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*CHESS EXPLAINED*

# THE FRENCH

**Viacheslav Eingorn and  
Valentin Bogdanov**

Two experts explain the workings of a profound opening complex



# **Chess Explained: The French Defence**

**Viacheslav Eingorn and  
Valentin Bogdanov**

*Translated by Steve Giddins*

**GAMBIT**

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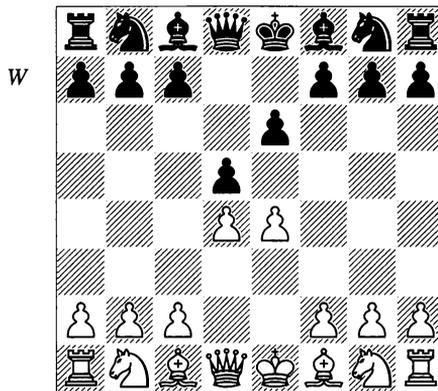
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# Symbols

+	check
++	double check
#	checkmate
!!	brilliant move
!	good move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
?	bad move
??	blunder
Ch	championship
corr.	correspondence game
1-0	the game ends in a win for White
1/2-1/2	the game ends in a draw
0-1	the game ends in a win for Black
( <i>n</i> )	<i>n</i> th match game
( <i>D</i> )	see next diagram

# Introduction

In the opening, White traditionally enjoys the initiative, but in return, it is usually Black who determines the direction in which the game will develop. The very first moves of the game lay the foundation of the later strategic battle. After 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 (*D*) we reach the basic position of the French Defence.



White usually sooner or later finds himself advancing the pawn to e5, which leads to the creation of the characteristic pawn configuration d4+e5 vs e6+d5. Admittedly, it is true that in contemporary chess, the exchange ...dxe4 is also seen quite often, while in the variation 3 ♘d2, the immediate central blow 3...c5 becomes possible. In principle, however, in all of the numerous branches, Black's actions be may divided for theoretical purposes into two stages:

- 1) The determination of the pawn position in the centre.
- 2) The choice of a concrete plan in the resulting situation.

It should be noted that, just as it is far from easy to play the French Defence for Black, so the same is true for White. In any event, one should not assume too much from outward appearances. White's space advantage, or, let us say, the blocked position of Black's c8-bishop, are the first things which strike one's eye. However, from Black's viewpoint, no less important is the fact that from the very start of the game, Black defines the outline of the position, based on genuine possibilities of counterplay.

The relatively modest size of this book means that we shall only cover the most fundamental theoretical lines, and discuss in general terms the methods by which the struggle is conducted in various important French structures. We hope that this will help the reader to develop a good impression of one of the game's most strategically complicated openings.

# 1 The Advance Variation

The voluntary advance of the e-pawn by 3 e5, although rather straightforward, is also in some ways the most principled continuation. By establishing an advanced post in enemy territory, White assures himself a space advantage and creates some preconditions for a future kingside attack. In the immediate future, however, White will have to concern himself with securing his position, since for the moment, his opponent obtains a relatively free hand, thanks to the release of the pawn tension in the centre. Both sides will continue developing, but Black also needs to achieve some more concrete benefits, since otherwise, at the end of the opening, a slightly inferior and rather prospectless middlegame will await him. As a rule, the next moves 3...c5 4 c3 are played almost automatically, after which the various options come into play.

In **Game 1**, the theme of Black's strategy is the exchange of his 'bad' light-squared bishop. This is an alternative to the plan of putting pressure on the white pawn on d4, so that to secure the pawn, White is forced to make some strategic concessions.

In **Game 2**, as a result of the cramping of White's queenside (...c4 in answer to a3), the play takes on a closed, manoeuvring character, in which each player tries to utilize his trumps in a long battle.

**Game 3** sees a more modern treatment of this classical variation, in which Black does not prevent the advance b4 and instead creates a semi-open position, relying on the activity of his pieces.

## Game 1 [C02]

### Alexander Grishchuk – Mikhail Gurevich

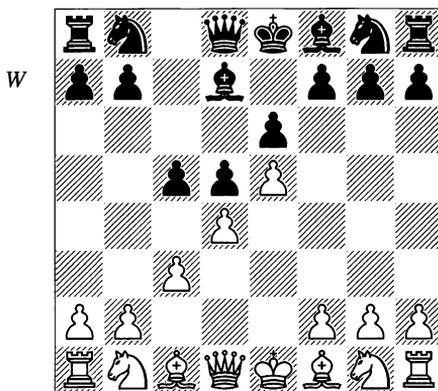
*French Team Ch, Bordeaux 2003*

#### 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3

Although Black can scarcely do without the advance ...c5, White's reply is perhaps not quite so essential, in as much as he can allow his pawn-centre to be broken up, relying on establishing piece control over the e5-square. All the same, at the present moment, such a strategy is insufficiently effective: after 4 ♖g4 cxd4 5 ♟f3, 4 ♟f3 cxd4 5 ♟d3 or 4 dxc5 ♟c6 5 ♟f3 ♟xc5 6 ♟d3, Black has no problems.

#### 4...♟d7 (D)

The bishop move can be regarded as a declaration of intent. This is a convenient moment to say a few words about Black's plan as a whole. Of course, given the general features of the pawn-structure, the exchange of light-squared

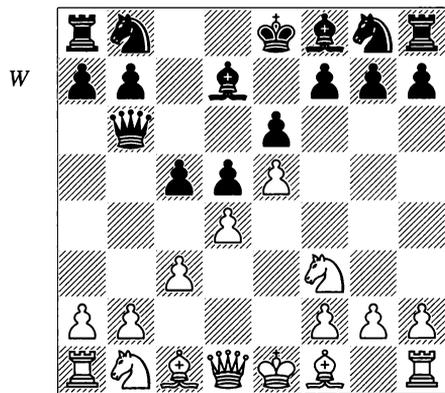


bishops is highly desirable for him. However, there is also some conflict of interests, since

this procedure takes a certain amount of time, and does not contribute to the development of his kingside pieces, nor to the rapid creation of counterplay. In the meantime, in this particular case (with White having a space advantage), these two issues (kingside development and creating direct counterplay) take on great importance, and it is not clear whether Black is right to postpone their solution.

**5 ♖f3 ♜b6 (D)**

The exchange on b5 can also be prepared by 5...a6, giving a position which is more often reached via the Sicilian Defence, after 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 a6 3 c3 e6 4 d4 d5 5 e5 ♙d7. In this case, the manoeuvre ...♙d7-b5 can be seen as a logical follow-up to the move 2...a6, but even so, after the sample variation 6 ♙d3 cxd4 (the immediate 6...♙b5 is not good due to 7 ♙xb5+ axb5 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 b4 ♙b6 10 ♖a3) 7 cxd4 ♙b5 8 ♙c2!? the white bishop dodges its pursuer, and the position of the latter on b5 turns out to be unstable.



**6 a3**

White prepares to extend his zone of influence to include the queenside, by the advance b4. The move 6 ♙e2 is also often played: then after the immediate 6...♙b5 the pawn sacrifice 7 c4 promises White the initiative, although proving an actual advantage is not so simple. Black may avoid the sharpening of the position by 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♙b5. Then, in particular, one frequently sees the continuation 8 ♖c3 ♙xe2 (8...♙b4 9 0-0 ♙xc3 10 ♙xb5+ ♜xb5 11 bxc3) 9 ♖xe2 ♖e7 10 0-0 ♖ec6 and then

...♖d7 and ...♙e7. Once he has succeeded in placing his minor pieces comfortably, Black should achieve equality.

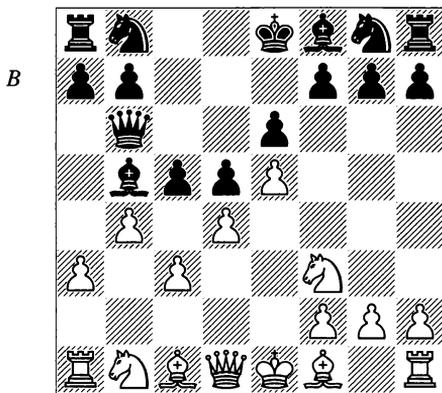
To complete this short theoretical overview, we should mention the existence of two less popular, but interesting variations: 6 ♙d3 ♙b5 (6...cxd4 7 ♖xd4) 7 dxc5 ♙xc5 8 b4!? and 6 ♖bd2 cxd4 (6...♙b5 7 c4!); 6...♖c6 7 ♖b3 cxd4 8 ♖bx4) 7 ♖xd4. We shall not investigate these lines any further, but the reader should be aware of them, so that he may determine whether to examine them in greater detail in the course of his own preparation. Throughout the book we shall similarly be mentioning minor variations in this manner.

**6...♙b5**

Sticking firmly to the general plan, and not fearing the aggressive answer 7 c4, which leads to unclear play. After the preliminary exchange 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 White obtains additional possibilities: 7...♙b5 8 ♙xb5+ ♜xb5 9 ♖c3 (9 b4 leads to the game continuation) 9...♜a6 and now 10 ♖e2 or 10 b4!? (when 10...♙xb4? fails to 11 axb4 ♜xa1 12 ♖b5).

The choice between 6...♙b5 and 6...cxd4 is mainly a question of tactics, whereas a real strategic alternative for Black is available in the form of 6...a5!? 7 ♙e2 (7 ♙d3 is met by 7...♙b5, but there are also the moves 7 a4, 7 c4 and 7 b3) 7...a4 (7...♙b5? 8 ♜b3) 8 0-0 ♖c6.

**7 b4 (D)**



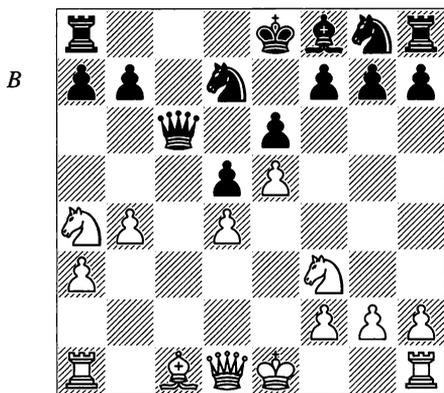
A standard pawn advance for the entire 3 e5 system, leading to the opening of the c-file and the freeing of the c3-square for the white knight.

**7...cxd4 8 ♖xb5+ ♗xb5**

So, Black's opening plan has been realized fully, and only his lack of development prevents him from turning to the exploitation of the weakened light squares in the enemy camp.

**9 cxd4 ♘d7**

In the event of 9...a5 10 ♘c3 ♗c6 11 ♖d2 axb4 12 axb4 ♖xa1 13 ♗xa1 ♗a6 14 ♗a4+ (Zviagintsev-Volkov, Russia Cup, Samara 1998) Black has a bad ending. As long as his h8-rook is unable to come into play, he is well advised to avoid such direct clashes.

**10 ♘c3 ♗c6 11 ♘a4! (D)**

The black knight is aiming for c4, so White takes control of the transit square b6.

**11...♘e7**

Again, it is risky to play 11...a5: 12 ♖d2 axb4 13 axb4 ♗a6 14 b5!? (by sacrificing a pawn, White exchanges off all of Black's developed pieces, but 14 ♖c3 is also good) 14...♗xb5 15 ♘c3 ♖xa1 16 ♘xb5 ♖xd1+ 17 ♗xd1 with an unpleasant initiative, Sveshnikov-Grosar, Slovenian Team Ch, Celje 2003.

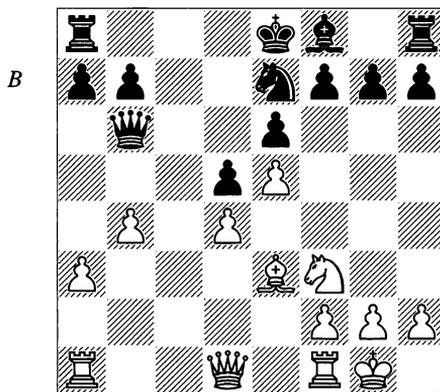
**12 ♖e3**

In reply to 12 0-0, 12...♘c8 and 13...♘cb6 is possible. Therefore White postpones castling and immediately brings out the bishop, creating the counter-threat 13 ♖c1.

**12...♘b6?!**

An important moment. This exchange leads to a passive position, from which Black does not succeed in escaping for the rest of the game. More promising is 12...♘f5!? 13 0-0 (13 ♖c1 ♗a6) 13...♖e7 or even 12...b5, although after

13 ♖c1!? (13 ♘c5 ♘f5) 13...♗a6 14 ♘c5 ♘xc5 15 dxc5 ♗xa3 16 0-0 White's attack seems rather dangerous.

**13 ♘xb6 ♗xb6 14 0-0 (D)****14...♘c6**

Black cannot obtain equality by 14...♘f5 15 ♖c1 ♗d8 16 ♖d2, after which the open lines fall into White's hands and there is the permanent threat of g4. On c6, the knight is also not very well placed, but Black hopes to connect his rooks favourably and obtain a satisfactory position. However, White continues to develop his initiative.

**15 ♘e1! ♖e7 16 ♗g4 g6**

16...0-0 is bad due to 17 ♖h6.

After the text-move, the serious weakening of the black king's future home confirms White's advantage, and now the simple 17 ♘f3 deserved serious consideration, renewing the threat of ♖h6.

**17 ♘d3!?**

White prefers to initiate the so-called 'play on both flanks'. To understand the next phase of the game, it is useful to consider the fighting potential of the various minor pieces: the d3-knight dreams of going to c5, but can also go to f4; the e3-bishop firmly defends the d4-pawn but is ready at a moment's notice to take part in active operations. In his cramped position, Black has no such freedom of manoeuvre and therefore, despite the apparent soundness of his position, it is difficult to hold the balance.

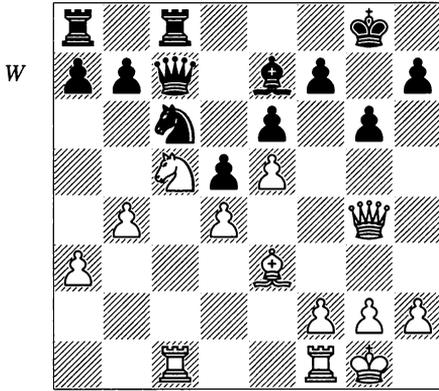
**17...0-0**

17...a5!? is interesting, although in the variation 18 ♖c5 axb4 19 axb4 ♜xa1 20 ♜xa1 ♜xb4 21 ♜a8+ ♘d8 22 ♜d1 White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

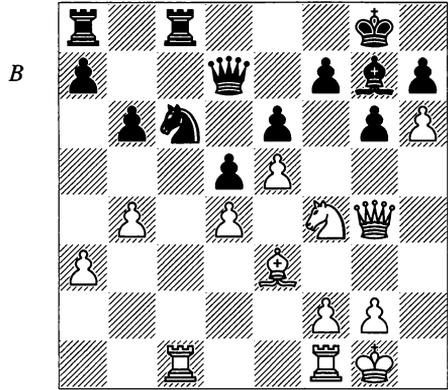
18 ♖c5 ♜c7?!

It is impossible to put up with the knight on c5 for long, but exchanging it is also impossible. Even so, slightly better was 18...♜fc8 and only then (if circumstances permit) ...♜c7 or ...a5.

19 ♜ac1 ♜fc8 (D)



24 h6!? (D)



24...♙xh6?!

An unfortunate decision. More solid was 24...♙f8 25 ♘h5 ♙e7 26 ♜f4 ♜d8, at least parrying the immediate direct threats and retaining a defensible position; for example, 27 ♜c3 a6 28 ♜fc1 ♘a7.

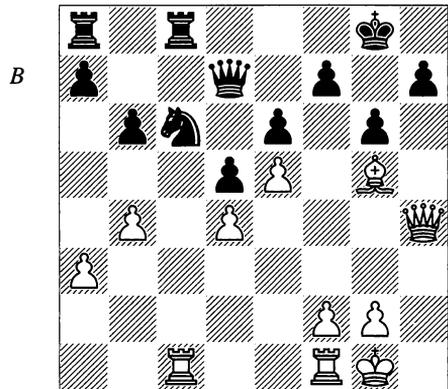
25 ♘h5

It is understandable that the variation 25 ♘xg6?! fxg6 26 ♙xh6 ♘e7 does not come into White's plans.

25...♙g7 26 ♘xg7 ♙xg7 27 ♜h4 ♙g8

Or 27...h5 28 ♜f6+ ♘h7 29 g4 ♜e7 30 ♜f4 (Psakhis; a draw results from 30 ♜xc6 ♜xf6 31 ♜xc8 ♜f3 32 ♜xa8 ♜xg4+).

28 ♙g5 (D)



20 h4!?

Black's tactical idea to 'smoke out' the unwelcome intruder is based on the idea of a pin (if 20 b5 ♘a5 21 ♘xe6?, then 21...♜d7). The simple answer 20 h3(!) casts doubt on this whole idea and allows White to obtain a clear advantage after 20...a6 21 ♜c3. However, he instead pushes the h-pawn one square further, opening a second front.

20...b6 21 ♘d3 ♜d7 22 h5

Barely having resolved his problems on the other flank, Black is obliged to defend himself on the kingside. With the help of only one bishop, it is hardly realistic to hope to achieve such a task, and so Black soon starts to prepare to transfer his forces back to the threatened sector: the bishop drops back to f8, so as to free e7 for the knight.

22...♙f8 23 ♘f4 ♙g7

23...♘e7? is insufficient, because of 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 ♘h5. Now, to force his way through to the f6-square, White does not hesitate to sacrifice a pawn, so as to start the attack before Black can offer the exchange of rooks.

28...f5

If such a counter-sacrifice is forced, then this demonstrates that Black's affairs are in poor

shape. However, 28...h5 is even more precarious in view of 29 ♕f6, after which the black king faces a grim future.

**29 exf6 ♖d8**

The knight dreams of reaching f7, but White's mating threats tie up the enemy forces.

**30 ♖h6 ♜c4?**

Black's position is very difficult. White's winning plan could consist, for example, of advancing the pawn by f4-f5, with a subsequent rook penetration on one of the e- and g-files,

which would thereby be opened. By his mistaken last move, Black allows an immediate pawn breakthrough and so greatly speeds the process, but even the best line, 30...b5 31 ♜fe1 ♜c4 32 ♜xc4 bxc4 33 f4, offers him little to rejoice over.

**31 ♜xc4 dxc4 32 d5!**

First 32 ♜e1, and then 33 d5, was also possible, with the same result.

**32...a5 33 ♜e1 ♜a7 34 f7+ 1-0**

Black loses a knight.

## Game 2 [C02]

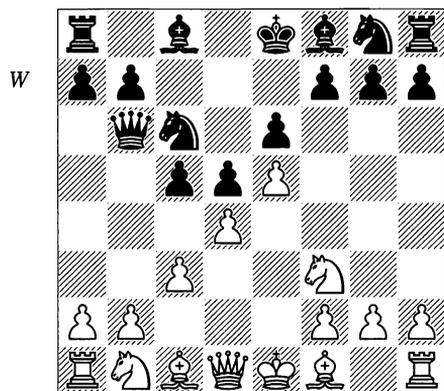
### Hikaru Nakamura – Yannick Pelletier

*Biel 2005*

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♖c6**

A natural move, which seems to need no comment. However, if Black intends to play both ...♖c6 and ...♗b6, then it is simpler to start with the latter, so as to avoid the original line 4...♖c6 5 ♕e3 ♗b6 6 ♗d2.

**5 ♖f3 ♗b6 (D)**



From b6 the black queen simultaneously attacks the squares d4 and b2, thereby hampering the convenient development of the white pieces.

**6 a3**

The planned expansion on the queenside, with which we are already familiar, here pursues the relatively modest aim of defending the d4-pawn by ♕b2.

After 6 ♕d3 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♕d7, the line 8 ♕c2 ♖b4 is completely without prospects for White, and the gambit line 8 ♖c3 ♖xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 10 0-0 is not fully correct.

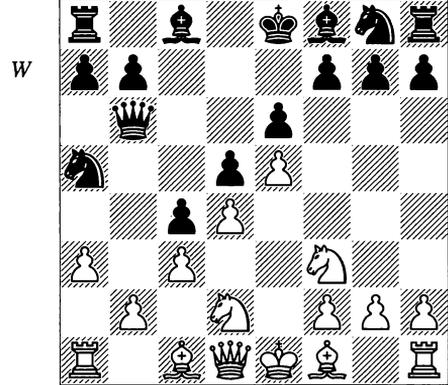
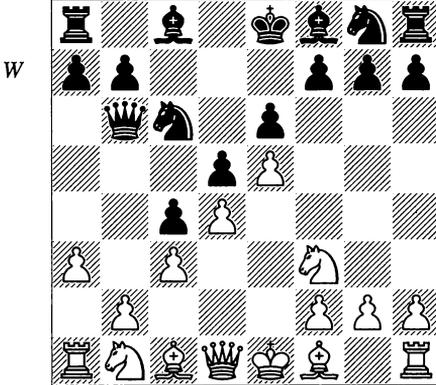
The more restrained continuation 6 ♕e2 cxd4 (also interesting is 6...♖h6!? 7 ♕xh6 and now 7...gxf6, but not 7...♗xb2? 8 ♕e3 ♗xa1 9 ♗c2) 7 cxd4 ♖h6 (more accurate than 7...♖ge7 8 ♖a3!? ♖f5 9 ♖c2) leads to one of the key positions of the opening. Here White has repeatedly but unsuccessfully tried just about every plausible move, from which we shall just mention the two most important:

a) 8 ♖c3 (exploiting the freeing of the c3-square; here 8 ♕xh6? ♗xb2 is unfavourable to White) 8...♖f5 9 ♖a4 ♗a5+ 10 ♕d2 ♕b4 11 ♕c3 b5 12 a3 ♕xc3+ 13 ♖xc3 b4 is satisfactory for Black.

b) 8 b3 ♖f5 9 ♕b2 ♕b4+ 10 ♖f1 ♕e7 or 10...0-0.

**6...c4 (D)**

After 6...a5, the continuation 7 ♕d3 gains in strength: 7...♕d7 8 0-0 (the simple 8 ♕c2 is also not bad). In this case, taking the pawn by 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♖xd4 10 ♖c3 is a rather risky undertaking (the inclusion of the moves a3 and ...a5 favours White), while by playing 8...a4 Black loses an important tempo compared with the variation 4...♕d7 5 ♖f3 ♗b6 6 a3 a5 7 ♕e2 a4 8 0-0 ♖c6, considered in the commentary to the previous game.



Strategically, the most radical response: Black gives up the siege of the d4-square, but in the process fixes the weaknesses b3 and a4 in the white camp, while the c4-pawn (like its opposite number on e5) restricts the scope of the enemy pieces. The blocked pawn-chain suggests that future play will take place on the flanks, although the situation in the centre can change after the potential breaks ...f6 and b3.

### 7 ♖bd2

White has no reason to postpone development of the queen's knight, especially if he plans to develop the bishop from f1 to g2 or h3. In the event of the immediate 7 g3, apart from 7...♘a5 8 ♖bd2 ♘d7, which simply transposes, the move 7...f6 is also perfectly good. However, after 7 ♖bd2 the continuation 7...f6, though still quite playable, is considered less favourable because of the variation 8 ♙e2 fxe5 9 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 10 dxe5 ♙c5 11 0-0 ♗e7 12 b4 cxb3 13 ♗xb3.

### 7...♗a5 (D)

The incautious 7...♘d7?! deserves serious censure, since White can immediately launch a successful attack on his opponent's pawn outpost by playing 8 b3! cxb3 9 ♗xb3 ♗a5 10 ♗xa5 ♙xa5 11 ♙d2 and then ♙d3, seizing the initiative. In Motylev-Hort, Hoogeveen 2003 there followed 11...♗e7 12 ♙d3 ♙c7 13 0-0 h6 14 ♗h4 g6 15 g3, and the further 15...♗c8? 16 ♙xg6! ♙b5 17 ♙g4 fxg6 18 ♗xg6 ♙xf1 19 ♙xe6+ ended in a catastrophe for Black.

Another advantage of White's choice of 7th move is that the natural reply 7...♗ge7? loses material to 8 ♙xc4!

Now the effectiveness of the break b3 is minimal (8 b3 cxb3 9 ♙b2 ♙d7 10 c4 dxc4 or 8 ♙b1 ♙d7 9 b3 cxb3 10 c4 ♗e7).

We have on the board a position which is highly complicated, and very instructive for further study, being as it is located on the border between opening and middlegame. There are no obvious pointers to allow the players to orientate themselves easily in the forthcoming play, and both sides will have to consider their plans very deeply. One interesting question, for example, is this: how will White develop his bishop from f1?

Let us assume that we plan to put it on h3, after first playing the preliminary h4: 8 g3 ♙d7 9 h4 0-0-0 10 ♙h3. Then in the possible variation 10...f5 11 exf6 (more cautious is 11 0-0) 11...gxf6 12 0-0 ♗h6 the h4-pawn turns out to be misplaced and Black's chances are preferable.

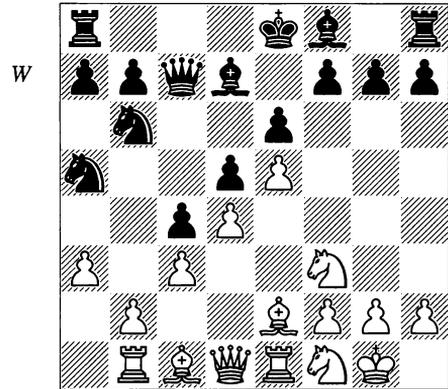
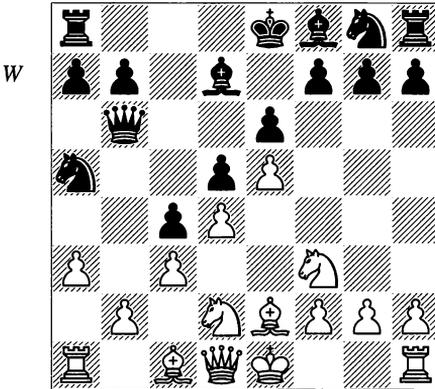
Let us try instead (after 8 g3 ♙d7) the immediate 9 ♙h3: if now 9...0-0-0 10 0-0 f5 11 exf6 gxf6, White saves a tempo and his king is safer. However, this time a more logical response is 9...♙e7 10 0-0 h5. Here the h2-pawn would prefer to be on h4.

From these considerations, we can draw the conclusion that after 8 g3 ♙d7 the least committal continuation is the unpretentious 9 ♙g2, or even the waiting move 9 ♙b1. In the game under consideration, White refrains altogether from the fianchetto of the bishop.

### 8 ♙e2 ♙d7 (D)

### 9 0-0

Less often seen (possibly for no good reason) is 9 ♙b1 ♗e7 10 ♗f1. By postponing



castling for a while, White gets on with regrouping his pieces, not fearing the variation 10...♞b3 11 ♙f4 (weaker is 11 ♞xb3 ♜xb3 12 ♙f4 b5) 11...♙a4 12 ♞xb3. Although the exchange of queens makes Black's planned queenside pawn advance with ...b5, ...a5 and ...b4 more realistic, White's chances in this complicated queenless middlegame still look preferable.

### 9...♞e7 10 ♞b1

Avoiding in good time any potential knight fork on b3, and reminding his opponent of the possible b3 break, which again needs to be considered seriously after moves such as 10...0-0-0, 10...♞c8 or 10...f6. There are also arguments for moving the other rook: after 10 ♞e1, in particular, the move 10...♙b5 (planning ...♞c6 and ...♙a4) loses much of its sting.

### 10...♞c7

Black plans the transfer of the knight via e7-c8-b6, which allows him soon to take complete control of the squares b3 and a4. The game is taking on a more concrete character.

### 11 ♞e1

Sticking to his chosen scheme. Black has no problems after 11 ♞h4 ♞g6 12 ♞df3 ♞xh4 13 ♞xh4 ♙e7 14 ♞f3 f5 15 ♙g5 ♙c6 (Dvoiry-Vaganian, European Clubs Cup, Izmir 2004), but an interesting continuation is 11 ♞g5 h6 12 ♞h3 ♞c8 13 ♞f3!? ♞b6 14 ♙e3, leading to an unclear position after 14...♙a4 15 ♞c1 ♞b3 16 ♞e1 ♞a5 17 ♞d2 ♙c2 18 ♞a1.

### 11...♞c8 12 ♞f1 ♞b6 (D)

This position is characteristic of the entire opening set-up. White's hopes of an advantage can be formulated in general terms as follows:

1) Black's obvious achievements on the queenside do not have real significance.

2) Without a pawn advance on the flank, nothing real can be achieved.

3) Such an advance is easier to carry out on the kingside than the queenside.

These considerations in themselves imply that only White can hope to carry out active operations on the kingside. It is thus time for the c1-bishop to emerge, while keeping the e3-square clear for the white queen, which might otherwise find itself blocked in by other pieces. However, it is not easy to find an ideal implementation of this aim, as we are about to see.

### 13 ♙f4

On f4 the bishop is undefended, and we shall see the significance of this in the next note, but 13 ♙g5 has its drawbacks too: 13...h6 14 ♙h4 and now 14...g5!? 15 ♙g3 ♙e7 or simply 14...♙a4 15 ♞c1 ♙e7 with approximate equality.

### 13...♙a4

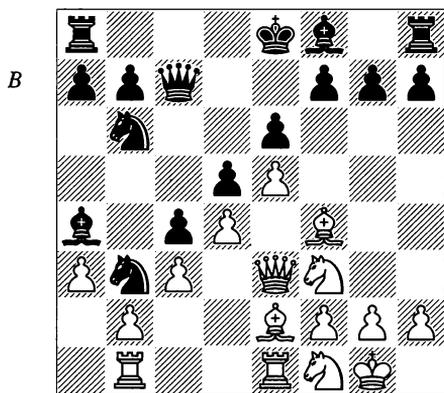
Black passes up the chance to seize the strategic initiative from his opponent by 13...f5!? 14 h4 h6 (or 14...0-0-0, after which it is unfavourable to play 15 ♞g5 h6 16 ♞f7? ♙a4 17 ♞d6+ ♙b8 18 ♞c1 g5) 15 h5 ♙e7 16 ♞c1 0-0-0, preparing ...g5, with full counterplay.

### 14 ♞c1 ♞b3

This invasion could have been delayed, so as not to force the white queen from the unfortunate square c1.

