 ♜c6
9...a6 – 71
10 g4
10 h4 – 79
10...♜e5 – 76
10...a6 – 78
10...♜xd4 – 75

Antoshin's Variation

- 1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♙e7 6 ♙f4**
6 ♖f3 – 84
6 ♜de2 0-0 – 84 (6...c6 – 85; 6...♜c6 – 86)
6 ♙c4 0-0 7 0-0 a6 – 88 (7...c6 – 90)
6 ♙e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♞e8 (7...c5 – 93) 8 ♞e1 – 95 (8 f4 – 96)
6 g3 d5 7 e5 (7 exd5 – 99) 7...♜g4 8 ♙f4 – 102 (8 ♙g2 – 101)
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7...c6 – 109
7...♜c6 8 0-0-0 ♜xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♙e6 – 117 (9...a6 – 119)
7...a6 8 0-0-0
8...b5 – 114
8...d5 – 113
8 ♜db5
8 exd5 – 120
8 e5 – 120
8...c6
8...♙b4 – 121
9 ♜c7 d4 10 ♜xa8 – 129
10 0-0-0 – 124
10 ♜e2 – 126
10 ♞d1 – 123

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6: 3rd move alternatives for White

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6

2...e5 – 132

3 ♗d3

3 ♘d2 – 133

3 f3

3...♘bd7 – 143

3...d5 4 e5 ♘fd7 – 136 (4...♘g8 – 135)

3...e5

4 ♘e2 – 137

4 dxe5 – 137

4 d5 ♗e7 5 ♗e3 0-0 6 c4 6 c4 – 142 (6 ♗d3 – 139)

3...e5 4 c3 d5 5 dxe5 ♘xe4

5...dxe4 6 ♗b5+

6...♗d7 – 149

6...c6 – 148

6 ♘f3 ♘c6 7 ♘bd2 ♘c5

7...♗g4 – 152

8 ♗b1

8 ♗b5 – 154

8 ♗c2 – 156

8 ♘b3 – 153

8...♗g4 9 h3 – 160

9 b4 – 158

3 ♘c3 ♘bd7 and 3...e5

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘bd7

3...e5

4 ♘ge2 – 165

4 f4 – 165

4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 – 166

4 f4

4 g3 – 176

4 ♗e3 – 178

4 g4 h6 5 h3 (5 ♗e3 – 200; 5 ♘f3 – 198) 5...e5 6 ♘ge2 – 203 (6 ♗g2 – 201)

4...e5 5 ♘f3 exd4

5...♗e7 – 180

5...c6 – 181

6 ♖xd4 c6

6...♘c5 7 ♗e3 – 187 (7 ♗c4 – 186)

7 ♖e3

7 e5 – 190

7 ♖d2 – 190

7...d5 8 exd5 – 193

8 e5 – 191

Philidor Hanham Variation

**1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 d6 3 d4 ♟f6 4 ♟c3 ♟bd7 or 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♟f6 3 ♟c3 ♟bd7 4 ♟f3 e5
5 ♖c4**

5 g3 – 208

5 g4 ♟xg4 – 213 (5...g6 – 211; 5...h6 – 210)

5...♖e7 6 0-0

6 ♖xf7+ – 219

6 dxe5 – 220

6 ♟g5 0-0 7 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 8 ♟e6 ♜e8 9 ♟xc7 ♜d8 10 ♟xa8 – 222

6...0-0 7 ♜e1

7 a4 – 234

7 ♜e2 c6 (7...exd4 – 236) 8 a4 b6 – 238 (8...exd4 – 241)

7...c6 8 a4 b6

8...exd4 – 249;

8...♜e8 – 250

8...♜c7 9 h3 – 256 (9 b3– 252; 9 ♖a2 – 253; 9 a5 – 255)

8...a5

9 h3 exd4 10 ♟xd4 – 264 (10 ♜xd4 – 268)

9 ♖a2 h6 – 271 (9...exd4 – 272)

9 b3 exd4 10 ♟xd4 (10 ♜xd4 – 274) 10...♟b6 – 278 (10...♟c5 – 276)

9 d5

9 ♖a2 – 280

9 h3 – 281

9 ♖g5 – 283

9 b3 a6

10 ♖b2 – 286

10 d5 – 284

9...cxd5

9...c5 – 289

9...♖b7 – 289

10 ♟xd5 ♟xd5

10...♖b7 – 291

11 ♖xd5 ♜b8 – 295

the Philidor files

The Philidor is a dynamic and underrated answer to White's most popular opening move, 1 e4. Recently it has acquired something of a cult following amongst certain Grandmasters; its supporters include the French number one Etienne Bacrot and the former European Champion Liviu Dieter Nisipeanu. One of its major selling points is its flexibility – Black even has a choice of two opening moves. It also suits a wide variety of playing styles; games can lead to sharp, tactical duels as well as strategic, positional battles.

In this definitive guide, Christian Bauer, himself a renowned expert on the Philidor, uncovers the secrets behind this intriguing opening. Using his own experience and other top-class Philidor games, Bauer identifies both the critical main lines and the tricky sidelines. He also examines the key tactical and strategic ideas for both White and Black, while highlighting crucial issues such as move-order options – a major weapon for the modern Grandmaster.

- Comprehensive coverage of a provocative opening
- Packed with original analysis
- Ideal for club and tournament players

Christian Bauer is a young Grandmaster from France who has a string of tournament successes to his name. He is a former national champion and has represented France in numerous team tournaments, playing top board at the 2000 Istanbul Olympiad. He is a regular columnist for the renowned French chess magazine *Europe Echecs*, while this is his second book for Everyman Chess; his first was *Play 1...b6!*.

EVERYMAN CHESS

www.everymanchess.com

published in the UK by Gloucester Publishers plc
distributed in the US by the Globe Pequot Press

ISBN-10: 1-85744-436-1
ISBN-13: 978-1-85744-436-0



US \$23.95 UK £14.99 CAN \$30.95