### 15 ♞e3 (D)

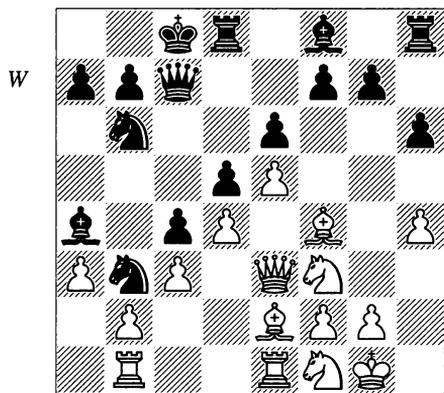
### 15...h6



The immediate 15...♠a5 deserved attention. This manoeuvre of the knight, shuttling to and fro, is one of Black's most important sources of counterplay: by dangling in front of White's eyes a repetition of moves (16 ♖bc1 ♠b3), he hopes either to get the bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal, or to achieve a favourable exchange of light-squared bishops. If White continues as in the game with 16 ♘d3d2 ♙c2 17 ♖bc1 ♙g6 18 h4, then the reply 18...h5!? looks satisfactory, preventing a pawn squeeze on the kingside. The other version of the same line promises White a minimal advantage: 16 ♘d1d2 ♙c2 17 ♖bc1 ♙g6 18 ♘h4, but in this case, there is no necessity to play 16...♙c2.

#### 16 h4 0-0-0 (D)

What is the hurry to castle? Here 16...♠a5 is clearly more accurate.



#### 17 h5

17 ♘d3d2 would have disturbed Black's plans.

#### 17...♠a5 18 ♘d3d2

White stubbornly avoids 18 ♙d1, but soon has to fall in with his opponent's wishes.

#### 18...♙c2 19 ♖bc1 ♙h7 20 ♙d1 ♖b8

This repositioning of the black king is also not very timely. More purposeful was 20...♗d7 21 ♙c2 ♙xc2 22 ♖xc2 ♗a4.

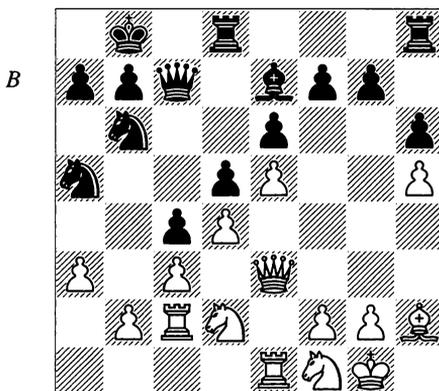
#### 21 ♙c2

This move is eventually forced, since otherwise White will not be able to defend the b2-pawn, should the need arise.

#### 21...♙xc2 22 ♖xc2 ♙e7

More flexible is 22...♗d7, while 22...♠b3 is more solid, offering another minor-piece exchange at the right time. The variation 23 ♘xb3 cxb3 24 ♖ce2 ♘c4 is not dangerous for Black.

#### 23 ♙h2 (D)



White slowly but surely puts the indicated plan into operation. The bishop retreats to free the way for the f2-pawn, the queen will transfer to h3, and the knights will take up posts on e3 and f3.

#### 23...♖a8 24 ♗h3 ♗d7 25 f4 g6

Black abandons all attempts to create counterplay on the queenside (such as 25...♖c8 26 ♘e3 ♖c6, planning ...♠a4) and, despite a serious shortage of space, starts a battle on the opposite flank. Such a decision can be considered the first real success for White's opening strategy.

#### 26 ♘e3 ♖dg8 27 ♘f3 ♘c6 28 ♖h1

White has convinced himself of the necessity of carrying out a pawn-storm, but he encounters certain difficulties in organizing this. There was also an interesting possibility of a

piece attack, with the move 28 ♖g4!?. In any event, the following variations look attractive for him:

a) 28... ♖e8 29 hxg6 fxg6 30 ♘f6 ♙xf6 31 exf6 ♘d8 32 ♖g3! ♘d7 33 f5.

b) 28...gxh5 29 ♖xh5 ♖e8 (with the threat of 30...f5) 30 f5 ♖g5 31 ♖h3 ♗xf5 32 ♘e3.

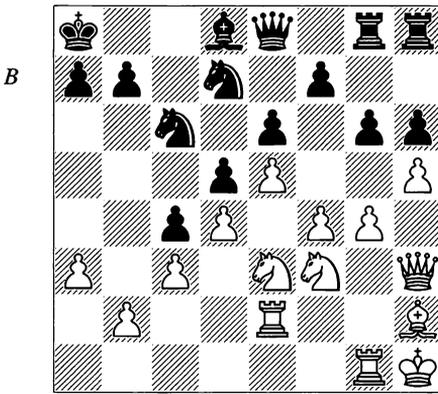
**28...♙d8**

Preparing 29... ♖e8 and again tempting White to play 29 ♘g4.

**29 g4 ♖e8 30 ♖g1**

At the moment, it is premature to play 30 hxg6 fxg6 31 f5 ♙g5, while 30 f5 can also be met by 30...♙g5 (weaker is 30...gxf5 31 gxf5 ♙g5 32 f6); moreover, it is not easy to assess all the consequences of the blockading reply 30...g5. While thinking about how to break through his opponent's resistance, White relocates his rooks, but does not do so in the most accurate way.

**30...♘d7 31 ♖e2 (D)**



**31...gxh5**

The reader may feel that a game in which the first exchange does not occur until the 21st move, and the second another 10 moves later, is rather boring. However, such developments are inherent in the opening structure. Gradually though, the strategic battle is coming to a head. The exchange on h5 opens green pastures before the f4-pawn, especially when the black pawn is still on f7, interfering with the coordination of his forces. It is highly questionable whether Black should make such a positional concession for the sake of carrying out the

manoeuvre ... ♖f8-g7 (the immediate 31... ♖f8 allows 32 hxg6 fxg6 33 f5). On the contrary, the attempt to free himself with 31...f6!?, not fearing the resulting complications, deserved serious attention.

**32 ♖xh5 ♖f8**

32...f6 is bad because of 33 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 34 exf6 ♘xf6 35 g5 (e.g., 35...♘e4 36 ♘xc4).

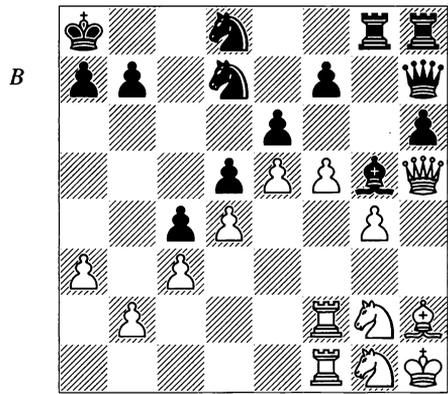
**33 f5 ♙g5 34 ♖f1**

Having taken one step forward, White does not rush to advance further immediately. All the same, more logical was 34 ♘g2, not giving his opponent the choice of exchanging on e3.

**34...♖g7**

Black considers the g5-bishop to be the main bastion of his new line of defence, and thus avoids the exchange on e3. Both continuations seem of roughly equal merit – in the variation 34...♙xe3 35 ♗xe3 ♖g7 36 ♖e2!? (weaker is 36 ♖g1 ♖h7) White also retains the advantage.

**35 ♘g2 ♖h7 36 ♖ef2 ♘d8 37 ♘g1 (D)**



**37...♘b8(?)**

This and the next black move are impossible to explain rationally. His only strategically sensible option was the advance ...f6. While Black fiddles, White's manoeuvres continue to have a clear purpose.

**38 ♘e2 ♘a6 39 ♘g3 ♖e8 40 ♖h3 ♖e7 41 ♘h5**

Once the knight has replaced the white queen, and occupied the blockading post on h5, Black is deprived of all chances for counterplay, and passive defence does not offer any hope of salvation.

41...♖c7 42 ♔f4 ♘b8 43 ♔xg5 hxg5 44 ♖xh3 48 ♜fxh3 ♜xh3 49 ♜xh3 b5 50 ♘h7  
 ♘e3 ♘bc6 45 ♜h2 ♘e7 46 ♜f3 ♜c6 47 ♘f6 exf5 51 gx f5 g4 52 ♜h4 1-0

## Game 3 [C02]

## Evgeny Sveshnikov – Josep Lopez Martinez

Stepanakert 2005

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♖b6

As already pointed out, attacking the d4-pawn is very logical, but such a direct opening strategy is not compulsory. Alternative plans start with the moves 4...♘c6 5 ♘f3, and then:

a) 5...♖b6 transposes back to the main game.

b) 5...♗ge7 6 ♘a3 (a typical counter-manoeuve by the white knight; an approximately equal position, if slightly passive for Black, arises after 6 ♔d3 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♘f5 8 ♔xf5 exf5) 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♘f5 8 ♘c2.

c) 5...♘h6 is a modification of the previous line – Black leaves open the diagonal of the f8-bishop, while also giving White several additional options, such as 6 dxc5 ♔xc5 7 b4 and 6 ♔d3 cxd4 7 ♔xh6 (after the exchange on d4, such an exchange seems more attractive) 7...gxh6 8 cxd4, Grishchuk-Bareev, European Clubs Cup, Panormo 2001.

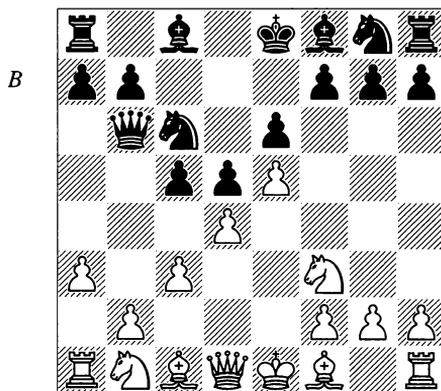
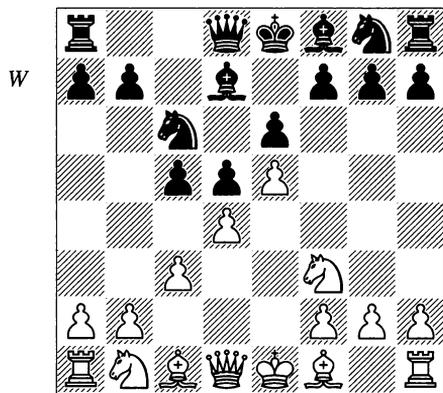
d) 5...♔d7!? (D) is the most flexible and commonly-played continuation, which it is interesting to compare with the variation 5...♖b6.

over the centre by 6 dxc5 ♔xc5 7 b4 (7 ♔d3 f6!?) 7...♔b6 8 b5 ♘a5 9 ♔d3 creates weaknesses in the white position and must be considered rather experimental. 6 a3 and 6 ♔e2 are more important moves.

The advance b4 is less well-motivated here than with the black queen on b6; for example, 6 a3 ♗ge7 (the plan with 6...c4 also offers certain advantages here, while 6...f6 is also not bad) 7 b4 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♘f5 with a good game for Black after 9 ♘c3 ♜c8 10 ♔b2 ♘h4 or 9 ♔b2 b5!? 10 ♘c3 (10 ♔xb5 ♘xe5) 10...a5.

6 ♔e2 offers more chances, since White is better placed to beat off the attack on d4, without positional concessions to the opponent. Certainly, now in the variation 6...♖b6 7 0-0 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗ge7 9 ♘c3 (9 ♘a3!? ♘f5 10 ♘c2) 9...♘f5 10 ♘a4 ♖a5 11 ♔d2 it is extremely useful for White that he has castled, but Black usually chooses one of several other continuations. We shall merely list these, without going into further details: 6...♗ge7, 6...♘h6, 6...f6 (attacking White's other central pawn) or even 6...♜c8 7 0-0 a6, quietly continuing with waiting tactics.

5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 a3 (D)



In the position after the bishop move, the attempt to modernize the idea of piece control

Again we have before us a familiar position, in which Black may (as occurred in Game 2) by 6...c4 mark out clear areas of influence for the two sides, giving the struggle a manoeuvring character. This time, he instead continues with piece development, thereby taking the risk of ending up in a strategically unfavourable position, in which he is cramped on both wings.

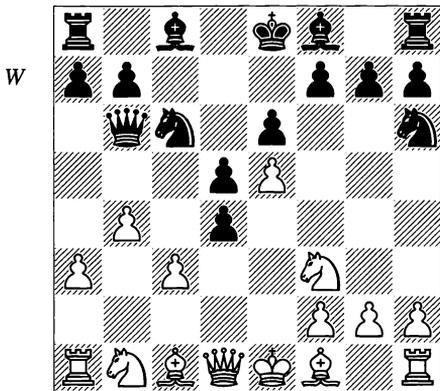
### 6...♟h6

Also commonly met is 6...♟d7 7 b4 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♞c8, for the time being preventing the enemy knight from coming to c3, while also threatening the d4-pawn (9 ♟e2 a5! 10 b5 ♟xd4 11 ♟xd4 ♞xc1). This veiled threat may be parried in two ways:

a) 9 ♟b2 creates a new tactical motif in the position. True, after the immediate 9...♟a5 10 ♟bd2 ♟c4 11 ♟xc4 (somewhat weaker is 11 ♟xc4 dxc4 12 ♞c1 c3) 11...dxc4 12 ♞c1 the results of the opening are in White's favour, but the preliminary 9...♟ge7 looks fine for Black. Then 10 ♟c3 ♟a5 11 ♟a4 ♞c6 12 ♟c5 ♟c4 and 10 ♟bd2 ♟f5 11 ♟b3 a5 12 b5 a4 give White nothing.

b) 9 ♟e3 ♟h6 10 ♟d3 ♟f5 (10...♟g4 is another idea) 11 0-0. White retains the initiative, but Black is close to equality, thanks to the opportunity of exchanging off one of the enemy bishops.

### 7 b4 cxd4 (D)

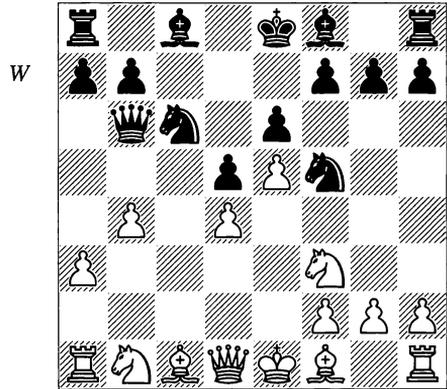


### 8 cxd4

A position with chances for both sides results from 8 ♟xh6 gxh6 9 cxd4 ♟d7 10 ♟e2 (10 ♟c3

♟xb4) 10...♞c8 11 0-0 ♟g7 12 ♞d2 0-0 13 ♞a2 (13 ♟c3 allows the counterblow 13...♟xd4 14 ♟xd4 ♟xe5) 13...f6, Bosch-Lputian, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

### 8...♟f5 (D)



### 9 ♟b2

Events develop in similar fashion to the variation indicated in the notes to White's 6th move, but with certain differences. Here, in the event of 9 ♟e3 the move 9...f6!? is possible; e.g., 10 b5 ♟xe5! 11 dxe5 ♟xe3 12 fxe3 ♞xe3+ 13 ♞e2 ♞c1+ with a quick draw (Romanishin-Lputian, Erevan 1988) or 10 ♟d3 ♟xe3 11 fxe3 fxe5 12 b5 ♟xd4! (Hurley-T.Clarke, Irish Ch, Dublin 1996), while White also achieves nothing significant after 10 exf6 gxf6.

### 9...♟d7

Black's pressure on the d4-pawn has reached its zenith, so what should he do now? The attempt to break up the queenside by 9...a5 10 b5 a4 is dubious. This idea is more effective when combined with the preliminary 9...♟e7: 10 h4! (nothing is promised by 10 ♟d3 ♟d7) 10...a5! (if now 10...h5, then by playing 11 ♟d3 and exchanging on f5, White can hope for some advantage) 11 b5 a4 12 g4 (12 ♟c3!?) 12...♟h6 13 ♞g1 ♟a5.

The text-move aims to provoke White into resolute action, since he cannot play 10 ♟d3, but he can attack the enemy knight on f5 with a pawn.

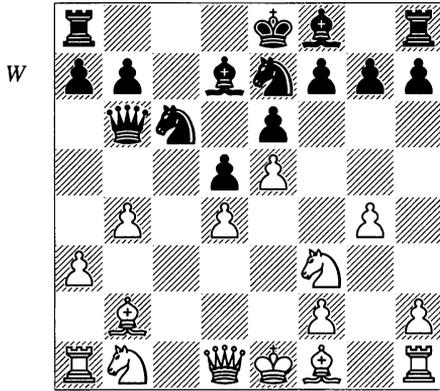
### 10 g4

White decides that he must accept the invitation. In the event of 10 ♟e2 ♟e7 11 0-0 he still

has not solved the problem of how to develop the b1-knight.

**10...♠f7 (D)**

The other retreat, 10...♠h6 is, after 11 ♖g1 or 11 h3, usually followed by the break 11...f6, although the simple 11...♞c8 also deserves attention.



The siege of d4 has been lifted at the cost of weakening the kingside, although this is compensated by White's additional space gains.

**11 ♖c3**

The knight prepares to jump to a4. Weaker is 11 ♖bd2 h5 12 g5 ♖f5 13 ♖b3 because of the standard reaction 13...a5 14 b5 a4.

After the text-move, Black must again make an important decision. Refraining from the quieter continuations 11...♠g6 or 11...h5 12 ♖a4 ♜d8 13 ♖c5 (13 g5 b6) 13...♞c8 14 g5 b6 (14...♠g6), he prefers a more radical method of conducting the opening struggle.

**11...♖a5**

Exploiting at the last moment the opposition of queen on b6 and bishop on b2. He would prefer, of course, to flick in the preliminary moves 11...h5 12 g5, but as noted earlier, White would play the immediate 12 ♖a4. It is worth mentioning another point – in the note to White's 6th move, the same position arose with the white pawn on g2, but the black rook already on c8.

**12 ♜c6**

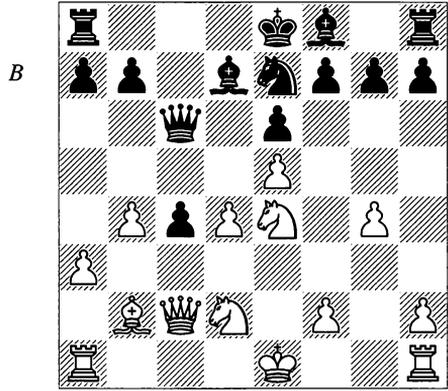
A practical decision, by which White tries to ensure himself a material advantage at least. A chaotic position with chances for both sides, typical of many lines of the French Defence,

arises after 12 ♖d2 (useless is 12 ♖a4 ♜c6) 12...♞c8 13 ♞c1 ♠g6.

**12...♖c4 13 ♞xc4 dxc4 14 ♖d2**

Attacking the c4-pawn while bringing both knights into range of the weakened d6-square.

**14...♜c6 15 ♖ce4 (D)**



A curious position. Although the threat of 16 ♖d6+ looks very serious, Black can ignore it with 15...c3!?. In Sveshnikov-Radjabov, Keres Memorial (rapid), Tallinn 2004, after 16 ♖d6+ ♜d8 17 ♖xf7+ ♗e8 18 ♖d6+ ♜d8 White could find nothing better than perpetual check (19 ♖f7+, etc.). Nor is it obvious that White achieves anything special with 16 ♜xc3 ♖d5 (Haba-Kosić, Calvia Olympiad 2004): this particular version of the endgame after 17 ♜xc6 ♞xc6 suits Black, while 17 ♜b3 ♞e7 gives him sufficient counterplay in the middlegame.

**15...♖c8**

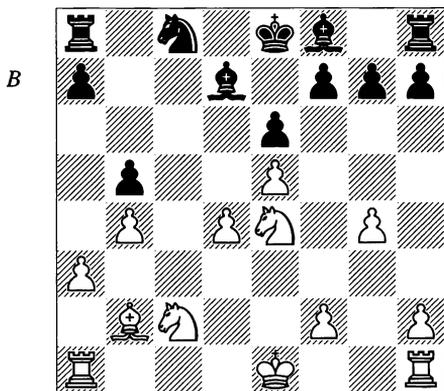
A quieter continuation. Black does not wish to place the knight on the edge of the board, but the f5-square is not available, and the variation 15...♖d5 16 ♖xc4 ♖b6 17 ♖cd6+ ♞xd6 18 ♖xd6+ ♗e7 19 ♜xc6 ♞xc6 20 ♖g1 ♖c8 leads to a pawn-down endgame. In Sveshnikov-Potkin, Russian Ch, Krasnoïarsk 2003, Black managed to hold the position after 21 b5 ♞d5 22 ♞c1 ♖xd6 23 ♞c7+ ♜d8 24 exd6 ♞c8, but he would have had a much harder task in the event of 21 d5!? ♞xd5 22 ♞c1 (Psakhis).

**16 ♖xc4**

More consequential than 16 ♜xc4 ♖b6 17 ♜xc6 (17 ♜e2 ♜d5; 17 ♜b3 ♜b5) 17...♞xc6 18 ♞b1.

White is ready to meet 16...♖b6 with 17 ♖cd6+, and does not object to the advance ...b5.

16...b5 17 ♖e3 ♜xc2 18 ♖xc2 (D)



By retaining control over the light squares, Black has achieved sufficient compensation for the pawn. Following a hypothetical opening of the position, his pieces could become very active, but for the moment the attacking scope of the f8-bishop is limited, and as long as White retains his solid position in the centre, he does not risk falling into an inferior position. In fact, both sides have reason to be dissatisfied with the results of the opening – it is very hard for White to play for a win, but on the other hand, Black can scarcely count on making more than a draw.

18...♗c6

More flexible is 18...♖b6 19 ♖e2 (19 ♖e3 can be met by 19...♖a4 or 19...a5) 19...♖c4.

19 f3 h5

There was also no need to hurry with this advance, since in doing so, Black clarifies the pawn-structure earlier than necessary.

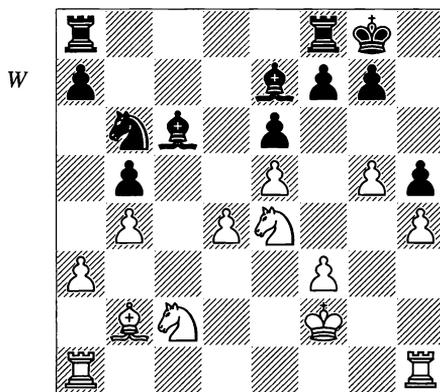
20 g5 ♖b6 21 ♖f2

As soon becomes clear, the e2-square would be a better post for the king.

21...♗e7 22 h4 0-0?! (D)

Black does not choose the best moment to castle, since now instead of 23 ♜ac1 (for example, 23...♖a4 24 ♗a1 or 23...♖c4 24 ♖e3), White can consider carrying out a tactical operation on the kingside.

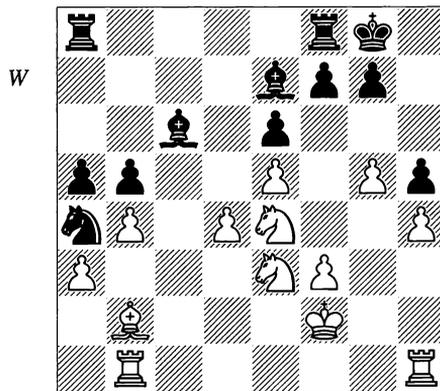
23 ♖e3



It was possible to land the blow 23 ♖f6+ immediately, but evidently, White did not consider his advantage in the variation 23...gxf6 (23...♖h8 is met by 24 ♖xh5) 24 gxf6 ♗xf6 25 exf6 ♖h7 to be serious enough.

23...♖a4 24 ♜ab1 a5?! (D)

Black is evidently in the dark as to his opponent's intentions.



25 ♗a1?

But here it was important to act without further delay: 25 ♖f6+! gxf6 26 gxf6 ♖xb2 (not 26...♗d8? 27 ♜hg1+ leading to mate) 27 fxe7 (there is only perpetual check after 27 ♜xb2? ♗d8 28 ♜g1+ ♖h7) 27...♖d3+ 28 ♖g3 ♜fe8 29 ♜b3 axb4 30 axb4 ♖xb4 (or 30...♖xe5 31 dxe5 ♜xe7 32 ♜c3) 31 ♖xb4 ♜xe7 32 ♜c1, and White's advantage is indisputable.

25...axb4 26 ♖f6+

In response to the prosaic 26 axb4, the reply 26...♖b6 is good enough, and therefore White

hurries – but sadly, the moment has already passed.

**26...♙xf6**

Now it is Black's turn to play for a win with an extra pawn. Taking the piece with 26...gxf6 27 gxf6 ♗d8 28 ♜hg1+ ♖h7 29 ♜g5 ♜g8 only leads to a draw.

**27 gxf6 bxa3 28 d5 ♗d7**

28...♗xd5 is completely safe, with approximate equality, but Black still has grounds to hope for more.

**29 f4**

More solid was 29 ♜hg1 g6 30 dxe6 ♗xe6 31 f4. In any event, there was no need to refrain from the rook move.

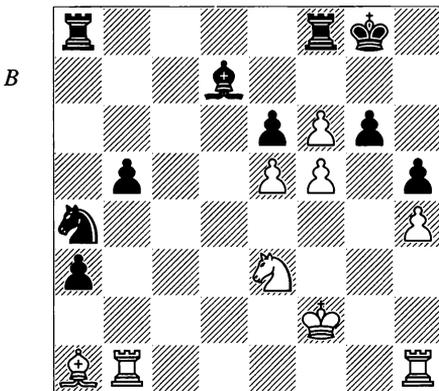
**29...g6 30 dxe6?**

This is now a serious error. Again, 30 ♜hg1 deserved attention; if 30...♘c5, then 31 dxe6 ♘e6 32 f5 ♘f4 33 e6, maintaining the initiative, while after 30...♖h7 31 dxe6 fxe6 the black king is badly placed on h7.

**30...fxe6**

By contrast, now the king has the convenient square f7. Even so, rather than try to build a defence by 31 ♗d4, White plunges forward.

**31 f5 (D)**



Another pawn is sacrificed, so as to bring the knight into the game. Unfortunately, in this instance, the end does not justify the means.

**31...exf5 32 ♘d5 ♖f7**

This gives White new chances of a favourable outcome to the game. Stronger was 32...♘c5!, going over to the counterattack.

**33 ♘c7 ♜a7**

But not 33...♜ab8 34 ♜hd1.

**34 ♜hc1!**

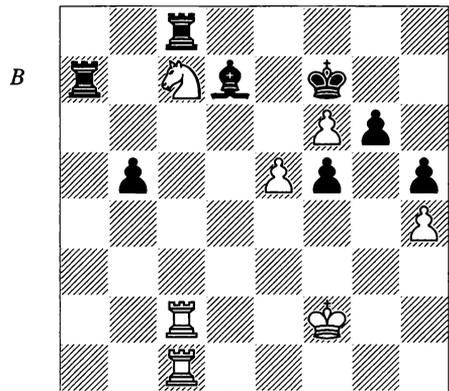
Clearly weaker is 34 e6+ ♗xe6 35 ♘xb5 ♗d7 36 ♘xa3 ♘c5 or 34 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 35 ♜xb5 ♜c8.

**34...♘b2**

Black gives up all pretensions to an advantage. More logical was 34...♜b7 or 34...♜b8 (though not 34...a2 35 ♜xb5!).

**35 ♗xb2 axb2 36 ♜xb2 ♜c8 37 ♜bc2 (D)**

Once again, White is searching for something. Comfortable equality was available in the variation 37 ♘xb5 ♜xc1 38 ♘xa7 ♜c5 39 ♜b7 ♜xe5 40 ♗xd7+ ♖xf6.



**37...b4 38 ♜c5 b3**

Instead, 38...♜b8 would again have given Black the initiative, but he is now content with a draw.

**39 e6+ ♗xe6 40 ♘xe6 ♜xc5 41 ♘xc5 ♜c7 42 ♘xb3 ♜xc1 43 ♘xc1 ♖xf6 44 ♘d3 g5 45 ♖g3 f4+ 46 ♖f3 gxh4 47 ♖xf4 h3 48 ♖g3 h2 49 ♖xh2 h4 50 ♖h3 ♖f5 51 ♖xh4 1/2-1/2**

The Advance Variation has a long and glorious history, having been played successfully even by Louis Paulsen. In the 20th century, Nimzowitsch and Sveshnikov were the great propagators of the white cause, although it must be said that it is only quite recently that this ancient continuation has gained widespread popularity. To solve his opening problems, Black requires accuracy, and the many unresolved positions which arise remain open for further theoretical research.

## 2 The Tarrasch Variation: Lines with ...f6

Both methods of defending the e4-pawn with the knight (3 c3 and 3 d2) are regarded as principal continuations against the French Defence. In this chapter we begin our examination of the Tarrasch Variation, characterized by 3 d2.

The position of the knight at d2 allows White to avoid the pin (3...b4), but obstructs his own bishop's c1-h6 diagonal and the d-file, and also weakens his control over the central squares, allowing the immediate reply 3...c5. The lines based on an early ...c5 (whether immediately or following a useful waiting move such as 3...a6) are covered in the next chapter.

Here we concentrate on lines where Black forces his opponent to play his pawn to e5. This can be achieved by playing ...f6, after which White can realize the main idea of the move 3 d2: the e4-pawn advances with tempo, while its neighbour on d4 is guaranteed the protection of the c-pawn. By comparison with the Advance Variation, 3 e5, the differences seem to favour White, but things are by no means so simple, since the d2-knight occupies a clearly inferior position. If it moves to f3, then the g1-knight must then develop to e2, preferably after first allowing the f1-bishop to develop to d3. The natural order of development of White's pieces is disturbed, whereas Black, after 3...f6 4 e5 d7, attacks the white centre by ...c5 and ...f6. The major role in Black's plan of counterattack played by the advance ...f6 should be noted – another difference from the 3 e5 lines.

In **Game 4**, we see the rather extravagant 3...c6, leaving the c7-pawn where it is.

**Game 5** may serve as an example of the depth of modern theory in the line 3...f6 4 e5 d7.

In **Game 6**, we see a hybrid waiting continuation, which contains the idea of preserving the option of several possible set-ups for Black.

### Game 4 [C04]

## Joe Gallagher – Rafael Vaganian

*Calvia Olympiad 2004*

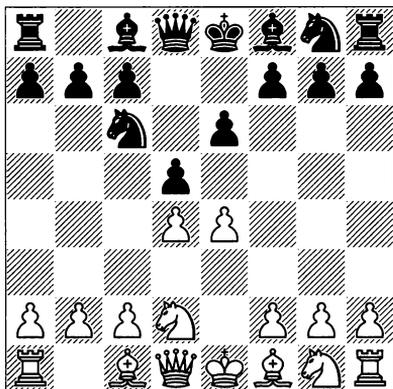
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 d2 c6 (D)

This move reminds one of the joke about the chess trainer who instructed one of his less successful pupils as follows: "Remember, in the Sicilian Defence, Black first plays his pawn to c5, and then his knight to c6 – not the other way round!" As we shall see, in the French Defence, this rule is not quite so categorical, and in certain situations some diversity is possible.

4 gf3

Defending the d4-pawn and taking control of the strategically important e5-square, around which the future of the game will revolve. The other reply, 4 c3, fulfils only the first task. Black continues 4...e5 5 exd5 (5 dxe5 dxe4) 5...xd5 6 gf3 exd4, obtaining an open position which is safe enough for him. Less well-known, but also deserving of attention, is 4 b5 dxe4 (4...a6

W



5  $\text{xc6} + \text{bxc6}$  6  $\text{gf3}$ ; 4... $\text{d7}$  5  $\text{gf3}$  or 5 c3)  
5  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{d5}$  (H.Garcia-Panno, Buenos Aires  
(3) 1971), and now in gambit style, 6  $\text{e2}!$ ?

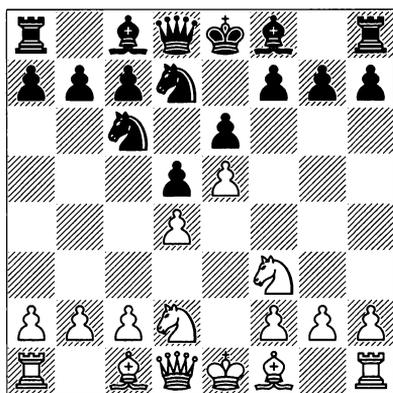
**4... $\text{f6}$**

Only this and the following move give real sense to Black's chosen set-up, which makes it all the more surprising how many other moves have been tried in practice (certainly the most exotic of which must be 4...g5, Balogh-Varga, Budapest 2000).

**5 e5  $\text{d7}$  (D)**

5... $\text{e4}$  is bad, and immediately places Black in an unpleasant position, since the knight cannot be supported satisfactorily.

W



Thus, the advance ...f6 now becomes the order of the day, and in the event of an exchange of pawns, Black is preparing to recapture on f6 with the queen, so as to try to free his game by ...e5. This is easier said than done, however, and Black usually experiences some difficulties, as

a result of which the whole variation has a somewhat dubious reputation in the theoretical manuals.

**6  $\text{b5}$**

Offering a small strategic compromise: White does not want to put the knight on b3 immediately, but Black, in his turn, can now refrain from 6...f6.

Other moves include:

a) 6  $\text{e2}!$ ? f6 7 exf6  $\text{xf6}$  8  $\text{f1}$   $\text{d6}$  (bad is 8...e5 9  $\text{e3}$  e4 10  $\text{xd5}$  with complications favourable to White) 9  $\text{e3}$ , and the advance ...e5 is prevented for the foreseeable future.

b) 6  $\text{d3}$  f6!? (the principled move; a tempo is lost after 6... $\text{b4}$  7  $\text{e2}$  c5 8 c3  $\text{c6}$ ) 7  $\text{g5}$  (here 7 exf6  $\text{xf6}$  8  $\text{f1}$  is less effective) 7... $\text{dx5}$  (the only move) 8 dx5 fxg5 9  $\text{h5} +$  g6 10  $\text{xg6} +$   $\text{d7}$  with an unclear position.

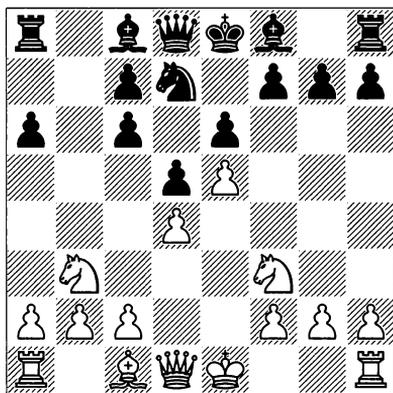
c) 6  $\text{b3}$  is a quiet continuation. After 6...f6 7  $\text{b5}$  White maintains control over the centre and obtains the advantage; e.g., 7...a6 8  $\text{xc6}$  bxc6 9 0-0 c5 10 c4, Bronstein-Barshauskas, USSR 1947. In recent times, Black has more often played 7...a5 8 a4 b6 (or 8... $\text{e7}$ ), taking advantage of the unfortunate position of the knight on b3, but practically abandoning his original idea.

**6...a6 7  $\text{xc6}$**

It is also possible to play in the spirit of the Ruy Lopez: 7  $\text{a4}!$ ? b5 8  $\text{b3}$   $\text{a5}$  9 c3.

**7...bxc6 8  $\text{b3}$  (D)**

B



**8...c5**

Black's pieces need some breathing space, so the immediate advance of the c-pawn seems

logical, although given the cramped position of Black's queen, he needs to pay careful attention to White's tactical threats.

If White manages to blockade the enemy pawn-mass on the queenside then he will obtain clearly the better position. Am.Rodriguez-Pecorelli, Cuban Ch, Matanzas 1997 provides an example of what Black must avoid: 8...a5 9  $\text{♙d2}$  (9  $\text{♙g5}$  is better) 9...a4?! (Black needs to play 9...c5! 10  $\text{♞xa5}$  c6, sacrificing a pawn for the initiative) 10  $\text{♞a5}$   $\text{♞b8}$  11 c4 a3? 12 b4.

**9  $\text{♙g5}$**

Nothing results from 9  $\text{♞a5}$  c6, so the bishop move is rather obvious.

**9... $\text{♙e7}$**

After 9...f6 10 exf6 (or 10  $\text{♙h4}$ ) 10...gxf6 11  $\text{♙h4}$  White obtains attacking chances.

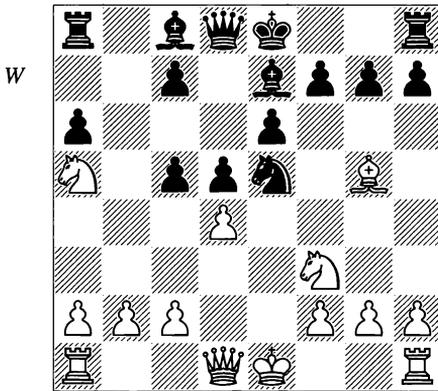
With the text-move, Black avoids unclear complications.

**10  $\text{♞a5}$**

Black would not mind the quiet continuation 10  $\text{♙e7}$   $\text{♞e7}$ , with approximate equality, but White is after more.

It appears that the only possible reply is 10... $\text{♞b8}$ , and then the variation 11  $\text{♙e7}$   $\text{♞e7}$  12 c3 0-0 13 0-0 leads to a small but enduring positional advantage for White. Such an outcome of the opening does not suit Black, and he considers himself obliged to enter a tactical battle.

**10... $\text{♞e5}$  (D)**



The exchange of tactical blows thus started requires from both players not so much accurate calculation (in fact, the line had been seen

before), as precise judgement of the rapidly-changing situation.

**11 dxe5**

The place of the captured white pawn has been taken by another, but now the d7-square is freed, and Black can capture on g5. Play develops differently after 11  $\text{♞e5}$ !?  $\text{♙xg5}$  12  $\text{♞ac6}$   $\text{♞d6}$  (12... $\text{♞f6}$ !?) 13  $\text{♞h5}$  0-0 14 dxc5  $\text{♞xc5}$  15  $\text{♞xg5}$  f6 16  $\text{♞e3}$ , when following 16... $\text{♞d6}$  17 0-0 fxe5 18  $\text{♞xe5}$   $\text{♞b8}$  19 b3 (not 19  $\text{♞d3}$ ? e5, Stojanović-Berkes, Turin Olympiad 2006) White succeeds in maintaining his knight in its central position, and stands better. In the ending after 16... $\text{♞xe3}$ + 17 fxe3 fxe5 18  $\text{♞xe5}$  White's position also appears preferable.

**11... $\text{♙xg5}$  12  $\text{♞c6}$   $\text{♞d7}$  13  $\text{♞xg5}$  h6!**

An important defensive resource. The variation 13... $\text{♞xc6}$  14  $\text{♞h5}$  g6 (14... $\text{♞d7}$  15  $\text{♞xh7}$ ) 15  $\text{♞h6}$  (or 15  $\text{♞f3}$ ) leads Black into difficulties.

**14  $\text{♞h5}$**

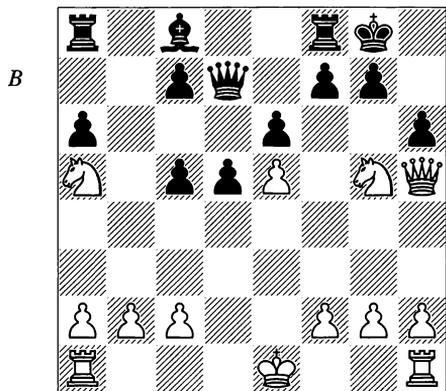
This is already something new, in comparison with 14  $\text{♞xf7}$   $\text{♞xf7}$  15 0-0. White does not worry about recovering his pawn, but instead increases his attacking possibilities.

**14...0-0**

In answer to 14...g6 there could follow 15  $\text{♞h4}$   $\text{♞xc6}$  16 0-0-0 (with the threat of 17  $\text{♞xf7}$ ; the immediate 16  $\text{♞xf7}$  does not give more than a draw) 16... $\text{♞d7}$  17  $\text{♞e4}$ .

**15  $\text{♞a5}$  (D)**

The next link in White's plan: he offers the other knight, so as to weaken the black kingside.



**15... $\text{♞a4}$**

There is no rush to take the knight, although even after the immediate 15... $\text{hxg5}$ , the sample variations 16  $\text{h4 g4}$  17  $\text{Wxg4 Wb5}$  18  $\text{Cb3 c4}$  19  $\text{h5 cxb3}$  and 16 0-0-0  $\text{Wa4}$  17  $\text{Md3}$  (there is also 17  $\text{g4}$  and 17  $\text{h4}$ ) 17... $\text{Wxa5}$  18  $\text{Th3 f5}$  do not bring White the desired victory. However, the queen move is undoubtedly stronger – with its help, Black seizes the initiative.

**16  $\text{Cb3 hxg5}$**

More consequential, and apparently stronger, was 16... $\text{c4!}$ ? (e.g., 17  $\text{Wg4 Wb4+}$  18  $\text{c3 Wb6}$ ), continuing to hunt both white knights. Black should not take on  $\text{g5}$  until he has to, so as to delay for as long as possible giving his opponent a convenient target for active operations against the weakened black king.

**17 0-0?! (D)**

Rather surprisingly declining the very natural chance to launch a quick attack on the enemy king, White instead quietly castles kingside. Such a decision appears (certainly at first sight) to be an excessively slow reaction to what has occurred on the board, but in fact, it leads to a new and very interesting situation.

17 0-0-0!? would have led to a sharp position, with chances for both sides. Some possible lines then are 17... $\text{Wf4+}$  18  $\text{cb1 Wxe5}$  (18... $\text{c4}$  19  $\text{h4}$ ) 19  $\text{h4}$ , 17... $\text{Tb8}$  18  $\text{Wxg5 c4}$  19  $\text{Md4}$  and 17... $\text{c4}$  18  $\text{Md4}$  (or possibly 18  $\text{h4 g4}$  19  $\text{Md4}$ ).

pawn minus, while Black must consider how to consolidate his position in the best way.

**17... $\text{Wf4}$**

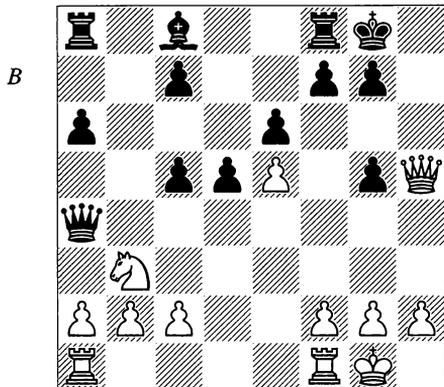
Black does not try to exchange queens, but instead simply wants to remove the  $\text{e5}$ -pawn, so as to unblock the centre and activate his bishop, while reducing the danger to his king. In itself, this is all very well, but White is soon able to restore material equality, and it remains an open question whether Black has any positional advantage.

Generally speaking, the best-looking continuation is 17... $\text{c4}$  18  $\text{Cd4 c5}$  (weaker is 18... $\text{Tb8}$  19  $\text{f4 g4}$  20  $\text{Wxg4 Txb2}$  21  $\text{Tf3}$ ), since in reply, White seems to have nothing better than 19  $\text{b3 cxb3}$  20  $\text{Cb3}$ . Then a continuation deserving attention is 20... $\text{Wh4}$  (less clear is 20... $\text{Wf4}$  21  $\text{Tfe1}$  or 20... $\text{We4}$  21  $\text{Wxg5 c4}$  22  $\text{Tae1}$ ) 21  $\text{Wxh4 gxh4}$ , when after 22  $\text{Cxc5 Ta7}$  White must defend an inferior endgame. Admittedly, he can also try to run for cover, and a draw, with 22  $\text{c4!?$   $\text{dxc4}$  23  $\text{Cxc5 Md8}$  24  $\text{Tfc1 Md4}$  25  $\text{Ta1}$ .

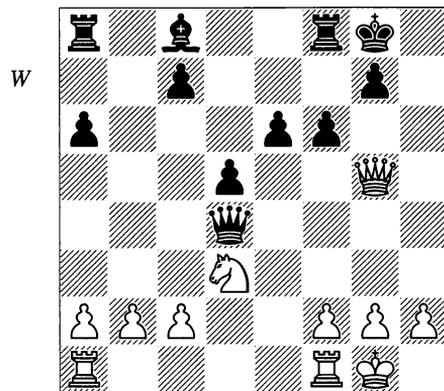
**18  $\text{Cxc5 Wxe5}$  19  $\text{Cd3 Wd4}$**

Preventing the attacking move  $\text{f4}$ . Lines such as 19... $\text{Wf6}$  20  $\text{f4 Wd4+}$  21  $\text{Ch1 g4}$  22  $\text{Ce5}$ , or, even more so, 19... $\text{Wf5}$  20  $\text{Tae1 f6}$  21  $\text{f4}$  would not suit Black's plans.

**20  $\text{Wxg5 f6}$  (D)**



B



W

Both sides are faced with complicated problems. White needs to demonstrate that the superiority of his knight over the passive enemy bishop gives sufficient compensation for his

Another metamorphosis has occurred, which we need to consider more carefully. White's opening experiment, begun on move 14, has ended quite well for him. He has again restored material equality, he has no weaknesses, and only

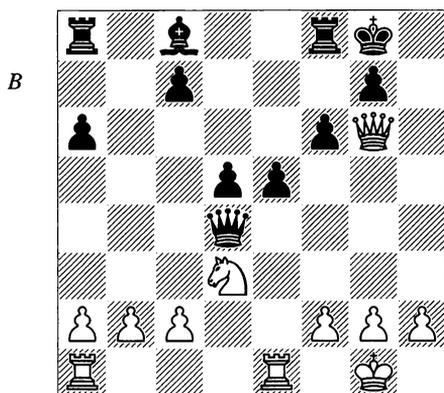
Black's potential pawn-mass in the centre can cause White any anxiety. Most of all, the change in the pawn-structure affects the white knight, which formerly was able to march around the board, but now is clearly in need of a stable location. The best such post is c5, as a result of which one comes to consider the variation 21 ♖e3!? ♗xe3 22 fxe3. In any event, the problem of the knight exists, and by ignoring it, it quickly takes on such importance that within a few moves, White is in a strategically lost position.

21 ♗g6

Still trying to find work for the white queen in the vicinity of the enemy king's residence.

21...e5 22 ♖fe1 (D)

And here, one might suggest 22 c3 ♗b6 (22...♗c4 23 b3) 23 b4 and then ♖c5.



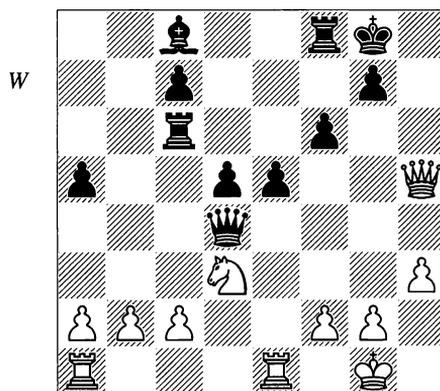
22...a5 23 h3?!

A pointless waste of time. It was necessary to play actively by 23 ♖ad1; e.g., 23...♗h4 24 f4 or 23...♗b6 24 c4!? dxc4 25 ♖f4.

23...♖a6 24 ♗h5?!

White senses that his queen could soon turn from the hunter into the hunted, but nothing was yet threatened.

24...♖c6 (D)



Now White's affairs are in a bad way: not only is the knight stuck on d3, but the queen's rook will be unable to reach d1.

25 ♖ac1 ♗e6 26 ♖ed1 ♗f7 27 ♗f5 ♖d8 28 b3 ♗h4 29 c3

The desperate attempt to break out of the positional chains by 29 c4 is useless: 29...g6 (29...dxc4 30 ♖b2) 30 ♗f3 e4 31 ♗f4 ♗xf4 32 ♖xf4 d4.

29...♗h6 30 ♖b2 e4

Black has delayed this move until the most effective moment. White loses material and the rest is of no interest.

31 g3 ♗e6 32 ♗f4 ♗xh3 33 ♗h4 ♗xh4 34 gxh4 ♗f7 35 ♖c4 ♖h8 36 ♖e3 ♖xh4 37 ♖d4 f5 38 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 39 ♖xd5 ♖g6+ 0-1

## Game 5 [C06]

### Mikhail Ulybin – Emanuel Berg

*Santa Cruz de la Palma 2005*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖d2 ♖f6

Along with 3...c5, this is the main continuation.

4 e5

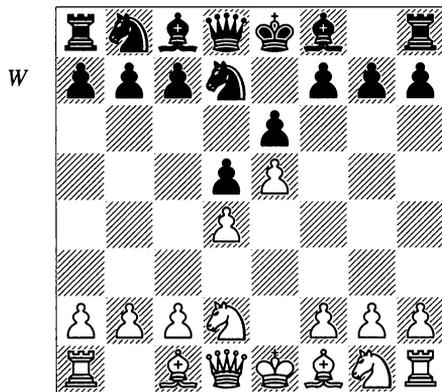
The e-pawn is more or less forced to advance, since after 4 ♗d3 there follows 4...c5

after which White still has nothing better than 5 e5 ♖fd7 6 c3.

4...♖fd7 (D)

The e5-square is the strategically crucial point, which Black neglects at his peril. The move 4...♖e4 does not promise him equal play,

if only because of the simple 5  $\mathcal{Q}d3$   $\mathcal{Q}xd2$  6  $\mathcal{Q}xd2$  c5 7 dxc5 (in this instance, the capture on c5 is fully appropriate). We should also add that the following line looks even more favourable for White: 5  $\mathcal{Q}xe4$  dxe4 6  $\mathcal{Q}c4$  or 6  $\mathcal{Q}e3$ , with a position which can also arise from another move-order: 3  $\mathcal{Q}c3$   $\mathcal{Q}f6$  4 e5  $\mathcal{Q}e4$ .



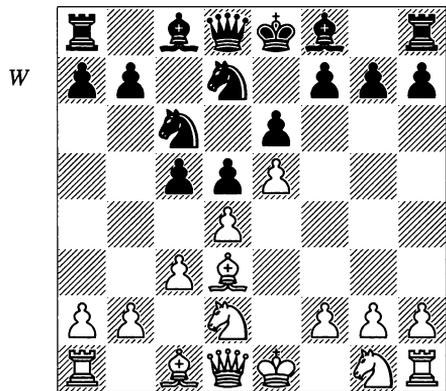
By contrast with the previous game, here Black's ideas include both pawn-breaks ...c5 and ...f6, while White in his turn can strengthen his centre by both c3 and f4. White's decision as to the appropriateness of the second of these moves will determine the contours of the position.

### 5 c3 c5 6 $\mathcal{Q}d3$

White refrains from advancing another pawn. 6 f4 is the main alternative. Of course, it is tempting to try to maintain the pawn duo d4+e5, but in that case Black obtains additional tactical possibilities based on the newly-created weaknesses on the g1-a7 diagonal and the f-file, which can be opened by ...f6 and ...fxe5. In practice, the most common line is then 6... $\mathcal{Q}c6$  7  $\mathcal{Q}df3$   $\mathcal{Q}b6$  and now White has a choice: 8 g3, 8 h4, 8 a3, 8  $\mathcal{Q}e2$  – all of these moves lead to a complicated battle with chances for both sides. We shall not dwell on this matter further, other than to say that the position after 8  $\mathcal{Q}e2$  will be seen again in Game 13 (Chapter 5).

### 6... $\mathcal{Q}c6$ (D)

Black continues to prepare for counter-action in the centre. Also possible here is the plan with the exchange of light-squared bishops, by 6...b6 7  $\mathcal{Q}e2$   $\mathcal{Q}a6$  8  $\mathcal{Q}xa6$   $\mathcal{Q}xa6$ , which announces a switch to flank strategy.



### 7 $\mathcal{Q}e2$

White must decide how to develop his pieces. With the text-move, the f3-square is reserved for the unfortunately-placed knight on d2, but the straightforward 7  $\mathcal{Q}gf3$  also offers good chances. White is prepared to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative after 7... $\mathcal{Q}b6$  8 0-0 cxd4 9 cxd4  $\mathcal{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathcal{Q}xd4$   $\mathcal{Q}xd4$  11  $\mathcal{Q}f3$ . Accepting the gambit is not compulsory for Black; he can, for example, develop analogously to the main line, with 7...cxd4 (or immediately 7...f6) 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 (the rash attack 9  $\mathcal{Q}g5$  fxg5 10  $\mathcal{Q}h5+$  g6 11  $\mathcal{Q}xg6+$  hxg6 12  $\mathcal{Q}xg6+$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  can be beaten off without particular problems) 9... $\mathcal{Q}xf6$  10 0-0  $\mathcal{Q}d6$ . A more original approach is seen in the related variations 7...g6 and 7... $\mathcal{Q}b6$  8 0-0 g6, while in addition, in the position after 7  $\mathcal{Q}gf3$  Black often adopts still another method of development (see Game 6).

### 7...cxd4

This preliminary exchange is a sensible preparation for the break ...f6, without which Black cannot reckon on adequate counterplay. The immediate 7...f6 8  $\mathcal{Q}f4$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  9 exf6 is unfavourable for Black, so if he really is determined to retain the c-pawns on the board, he should investigate 7... $\mathcal{Q}b6$  8  $\mathcal{Q}f3$  (8 0-0!?) 8...f6.

### 8 cxd4 f6

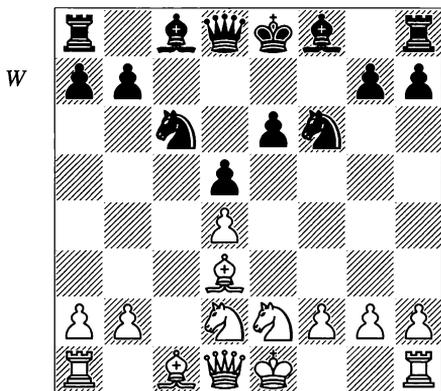
Again it was possible to preface this with 8... $\mathcal{Q}b6$  9  $\mathcal{Q}f3$  and only now 9...f6.

### 9 exf6

Here 9  $\mathcal{Q}f4$  leads to unclear consequences after 9... $\mathcal{Q}xd4$  10  $\mathcal{Q}h5+$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  11 exf6+  $\mathcal{Q}xf6$  12  $\mathcal{Q}g6+$  hxg6 13  $\mathcal{Q}xh8$   $\mathcal{Q}f7$  14  $\mathcal{Q}h4$  e5.

### 9... $\mathcal{Q}xf6$ (D)

This is the main line, but 9...♖xf6 is also played, though it does not change the main ideas of the position.



We can sum up the preliminary results of the opening: Black's position is now less cramped, but the pawn-structure overall is more favourable to White, who is ready at the first appropriate moment to occupy the e5-square with a knight. Black's hopes rest on the growing activity of his pieces, although it must be noted that the other freeing pawn-break ...e5 will create new positional problems. It is usually not a good idea to hurry to eliminate the white pawn on d4, but better instead to utilize it as an object of attack (often with the help of the exchange sacrifice ...♞xf3). As far as the notorious bad French bishop on c8 is concerned, for the moment it is doing the job of defending the e6-pawn, and in the future it can be activated via the march ...♞d7-e8-h5(g6). Such are the general considerations.

#### 10 ♘f4

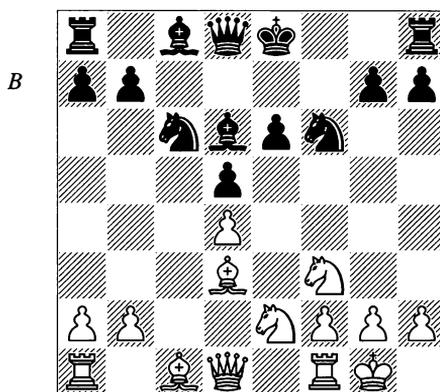
10 f4 has more minuses than pluses.

#### 10...♞d6

For 10...♞b6 11 0-0 ♞d6, see the note to Black's 11th move.

#### 11 0-0 (D)

At this moment, 11 ♞f4 is slightly premature, because of 11...♞xf4 (11...♞a5+!? 12 ♞d2 ♞b4) 12 ♘xf4 ♞a5+ 13 ♞d2 ♞xd2+ 14 ♘xd2 0-0 15 ♞he1 ♘e4+ 16 ♞xe4 ♞xf4 17 ♞d3 ♞d7! (weaker is 17...♘d4 18 ♘e3 ♘xf3 19 ♘xf4) 18 ♘e3 ♞af8, Sorokin-Dreev, Borzhomi 1988.



#### 11...♞c7

More flexible is 11...0-0 (Black does not hurry to bring out his queen). After 12 ♞f4 ♞xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♘e4 14 ♞c1 ♘g5 15 ♘xg5 ♞xg5 16 ♘e2 White's position is slightly preferable, but no more than that.

Another logical continuation is 11...♞b6, immediately taking aim at the pawns on d4 and b2. Here we shall just give a brief sketch of some possible variations to assist with the reader's own study:

a) 12 ♞f4 ♞xf4 13 ♘xf4 ♞xb2.

b) 12 ♞b1 0-0 13 ♞f4 (13 b4!?) 13...♞xf4 14 ♘xf4 ♘e4. The inclusion of the moves ♞b1 and ...♞b6 is in Black's favour: 15 ♘e2 (15 g3 ♘xd4) 15...♞d7 16 ♘c3 (16 ♞xe4 dxe4 17 ♘g5 ♞ad8, V.Ivanov-Maiorov, Russian Team Ch, Smolensk 2000) 16...♞f4!? and 17...♞af8.

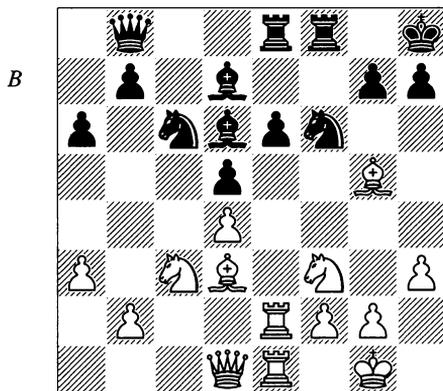
c) 12 ♘f4 0-0 13 ♞e1 ♞d7 (13...♞xf4? 14 ♞xf4 ♞xb2 15 ♞d6 is inferior; instead Black himself is prepared to sacrifice a pawn) 14 ♘xe6 ♞fe8.

d) 12 ♘c3 0-0 (12...♞d7) and now:

d1) 13 ♞g5 ♘h8 14 ♘a4 (parrying the threat of 14...♘xd4) 14...♞c7 15 ♞c1 ♘g4 16 h3 ♘h2 17 ♘e5! (17 ♘xh2 ♞xh2+ 18 ♘h1 ♞f4 19 ♞h5 g6 20 ♞xf4 ♞xf4 21 ♞xg6 ♞e7, Kosashvili-Ulybin, World Junior Ch, Santiago 1990 is not particularly attractive for White) 17...♞xe5 18 dxe5 ♘xf1 19 ♞h5 h6! and attack and defence are equally balanced, Akopian-Ulybin, USSR Under-26 Ch, Minsk 1990.

d2) After 13 ♞e3, here is an example where we see the move ...♞b6 not leading to such a good result: 13...a6 14 a3 ♞c7 15 ♞c1 ♞d7 16

♖e1 ♜ae8 17 h3 ♞d8 18 ♙g5 ♞b8 19 ♛c2 ♚h8  
20 ♛ce2 (D).



This is Stein-Doroshkevich, USSR Team Ch, Rostov 1971. The outwardly leisurely way in which events appear to have developed turns out to be clearly in White's favour: Black has not succeeded in developing counterplay in time and is already struggling to find useful moves.

### 12 ♙g5

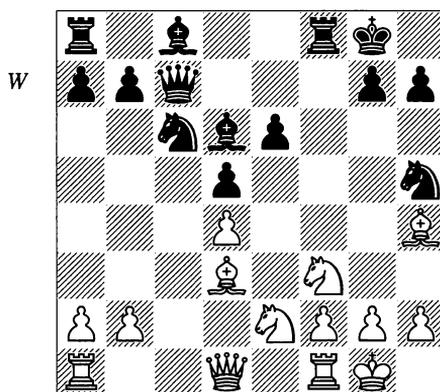
Here too, White can adopt a cautious strategy; for example, 12 h3 0-0 13 ♙e3 ♙d7 14 ♛c1 ♜ae8 (14...♙e8 15 ♟g5 ♞e7 16 f4) 15 a3, Ulybin-E.Berg, Bydgoszcz 2000.

The text-move is the start of a more ambitious plan of action. Since Black has prevented 12 ♙f4, White tries to realize the strategically favourable exchange of dark-squared bishops via the manoeuvre ♙g5-h4-g3. The analogous variation 12 ♟c3 a6 13 ♙g5 0-0 14 ♙h4 is also very well known to theory. In the version in the game, the knight remains on e2 to defend the d4-pawn and keep the c-file open. It only remains to add that White's strategic aim can be achieved most directly and easily by 12 g3 0-0 13 ♙f4, but then the weakening of his kingside significantly reduces his chances of securing an opening advantage.

### 12...0-0 13 ♙h4

This is more consistent than 13 ♛c1 ♟g4 14 ♟g3 (14 h3 ♛xf3), although in the game too, the white bishop does not succeed in reaching its desired post on g3.

### 13...♟h5 (D)



It is understandable that Black wishes to preserve his very useful dark-squared bishop, while he has no objection at all to another exchange of pieces by 14 ♙g3 ♟xg3 15 hxg3.

### 14 ♞c2

On 14 ♛c1 there follows 14...g6, with the typical idea for this variation of ...♞g7. White therefore hurriedly tries to force the game into another channel, but here too he meets determined counter-measures from Black.

### 14...h6

Not 14...g6 15 ♙xg6, nor 14...♚h8 15 ♙xh7 ♛xf3 16 gxf3 g5 17 ♙g6.

### 15 ♙g6

A small subtlety: White refrains from the preliminary 15 ♙h7+ ♚h8, hoping to be able to use this check more favourably later on.

### 15...♛xf3

The exchange sacrifice is best, because after 15...♟f4 16 ♟xf4 ♙xf4 (16...♛xf4 17 ♙g3 ♛f6) 17 ♛ad1 White's positional advantage, if not that great, is certainly clear enough.

### 16 gxf3

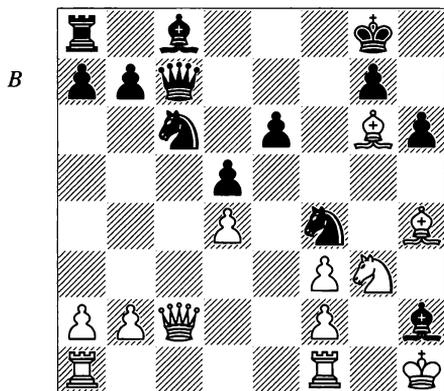
By contrast, here after 16 ♙xh5 Black would more easily be able to hold the balance following 16...♛f8 17 ♙g3, thanks to the poorly-placed white knight on e2. The consequences of 16...♙xh2+! are also quite unclear, so White decides to accept the exchange sacrifice and march boldly into the complications.

### 16...♙xh2+ 17 ♚h1

More cautious is 17 ♚g2 ♟f4+ 18 ♟xf4 ♞xf4 19 ♙g3 ♙xg3 20 fxg3, but it was hardly worth starting the fight in the first place, only to settle for this.

17...♗f4 18 ♖g3 (D)

18 ♗xh2?! ♗xg6+ 19 ♕g3 ♜f7 is clearly unfavourable for White.



This highly unusual position must be considered one of the most critical for the whole opening system. Certainly, dozens of tournament games have taken this position as their starting point. Strategic considerations have become a thing of the past, and now the battle is mainly one of tactics.

18...e5 (D)

One variation which does not recommend itself is 18...♗xg6?! 19 ♜xg6 ♕xg3 20 ♕xg3 ♜e7 21 ♖g1, but rather more interesting is 18...♕xg3 19 fxg3 (19 ♕xg3 ♗d7 20 ♜d2 ♖f8) 19...♗xg6 20 ♜xg6 ♗xd4, Potkin-Kosyrev, Russian Ch, Krasnodar 2002. However, the main continuations are the two queen moves, both of which unpin the c6-knight:

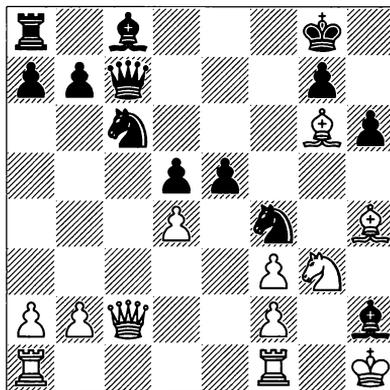
a) 18...♜b6 19 ♖ad1 (19 ♖ac1!? ♗d7 20 ♗xh2 ♗xd4 21 ♜c7) 19...♗xd4 20 ♜a4 ♗d7 (20...♗xg6 21 ♜e8+ ♗f8) 21 ♜xd7 ♗xg6.

b) 18...♜d6 19 ♖ad1 (19 ♖ac1 e5) 19...e5 20 ♗h7+ ♗h8 21 dx e5 (21 ♗xh2 g5) 21...♗xe5 22 ♗e4 ♗h3, Kotronias-M.Gurevich, European Ch, Kusadasi 2006.

We shall not comment in detail on these continuations, as this book is not meant to be a theoretical encyclopedia, and all the more so in view of the fact that with the text-move, Black demonstrates a new and promising way of organizing his attack, by immediately opening the h3-c8 diagonal.

19 ♗xh2

W



An optimistic approach to the problem: White grabs some material while he can. After 19 ♖ad1 he must reckon not only with 19...♜d6, but also 19...e4 or 19...♕xg3. Another example from practice saw 19 ♖fe1 ♗h3 (threatening 20...♗xd4) 20 ♖ad1 (20 ♗e2!?) 20...♕xg3 (20...♗xd4) 21 ♕xg3 (21 fxg3) 21...♕g2+ 22 ♗h2 ♕xf3 and White was in a lamentable state in Biti-Gleizerov, Zadar 2005.

19...♜d6

Black's calm and consistent play makes a strong impression.

20 ♗h7+

As we see, White ends up giving this check after all. However, even an extra rook is small consolation when one's king and several other pieces are all in danger.

20...♗h8 21 dx e5?!

There was no necessity to bring the black knight nearer the scene of the action. Better is 21 ♖ad1 (M.Hoffmann-Stellwagen, Dutch Team Ch, Enschede 2003), transposing to note 'b' to Black's 18th move, and retaining better chances of a successful defence.

21...♗xe5 22 ♗f5 ♕xf5

Stronger than 22...♗xf3+ 23 ♗h1.

23 ♗xf5 ♜e6 24 ♕g3

The bishop finally completes the manoeuvre begun on move 12!

24...♖c8

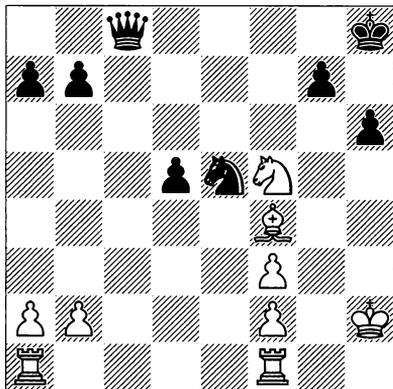
Much the same result could be achieved by 24...♖f8 25 ♕xf4 ♖xf5 26 ♜xf5.

25 ♜xc8+

Forced, since 25 ♜a4 fails to 25...♖c4.

25...♜xc8 26 ♕xf4 (D)

B



White has managed to beat off the attack, but at a high cost. He has a pawn less, and in the endgame reached, the rooks will have trouble containing the enemy queen.

**26... $\text{xf5}$**

The first inaccuracy. 26... $\text{xf3+}$  27  $\text{g3}$   $\text{xf5}$  28  $\text{xf3}$   $\text{g5}$  was a more decisive possibility, winning one of White's f-pawns and thereby exposing his king to checks as much as possible.

**27  $\text{xe5}$   $\text{xe5+}$  28  $\text{g2}$   $\text{xb2}$ ?**

A totally unnecessary act of larceny. It was far more important to seize the favourable moment to advance the d-pawn: 28... $\text{g5+}$  29  $\text{h2}$  d4.

**29  $\text{ab1}$   $\text{xa2}$  30  $\text{xb7}$   $\text{a6}$  31  $\text{b4}$   $\text{h5}$  32  $\text{d1}$**

Now the white rooks are operative and Black can no longer win.

**32... $\text{g6+}$  33  $\text{f1}$   $\text{f5}$  34  $\text{g2}$   $\text{g6+}$  35  $\text{f1}$   $\text{a5}$  36  $\text{bd4}$   $\text{a6+}$  37  $\text{g2}$   $\text{g6+}$  38  $\text{f1}$   $\text{a6+}$  39  $\text{g2}$   $\text{g6+}$   $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$**

Game 6 [C06]

**Ilia Smirin – Ivan Cheparinov**

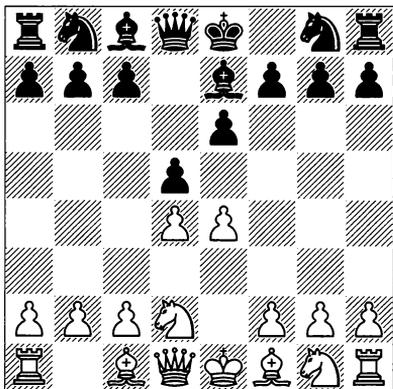
*Calvia Olympiad 2004*

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3  $\text{d2}$**

As already noted, the two most fundamental continuations in this basic position are 3...c5 and 3... $\text{f6}$ . To this list one can add the exchange 3... $\text{dx4}$ , but Black's remaining moves in this position (including 3... $\text{c6}$  from Game 4) must really be considered as relatives of one of the main continuations already listed. This is useful to bear in mind, in looking at Black's next move.

**3... $\text{e7}$  (D)**

W



The popularity of this slightly strange-looking move is rather surprising, especially if one considers that it does not promise Black any special benefits. Black begins a sort of cat-and-mouse game with his opponent, inviting him to commit himself to a particular arrangement of his pieces and pawns, with Black's further action then being determined in response to White's choice. Such ideas are not fully in accordance with normal principles of opening development, as a result of which their use requires care. As well as 3... $\text{e7}$ , this applies even more to the variations 3...h6 and 3...a6, which because of their strategic vagueness will be considered in the next chapter.

**4  $\text{gf3}$**

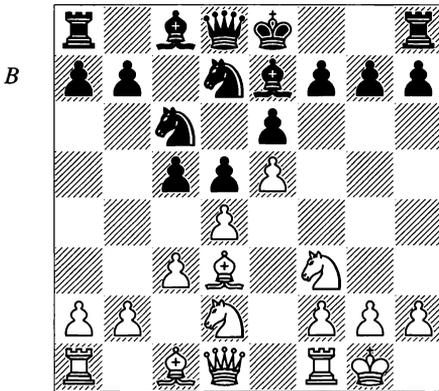
White does not take too much notice of his opponent's cunning ideas, and perhaps rightly so. However, in this particular position, the move 4 e5 also deserves serious attention, after which the bishop is misplaced on e7, a drawback which is not shared by the aforementioned moves 3...h6 and 3...a6. The position acquires somewhat different outlines after 4  $\text{d3}$ : then

Black has a choice between 4...dxe4 (4...♞f6 now makes no sense) or 4...c5 (this will be discussed in more detail later on).

#### 4...♞f6

Black returns to the beaten track, although 4...dxe4 remains an alternative.

5 e5 ♞fd7 6 ♟d3 c5 7 c3 ♞c6 8 0-0 (D)



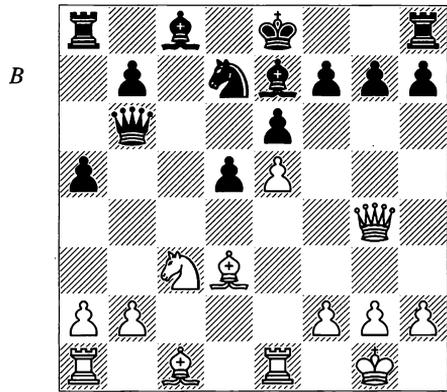
Thus, instead of occupying the convenient squares e2 and f3, here the white knights have taken up less favourable positions. The price Black pays for this is that of having virtually to renounce the idea of the standard break ...f6, since then after the anticipated exchange of pawns on f6, his dark-squared bishop needs to be on d6. The waste of time spent on the unnecessary move 3...♞e7 is also felt in the variation 8...♞b6 9 dxc5 (as usual, the gambit continuation 9 ♖e1 is also possible) 9...♞c7 (9...♞xc5 10 ♟c2; 9...♟xc5 10 ♞e2) 10 ♞b3 ♞dxe5 11 ♟f4 (or 11 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 12 f4) with advantage to White. Consequently, Black usually seeks other means of organizing his counterplay, based primarily on tactical considerations.

a) 8...a5 may be the prelude either to a queenside pawn advance, or to the exchange ...cxd4. After 9 ♖e1 (9 a4!?) Black must make a fundamental decision:

a1) 9...c4 10 ♟c2 b5. Despite White's temporary problems activating his pieces, such positions are usually in his favour, and this position is no exception: 11 ♞f1 (11 b3 ♞b6 12 bxc4 dxc4) 11...♞b6 12 h4!?, L.Bronstein-Dolezal, American Continental, Buenos Aires 2003.

a2) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 and now:

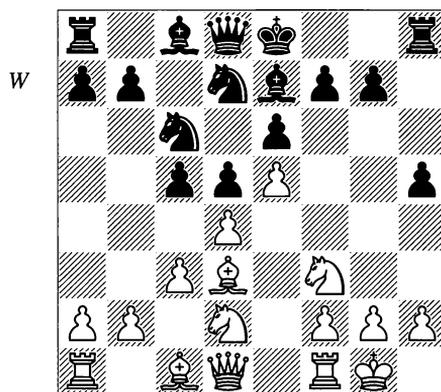
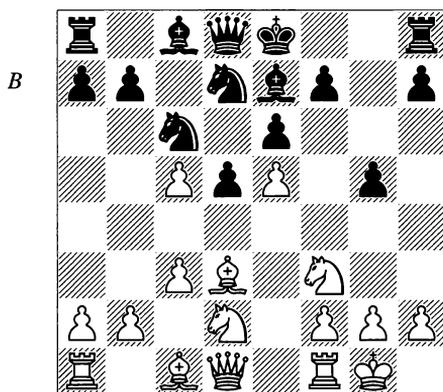
a21) 10...♞b6 11 ♞b1 (11 ♞a4 ♞b4 clearly offers few prospects to White) 11...♞xd4 12 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 13 ♞c3 ♞b6 14 ♞g4 (D).



Thanks to his extra pawn, Black now has grounds to consider the positional exchange sacrifice 14...0-0!? 15 ♟h6 g6, whereas continuing with 14...g6 or 14...♞f8 leaves White with a long-term initiative.

a22) It should be noted that, besides the direct attack on the d4-pawn, the move 10...g5 is also possible, although after 11 h3 h5 12 ♞f1 g4 13 hxg4 hxg4 14 ♞3h2 play does not develop to Black's advantage, and the plan of chasing the enemy knight from f3 seems more logical at an earlier stage.

b) 8...g5. Of course, this blow is directed at White's centre, not his king, although for the moment there is no real threat to take on d4 (the exchange of pawns by 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 g4 11 ♞e1 ♞xd4 12 ♞xg4 is not especially good for Black). Nonetheless, it is not easy for White to find a useful waiting move here: neither 9 ♞b3 nor 9 ♖e1 can be played because of the loss of a piece, while in the variations 9 a3 h5 (9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♞b6) 10 b4 g4 11 b5 ♞a5 12 ♞e1 ♞b6 and 9 b3 cxd4 10 cxd4 h5 11 ♟b2 ♞b6 Black generally has little to complain about. And since the voluntary weakening of the kingside by 9 h3 h5 10 g4 (10 h4) looks dubious, this rather complicated situation tends to lead White towards a radical decision: either to maintain the d4-e5 couplet by 9 b4!? cxd4 10 cxd4 ♞xb4 11 ♟e2, or, on the contrary, to place his faith in opening the position by 9 dxc5 (D).



This is the most common response to Black's flank diversion. The opening struggle moves to a new plane: White has serious justification for considering that the rather artificial move 8...g5 has condemned the black king to permanent discomfort and therefore he is prepared to accept the destruction of his pawn-centre. Black, on the other hand, having achieved his basic strategic aim of destroying the enemy centre, must now prepare himself to face the resulting piece onslaught. Here is just a sketch of some possible variations that the reader may investigate: 9...♘xc5 10 ♖b5 (10 ♖c2 g4 11 ♘d4) 10...♗b6 11 ♘d4 (11 ♗e2); 9...♘cxe5 (9...♘dxe5) 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘b3 (11 ♘f3; 11 ♖b5+); 9...g4 10 ♘d4 ♘dxe5 11 ♖b5 ♖d7 12 ♘2b3 (12 f4).

Our excursion through the murky theoretical waters of this opening line has delayed us a little. In conclusion, let us just imagine that in the basic position after 8 0-0, Black's bishop still stands on f8, and that instead of 3...♖e7, Black had played 3...a6 or 3...h6. Then both sides would have additional options, but 3...h6 looks preferable. We shall not dwell on the details, but will merely offer one practical example, in which the following was seen: 8...g5 (remember that the black pawn is on h6, and the bishop on f8) 9 dxc5 ♖xc5!? 10 ♘b3 ♖b6 (10...♖e7) 11 ♖e1 ♗c7 12 ♖b5 (Shaw-Eingorn, Bad Wiessee 2003) and now interesting complications result from 12...a6!? 13 ♖xc6 bxc6 14 c4! dxc4 15 ♘bd2 g4.

### 8...h5 (D)

It turns out that even this advance of the rook's pawn may be considered as part of the

struggle for the centre. Black prepares the advance ...g5-g4, believing that White now has nothing better than 9 ♖e1. Certainly, the fact that Black's kingside has so far been only slightly weakened means that the continuation 9 dxc5 ♘dxe5 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♘b3 (Hraček-Morozevich, European Clubs Cup, Rethymnon 2003) is less justified, while 9 a3 a5 (or 9...g5) also brings nothing.

### 9 ♖e1

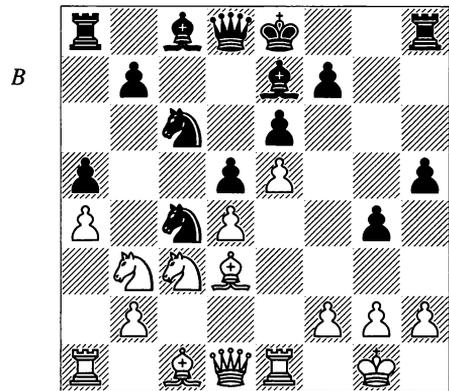
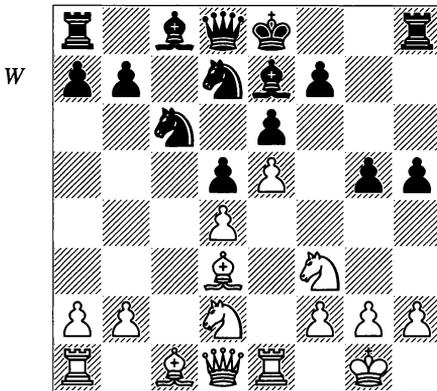
In the cause of prophylaxis, the moves 9 ♖e2, and even the extravagant 9 ♘b1, deserve attention, so as to have the possibility of protecting the d4-pawn by either ♘b3 or ♖e3 respectively. However, for the moment, White has no wish to take his opponent on in a contest of ingenuity, and instead, is happy to stick with his simple and understandable strategy, not for a moment seeking to prevent his opponent's risky experiments.

### 9...cxd4

In fixing the object of his attack, Black must concede the white knight use of the b3-square, which was previously unavailable because of the fork ...c4. This concession is necessary, since in the event of the immediate 9...g5 there follows 10 dxc5 g4 11 ♘d4 ♘dxe5 12 ♖b5 (or 12 ♘2b3) and Black's affairs are not in great shape – here the difference in value between the moves ♖e1 and ...h5 is clearly in White's favour.

### 10 cxd4 g5 (D)

Having said A, Black must say B. White is now forced to face the inconvenience of moving his knights from one bad square to another,



but on the other hand, the black pawns cannot move backwards.

**11 ♖b3 g4 12 ♜fd2 a5**

Conceding the b5-square, but seizing b4, and weakening the position of the knight on b3. The last factor, in particular, may later allow the black queen to attack the d4-pawn, although as it happens, nothing of the sort occurs in this game.

**13 a4 ♜b6**

An interesting moment: Black suddenly alters the direction of his play. If his play so far has had a certain underlying logic, now he takes a step sideways, although after playing such uncompromising moves as ...h5, ...g5 and ...g4, the attempt to return the game to normal positional channels seems rather dubious. True, the apparently more consistent 13...♙b6 is not stronger, since then the continuation 14 ♜b1 (14 ♙b5 can be met by 14...♙b4!?, but Black should avoid 14...♜xd4 15 ♜c4) 14...♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♜c3 would give White excellent compensation for the pawn (compare the similar variation examined above, beginning with 8...a5 9 ♙e1 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♙b6). Possibly Black should try 13...♙b4!?, pinning the d2-knight and planning ...f5 or ...f6. The idea looks suspicious, but the same can be said for Black's position as a whole.

**14 ♜b1 ♜c4 15 ♜c3 (D)**

**15...♙b6?**

This loss of time is hard to explain, and immediately decides the game in White's favour. It was essential to choose between 15...♙d7 and 15...b6, containing the enemy initiative as far as possible.

**16 ♙xc4 dxc4 17 ♜d2**

Now both white knights have excellent prospects. For Black, with his lagging development and the gaping holes in his pawn-structure, it is the beginning of the end.

**17...♜b4**

Also hopeless is 17...♙xd4 18 ♜b5 ♙d8 19 ♜xc4 ♙xd1 20 ♙xd1 0-0 21 ♙e3, which leaves the white pieces dominating the board.

**18 ♜xc4 ♙c6 19 b3**

The c4-pawn has gone and White's threats have even grown. The rest is not difficult.

**19...b6 20 ♜e4 ♙a6 21 ♙g5**

Also good is 21 ♜cd6+ ♜f8 22 ♙g5 ♙c2 23 ♙c1. By returning the pawn, White avoids the exchange of queens and soon breaks through to the black king.

**21...♙xc4 22 ♙c1 ♙xb3 23 ♙xb3 ♙d5 24 ♙e3 ♙d7 25 ♙xe7 ♙xe7 26 ♜f6+ ♜f8 27 ♙c4 ♙d8 28 ♙ec1 ♜d5 29 ♙g5 1-0**

We may conclude that the variations we have seen after 3 ♜d2 are strategically better for White, although he is continually being forced to prove this conclusion, as Black is improving the methods by which he seeks counterplay.

# 3 The Tarrasch Variation with ...c5

In this chapter, we shall concern ourselves with positions where the move ...c5 is played with the white pawn still on e4. As already pointed out, in this way Black tries immediately to exploit the drawbacks of the knight being developed on d2. The pawn opposition in the centre usually results in White liquidating the tension by the exchange exd5, after which Black has two means of recapturing on d5. Let us consider each in turn:

- ...♙xd5 (or sometimes ...♞xd5). Taking with a piece, together with the later exchange of another pair of central pawns by ...cxd4 (**Game 7**) leads to a semi-open position. After this, Black's principal task is to complete his development satisfactorily, while White tries to convert his initiative into something more lasting (for example, an attack on the black king). It is clear that in such a case, the main issues facing both players will be resolved in the opening stage of the game.
- ...exd5. By contrast, the recapture on d5 with the pawn usually transfers the weight of the strategic struggle to the middlegame, and even the endgame (**Game 8**). Black agrees to accept an isolated pawn in his camp, but this reduces his opening problems. The position is balanced on the edge of equality (although, of course, White's position is always a little 'more equal'), and the rest depends on the manoeuvring skill of the two players.
- Finally, we must also bear in mind Black's various attempts to play a waiting game on the third move (3...a6, 3...h6, 3...♙e7). They will be considered again in **Game 9**, but in the context of the later advance ...c5 (ideas with a quick ...♞f6 were seen in the previous chapter).

## Game 7 [C07]

### Sergei Rublevsky – Nikita Vitiugov

*Russian Ch, Moscow 2006*

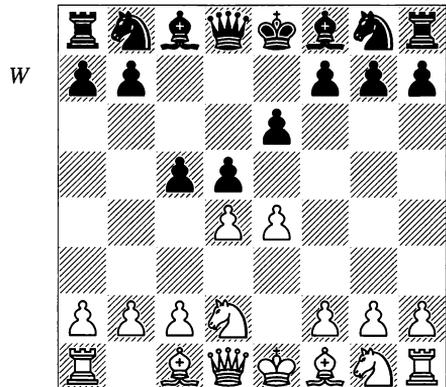
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♞d2 c5 (D)

4 ♞gf3

White retains the tension. 4 exd5 is more common, when Black has the choice between 4...exd5 (see Game 8) and 4...♙xd5, when 5 ♞gf3 cxd4 transposes to the game.

4...cxd4

Black wishes to avoid structures in which he has an isolated pawn. For this purpose, it seems at first sight better to choose 4...♞f6 5 exd5 ♞xd5 (the knight on d5 stands better than the queen), but then Black must also be prepared for the variation 5 e5 ♞fd7 6 c3.



In the event of 4...♘c6, it is White who gets to choose the strategic direction of the game:

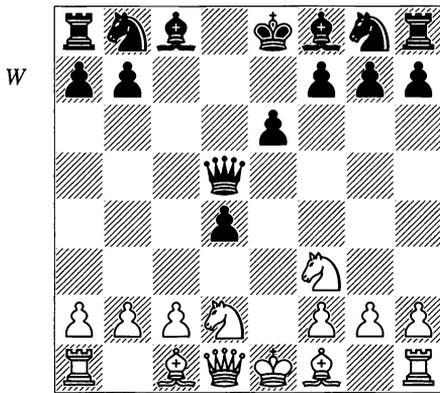
a) He can play the classical continuation 5 exd5 exd5 (5...♙xd5 is unfavourable here) 6 ♖b5, which we cover in Game 8.

b) The immediate 5 ♖b5 is also possible. Here we shall provide just a skeleton of the possible continuations, for the reader to investigate if he so wishes: 5...dxe4 6 ♘xe4 ♙d7 7 ♙e3 (7 ♙g5) 7...♙a5+ 8 ♘c3; 5...a6 6 exd5 (6 ♙xc6+ bxc6 7 0-0) 6...axb5 7 dxc6; or 5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4 ♙d7 7 ♘xc6 bxc6 (7...♙xc6 8 ♙xc6+ bxc6 9 c4) 8 ♙d3. Although these variations are interesting, they pose Black fewer problems than the main line.

**5 exd5**

There is no sense in delaying this exchange any further. After 5 ♘xd4 ♘f6 (more cunning is 5...♘e7!?, while the simple 5...e5 6 ♘4f3 dxe4 7 ♘xe5 ♙d5 is also sufficient) 6 e5 (harmless is 6 exd5 ♘xd5 7 ♘2f3 ♙e7 or 7...♙b4+ with a comfortable game for Black) 6...♘fd7 7 ♘2f3 ♘c6 8 ♖b5 chances are equal, Eingorn-S.Ivanov, USSR Team Ch, Azov 1991.

**5...♙xd5 (D)**



No trace of White's pawn-centre remains, but he retains the initiative, since the black queen has come out very early and will be forced to move several more times.

**6 ♙c4 ♙d6**

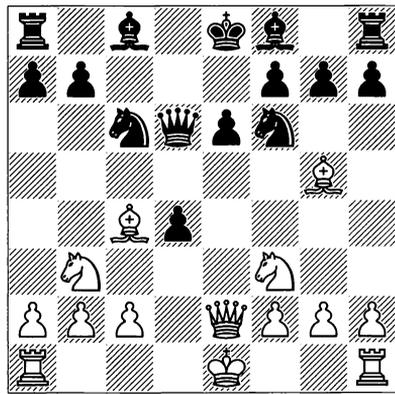
Risky is 6...♙c5 7 ♙e2 ♘c6 8 ♘b3 (8 ♘e4!?) 8...♙b6 9 0-0 and now at any rate, Black is well advised to refrain from the attempt to hang onto the pawn by 9...♘ge7?! 10 ♙d1 ♘f5 11 ♙d3

♘d6 12 a4, which did not work out well for Black in Beliavsky-Nikolić, Wijk an Zee 1984. By comparison with 6...♙c5, a safer somewhat line is 6...♙d8 7 0-0 a6 (7...♘c6 8 ♘b3 ♘f6 9 ♙e2!?! ♙e7 10 ♙d1) 8 ♘b3 ♙c7, although the retreat to d6 is the most popular.

**7 0-0**

7 ♘b3 and 7 ♘e4 do not work because of 7...♙b4+, but it is nonetheless clear that White will soon restore material equality, and the only question is how promising his prospects will then be. The only drawback to Black's position is his lack of development, and so it follows that in his attempts to obtain an advantage, White must proceed purposefully. Those players to whom kingside castling seems insufficiently energetic here prefer to play 7 ♙e2!?, preparing to evacuate the white king to the other side, and trying for the fastest possible mobilization of their forces. The critical position then arises after 7...♘f6 8 ♘b3 ♘c6 9 ♙g5 (D).

B



In the variation 9...♙e7 10 0-0-0 0-0 (10...e5 can be met by 11 ♖b5 or 11 ♙he1) 11 ♘bxd4 Black experiences some problems, but it is less obvious how White can obtain anything concrete from the rapid appearance of his rook on the d-file in the line 9...a6 10 0-0-0 b5 11 ♙d3, since here White cannot really avoid losing time on the prophylactic move ♘b1. Black can also defend by 9...♙b4+ 10 ♙d2 ♙b6 11 0-0-0 ♙d7 12 ♙g5 (12 ♙f4!?) 12...♙c5 and if 13 ♘e5, then 13...♘xe5 14 ♙xe5 ♙d6; e.g., 15 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♘xd4 ♙c5.

**7...♘f6**

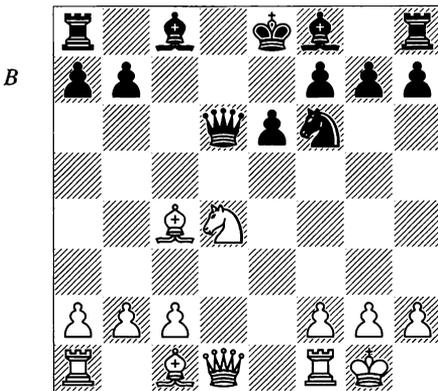
Not allowing White to play 8 ♖e4. There is no point in examining the continuation 7...♗c6, meeting 8 ♖e4 with 8...♗d8, even more so because after 8 ♖b3 Black anyway has nothing better than 8...♗f6, as 8...e5?! is unattractive due to 9 ♗g5 ♗h6 10 f4. Even less logical is 7...a6 8 ♖e4 ♗c7 9 ♗xd4 ♗c6 10 ♗c3.

**8 ♖b3 ♗c6 9 ♗bxd4 ♗xd4**

This exchange not only simplifies the position, but also deflects the white f3-knight from the more attractive post e5.

**10 ♗xd4 (D)**

White can recapture with the queen by 10 ♗xd4, but the standard ending with 3 vs 2 on the queenside is only roughly equal, since Black has time to take the necessary defensive measures: 10...♗xd4 (the preliminary 10...♗d7!? is even more accurate) 11 ♗xd4 ♗d7 12 ♗e2 (transferring the bishop to its best diagonal) 12...♗c5 13 ♗b3 ♗b6 14 a4 a5 (weaker is 14...a6 15 ♗f3) 15 ♗f3 ♖c8 16 c3 ♗c6.



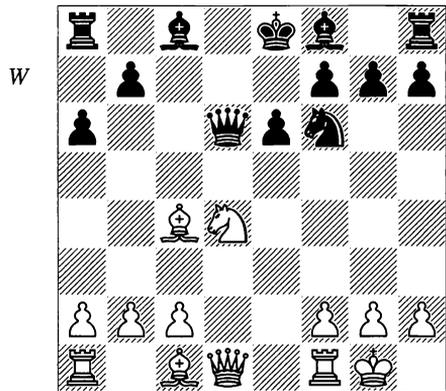
in contemporary practice, Black usually strives for the set-up ...♗c7 + ...♗d6, after the preliminary 10...a6 or 10...♗d7 (the latter often being combined with ideas of queenside castling).

**10...a6 (D)**

Although 10...♗d7 allows Black to get by without this pawn move, it is not especially favourable, as this brief 'bare-bones' outline of possible continuations suggests:

a) 11 b3 0-0-0 (leading to interesting complications; premature is 11...h5 12 ♗b5 ♗e5 13 ♗e1! – Miles-Nenashev, Agios Nikolaos 1995) 12 ♗b2 (12 a4!?) 12...♗c7 (12...♗f4 is another idea) 13 ♗e2 h5 14 h3 (14 ♗f3 ♗g4) 14...♗g4.

b) 11 c3 ♗c7 (11...0-0-0 12 a4) 12 ♗e2 ♗d6 (again 12...0-0-0 13 a4 is not without its dangers, but 12...a6 deserves greater attention here) 13 ♗b5 ♗xb5 14 ♗xb5+ ♗e7 15 g3 with advantage to White, thanks to his bishop-pair.



**11 ♗b3**

The game has now reached the stage where various opening subtleties come into play, and we need to have a little patience to familiarize ourselves with some of these.

a) After 11 c3 ♗c7 12 ♗e2 (or 12 ♗b3 ♗d6 13 h3 ♗h2+ 14 ♗h1 ♗f4, such an exchange of bishops securing the safety of the f6-knight, and thereby strengthening the position of the black king) 12...♗d6 13 h3 0-0 (here too, 13...♗h2+ 14 ♗h1 ♗f4 is possible) 14 ♗g5 ♗e4 White does not obtain any advantage.

b) Black is also happy enough in the variation 11 b3 ♗c7 (premature is 11...b5?! 12 ♗f3) and now:

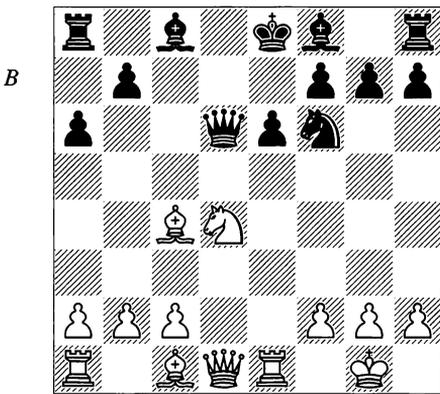
With queens on the board, White's queenside pawn-majority does not play a significant role, while conversely, the importance of Black's extra centre pawn on e6 grows greater. This structural advantage compensates for White's piece pressure. For example, in the event of 10...♗e7 11 b3 (less ambitious is 11 c3 or 11 ♗e3) 11...0-0 12 ♗b2 ♗f4 (12...a6 13 ♗f3) 13 ♗e2 (Geller-Vaganian, USSR Ch, Moscow 1976) Black experiences some difficulties. This shows that, as well as developing his pieces, Black must also concern himself with finding a more active disposition for them. Consequently,

b1) 12 ♖b2 ♗d6 13 ♘f3 (if 13 h3, then either 13...0-0 or 13...b5, while even 13...e5 is good) 13...b5 14 ♗d3 ♖b7.

b2) Wishing to prevent his opponent from developing comfortably, White often resorts to more strong-arm methods: 12 ♖e2 ♗c5!? (12...♗d6 13 ♘f5 ♗xh2+ 14 ♖h1 0-0 15 ♘xg7 or 12...b5 13 ♗d3 ♗c5 14 ♘f5 0-0 15 ♘xg7 – in both cases with unclear consequences) 13 ♘f5?! (here this is incorrect; better is 13 ♖b2 0-0 14 a4) 13...0-0 14 ♘xg7 ♖xg7 15 ♖b2 (Geller-Kindermann, Dortmund 1989), and now 15...♗g8 parries the threats.

c) Here is another example on this theme: 11 a4 ♖c7 12 ♖e2 ♗d6 13 ♘f5 ♗xh2+ 14 ♖h1 ♖f8 (14...0-0 15 ♘xg7 ♗f4) 15 ♘g3 (15 ♘xg7?! h5) 15...h5 16 ♖xh2 h4, Van der Wiel-Glek, Tilburg 1994.

d) A deeper version of the ♘f5xg7 sacrificial idea occurs in the variation beginning 11 ♖e1 (D).

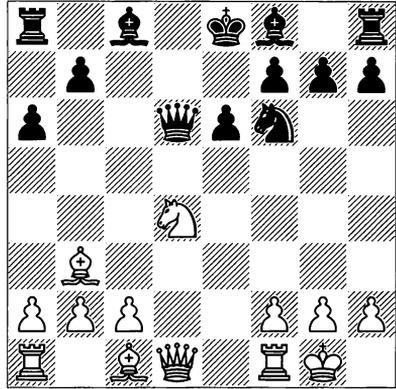


After 11...♖c7 12 ♖b3 ♗d6 13 ♘f5 ♗xh2+ 14 ♖h1 0-0 (14...♖f8 is dubious because of 15 g3 or 15 ♖d4) 15 ♘xg7 ♗d8! 16 ♖f3 ♖xg7 17 ♗h6+ ♖g6 no successful way to prosecute the white attack has been found. Moreover, Black is not forced to enter these complications and can instead play 11...♗d7.

Now it is time to return to the move in the game, 11 ♖b3 (D). Its idea is clear – prophylaxis. The moves 11 ♗d3 and 11 h3 also have their logic, but pose slightly different problems.

11...♗d7

B



With the bishop on b3, it is more difficult for White to attack on the queenside, and therefore queenside castling is rather safer than usual for Black. Furthermore, Black's last move keeps the d4-knight under the surveillance of the black queen. Another plan is connected with the stereotyped 11...♖c7 12 ♖f3 (White has managed to do without the move c3) 12...♗d6:

a) 13 ♖h1. By comparison with variation 'b', the h3-square remains free for White's queen or rook, but Black has the additional possibility of counterplay by 13...♗e5 14 ♗e3 (14 ♗d1) 14...♗d7, planning ...h5 and ...♘g4.

b) 13 h3 ♗e5 (more often seen is 13...0-0 14 ♗g5 ♗h2+ {or 14...♘d7}) 15 ♖h1 ♗e5) 14 c3 h6!? (not allowing the white bishop to g5) 15 ♖e1 0-0 16 ♗e3. In Khalifman-Volkov, Kazan 2005, White obtained a successful attack after 16...♗d7 17 ♖e2(!) ♗ad8 18 ♖ae1 ♖fe8 19 ♗xh6!, but (according to Khalifman) 16...♗b8 and then 17...b5 would have led to equality.

12 c3 (D)

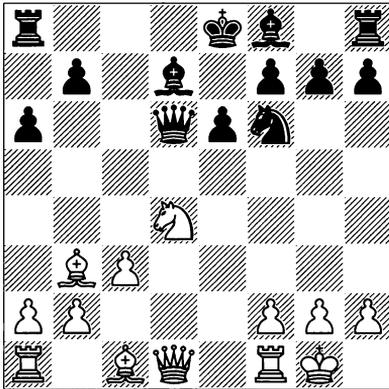
White needs to free his queen from the menial task of defending the knight, and it is better to do this straightaway, rather than after the moves 12 ♖e1 0-0-0, the inclusion of which helps Black more than White.

12...♖c7

This appears the most accurate. The immediate 12...0-0-0 is also not bad, when play can continue 13 ♖f3 (13 ♗g5 ♖c5) 13...♖c7 and now:

a) 14 ♗g5 ♗d6 15 h3 can be answered by 15...♗e5 or 15...♗h2+ 16 ♖h1 ♗e5, leading to an approximately equal position.

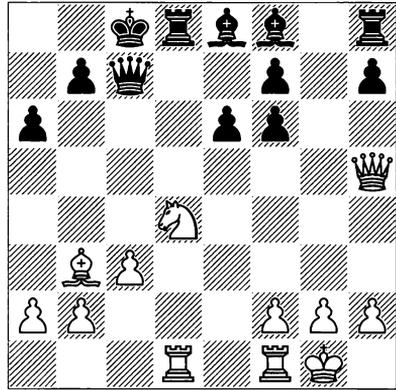
B



inconvenient retreat. The opening stage of the game is almost over.

15...e8 16...ad1 (D)

B



b) The attempt to avoid this line with 14 e4!? e6 (14...e5 15 e3) 15 exd6 cxd6 16 ad1 c7 17 h3 gave White only a minimal advantage in Rublevsky-Bareev, Poikovsky 2006.

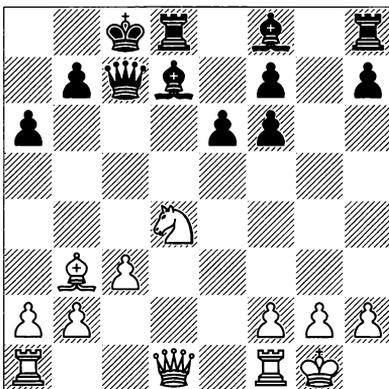
13 g5 0-0-0 14 xf6

Avoiding 14 f3, which transposes to line 'a' of the previous note.

Exchanging on f6 has serious consequences: Black's pawn-structure is spoiled, but White gives up his very important dark-squared bishop. Such positions arise quite often in this line, with Black having castled kingside, but here his king is located on the other flank – from there, it cannot help defend the weak pawns, but is itself safer.

14...xf6 (D)

W



15 h5

Logical; from h5, the queen attacks the pawns on f7 and h7, forcing the d7-bishop into an

Let us draw some conclusions. The game is moving into a spell of positional manoeuvring. In such a game, Black's prospects do not appear to be worse. He will soon continue developing his pieces, and the white queen can be driven from its favourable position. However, any more ambitious black plans depend on advancing his pawns, and with this he faces serious difficulties. Overall, the position reached can be considered as roughly equal, and White needs only to pay careful attention to his opponent's attempts to seize the initiative.

16...b8

Clearly bad is 16...e5 17 xe5 fxe5 18 f3 or, even worse, 16...c5? 17 xe6! fxe6 18 xd8+ xd8 19 d1+ e7 20 xc5 ex5 21 xe6.

The text-move transfers the king to a better square, while the d8-rook will take its place, avoiding a needless confrontation along the open file. Without going into detail, we present one example of a less successful strategy for Black: 16...e6 17 d3 c5 18 h3 e7 19 fd1 e7 20 e2 h5 21 f3 f8 22 h4 g7 23 a4 xa4 24 xa4 xd3 25 xd3 g8 26 g3, Jansa-Levitt, 2nd Bundesliga 1991/2.

17 fe1

There is little sense in doubling rooks on the d-file, since there is nowhere for White to penetrate.

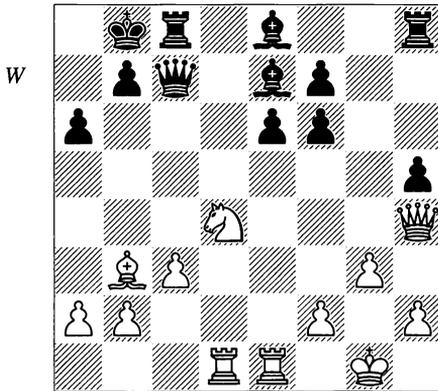
17...c8 18 h4

Voluntarily abandoning the observation post on h5.

**18...♙e7 19 g3?!**

One queen on its own is not much of an army, but even so, 19 ♖h6 was more logical, not allowing Black's obvious answer.

**19...h5 (D)**



Now this weak pawn can look forward to the possibility of being exchanged off, and the f6-pawn is also ready to advance. Black's chances are now preferable, and they grow even more so after White's next dubious decision.

**20 ♖f4(?) ♗xf4 21 gxf4 ♖g8+ 22 ♙f1 f5**

The immediate 22...♖g4 is more energetic, although the text-move does not spoil anything.

**23 ♖e3 ♙c5**

This is not easy to understand. There are several tempting continuations; for example, 23...♙d8 and 23...♖g4 (with the idea 24 ♘xf5 ♙b5+) are both good.

**24 ♙e2 ♖g4 25 ♙f3 ♙b6?!**

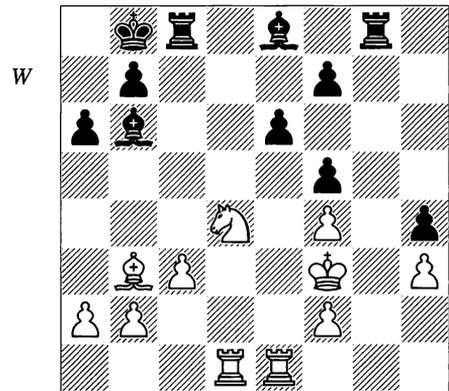
Again rather slow, this time more significantly so. With 25...♙d7 26 h3 ♖h4 27 ♘xf5 ♖xh3+ 28 ♙g2 ♖xe3 29 ♘xe3 ♙c7, Black could still retain some advantage.

**26 h3 ♖g8 27 ♖ee1**

Now White can breathe a sigh of relief – the f4-pawn is defended and the excellent knight on d4 prevents the enemy bishop on d7 from coming into play.

**27...h4 (D)**

The move 27...♖d8 does not prevent the reply 28 ♖g1: 28...♖xg1 29 ♖xg1 ♙xd4 30 cxd4 ♖xd4 31 ♖g8 ♖d8 32 ♙e3.



**28 ♖g1 ♙xd4**

Now nothing better is apparent.

**29 cxd4 ♙c6+ 30 ♙e3 a5**

The last chance to fight for an advantage was 30...♙g2.

**31 ♖g5 a4 32 ♙c4 ♙e4 33 ♙d3**

The line 33 b3 ♖xg5 34 fxg5 b5 also leads to equality.

**33...♙xd3 1/2-1/2**

## Game 8 [C09]

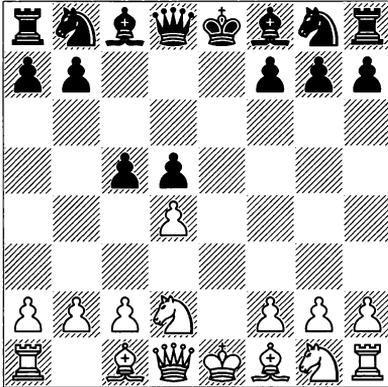
### Michael Adams – Artur Yusupov French Team Ch, Port Barcares 2005

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 (D)**

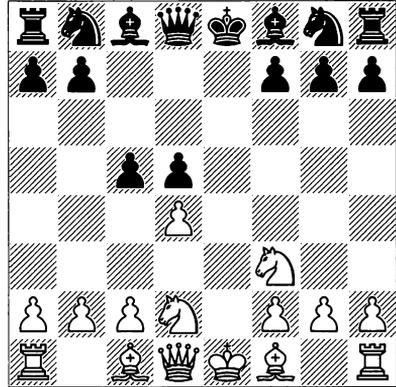
The classical system – Black follows the principles of development formulated by Tarasch, the analogous idea to which underlay his defence to the Queen's Gambit: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6

3 ♘c3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5. Black's pieces (especially his light-squared bishop) acquire freedom of action, White has no space advantage, and after the eventual exchange dxc5 the d5-pawn will become the only pawn in the centre

W



B



of the board. The disadvantages of the isolated pawn, of course, are well-known, and therefore the handling of this variation requires considerable skill from both players.

### 5 ♖gf3 (D)

After the check 5 ♜b5+ there is usually a transposition of moves (5...♗c6 6 ♖gf3), although the reply 5...♗d7 leads to independent paths:

a) 6 ♖e2+ ♗e7 (going into a slightly inferior endgame by 6...♗e7 7 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 8 dxc5 is not very attractive for Black) 7 dxc5 (an interesting continuation, which previously enjoyed considerable popularity; White temporarily hangs on to the c5-pawn) 7...♗f6 8 ♖b3 0-0 9 ♗f3 (more solid than 9 ♗e3 ♗e8 10 0-0-0) 9...♗e8 10 ♗e3 a6 11 ♗d3 ♗a4 with chances for both sides.

b) 6 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 (6...♗xd7 is also not bad) 7 ♖e2+ ♗e7 8 dxc5 ♗f6 9 ♖b3 0-0 10 ♗f3 ♗e8 11 0-0 ♗a6 12 c6 (or 12 ♗e3 ♗xc5) 12...♖xc6, again with approximately equal chances, Xie Jun-Korchnoi, Marbella (Veterans vs Ladies) 1999.

### 5...♗c6

Another method of development is 5...♗f6. After 6 ♜b5+ ♗d7 7 ♗xd7+ (7 ♖e2+ ♗e7 8 dxc5 was considered in the previous note) 7...♗bxd7 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 ♖b3 ♗ce4 11 ♗fd4 White's chances are preferable, but Black has no serious difficulties and can maintain the balance. David Bronstein's opinion on such positions is especially interesting: "Black does not even need to fight for the d4-square, but can make up for it by careful attention to the

other squares around the d5-pawn. And the d5-pawn itself? It can take care of itself, as long as it stays within range of the black pieces."

One should also mention the existence of the somewhat adventurous variation 5...c4 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb3 (7 ♜b5+ ♗d7 8 ♖e2+ ♖e7) 7...♗b4 8 ♗b5+ (8 ♗e5) and the move 5...a6 – but of this, more later (Game 9).

### 6 ♗e2

The immediate capture on c5 would present Black with an important tempo, while the excessively modest move 6 ♗e2 blocks the open e-file, allowing Black to develop his knight to f6.

### 6...♗d6

Now Black's king's knight will occupy the more modest post e7, shielding its king from a possible check. In an attempt to avoid the main variation, Black has also tried 6...cxd4 7 ♖e2+ (7 ♗xd4 ♗d7 8 ♗2f3 ♗f6 9 0-0 ♗e7) 7...♗e7 8 0-0 a6 and 6...♖e7+ 7 ♗e2 (simpler is 7 ♖e2) 7...♖c7 8 0-0 ♗f6, although in both cases, his opening pretensions seem slightly artificial.

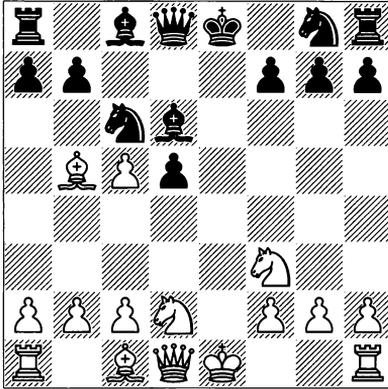
### 7 dxc5 (D)

This is more accurate than 7 0-0 cxd4 (if he wishes, Black can also play 7...♗e7) 8 ♖b3 ♗e7 9 ♗bxd4. The difference from the analogous variation, seen in the game, consists in the fact that there, White has the option to refrain from the move ♗bd4.

### 7...♗xc5 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♖b3

For the time being, White is not ready to attack the isolated pawn on d5, but on the other hand, he has firm control over the d4-square,

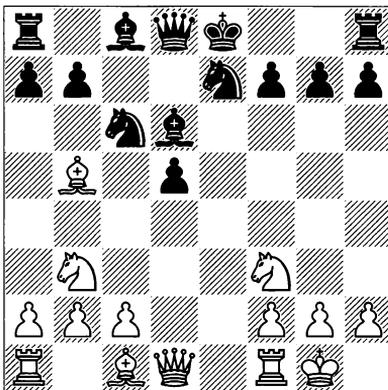
B



and Black must now choose where to retreat his bishop. He would prefer, of course, to keep the bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal, but in that case, the bishop can easily be exchanged off after 9...♗b6 10 ♖e1 (Botvinnik's old idea 10 ♗e3 ♗xe3 11 ♗xc6+ bxc6 12 fxе3 appeared remarkably subtle to his contemporaries, but the modern assessment of it is more modest) 10...0-0 11 ♗e3. Now both further simplification by 11...♗xe3 12 ♖xe3 ♗g4 13 ♗d2 ♗xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♗b6 15 a4 (McShane-Korchnoi, Reykjavik 2003) or 11...♗g4 12 h3 ♗xf3 (if 12...♗h5, then in reply to 13 ♗xb6 Black must now take with the pawn) 13 ♗xf3 ♗e5 14 ♗h5 does not turn out very nicely for Black – White achieves what he was aiming for, namely a small but lasting advantage. The more primitive 11...♗f5 (so as, if necessary, to play ...♗e4) does not in principle change the assessment of the position – Black still faces a fight to equalize.

9...♗d6 (D)

W



The standard position for the whole opening system.

10 ♖e1

White could slightly modify the pawn-structure by 10 ♗xc6+ bxc6 11 ♗d4 0-0 12 ♗f4 ♗f5 13 ♗a4; that way, the dark-squared bishops are exchanged, but it is impossible to maintain the blockade on the squares d4 and c5, and Black obtains adequate play.

The simple developing move of the rook is useful for White. Say, for example, he plays 10 ♗g5 0-0. Now 11 ♗h4?! is premature (11 ♖e1 is stronger) because of 11...♗b6 12 ♗d3 a5 13 a4 ♗f5, and the h4-bishop virtually has to retrace its steps by 14 ♗g5.

Of the other possibilities, we shall mention also 10 ♗bd4 (see the note to White's 7th move; the knight's occupation of the d4-square creates tension in the centre, which is more favourable to Black than White) 10...0-0 11 ♗e3 (11 c3 ♗g4 12 ♗a4 can be met by 12...♗h5 or 12...♗d7) 11...♗g4 12 ♗d2 ♗c7.

10...0-0 11 ♗d3

Voluntarily returning to Black the tempo that he lost earlier with ...♗f8-d6xc5. Although White indirectly prevents the pin 11...♗g4 because of 12 ♗xh7+, it is more consistent to play 11 ♗g5 ♗g4 12 ♗h4 or 11 h3 h6 (11...♗f5 12 ♗g5; 11...♗f5 12 ♗d3) 12 ♗e3! with the idea of meeting 12...♗f5 with 13 ♗c5.

11...h6

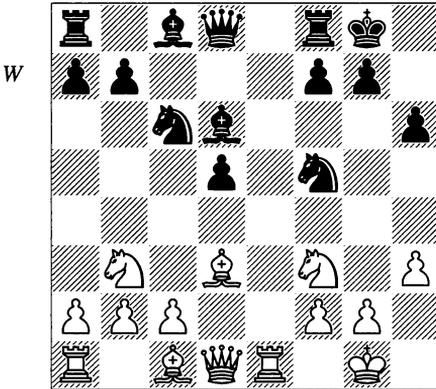
The natural reaction: Black does not allow the bishop to g5. As always, he must be careful about exchanging pieces without a concrete purpose – for example, in the event of ...♗f5 now or on the next move, Black would have more worries over the safety of the d5-pawn.

12 h3 ♗f5 (D)

The knight takes up an active post, preventing the bishop from developing to e3, and for the moment, Black does not need to fear the exchange ♗xf5.

13 c3

The advances of the h-pawns have created weaknesses along the b1-h7 diagonal for Black, and, correspondingly, h2-b8 for White. White's last move is not so much strengthening control over d4, as preparing the set-up with ♗c2 and ♗d3. By comparison, after 13 ♗d2 ♗c7 14



♙c3 ♖d6 15 ♙b5!? (a rather amusing return) 15...♙b6 (Adams-Lputian, Ljubljana 1995) the play is more concerned with the isolated pawn.

### 13...♗f6

An interesting alternative is 13...♙c7, setting up a mirror manoeuvre with the queen. After 14 ♙c2 ♖d6 15 ♗d3 g6 the direct 16 g4 ♙b6! 17 ♖g2 ♙xf2 18 ♖xf2 ♗g3+ 19 ♖e2 only leads to unclear complications after 19...♗h4 (Akopian-Yusupov, Germany-Armenia, Baden-Baden 1996) or 19...♗xh3 (Kuthan-Eingorn, Oberwart 1996). White is also promised nothing special by 16 ♖d2 h5 17 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 18 ♗h6 ♖fe8, but a more subtle continuation is 16 ♖d1 ♖g7 (16...h5 17 ♙g5) 17 ♖d2!? ♖h8 18 ♖d1.

### 14 ♙c2 ♖d8

According to Uhlmann, in the event of 14...♙e6 15 ♖d3 ♖fe8 White can obtain the advantage by playing 16 g4 ♗h4 17 ♗xh4 ♗xh4 18 ♗h7+ ♖f8 19 ♖g2, although this recommendation has not so far been tested in practice.

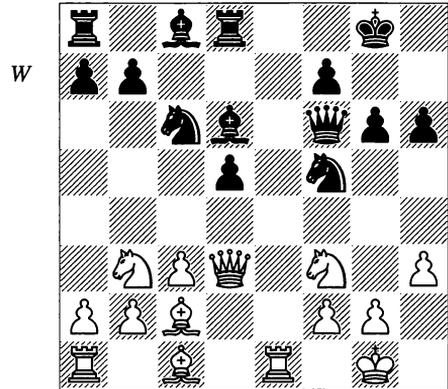
### 15 ♖d3 g6 (D)

By forcing the move ...g6, White has significantly enhanced the strength of his dark-squared bishop, which now has the hidden possibility of taking up a post on the long diagonal.

### 16 ♖d2

White would like to induce a further weakening of the dark squares around the enemy king (16...h5), while in passing, preventing the counterplay outlined in the previous note.

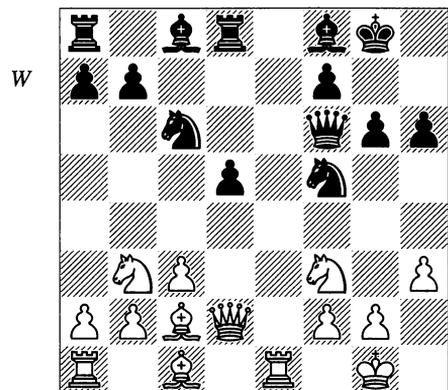
Following 16 ♖d1, here is an example of such a plan becoming reality: 16...♙f8 (too passive) 17 ♙xf5 (now this is positionally justified) 17...♙xf5 18 ♗bd4 ♙e4 19 ♙e3 ♗a5?! (an



unnecessary waste of time; better is 19...♖e8) 20 ♗d2 ♗c6 21 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 22 ♙d4 ♖e8 23 ♗f1, and Black faced a difficult defence in Tolnai-Uhlmann, Debrecen 1988. However, the attacking variation 16...♗h4 17 ♗xh4 (17 ♗bd4 ♗xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♗xg2 19 ♖xg2 ♙xh3+) 17...♗xh4 is stronger. The threat of the sacrifice ...♙xh3, hanging like the Sword of Damocles over White's position, prevents him from achieving any advantage.

The simple 16 ♙d2 would place White's most powerful piece in a slightly awkward position: 16...a5! 17 a4 b6 18 ♖e2 (18 ♗b5 ♙a6) 18...♙a6 19 ♙d3 ♙xd3 20 ♗xd3 ♗e5 21 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 equalizing quickly.

### 16...♙f8 (D)



The black bishop is forced to retreat, but now White must continue his development, not allowing himself to be further deflected by side-issues.

**17 ♖f4**

One can only envy the white queen's irreplaceable energy. Soon it will turn up on the h2-square, far from the centre.

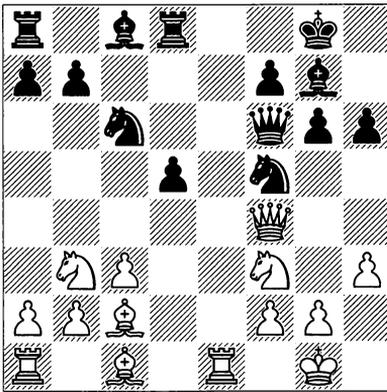
In principle, the modest 17 ♖e2 is more in the spirit of the position, but then 17...♘d6! (17...♙g7 is weaker due to 18 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 19 ♙e3 ♙e4 20 ♘bd4) is a good answer, avoiding the exchange on f5, which now favours White, as Vi.Ivanov pointed out.

Instead, decentralizing the knight by 17 ♘h2 allows the breakthrough 17...d4 (or 17...♖g7 18 ♘g4 d4).

**17...♙g7 (D)**

In the event of 17...♙d6, the queen is ready to turn to the queenside by 18 ♖a4, and in answer to 17...g5!? is prepared to retreat: 18 ♖d2 (18 ♖a4?! a6 looks suspicious for White) 18...d4 (otherwise 19 ♖d3!) 19 ♘bxd4 ♘fxd4 20 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 21 cxd4 ♙xd4 22 ♖c3, still retaining some initiative.

W

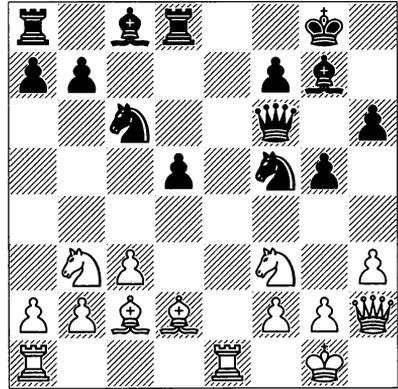
**18 ♙d2**

Blocking the queen's quiet retreat back to d2. The prophylactic 18 h4 allowed an easing of the tension in Adams-Lputian, Moscow 2004: 18...♖d6 19 ♙d2 ♙e6 (19...♖xf4 20 ♙xf4 d4 is more accurate) 20 ♙ad1 ♖xf4 21 ♙xf4 d4 22 ♙xf5 ♙xb3 23 axb3 gxf5, and having achieved an ending which is only slightly worse for him, Black managed to hold the draw. The bishop move looks like an attempt to achieve more, although one cannot consider it a great success. It should be added that at this moment, the programmed 18 ♙xf5 also leads

to a position with chances for both sides after 18...♙xf5 (18...g5!?) 19 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4 ♙e8 21 ♙e3 ♙e4.

**18...g5 19 ♖h2 (D)**

B

**19...b6!?**

The start of a series of moves which do not really fit in with the position. One interesting try is 19...♙f8 and then 20...♙d6, if only to find out whether the white queen is really ready to go to h1 (if it is not, then the only alternatives are the unclear variations 20 g4 ♘d6 21 ♘bd4 and 20 ♘e5 ♙d6 21 f4).

The play has taken on a concrete character; for example, the incautious 19...♙d6?! runs into the energetic reply 20 h4! (an important attacking resource; instead, 20 ♘bd4 ♘c4 21 ♙c1, Zubarev-Lysy, Nizhny Tagil 2005, is toothless) with the idea 20...g4? 21 ♙g5!. As long as the knight remains on f5, such unpleasantness is less likely, but all the same, the development of the bishop from c8 to a6 is dubious.

**20 ♙ad1 ♙a6 21 ♙xf5**

Possibly White is a fraction hurried with this exchange, convinced that he is already assured of an advantage. Instead, 21 h4 deserved attention (one of the possible variations then being 21...g4 22 ♙g5 hxg5 23 hxg5 ♖g6 24 ♘h4 g3 25 fxg3 ♘hx4 26 ♙xg6 ♘xg6), and also 21 g4 ♘d6 22 ♘bd4, as well as the simple 21 ♙c1.

**21...♖xf5 22 ♙e3**

Here, too, the break 22 h4 looks quite attractive.

**22...♙c4?!**

Dangerously slow. One way or another, Black should put a rook on the e-file. After 22...♖e5 (weaker is 22...♞e8 23 ♖d6) 23 ♗bd4 ♗xf3+ 24 ♗xf3 ♞e8 his position remains defensible.

23 ♗bd4 (D)

23...♗xd4?

Now Black's position deteriorates sharply. More stubborn was 23...♗xd4 24 ♗xd4 (24 ♗xd4 f6!) 24...♞g6.

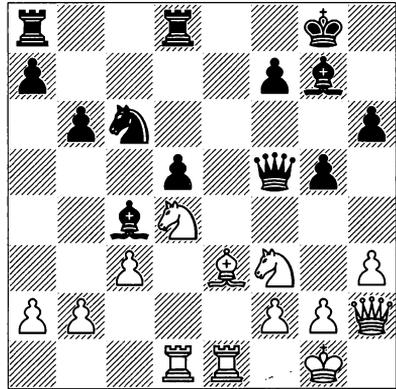
24 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 25 ♗xd4 ♞e8 26 ♞c7

With the opposite-coloured bishops, Black's pawn weaknesses and exposed king quickly become decisive positional factors.

26...♗xa2

Black could still resist by 26...♗e2 (closing the e-file), but instead he as good as surrenders.

B



27 ♞c6 ♞f8 28 ♞xh6 f6 29 ♞e7 ♞f7 30 ♞de1 ♞af8 31 ♞xf7 ♗xf7 32 g4 1-0

### Game 9 [C08]

## Andrei Kovaliov – Viacheslav Eingorn

Kiev 1983

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 a6

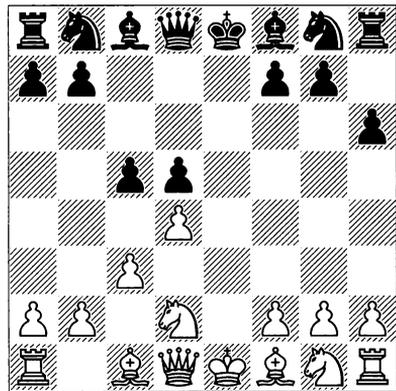
This move has been known in practice for a long time, and, probably as a consequence, is not viewed with quite such bewilderment by theoreticians as is the move 3...h6. Earlier we discussed the consequences of the non-standard variations 3...♗e7 and 3...h6, in connection with the follow-up 4 ♗gf3 ♗f6 5 e5 ♗fd7 6 ♗d3 c5 7 c3 ♗c6. Now we shall look briefly at other variations, which have more connection with the theme of this chapter:

a) 3...♗e7 4 ♗d3 (4 ♗gf3 ♗f6 5 ♗d3 c5 6 dxc5 dxe4 is another line) 4...c5 5 dxc5 (5 exd5 ♞xd5 leads to another type of position that is familiar to us). Now Black may simply reply 5...♗xc5, but usually he tries to save a tempo by playing, for example, 5...♗f6 (or 5...♗d7) 6 ♞e2 0-0 7 ♗gf3 a5 8 0-0 ♗a6 9 e5 ♗d7.

b) 3...h6 4 c3!? (4 ♗d3 c5) 4...c5 5 exd5 exd5 (D).

What are the differences from the 'normal' 3...c5 4 exd5 exd5? As before, playing to win the c5-pawn (6 ♗b5+ ♗d7 7 ♞e2+ ♗e7 8 dxc5 ♗f6 9 ♗gf3 0-0 10 ♗b3 ♞e8 11 ♗e3) is not especially promising. After 6 ♗gf3, Black has an

W



interesting attempt to exploit the new situation on the board, by 6...♗c6 (also possible is 6...♗f6 7 ♗b5+ ♗d7 8 ♗xd7+ ♗bxd7) 7 ♗b5 ♞e7+!? with the idea of 8 ♗e2 cxd4. After all, the strange-looking moves 3...h6 and 3...a6 would scarcely deserve serious attention if their only aim was to keep white pieces out of the squares g5 or b5!

4 ♗gf3

More original is 4 c3 c5 5 exd5 (5 e5 leads to a different opening set-up) 5...exd5 6 ♗df3.

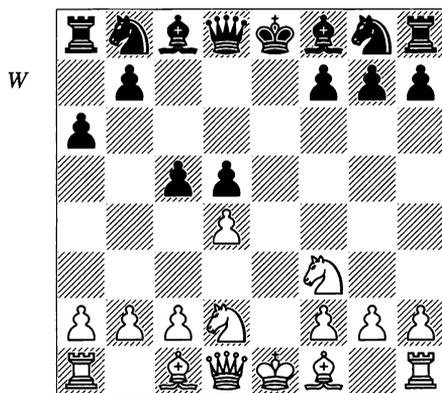
4...c5

As already discussed, here too 4...♟f6 5 e5 ♟fd7 is possible.

### 5 exd5

The variation 5 c3 cxd4 6 cxd4 dxe4 7 ♟xe4 (now it is White who has the isolated pawn) does not pose Black serious problems. An amusing metamorphosis can occur after 7...♟b4+ 8 ♟c3 ♟f6 9 ♟d3 ♟c6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♟g5 ♟e7 – before us we now have a position from the Queen's Gambit Accepted! A significantly more promising continuation, from the viewpoint of fighting for an opening advantage, is 5 dxc5!? ♟xc5 6 ♟d3; White concerns himself first and foremost with the development of his pieces, and retains the possibility of either taking on d5, or advancing the pawn to e5.

### 5...exd5 (D)



This basic position can also be obtained after 3...c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♟gf3 a6 – indeed, given the possibility of White varying earlier (especially with 5 dxc5), this latter move-order may even be preferable from Black's standpoint. What ideas are connected with the position of the pawn on a6? One of them consists in developing the g8-knight to f6, which is not possible in the variation 5...♟c6 6 ♟b5.

### 6 dxc5

The b5-square is not available for the bishop, and 6 ♟d3 is met by 6...c4. However, the simple move 6 ♟e2 is an alternative:

a) 6...♟f6 7 0-0 ♟e7 (7...♟bd7!?) 8 dxc5 ♟xc5 9 ♟b3 ♟a7 (9...♟b6). Although White has gained a tempo over the game, this does not greatly enhance his chances of an advantage.

b) 6...cxd4 7 0-0 ♟d6 8 ♟b3 ♟e7 9 ♟bxd4 0-0 and the play continues along the lines of Game 8.

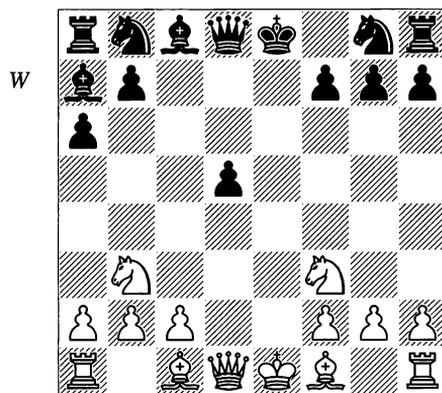
c) 6...c4 changes the strategic features of the position. The further moves 7 0-0 ♟d6 8 b3 cxb3 (8...b5 is risky) 9 axb3 ♟e7 (the incautious 9...♟f6?! is fraught with unpleasantness after 10 ♟b5+!) lead to a manoeuvring game, in which chances are approximately equal, although White retains some initiative.

### 6...♟xc5 7 ♟b3

The black bishop has reached c5 in one move (a minor thing, but nice all the same). More significant, however, is where the bishop now retreats after the attack by the knight.

### 7...♟a7 (D)

Demonstrating the next idea of the move ...a6, although the move 7...♟b6 is about equally good (sometimes it is useful to have the bishop protected by the queen). The strategically important squares d4 and f2 remain under surveillance, and it turns out that this time, it is not so easy for White to initiate the exchange of dark-squared bishops without spoiling his own pawn-structure.



### 8 ♟e2

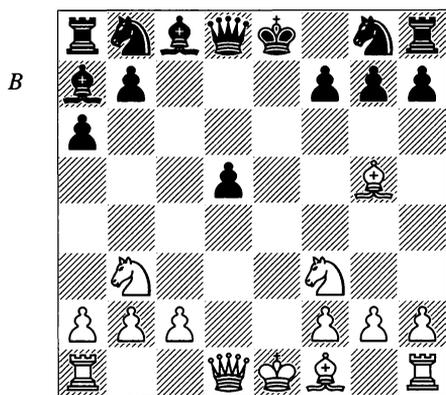
Played without any special pretensions – White simply develops his pieces, and allows Black to do the same.

The most natural continuation is 8 ♟d3, having in mind 8...♟f6 (8...♟e7?! 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♟e1) 9 ♟e2+. Therefore Black should himself give check: 8...♟e7+ 9 ♟e2 ♟c6 (the immediate 9...♟g4 is also not bad) 10 ♟g5 (10 c3?!).

turns out to be unnecessarily slow: 10...♔g4 11 0-0 ♖xe2 12 ♙xe2 ♜f6) 10...f6 11 ♙f4 ♙g4 12 0-0 ♖xe2 13 ♙xe2 ♜ge7, retaining sufficient counterplay in the complicated endgame thus reached, Vilela-Eingorn, Polanica Zdroj 1984.

An interesting modification of this variation is 8 ♖e2+!? ♖e7 (with the black bishop on b6, 8...♜e7 or 8...♙e6 is preferable). Now White is promised little by 9 ♙g5 ♖xe2+ 12 ♙xe2 ♜c6 13 0-0 h6 14 ♙f4 (14 ♙h4 ♜ge7) 14...♜f6 (Ivanchuk-Eingorn, USSR Ch, Moscow 1988), but after 9 ♙d2!? ♜c6 (if 9...♙e6, then 10 ♙e3, achieving his aim at the cost of a tempo) 10 ♙c3 ♜f6!? 11 ♙xf6 gxf6 the activity of Black's pieces compensates for his pawn weaknesses.

White also has the energetic response 8 ♙g5 (D).



This is directed against the reply 8...♜f6, which leads to difficulties: 9 ♖e2+ ♙e6 (here 9...♖e7?! is dubious: 10 ♙xf6 gxf6 11 ♜fd4 ♜c6 12 0-0-0 and White stands better) 10 ♜fd4 ♖e7 11 ♜xe6 fxe6 12 0-0-0 ♜c6 13 g3 0-0 14 ♙h3 ♖ae8 15 ♖he1 h6 16 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 17 f4, and Black's central pawns are weak, Aseev-Eingorn, USSR Ch, Lvov 1984.

The modest 8...♜e7 (also possible is 8...f6 9 ♖e2+ ♖e7) 9 ♖d2 0-0 is more reliable, and leads to a game with chances for both sides after 10 0-0-0 or to immediate equality in the event of 10 ♙e3 ♙xe3 11 ♖xe3 ♜f5.

In all of these variations, White proceeds purposefully, trying to prevent Black from carrying

out his opening plan – a complete contrast with White's play in the game.

### 8...♜f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♙g5

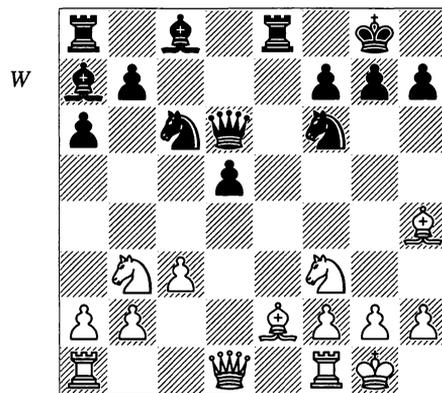
The pin of the f6-knight is not at all dangerous for Black, and indeed, this pseudo-activity soon leads to difficulties for White himself. On the other hand, it is not easy for him to find a constructive plan – of course, it is logical to put a knight on d4 and play c3, but what then?

### 10...♜c6 11 c3 ♖e8 12 ♙h4

Preparing ♖e1, which at present is unfavourable because of the tactical blow 12...♙xf2+.

### 12...♖d6 (D)

Simpler is 12...h6; e.g., 13 ♖e1 g5 14 ♙g3 ♜e4.



As a result of the opening, Black has achieved what he wanted – he controls the g1-a7 diagonal, and the king's knight has been able to go to f6, and is now ready to jump into e4. White finds himself in the role of defender, although the equilibrium has not yet been disturbed.

### 13 ♖e1

It was possible to play for equality straightaway with 13 c4 or even 13 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖e1, although then White would have to suffer a fair bit after 14...♙f5 (14...♙e6!?) 15 ♖xd5 ♖ad8 16 ♖c4. White's position would remain very sound after 13 ♙g3 ♖e6 (13...♖e7 14 ♖e1 ♙g4 15 h3 ♜e4 16 ♙h4 g5 17 ♜xg5) 14 ♖e1 ♜e4 15 ♜bd4.

### 13...♜e4 14 ♜bd4

Again 14 c4 deserves attention, as does 14 ♙d3, seeking to release the tension. By closing the line of the a7-bishop, the knight itself

becomes an object of attack, and White's position begins to resemble a fortress under siege. The difference in the activity of the two sides' pieces is clear, and although White does not yet have any real weaknesses, it is understandable that he finds it difficult to sit quietly behind his barricades.

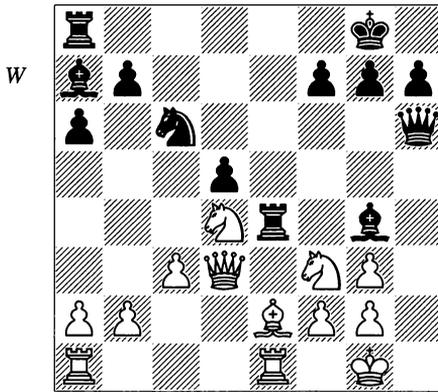
**14...♙g4 15 ♖d3?!**

A pointless manoeuvre, and White's first concrete mistake. It was already time to seek defensive possibilities by, for example, 15 ♖b3.

**15...♗h6 16 ♙g3 ♖xg3?!**

Not the best. Black could have obtained a serious advantage by 16...f5!.

**17 hxg3 ♙e4 (D)**



**18 ♖ad1?**

Another move made from so-called 'general considerations', but which proves to be the decisive mistake. In this critical position he had one last chance to repair the defects in his position: 18 ♖xc6! (the weak outpost on d4 needs to be not strengthened, but liquidated!) 18...bxc6 (18...♗xc6? 19 ♖e5) 19 ♙f1 with an inferior, but defensible position.

**18...♖xd4 19 ♖xd4**

Now White's pieces cannot move without some material or positional loss, and he hopes in vain for escape. More stubborn resistance could be offered after 19 cxd4.

**19...♖ae8 20 f3**

This weakening is forced – the threat was to exchange on d4 and capture on e2, while in the event of 20 ♖d2 ♖4e5 Black's victory is only a

question of time. The striking move 20 ♗xe4 is clearly also inadequate.

**20...♖e3 21 ♖d2 ♙d7**

Defending the back rank while also neutralizing the threatened 22 ♙f1.

**22 ♖f2**

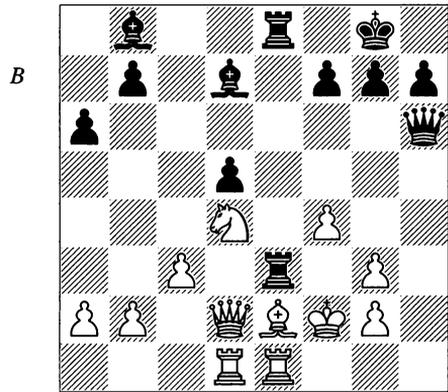
Trying to take a hand in the fight, the white king marches to his death.

**22...♙b8**

Having done its work on one diagonal, the bishop transfers to the neighbouring one, which White cannot defend. The threat is 23...♗h2.

**23 f4 (D)**

23 ♖h1 ♗g5 24 g4 g6 is equally hopeless, but now comes the denouement.



**23...♖xg3**

The most effective route to victory, even if not the only one.

**24 ♖xg3 g5 25 ♖f2 ♙xf4 26 ♖f5 ♙xf5 27 ♙d3 ♖h4+**

Quicker was 27...♙g3+ with the same result.

**28 ♖f1 ♖h1+ 29 ♖f2 ♖xe1 30 ♖xe1 ♙g3+ 0-1**

Looking at the statistics on the French Defence, one sees that Tarrasch's move has lost some of its popularity. In recent years, practice has shown that after both 3...♖f6 4 e5 ♖fd7, and in the variations with 3...c5, Black can have confidence in his position, and possibly for that very reason, contemporary theory is focused on the more energetic 3 ♖c3.

# 4 Burn and Rubinstein Lines: Black plays ...dxe4

The variations 3  $\text{♞c3/d2 dxe4 4 ♞xe4}$  (Rubinstein) and 3  $\text{♞c3 ♞f6 4 ♜g5 dxe4}$  (Burn) are significantly different in their underlying conception from most French Defence variations, while being very similar to one another. Here we see a completely different approach to the problems of the centre: by exchanging off the d5-pawn, Black concedes his opponent greater room for manoeuvre, but in so doing ensures that he will not have too many problems developing his pieces. He counts on overcoming the slight cramp in his position by preparing the break ...c5, while in the meantime seeking to ease his defence by exchanges.

Certainly, the opposition of the knights on e4 and f6 often leads to exchanges; in various lines, White takes on f6 with the knight (**Game 10**) or the bishop (**Game 11**), and in the case of the latter, the recapture with the pawn ...gxf6 (**Game 12**) can be of independent strategic significance.

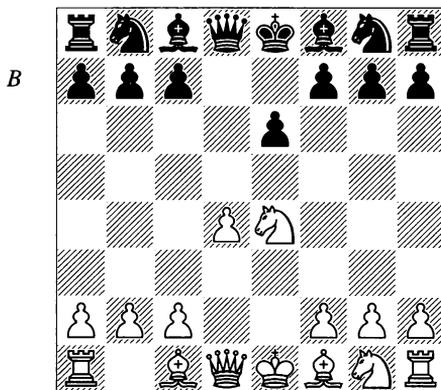
We shall say a few more words about Black's general opening set-up. By voluntarily giving up the centre, he limits his own strategic possibilities, but this does not mean in this instance that he is condemned to a long and cheerless battle for equality – on the contrary, events often develop very dynamically, and the situation reminds one of the variation 3  $\text{♞d2 c5 4 exd5 ♞xd5}$ , although in this case, White's chances of developing his initiative seem better.

## Game 10 [C10]

### Peter Svidler – Anatoli Vaïsser

*French Team Ch, Asnières-sur-Seine 2006*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3  $\text{♞c3 dxe4 4 ♞xe4}$  (D)



4... $\text{♞d7}$

The move 4... $\text{♞f6}$  has never been popular, since after 5  $\text{♞xf6+ ♞xf6}$  (when the black queen has come out too early) or 5...gxf6 (spoiling Black's pawn-structure without adequate justification), White stands better.

4...b6 is also dubious, while if Black plays 4... $\text{♞d7 5 ♞f3 ♜c6}$  (which is seen quite often) he will soon have to exchange the bishop for one of the enemy knights, settling for a solid but rather passive position. A typical example is 6  $\text{♞d3 ♞d7 7 0-0 ♞gf6 8 ♞g3}$  (or 8  $\text{♞ed2}$ ) 8... $\text{♞e7 9 ♞e1 ♞xf3 10 ♞xf3 c6 11 c3 0-0 12 ♞f4 ♞e8}$ , Volokitin-Nakamura, Lausanne 2005.

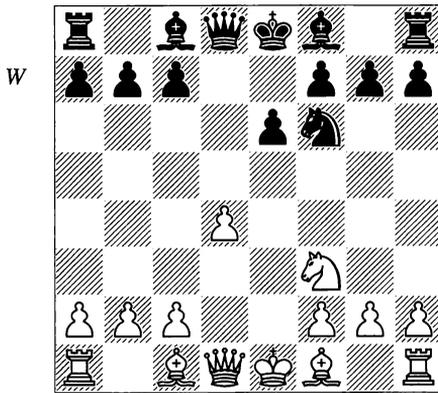
5  $\text{♞f3}$

The most natural, although at this moment, White has an almost limitless choice of moves – in particular, he may prepare queenside castling: 5  $\text{♙d3!?$   $\text{♜g6}$  6  $\text{♚e2}$  (6  $\text{♜xf6+}$   $\text{♜xf6}$  7  $\text{♙g5}$  is another possibility) 6...c5 (6... $\text{♜xe4}$  7  $\text{♙xe4}$  with the idea of 7... $\text{♜f6}$  8  $\text{♙xb7}$ ) 7  $\text{♜xf6+}$   $\text{♜xf6}$  8  $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{♙xc5}$ , and now 9  $\text{♙d2}$ , 9  $\text{♙g5}$  or 9  $\text{♜f3}$ .

### 5... $\text{♜g6}$ 6 $\text{♜xf6+}$

Retreating the knight would be like undeveloping, but the move 6  $\text{♙g5}$  will be considered in Game 11.

### 6... $\text{♜xf6}$ (D)



The basic position of the variation. White usually now proceeds in one of two directions.

### 7 c3

This waiting move has been quite fashionable in recent times. A subtlety to note is that it opens the diagonal of the white queen from d1 to a4. Even so, rapid development looks a more promising plan for White in the opening stages in this variation. Such a plan can be based on the following scheme of development: in answer to ...c5 White captures by  $\text{dxc5}$ , his bishops go to d3 and g5, the queen to e2 (or d2), and his rooks occupy the central files (castling on either side, as the player prefers), and the knight from f3 aims for e5. 7  $\text{♙d3}$  is a typical way to start off:

a) 7...b6 8  $\text{♚e2}$  (8  $\text{♜e5?!}$   $\text{♙b7}$  9  $\text{♙b5+}$  c6 is no use, but 8 0-0  $\text{♙b7}$  9  $\text{♚e2}$   $\text{♙e7}$  10  $\text{♜d1}$  is also not bad) 8... $\text{♙b7}$  9  $\text{♙g5}$   $\text{♙e7}$  10 0-0-0 and White has an active position.

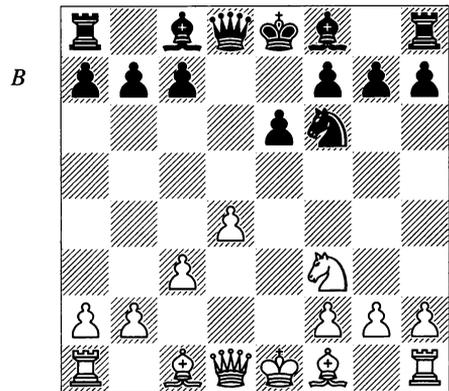
b) 7...c5 8  $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{♙xc5}$  and now:

b1) In the event of the quiet 9 0-0 0-0 10  $\text{♚e2}$  b6 11  $\text{♙f4}$  (or 11  $\text{♙g5}$   $\text{♙b7}$  12  $\text{♜ad1}$   $\text{♚c7}$  13  $\text{♙xf6}$   $\text{gxf6}$  14  $\text{♙e4}$ ) 11... $\text{♙b7}$  12  $\text{♜ad1}$  White must be satisfied with only a minimal advantage.

b2) 9  $\text{♙g5!?$  h6 (more accurate than 9...0-0 10  $\text{♚d2}$   $\text{♙e7}$  11 0-0-0  $\text{♚c7}$  12  $\text{♜he1}$  b6 13  $\text{♜e5}$ , Lahno-Drozdosvsky, Ukrainian Ch 2006) 10  $\text{♙h4}$  0-0 11  $\text{♚d2}$  (11  $\text{♚e2}$   $\text{♚a5+}$ ) 11...b6 12 0-0-0  $\text{♙b7}$  13  $\text{♜he1}$   $\text{♙e7}$  14  $\text{♜e5}$  with the initiative, Morozevich-Pelletier, Biel 2006.

The alternative approach is characterized by White striving to prevent his opponent from playing ...c5 or to exploit this pawn advance for his own purposes. To such variations belong the lines starting with 7  $\text{♜e5}$ , 7  $\text{♙e3}$ , 7  $\text{♙g5}$ , and also the continuation in the game.

Thus we now return to 7 c3 (D):



### 7...c5

The principled response: Black does not fear the weakening of the a4-e8 diagonal. The slower 7... $\text{♙e7}$  allows White not only standard development, but also several other possibilities, such as 8  $\text{♚a4+!?$  c6 (8... $\text{♙d7}$  9  $\text{♚b3}$ ) 9  $\text{♙d3}$  0-0 10  $\text{♚c2}$  b6 11  $\text{♙g5}$  h6 12 h4  $\text{♙b7}$  13  $\text{♜h3}$ . The direct attack on the black king looks dangerous, but he has enough defensive resources: 13...c5 14  $\text{♙xh6}$  c4 (even 14... $\text{♙xf3}$  15  $\text{♜xf3}$   $\text{gxf6}$  16  $\text{♜g3+}$   $\text{♜h8}$  17  $\text{♚d2}$   $\text{♜g8}$  18  $\text{♜xg8+}$   $\text{♜xg8}$  19  $\text{♚xh6}$  f5 does not lose) 15  $\text{♙xg7}$   $\text{cxd3}$  16  $\text{♚d2}$   $\text{♜xg7}$  17  $\text{♜g3+}$   $\text{♜g4}$  18  $\text{♜xg4+}$   $\text{♜h7}$  19  $\text{♜g5+}$   $\text{♙xg5}$  20  $\text{♜xg5}$  (Motylev-Roiz, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005), and now Black should continue 20... $\text{♙e4}$ ; e.g., 21  $\text{♜h5+}$   $\text{♜g8}$  22  $\text{♚h6}$  f6.

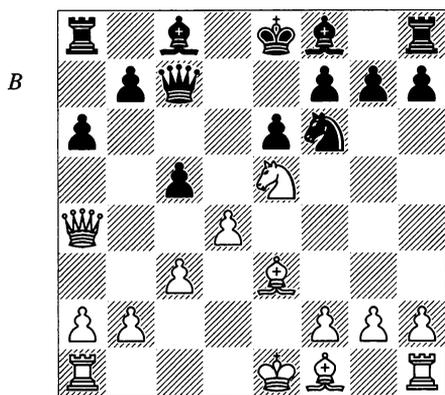
**8 ♖e5 a6**

Both 8...♖a5 and 8...♘d7 9 ♙b5 ♙d6 (already forced) 10 ♖g4 ♗f8 (Kasparov-Ponomarev, Linares 2002) are dubious.

**9 ♙e3**

9 ♙g5 has also been played, although the immediate 9 ♖a4+ is simpler; after 9...♘d7 10 dxc5 ♙xc5 11 ♙f4 White's chances have to be preferred, while in the event of 9...♙d7 10 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 11 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 the ending is somewhat better for him, thanks to the two bishops.

**9...♖c7 10 ♖a4+ (D)**



**10...♙d7**

The queen check gives Black a difficult choice. The reply 10...♘d7 leads to an unwelcome delay in development, but in fact, it is not obvious that Black faces any serious danger: 11 0-0-0 cxd4 12 ♘xd7 (12 ♙xd4 ♙d6) 12...♙xd7 (also playable is 12...♖xd7 13 ♖c2 ♙c5 14 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖c7) 13 ♖xd4 ♙c6. Giving up the light-squared bishop, on the other hand, is a definite positional concession.

**11 ♘xd7 ♘xd7**

Planning to castle queenside, retaining some chances of counterplay. It is clearly illogical to acquiesce to the loss of a tempo to exchange queens with 11...♖xd7 12 ♖xd7+ ♘xd7.

**12 g3!?**

The unopposed light-squared bishop occupies the long diagonal, and in the process White takes control of the f4-square. Less effective is 12 ♙e2 0-0-0 13 0-0 ♘b6, when 14 ♖b3 is met by 14...♘d5, and in the event of 14 ♖a5 ♘d5

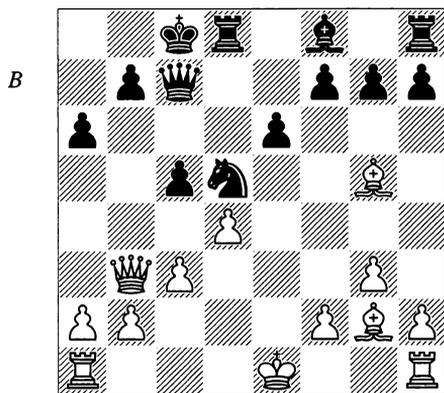
15 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 16 dxc5 ♘xe3 17 fxe3 f5 18 b4 g6 White's extra pawn in the endgame is of no real significance, Anand-Savchenko, Bundesliga 2004/5.

**12...0-0-0 13 ♙g2 ♘b6 14 ♖b3 ♘d5**

We should note that here, as later on, it is not in Black's interests to block the queenside with ...c4. A later break with b3 would result in White's major pieces quickly becoming active and exerting unpleasant pressure.

**15 ♙g5 (D)**

White does not bother clinging on to his bishop-pair, but the simple 15 ♙d2 was also possible.



**15...♙e7**

The prudent move 15...♙d7 suggests itself, and was indeed played in Grishchuk-Nogueiras, World Team Ch, Beersheba 2005. After 16 0-0 cxd4 17 cxd4 ♗b8 (17...♖a5!?) 18 ♙d2 (taking the a5-square from the black queen) 18...♙e7 19 ♖ac1 ♖d6 20 ♖c4 (20 ♖c5!?) Black eased the pressure by sacrificing a pawn with 20...♖c8 21 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 22 ♖c2+ ♗b8 23 ♖xh7 ♙f6 and managed to draw.

**16 ♙xe7 ♘xe7 17 0-0**

The capture on c5 (17 dxc5 ♖e5+ 18 ♗f1 ♙d7) would cost White his castling rights and therewith his chances of obtaining an advantage.

**17...cxd4 18 cxd4**

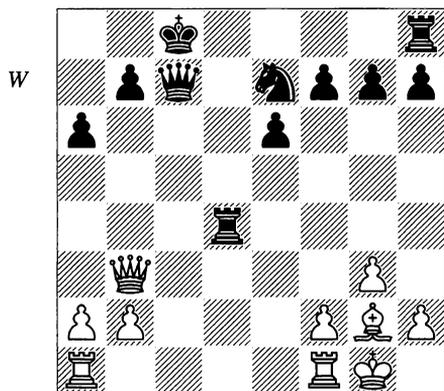
White's claims to an advantage are based on the strength of the g2-bishop. Of course, if Black's king were not located on the queenside, he would have very nice play against the isolated

d-pawn, but here he has other things to worry about.

**18...♖xd4 (D)**

Black takes the important decision to cut the Gordian Knot by taking the d-pawn.

After the alternative 18...♝b8 19 ♖ac1 ♗d7 20 ♖c5, 20...♘d5 21 ♖fc1 ♖c8 22 ♖1c4 (with the threat of 23 ♗xd5 exd5 24 ♖xd5) 22...♖hd8 leads to a situation reminiscent of Game 9, Kovaliov-Eingorn: after the exchange of dark-squared bishops, the c5-square becomes available for White's rook, and the d5-knight is a convenient object of attack. Another attempt to blockade by 20...♘f5 21 d5 e5 does not succeed because of the simple 22 d6 ♘xd6 23 ♖xe5.



Of course, Black does not expect to hang on to his extra pawn. Rather, he hopes to occupy the d-file with his rooks while White is re-establishing material equality.

**19 ♖ac1 ♘c6 20 ♗xc6?!**

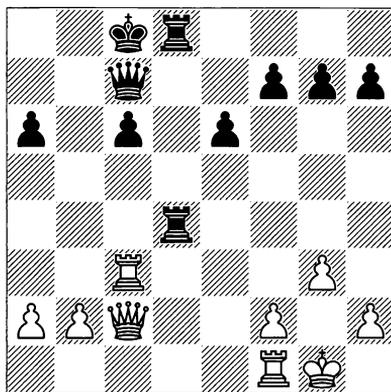
It is hard to understand what made White hurry with this exchange. It was perfectly possible to build up in the same way as in the game (20 ♖c3 ♖hd8 21 ♗c2), but with the bishop still alive on g2. After its premature removal, it becomes easier for Black to coordinate his forces.

**20...bxc6 21 ♖c3 ♖hd8 22 ♗c2 (D)**

**22...♖8d6**

22...♖d2 23 ♗xh7 ♖xb2 24 ♗xg7 would hand White a new and dangerous weapon – the passed h-pawn. However, the reply 22...♝b7!? looks more natural, immediately making use of the vacated b7-square.

B



**23 ♗xh7 f6**

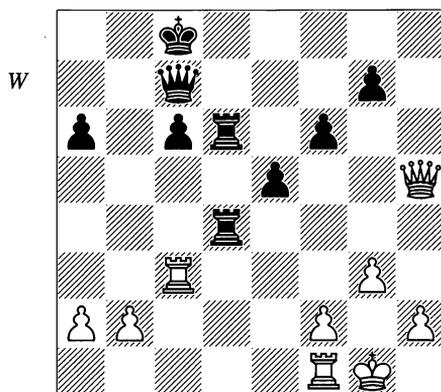
Preparing by ...e5 to establish a solid central pawn configuration. The control of the open d-file compensates for Black's pawn weaknesses, although he cannot establish full equality, because of the constant need to concern himself with the safety of his king.

**24 ♗h5**

Taking control of the d1-square, so as to prevent the likely exchange of rooks on the back rank. Nevertheless, at this precise moment, 24 ♖b3 was preferable, keeping the enemy king in the danger zone.

**24...e5 (D)**

Black misses a favourable opportunity to play 24...♖b4.



**25 ♖fc1**

Again 25 ♖b3 deserved attention. White instead sets his opponent a small trap, into which he duly falls, thanks to a moment's inattention.

**25...♖b4?**

The move which was good on his last turn now turns out to be a tactical oversight. He should play 25...♗b7 or 25...♞d5, retaining good chances of a successful defence.

26 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 27 ♖e8+ ♗b7 28 ♜xc6 ♖xc6 29 ♖e7+ ♗c8 30 ♖xb4

The rest is fairly straightforward: White has a queen ending with an extra pawn and the better king.

30...♞d7 31 h4 ♗c7 32 ♖c5+ ♗b7 33 ♗g2 ♖e6 34 ♖f8 ♞d7 35 ♖b4+ ♗c7 36 ♖c5+ ♗b7 37 b3 g6 38 a4 ♖e6 39 ♖c4 ♖e8 40 ♞d5+ ♗c7 41 ♖c5+ ♗b7 42 a5 ♖e6 43 ♖b6+ 1-0

Game 11 [C13]

**Tatiana Kosintseva – Xu Yuhua**

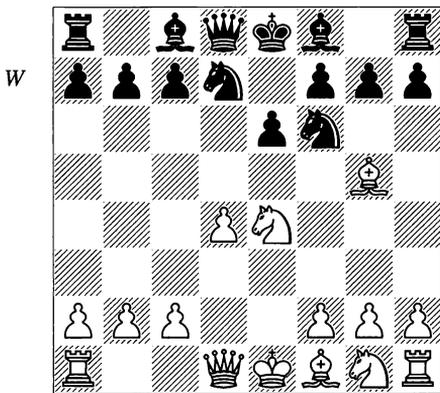
*FIDE Women's Knockout, Ekaterinburg 2006*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6

In principle, this move-order somewhat limits White's options, because by comparison with the immediate capture 3...dxe4, he is forced to commit himself earlier – Black waits for the reply 4 ♗g5 and only then exchanges on e4. The flipside is that Black must be prepared to meet the line 4 e5 (Chapter 5).

4 ♗g5 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♗e7

Black may instead direct play into one of the 3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 variations, by 5...♘bd7 (D).



Then:

a) White can play 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 (the experimental 6...gxf6 has not yet been sufficiently investigated), and then choose between the variations 7 ♘f3 and 7 ♗d3 h6 (a standard position is reached after 7...c5 8 dxc5 ♗xc5) 8 ♗h4 c5 9 dxc5 ♖a5+ 10 c3 ♖xc5.

b) 6 ♘f3 changes little:

b1) 6...h6!? 7 ♘xf6+ (7 ♗h4 ♗e7 8 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6) 7...♘xf6 and now:

b11) 8 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 is fairly harmless.

b12) 8 ♗h4 c5 is a common continuation. Now White can play 9 ♗b5+ or 9 ♘e5.

b13) 8 ♗e3 ♘d5 (8...♗d6 and 8...a6 are also possible) 9 ♗d3 is another idea, in this case agreeing to a further exchange of pieces. Black should either accept the invitation by 9...♘xe3 10 fxe3 ♗d6, or immediately reply 9...c5, whereas 9...♗d6 10 ♗d2 ♘f4 11 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 12 ♖e2 c6 13 0-0 (Shirov-M.Gurevich, Turin Olympiad 2006) leads to a dangerous lag in development for Black.

b2) 6...♗e7 has also been played, but then after 7 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 (more logical than 7...♘xf6 8 ♗d3 c5 9 dxc5 ♖a5+ 10 c3 ♖xc5 11 ♖e2) 8 h4 Black faces new defensive problems.

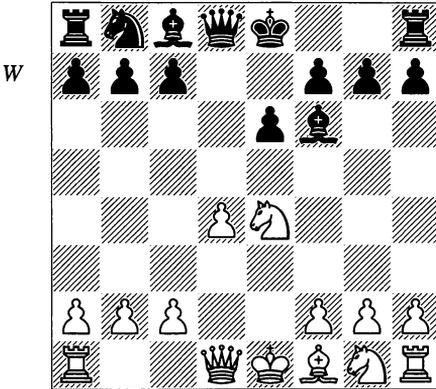
The move played by Black in our main game, 5...♗e7, produces a position with slightly different characteristics, since now White captures on f6 with the bishop, avoiding superfluous exchanges.

6 ♗xf6

The double exchange 6 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 7 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 does not give Black any problems: 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 c3 (9 ♗d3 c5) 9...♘d7 10 ♗e2 (10 ♗d3 is also possible) 10...e5 with immediate full equality.

6...♗xf6 (D)

We have reached the starting position of the variation. It is relatively easy to identify the main strategic features. White will castle queen-side and prepare an attack on the black king, although storming its fortress will not be so easy.



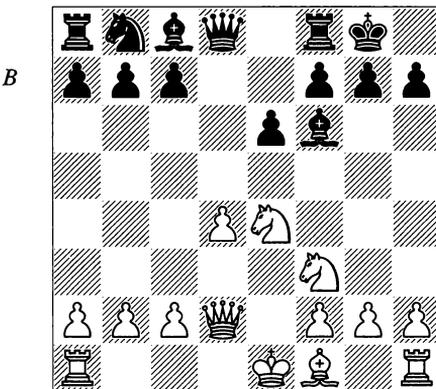
Even so, the relative passivity of his position is a serious minus for Black, and he needs to proceed with great care. He is only likely to get a real chance to take the initiative if White allows himself to be side-tracked from his attack.

**7 ♖f3 0-0**

The transfer of the bishop to c6 (7...♗d7) is not good here, but 7...♗d7 8 ♜d2 0-0 usually leads merely to a transposition of moves. The attempt to delay castling with 8...b6 is inferior because of 9 ♗b5 ♗b7 (9...0-0 10 ♗c6) 10 ♗xf6+ gxf6 11 ♜c3.

**8 ♜d2 (D)**

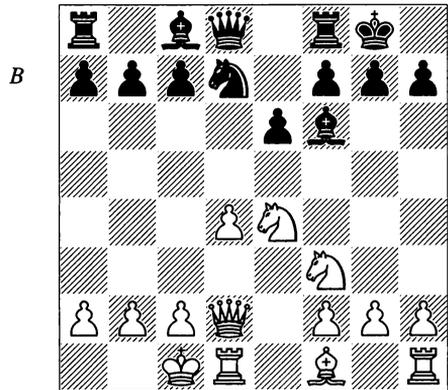
The main line, which for the moment prevents direct counterplay in the centre by Black. Also possible are the variations 8 ♗c4 ♗c6 (8...♗d7!?) 9 c3 e5 and 8 c3 ♗d7 9 ♜c2 e5, while the moves 8 ♜d3 and 8 ♜e2 are played more rarely.



**8...♗d7**

In the event of 8...b6 White has the additional resource 9 ♗xf6+ ♜xf6 10 ♗d3 ♗b7 (otherwise 11 ♗e4) 11 ♗g5. By sacrificing the exchange with 11...h6 (11...g6 12 0-0-0 is dangerous) 12 ♗h7 ♜xd4 13 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 (or 13...♜xb2 14 ♗h7+ ♗h8 15 0-0 ♗a6 16 ♗xe6), Black obtains some compensation, but still stands worse.

**9 0-0-0 (D)**



**9...b6**

The preliminary 9...♗e7 allows both sides to vary the play (White can reply 10 ♗c4 or 10 h4, for instance), but after 10 ♗d3 b6 11 h4 ♗b7 we reach the position in the game. In this line, White can try to exploit the momentary weakening of the h1-a8 diagonal by 11 ♗eg5, which led to one striking practical success: 11...h6 12 ♗h7+ ♗h8 13 ♗e4 hxg5? (with the idea of 14 ♗xa8? g4) 14 g4!! ♜b8 15 h4, and in view of the inevitable opening of the h-file, the black king found itself in deadly danger in J.Polgar-Berkes, Budapest 2003. A beautiful victory, but the way to meet this idea was soon found: 13...♗xg5 14 ♗xg5 ♜b8 or even earlier 11...♗xg5 12 ♗xg5 ♗f6.

**10 ♗d3**

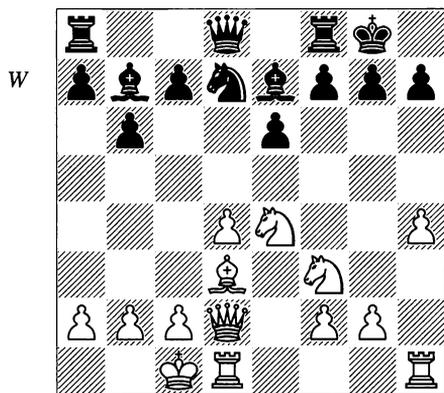
Beginning to eye up the h7-square. A central strategy, based on preparing the advance d5, does not promise any real advantage: 10 ♗c4 (10 d5 ♗c5 11 ♗xc5 bxc5) 10...♗b7 and now 11 d5 can be met by 11...b5!?. (11...e5 is another idea) 12 ♗b3 c5 13 ♗d6 ♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 exd5 15 ♜xd5 ♗b6, while 11 ♜he1 ♗d5 12 ♗d3 c5 13 c4 ♗b7 leads to an unclear position.

**10...♗b7 11 h4**

Creating a beachhead on g5 for one of his knights. White wishes to induce a weakening of Black's kingside pawns with ...g6 or ...h6, while the pawn-thrust creates the possibility of transferring the rook via h1-h3-g3.

11...♗e7 (D)

11...c5 is dubious in view of 12 ♖fg5, and so Black makes this move first.



The bishop moves away from the enemy knight's attack, freeing the f6-square for the d7-knight. In addition, Black prepares the programmed counter-blow ...c5, which, if necessary, will be played even at the cost of a pawn sacrifice.

12 ♖eg5

The continuation 12 c3!? ♖f6 (12...c5 13 ♖eg5) 13 ♖eg5 is identical with what occurs in the game. Here is a very brief outline of the other possibilities so that the reader may investigate them himself:

a) 12 ♖f4 ♖f6 (12...♖b8!?) 13 ♖xf6+ (13 ♖eg5 ♗xf3! 14 ♖xf3 ♖d6) 13...♗xf6 14 ♖g5 h6 with equality.

b) 12 ♖fg5 h6 13 ♖h3 and now 13...c5 is more logical than 13...♖f6 14 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 15 ♖h7 ♖e8 16 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 17 g4.

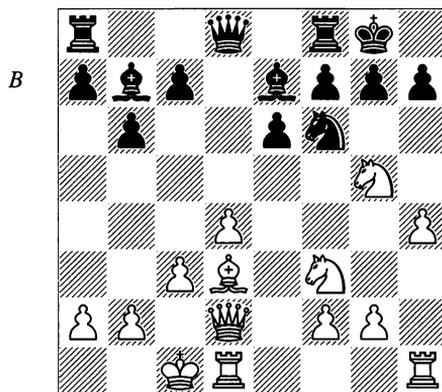
c) 12 ♖h3 c5 13 ♖eg5 (or 13 ♖g3 ♖c7) 13...♖f6 14 ♖g3 ♖c7, Bruzon-Bareev, Capablanca Memorial, Havana 2006.

d) 12 ♖e2 c5 13 dxc5 ♖c7 14 ♖eg5 ♖f6 (14...h6) 15 ♖e5 h6 16 ♗g6!? (striking, but it does not give any advantage) 16...hxg5 17 hxg5 fxg6 18 ♖xg6 ♗f7 (mistaken is 18...♖e4? 19 ♖h8+ ♗f7 20 ♖e5+ ♖xe5 21 ♖h5+, E.Berg-

Bareev, European Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005) 19 ♖e5+ ♗g8 20 ♖g6, Naiditsch-Bareev, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005.

To judge from the above variations, the reader may form the following impression of the position: the slowness with which he mobilizes his forces can certainly cause Black some unpleasant moments, but practice so far has failed to show any way for White's powerful-looking armada to achieve anything concrete.

12...♖f6 13 c3 (D)



Black stubbornly refuses to weaken the king-side, and so White prepares to attack h7 again. This is a dangerous threat – the incautious 13...c5? 14 ♖c2 g6 (14...h6 15 ♗h7+ ♗h8 16 ♖e5) 15 h5 ♖xh5 16 ♖xe6 left Black on the verge of defeat in Ivanchuk-Radjabov, Moscow 2002.

13...♗xf3(!)

A standard exchange in such positions. One of White's active pieces is removed, and he must now think about how to recapture on f3.

14 gxf3

The reply 14 ♖xf3 practically means abandoning the attack.

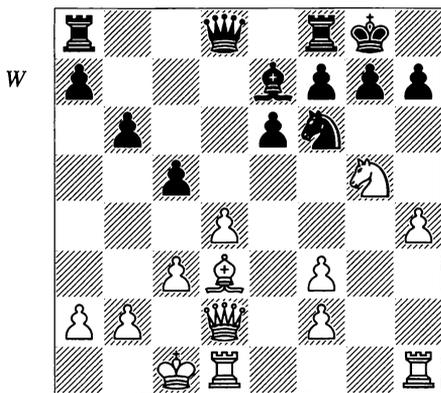
Now Black must think seriously about the possible threats along the g-file, but on the other hand, if White's initiative slows, the chronic weakening of his kingside pawn-structure will soon come home to roost. This is a critical moment – White has taken a considerable strategic risk and may later pay for his positional weaknesses. However, Black needs to be very much on the alert.

**14...c5 (D)**

There is no sense in Black's delaying this advance, which allows him to reckon on some counterplay.

The following example shows what can go wrong: 14...♖h8 15 ♖b1 ♗d6? 16 ♜dg1 h6 (16...♗d8! still gives chances of defence) 17 ♘e4 ♘e4 18 fxe4 (weaker is 18 ♙xe4 ♜ad8 19 ♝xg7 ♚xg7 20 ♜g1+ ♙g5) 18...e5 19 f4, Topalov-Dreev, Linares 1995.

Nor is the following any better: 14...♗d5 15 ♜dg1 ♜fd8 (Black could try 15...♜ad8!?, but not 15...♗xa2? 16 ♘h7 ♘h7 17 ♝xg7+) 16 ♘e4 ♗h5 17 ♗g5 ♗xg5+ 18 hxg5, Areshchenko-M.Gurevich, European Ch, Warsaw 2005.

**15 ♗c2**

White refuses to be tempted by immediate combinative tries, and the queen move in fact serves to direct the game along more positional channels. She refrains from the inclusion of the moves 15 dxc5 ♗c7, so as not to give the d8-square to the black rook:

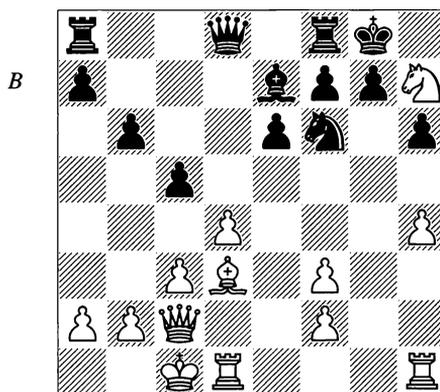
a) After 16 cxb6 axb6 or 16...♗xb6 the extra pawn is not such a great gain for White.

b) The variation 16 ♜dg1 bxc5 17 ♘h7 ♘h7 18 ♝xg7+ (perpetual check results from 18 ♗h6 ♙g5+ 19 ♝xg5 ♘xg5 20 ♗h8+! ♚xh8 21 hxg5+ ♚g8 22 ♙h7+) 18...♚xg7 19 ♜g1+ ♚h8 20 ♗h6 ♙g5+! 21 hxg5 f5 shows that the white king can prove a liability on the c1-h6 diagonal.

c) Thus 16 ♖b1 has been played, removing the king from the aforementioned c1-h6 diagonal. However, even after 16...bxc5 nothing

decisive for White can be seen: 17 ♜dg1? (Anand-Bareev, Wijk aan Zee 2004) is met by 17...c4 18 ♘h7 ♗d8! (Finkel), and the more accurate 17 ♜hg1 turns out to be sufficient only for a draw after 17...♜fd8 18 ♘e6 fxe6 19 ♗h6 g6 20 ♝xg6+.

It goes without saying that the tactical ideas of attack and defence shown here are not all that the position has to offer, and there is scope for further research.

**15...h6 16 ♘h7 (D)**

By offering the exchange of knights, White counts on retaining the initiative in a position with opposite-coloured bishops.

**16...♜e8?!**

A somewhat optimistic continuation, which leads to more serious problems.

The exchange sacrifice 16...cxd4 17 ♘xf8 ♗xf8 18 ♖b1 dxc3 19 ♗xc3 is interesting, although the position of Black's king leads one to prefer White. However, there is no need to panic yet – Black has a perfectly satisfactory continuation in 16...♘h7 17 ♙xh7+ ♚h8 18 ♙e4 ♜b8 19 dxc5 ♗e8 (19...♗c8) 20 c6 f5, accepting the necessity of a certain weakening of the kingside.

**17 ♘xf6+**

Avoiding a small trap: after 17 dxc5 there follows 17...♘d5! 18 ♙b5 ♗c7, trapping the errant knight on h7.

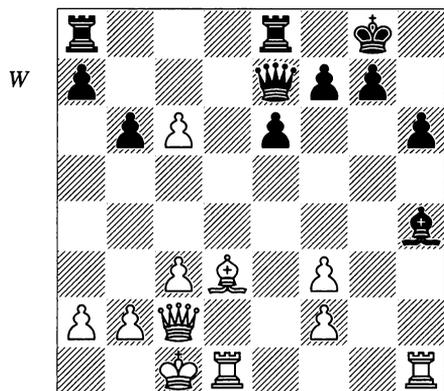
**17...♙xf6 18 dxc5**

Refusing the unfavourable variation 18 ♙e4? cxd4. Now White's pawn reaches c6 and can if necessary be defended.

18...♖e7

The point of Black's idea – she intends to take on h4. However, then her queen will be tied to the defence of the bishop, and the white passed pawn will momentarily not be under lock and key. Even so, Black is confident in the soundness of her position. The cautious 18...♖c7 is an admission of failure – after 19 c6 ♖ad8 it is difficult for White to make progress, but the advantage of course remains on her side.

19 c6 ♖xh4 (D)



20 ♖a6?

One can only guess what made White play this pointless move. Of several possibilities which are worthy of attention (20 ♖h7+, 20 ♖b1, 20 ♖a4, 20 f4), the last seems the most interesting. The pawn protects its king from check on the c1-h6 diagonal and prepares to advance further. In addition, the long light-square diagonal is opened and the d-file remains out of bounds to Black (20...♖ad8 21 c7). In short, 20 f4 promises Black some difficult times.

20...♖g5+ 21 ♖b1 ♖ad8

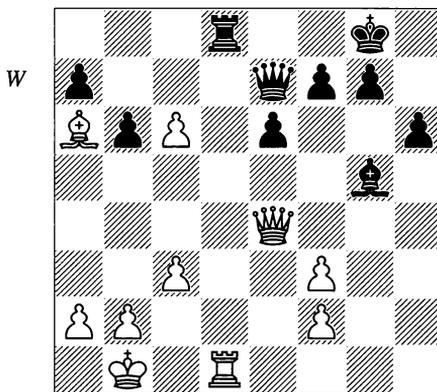
Now Black has the situation under control and if all the rooks are exchanged, the importance of the h-pawn will be enhanced.

22 ♖e4

A further inaccuracy. The queen keeps its sights on h7, but it was already time for White to think in terms of equality by 22 ♖a4 ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖d8 24 ♖d7 (or 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 f4) 24...♖xd7 25 cxd7 ♖d6 26 f4.

22...♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖d8 (D)

24 ♖d3

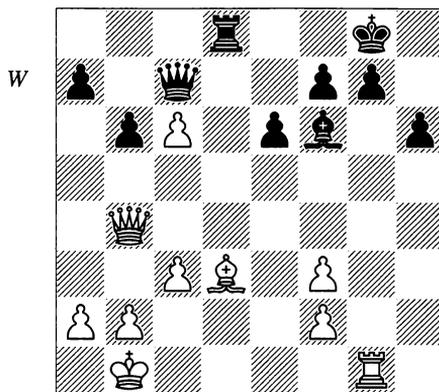


Now White has no time for f4 because d1 is undefended. Wishing to retain a pair of rooks, she abandons the open file on her next move, thereby ceding the initiative to her opponent.

24...♖c7 25 ♖g1 ♖f8 26 ♖b4+ ♖e7

Naturally, Black avoids the repetition and does not even hurry to eliminate the c6-pawn. 26...♖d6!? 27 ♖b5 a6 28 ♖xa6 ♖xc6.

27 ♖e4 ♖f6 28 ♖b4+ ♖g8 (D)



Black's winning plan involves a combination of several ideas, including the capture on c6, penetration with her rook to d2, and the advance of the h-pawn. If permitted, the advance ...b5-b4 is also on the agenda (so as to attack the b2-square), while on the kingside, Black will seek to prevent the analogous advance f4-f5. As usual, all of this is easier said than done, as White has counterchances which should not be underestimated.

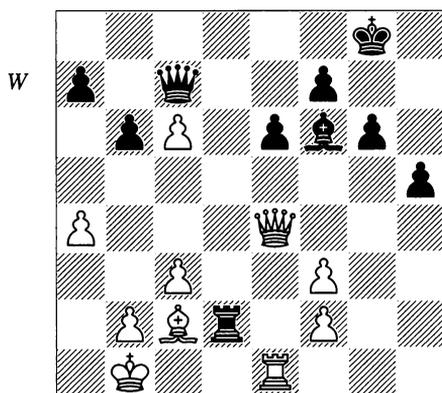
29 ♖e4 ♖e5 30 ♖c4 ♖d2 31 a4

With the idea of giving her king greater freedom.

31...♖f8 32 ♖e1 h5?! 33 ♖c2

Black's last move was not very well-timed, because after 33 ♖g6 (threatening 34 ♖xe5) Black would have to part with the h-pawn: 33...♖d5 34 ♖xh5 ♖c5 35 ♖e4.

33...♖f6 34 ♖b4+ ♖e7 35 ♖e4 ♖f6 36 ♖b4+ ♖g8 37 ♖e4 g6 (D)



So far White has successfully maintained the status quo. Now she has the tactical idea of a sacrifice on g6.

38 ♖e3 ♖d8 39 ♖e4 ♖g7 40 ♖g1

The immediate advance 40 f4 looks more logical.

40...h4

Black could play 40...♖e5, establishing a blockade.

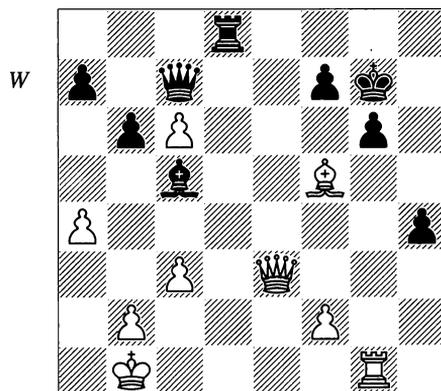
41 f4 ♖e7

The position has levelled out. Black makes a new attempt, but the bishop transfer weakens the defence.

42 f5?

Direct, but inaccurate. The preliminary 42 ♖f3 is stronger, setting up the additional threat of 43 ♖h5 (e.g., 42...♖f8 43 ♖xg6) or even 42 ♖c2 ♖c5 43 ♖f3.

42...exf5 43 ♖xf5 ♖c5 (D)



The struggle has come to life, and tactics start to play the main role.

44 ♖f3

The lines 44 ♖g5 ♖d5! (but not 44...♖xf2? 45 ♖xg6! ♖xg1 46 ♖c2+ with equality) 45 ♖g4 ♖xc6 46 ♖e4 ♖xf2 and 44 ♖e4 ♖xf2 45 ♖g4 ♖d6 do not turn out in White's favour.

44...♖d2 45 ♖g2 ♖e5?

This tempting move is a mistake in return. Better was 45...♖d6 (e.g., 46 ♖e4 ♖e5) with advantage.

46 ♖a2?

Missing a wonderful chance to save the game by 46 ♖h5! with the threats 47 c7, 47 ♖xg6 and 47 ♖xg6+. Now it is all over, as Black's pieces are the first to break through to the enemy king.

46...♖d6 47 ♖d7 ♖c5 48 ♖b1 ♖c4 49 ♖e8 ♖b3 0-1

## Game 12 [C13]

### Vasily Ivanchuk – Sergei Volkov

*European Clubs Cup, Saint Vincent 2005*

1 e4 e6 2 ♖c3 d5 3 d4 ♖f6 4 ♖g5 dx4 5 ♖xe4 ♖e7 6 ♖xf6 gxf6

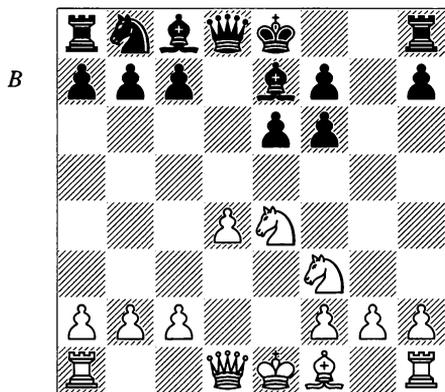
Just as the systems with ...dx4 are fundamentally different from other lines of the French

Defence, so this particular line occupies a special place within the ...dx4 complex itself. Instead of aiming gradually to equalize, Black heads for a clear confrontation. His idea is that

his strong dark-squared bishop should compensate for the defects in his pawn-structure.

**7 ♘f3 (D)**

The most natural, but serious attention has also been given to several other moves: 7 ♖d2, 7 ♖d3 and 7 ♗c4.



This is the basic position of the variation.

**7...f5**

The modest role of defender does not suit Black, and he himself takes steps to conduct an active role in the centre. In recent times, this same idea has been pursued quite often, and with reasonable results, with the move 7...a6 (an invention of Morozevich). Gradually, however, White has begun to find ways of exploiting Black's rather experimental opening strategy; in particular, the line 8 c4 f5 9 ♘c3 ♗f6 10 ♖d2 c5 11 d5 has proved to be an effective counter.

One continuation which has long been known to theory is 7...b6 8 ♗c4 (8 ♗d3!? ♗b7 9 ♖e2) 8...♗b7 9 ♖e2 c6 with the further moves ...♗d7, ...♖c7 and ...0-0-0, which leads to a somewhat passive position for Black. White's simplest continuation is 10 0-0, not particularly fearing the long-term threats on the g-file, although in the event of 10 0-0-0 ♖c7 11 ♗he1 ♗d7 12 ♗b1 (also interesting is 12 ♗c3!? with the idea of 13 d5, but note that 12 ♗a6? is a mistake because of 12...♗xa6 13 ♖xa6 b5) 12...0-0-0 13 ♗a6, one must also prefer his chances.

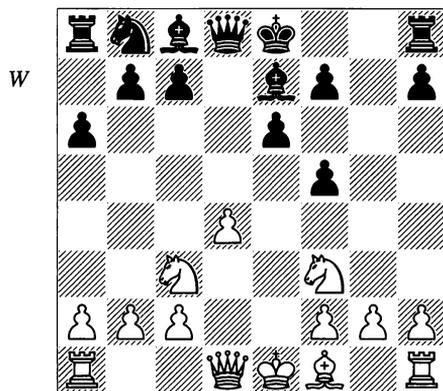
**8 ♗c3**

If 8 ♗g3 or 8 ♗ed2, then 8...c5 is satisfactory, whereas now White is ready to meet this with 9 d5.

**8...a6 (D)**

Black could stick to his guns with the slightly suspicious variation 8...♗f6 9 ♖d2 (9 ♗c4 ♗c6!?) 9...c5 10 d5 e5 (or 10...exd5).

With the text-move, he has another thought – the knight on c3 prevents White from playing c4, which gives Black grounds for switching to Morozevich's plan.



Now that Black has weakened the e5-square, the more defensive plan outlined above, with ...c6, etc., is less appropriate. However, Black understands that the advance d5 is not currently so dangerous anyway, so he has no need to resort to ...c6.

**9 g3**

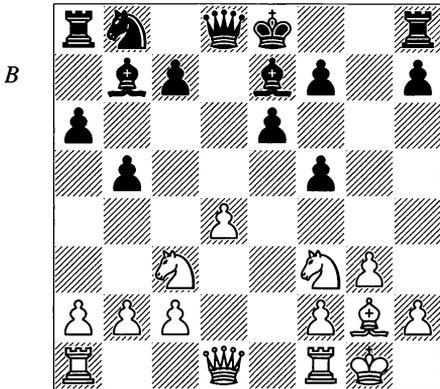
The long h1-a8 diagonal is the best place for the bishop here. White does not pay great attention to his opponent's flank expansion; he intends to castle kingside, since queenside castling would have rather unclear consequences: 9 ♖e2 (or 9 ♖d2 b5 10 0-0-0 ♗b7) 9...b5 10 0-0-0 b4 (10...♗b7 is met by 11 d5).

**9...b5**

The consistent follow-up to his previous move. In the variation with 9...♗f6, the addition of the moves g3 and ...a6 would turn out to be in White's favour.

**10 ♗g2 ♗b7 11 0-0 (D)**

The 'bad' French bishop has found a nice post on b7, but Black now has other opening problems. Most important of all, he wants in the near future to achieve the break ...c5, since otherwise his pawn position on the queenside will contain more holes than a sieve. The move



...c5 will lead to the opening of the d-file, and so Black needs to connect his rooks as soon as possible, to be able to fight for control of the file. That in turn means that he must castle kingside, but his king will not feel particularly safe on g8. We should also note that the order in which these ideas is realized is of considerable significance too.

### 11...c5

After 11...0-0 White has a choice between simplifying into an endgame with 12 ♖e1 c5 13 dxc5 ♗xd1 14 ♜axd1 ♘xc5 15 ♘e5, counting on enjoying a small advantage, thanks to his superior pawn-structure (Babudzhian-Stellwagen, World Junior Ch, Istanbul 2005), or a more complex middlegame struggle – for example, after 12 ♖c1 (12 ♘e5 ♘xg2 13 ♗xg2 b4 leads to equality) 12...c5 13 dxc5 ♘xc5 14 ♗h6 or 12 ♗d2 c5 13 ♜ad1 with the initiative.

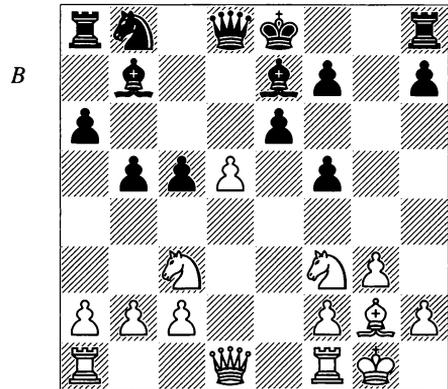
Possibly for this very reason, Black decides on the immediate advance of the c-pawn, not wishing to wait for a white rook to appear on d1. Black also confirms that he is not opposed to an exchange of queens (12 dxc5 ♗xd1 13 ♜fxd1 ♘xc5). The logic of his play is understandable, but it runs up against a sharp response.

### 12 d5(!) (D)

Up to now, Black has been indirectly preventing this advance, but now it transpires that the move is possible after all, thanks to the position of the black king in the centre.

### 12...b4

Capturing in the centre is impossible since 12...exd5? is met by 13 ♘e5, so this is forced.



### 13 dxe6

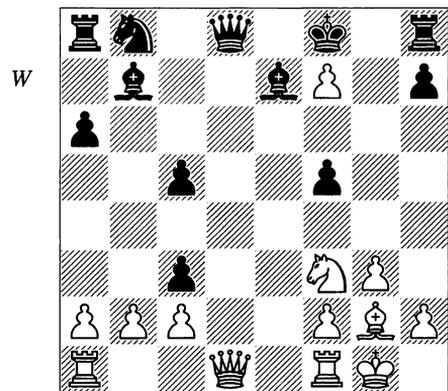
A beautiful positional piece sacrifice in the style of Tal.

### 13...bxc3

Black has no choice but to take up the gauntlet, since otherwise White will have an attack free of charge: 13...fxe6 can be met by 14 ♘e2 or 14 ♗xd8+.

### 14 exf7+ ♗f8 (D)

14...♗xf7? would be tantamount to suicide, with such lines as 15 ♘e5+ ♗f6 16 ♗h5 ♗f8 17 ♘xb7 ♜a7 18 ♘c8!.



On the other hand, putting up with such an enemy pawn as that on f7 is highly unpleasant. The position has a rather irrational character, and it is well-known that defending in such positions is usually more difficult than attacking. Even so, it is still rather early to draw any firm conclusions, and both players must rely more on intuition than exact calculation.

**15 ♖e2**

Even in the event of 15 bxc3 ♖xd1 16 ♜fxd1 Black would not find it easy to activate his pieces, although it is clear that White has no reason to go into the ending anyway. As well as the move played, 15 ♖c1 is also possible, but White decides to occupy one of the central files, at the far end of which there is the tempting entry-square e8.

**15...cxb2**

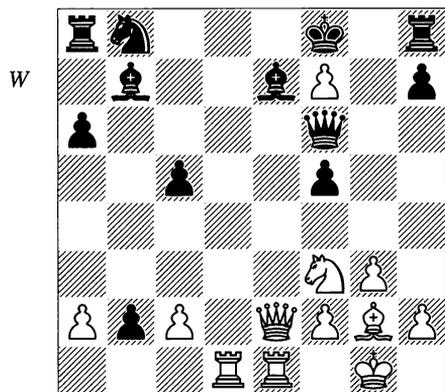
This pawn can also make a nuisance of itself, but on the other hand, Black expends another tempo. The move 15...♙e4 is interesting, as is 15...♙f6!? with the idea of putting the queen on e7. After 16 ♘g5 ♙xg5 17 ♙xb7 ♜a7 18 ♖e5 ♘xf7 Black is holding.

**16 ♜ad1 ♖b6 17 ♜fe1**

Of course, White is not distracted by the ineffective combination 17 ♘g5 ♙xg2 18 ♜d8+ ♖xd8 19 ♘e6+ ♘xf7 20 ♘xd8+ ♜xd8 21 ♘xg2.

**17...♖f6 (D)**

Practically forced, since 17...♙e4 is bad due to 18 ♘e5.



**18 c3**

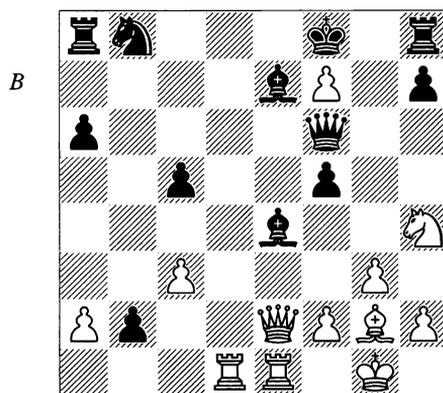
Although White has completely mobilized his forces, the direct attack 18 ♘g5 ♙xg2 19 ♜d8+ ♙xd8 20 ♘h7+ ♘g7 again brings no particular results, nor is there any other obvious way of achieving a quick breakthrough. White therefore decides to remove the awkward enemy pawn, leaving Black to find a way to coordinate his forces.

**18...♙e4**

Preparing 19...♘c6, since the biggest unpleasantness for Black here is the need to protect the e7-bishop with his king and queen. Possibly this task should have been assigned to the rook, by 18...♙xf3!? (removing the dangerous white knight – worse is 18...♜a7? 19 ♖xb2 ♘g7 20 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♘h4) 19 ♙xf3 ♜a7 20 ♖xb2 (20 ♙d5 ♜d7) 20...♘g7.

**19 ♘h4!? (D)**

19 ♖xb2 ♘c6 20 ♘h4 is perfectly possible, but White's chosen continuation is more energetic – he immediately sets about removing the obstruction along the e-file.



**19...♘c6**

19...♙xg2 also deserved attention, despite the fact that it assists the white knight's transfer to f4. For example, 20 ♘xg2 ♘c6 21 ♘f4 (21 ♖xb2 ♜d8 22 ♜xd8+ ♘xd8) 21...♜b8 22 ♜b1 and now 22...♖xf7 or even 22...h5!? 23 ♖xb2 ♜xb2 24 ♖xb2 ♜h6.

**20 ♙xe4 fxe4 21 ♖xe4**

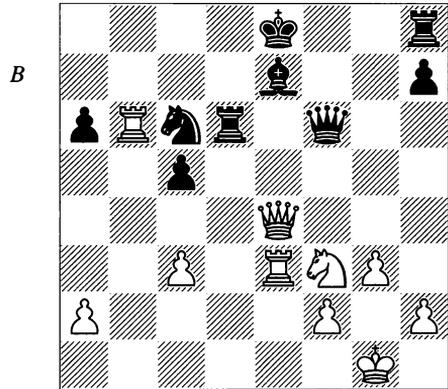
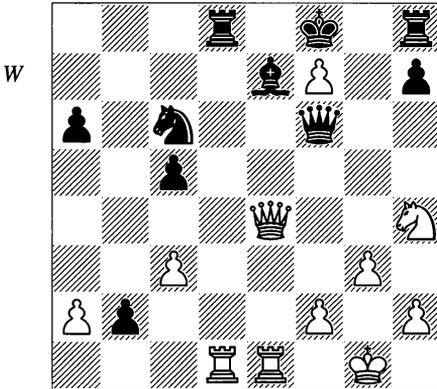
The position remains unclear, but there are two obvious criteria by which events can be judged – the number of black pawns that fall, and the possibility of the h8-rook coming into play.

**21...♜d8 (D)**

The start of a rather unsuccessful defensive manoeuvre. It is more logical to continue with 21...♜b8, so as to defend his main trump, the b2-pawn.

**22 ♜b1 ♜d2**

Black wishes to lure the white knight back to f3 before putting his rook on d6. The immediate



22...♖d6 23 ♖xb2 ♕xf7 loses to 24 ♖e3, heading for f3.

23 ♘f3 ♖d6 24 ♖xb2 ♕xf7

Both advanced infantrymen have finally been liquidated. This slightly unusual form of exchange turns out to benefit White more than Black, since now that his rooks are free of any encumbrance, they can develop maximum activity.

25 ♖b6?!

A new stage of the struggle begins with an inaccuracy – instead of this direct attack on the knight, it is more accurate to play 25 ♖b7!? (threatening 26 ♖c7), retaining an unpleasant initiative.

25...♕e8?

A serious mistake. Without an exceptionally good reason, it cannot be right for the black king to stay in the centre, where his pieces (even if one of them is an extra piece) have to shield him from checks. Black could instead have played 25...♕g7 with a clear conscience, since if then 26 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 27 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 28 ♖xe7+ ♕f6, White can count on no more than equality, while the continuation 26 ♗g4+ ♗g6 also fails to yield any advantage.

26 ♖e3!? (D)

26 ♘g5 and 26 ♗e3 are both more aggressive, but prophylaxis is also fully appropriate here, since the opponent has no useful moves.

26...♖f8

Sadly, Black can find nothing better than to donate the h-pawn.

27 ♗xh7 ♖f7

This is pointless – 27...♗f5 is a tougher defence.

28 ♗g8+ ♖f8 29 ♗c4 a5 30 ♕g2

30 ♗b5 or 30 ♗a6 would end the game immediately.

30...♖f7

Missing the last chance to play 30...♗f5. Now Black's last hope is gone.

31 ♗xc5 ♕f8 32 ♗h5 ♕g8 33 ♗g4+ ♖g7 34 ♗c4+ ♖f7 35 ♗g4+ ♖g7 36 ♗c8+ ♕f8 37 ♖e8 ♖g6

He could prolong his resistance by 37...♖f7.

38 h4 ♗f7 39 ♖b7 ♗f6 40 ♘g5 ♕e5 41 ♖f7  
1-0

At one time, even Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch argued over the 'surrender of the centre' by ...dxe4; the former considered it completely bad, the latter, virtually the best system of defence. Steering between these two extremes, we can say that many years of practical experience on the whole tends to support Tarrasch's opinion more than Nimzowitsch's, although this has not put off modern-day players. They are attracted by the simplicity of Black's play, and prefer to pursue the opening discussion on the basis of concrete variations, rather than being deflected by abstract considerations.

# 5 The Classical French (3 c3 f6)

After a brief interlude, we now return to lines with the normal French Defence interpretation, in which Black holds the d5-point. With the knight on c3, the immediate central counterblow ...c5 is clearly unfavourable for Black. Black's main task is to increase the pressure against e4, although it is possible not to hurry with this, but instead to wait until White has played  $\text{f3}$ . With this intention, the moves 3... $\text{c6}$ , 3... $\text{e7}$ , 3...a6 and 3...h6 are sometimes played, although it should be said that by playing in this way with the knight on c3, Black takes greater strategic risks than after 3  $\text{d2}$ . The two best moves for Black are reckoned to be 3... $\text{b4}$  (Winawer Variation) and 3... $\text{f6}$  (Classical Variation). The first of these will be examined in the final three chapters, but here our subject will be the knight move.

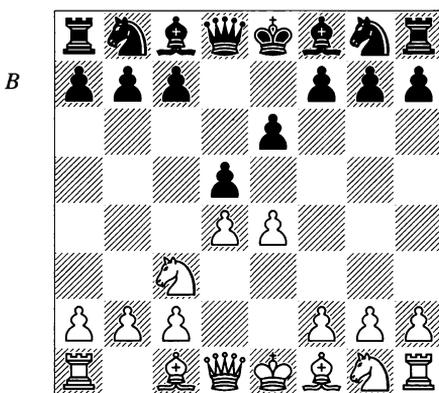
One of the main variations then is 4 e5  $\text{f7}$  (Game 13). The only serious alternative to the advance of the e4-pawn is 4  $\text{g5}$ , whereupon Black can choose between 4... $\text{e7}$  (Game 14) and 4... $\text{b4}$ , setting up a counter-pin (Game 15). The further move 5 e5 again leads to the standard French pawn-structure and its derivatives, with which the reader is already familiar from the earlier chapters. The exception is the variation 4  $\text{g5}$   $\text{b4}$  5 e5 h6, in which positions arise that are more typical of the move 3... $\text{b4}$ .

## Game 13 [C11]

### Natalia Zhukova – Elina Danielian

*European Women's Team Ch, Gothenburg 2005*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3  $\text{c3}$  (D)



3... $\text{f6}$

Here is a bare-bones presentation of the possible alternatives (apart from 3... $\text{b4}$ ), just to

provide a few pointers in case the reader wishes to investigate these rarer possibilities on his own:

a) 3... $\text{c6}$  4  $\text{f3}$  (given that Black has blocked his c-pawn, 4 e5 looks simpler) 4... $\text{f6}$  5 e5  $\text{e4}$  6  $\text{d3}$  (6  $\text{e2}$ !?) 6... $\text{b4}$  7  $\text{d2}$ .

b) 3... $\text{e7}$  4  $\text{d3}$  (4 e5!?) 4... $\text{c6}$  5  $\text{f3}$   $\text{b4}$  6  $\text{b5+}$  c6 7  $\text{e2}$  dxe4 (here this exchange is not fully justified positionally; more logical is 7... $\text{f6}$  8 e5  $\text{e4}$ ) 8  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{f6}$  9  $\text{xf6+}$   $\text{xf6}$  10 0-0, Gulko-Romanishin, USSR Ch, Moscow 1976.

c) 3...a6 4  $\text{f3}$  (4  $\text{d3}$   $\text{c6}$  5  $\text{f3}$   $\text{b4}$ ) 4... $\text{f6}$  5  $\text{g5}$  (5 exd5!?) 5... $\text{e7}$  6 e5  $\text{fd7}$  7  $\text{xe7}$   $\text{xe7}$  8  $\text{d3}$  c5 9 dxc5  $\text{c6}$  10 0-0  $\text{dx5}$  11  $\text{xe5}$   $\text{xe5}$  12 b4, Schebler-Liogky, Budapest 1996.

d) 3...h6 (as we see, again the moves ... $\text{e7}$ , ...a6 and ...h6 are all possible) 4  $\text{d3}$  (4  $\text{e3}$ !?)

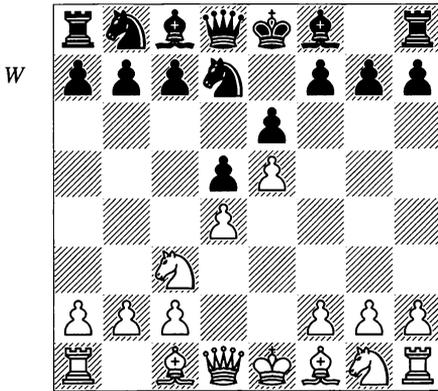
4...♟c6 5 ♘f3 ♟b4 6 ♙b5+ c6 7 ♙e2 ♘f6 8 e5 ♟e4 9 0-0 c5 10 ♙e3.

In the above variations, it is easy to see the ideas that unite the different lines, as well as those that distinguish them. We shall take this opportunity to warn the reader once again: all of these rather artificial continuations have their weaknesses, and so it is safer to stick with the generally accepted norms of opening strategy.

#### 4 e5

Black has no problems after 4 ♙d3 c5 5 ♘f3 ♟c6 (or 5...cxd4 6 ♟xd4 ♟c6).

#### 4...♟fd7 (D)



A familiar picture, but here the white knight stands on c3. In the variation 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘f7 White must concern himself primarily with the e5-pawn, whereas here the concern is how to support the d4-pawn.

#### 5 f4

Settling for piece control of the centre also deserves attention, and certainly, this seems one of the most appropriate moments for such a plan. After 5 ♘f3 (the same position may arise from a different move-order: 1 e4 e6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 ♟c3 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 d4) 5...c5 6 dxc5 ♟c6 7 ♙f4 ♙xc5 (7...♟xc5 is possible too) 8 ♙d3 f6 9 exf6 ♟xf6 (9...♟xf6 10 ♙g3) 10 0-0 (sharper is 10 ♟e2 0-0 11 0-0-0) 10...0-0 White cannot maintain full control over e5 and the chances are equal.

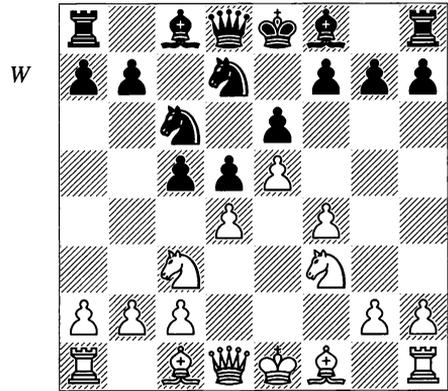
Another continuation is 5 ♟ce2 c5 6 c3, following quite the opposite strategy – White plays to maintain the pawn duo d4+e5. However, his

lack of development is not without its dangers: 6...cxd4!? 7 cxd4 f6 8 f4 (more consistent than 8 ♘f4) 8...fxe5 9 fxe5 ♙b4+ (or 9...♟h4+ 10 ♟g3 ♙b4+ 11 ♟f2 0-0+ 12 ♘f3 ♟c6 13 ♙e3 ♟dxe5) 10 ♟f2 (10 ♙d2? ♟h4+) 10...0-0+ 11 ♘f3 ♟c6 12 a3 ♟dxe5 (J.Polgar-Hernandez, Merida 2000). More often Black plays 6...♟c6 7 f4 ♟b6 8 ♘f3, reaching a position which White is aiming for in the present game, but with a different move-order.

#### 5...c5 6 ♘f3

The archaic line 6 dxc5 ♟c6 7 a3 ♙xc5 8 ♟g4 is very rarely played today.

#### 6...♟c6 (D)



#### 7 ♟e2

Since White does not wish to capture on c5, it is necessary to strengthen the d4-point. This move prepares c3, but the modern theory of the 4 e5 systems is based on the variation 7 ♙e3 and its many branches.

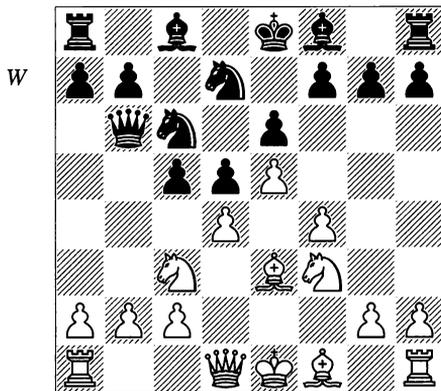
a) The first of these is 7...cxd4 8 ♟xd4, and then:

a1) 8...♙c5 9 ♟d2. Now, in the event of 9...♟xd4 10 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 11 ♟xd4 ♟b6 White can choose between going into a slightly better ending (by 12 ♟xb6 or 12 ♟b5) and the aggressive 12 ♟d2 ♟xb2 (12...♟c5 is passive: 13 0-0-0 ♙d7 14 ♟d4) 13 ♟b1 ♟a3 14 ♟b5 ♟xa2 15 ♟d6+ ♟e7 with unclear complications, unless White takes the immediate draw by 16 ♟b4 a5 17 ♟f5++. The more popular continuation nowadays, 9...0-0 10 0-0 a6, must also be regarded overall as slightly more favourable for White, although with opposite-side castling,

Black has chances to create counterplay by advancing his queenside pawns.

a2) 8...♗b6 is more ambitious and leads to a sharp position. Play takes a forcing character: 9 ♖d2 (nothing comes from 9 ♗cb5 a6 10 ♗f5 ♙c5 or 9 a3 ♙c5 10 ♗a4 ♖a5+ 11 c3 ♙xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♗xd4 13 ♖xd4 b6) 9...♗xb2 10 ♖b1 ♗a3 11 ♙b5 – here practice shows that White’s initiative is worth more than the sacrificed pawn.

b) It is also possible to play 7...♗b6 (D) one move earlier:



White replies 8 ♗a4 ♖a5+ 9 c3 and obtains some advantage in the event of 9...b5 10 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 11 dxc5 b4 12 ♗d4 ♙d7 13 a3. After much investigation, the piece sacrifice 9...cxd4 10 b4 ♗xb4 11 cxb4 ♙xb4+ 12 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 13 ♗xd2 is also considered insufficient, but a better try is the more cautious 9...c4 10 b4 ♖c7.

c) In view of the fact that the immediate attempts to attack d4 and b2 ultimately seem to be insufficiently effective, it makes sense for Black to refrain from them altogether, and, maintaining the tension in the centre, immediately begin the advance of his pawns by 7...a6 8 ♖d2 b5. Positionally, this looks more fruitful: after 9 dxc5 ♙xc5 10 ♙xc5 ♗xc5 11 ♖f2 ♗b6 Black’s pieces are active, while otherwise (depending on circumstances) he will play 9...♗b6, 9...♖a5, 9...♙b7 or even 9...g5 (e.g., 9 a3 g5!?) with a very complicated and unclear position.

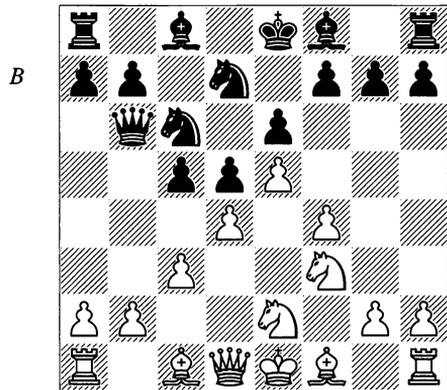
To return to the game continuation, 7 ♗e2: by defending the d4-pawn in this way, White begins to move towards the variation 3 ♗d2

♗f6 4 e5 ♗fd7 5 f4 c5 6 c3 ♗c6 7 ♗df3, and soon transposes exactly into it.

**7...♗b6**

After 7...f6 8 c3 Black can hardly have anything better than 8...♗b6, while the exchange 7...cxd4 just helps White’s development after 8 ♗exd4 ♗c5 9 ♙e3.

**8 c3 (D)**



White has completed his pawn-centre. The space advantage may have its say in the middle-game, but the internal weaknesses in White’s position are significant in the opening, and therefore Black tries to open the f-file with the help of the break ...f6. This will then create possible tactical threats, such as the sacrifice of an exchange (...♖xf3) or a piece (...♗dx5).

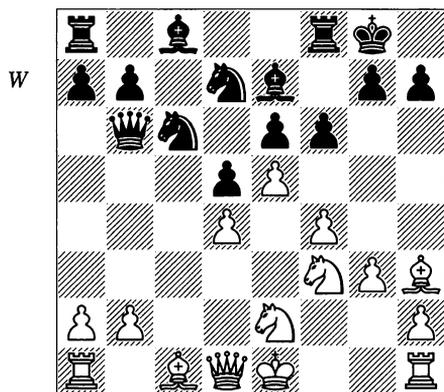
**8...♙e7**

First 8...f6 is interesting, bearing in mind the variation 9 g3 cxd4 10 cxd4 (10 ♗exd4) 10...fxe5 11 fxe5 ♙b4+ 12 ♗c3 0-0, although if White answers 9 a3, the difference between the moves 8...f6 and 8...♙e7 is not so significant – together with kingside castling, both moves are part of Black’s plan.

**9 a3**

White’s manoeuvres mean that the knight is tied to e2, until such time as the d4-pawn is adequately protected. Because of this, White is forced to resort to rather clumsy methods of development: g3 and ♙h3 or h4 and ♖h3. This last idea creates the possibility of a kingside attack, but commits White’s king to remaining in the centre. Now there is also the standard idea of the advance b4. A more thorough practical

test has occurred of the position after 9 g3 0-0 10  $\text{h3}$ . White attacks the e6-pawn, but Black does not allow this to deter him: 10...cxd4 (or immediately 10...f6) 11 cxd4 (11  $\text{dxd4}$   $\text{c5}$ ) 11...f6 (D).



After 12  $\text{ex6+}$   $\text{h8}$ , the variation 13  $\text{exf6}$   $\text{b4+}$  14  $\text{f1}$   $\text{xf6}$  15  $\text{xc8}$   $\text{axc8}$  grants Black the initiative, while the incautious grab of a second pawn by 13  $\text{xd5?}$   $\text{fxe5}$  14  $\text{fxe5}$   $\text{dxe5}$  15  $\text{dxe5}$  (or 15  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{b4+}$ ) 15... $\text{dxe5}$  ends in a quick catastrophe.

### 9...a5

It is by no means compulsory to stop White's hypothetical advance on the queenside, and instead, 9...0-0 (or 9...f6) is perhaps more consistent. Then White faces a dilemma: he must choose between opening a second front by 10 b4 cxd4 11  $\text{dxd4}$  (or 11 cxd4) or treat his move 9 a3 more as prophylaxis, and continue 10 h4 f6 11  $\text{h3}$  (meeting 11...a5 with 12 b3), in both cases with a very complicated and unclear position.

### 10 g3

After the mutual advance of the a-pawns, the continuation 10 f5!? is tempting, with the follow-up  $\text{f4}$ . In returning to the stereotyped  $\text{h3}$ , White hopes later to benefit from her enhanced control of b4.

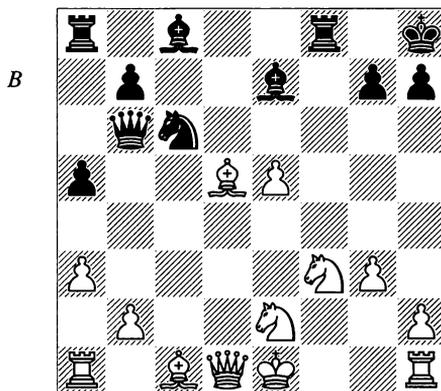
### 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 f6 12 $\text{h3}$ 0-0

Black meets her opponent head-on. Avoiding the preliminary exchange 12...fxe5 13 fxe5, she invites the variation 13  $\text{ex6+}$   $\text{h8}$  14  $\text{exf6}$  15  $\text{xc8}$   $\text{axc8}$  16 0-0, but White has other ideas.

13  $\text{ex6+}$   $\text{h8}$  14  $\text{xd5}$   $\text{fxe5}$  15  $\text{fxe5}$   $\text{dxe5}$ !

Sacrificing a piece is essential. 15... $\text{d8}$  is unsatisfactory because of 16  $\text{b3}$  or 16  $\text{f4}$  (Finkel).

### 16 dxe5 (D)



### 16... $\text{g4}$

Here in the event of 16... $\text{dxe5}$  the knight can simply be captured, since the unpleasant answer 17... $\text{b4+}$  is no longer available. It is this nuance that White is counting on, but her hopes are only partially fulfilled – certainly, Black's attack is not deadly here, but it is fully sufficient to maintain equal chances.

### 17 $\text{f4}$ ?!

White has been caught in some sharp complications and makes a slight misstep. Objectively, the best line appears to be 17  $\text{xc6}$   $\text{xc6}$  (17... $\text{ad8}$  18  $\text{a4}$ ) 18  $\text{ed4}$   $\text{e4+}$  (this is more accurate than 18... $\text{d5}$ ) 19  $\text{e2}$   $\text{d5}$ ! (and here 19... $\text{xf3}$  is weaker: 20  $\text{xf3}$   $\text{xf3}$  21  $\text{xf3}$   $\text{xf3}$  22  $\text{d2}$ ). In the resulting position, White's chances are preferable, although after both 20  $\text{f4}$   $\text{g5}$  21  $\text{h3}$  (21  $\text{e6}$   $\text{gxf4}$  22  $\text{e5+}$   $\text{xe5+}$  23  $\text{dxe5}$   $\text{ad8}$ ) 21... $\text{xf3}$  22  $\text{xf3}$   $\text{gxf4}$  23  $\text{g4}$   $\text{ac8}$ , and 20 0-0  $\text{c5}$  21  $\text{e3}$   $\text{xd4}$  22  $\text{xd4}$   $\text{xf3}$  23  $\text{d2}$   $\text{ad8}$ , it is difficult to speak of any real advantage for her.

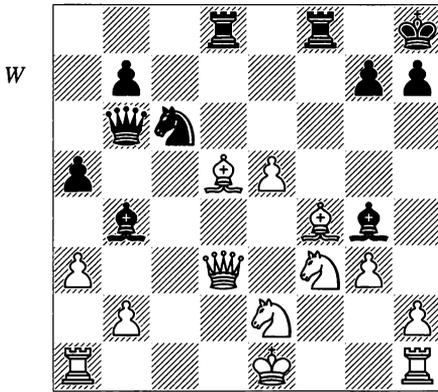
### 17... $\text{ad8}$ 18 $\text{d3}$ !?

It was necessary to play 18  $\text{f1}$ . By means of 18... $\text{c5}$  (18... $\text{e6}$  19  $\text{ex6}$ ) 19  $\text{c3}$   $\text{xf4}$  20  $\text{gxf4}$   $\text{h4+}$  21  $\text{d2}$  (21  $\text{dxc3}$   $\text{e3+}$ ; 21  $\text{e2}$   $\text{d4+}$ ) 21... $\text{xd5+}$  22  $\text{dxd5}$   $\text{xd5+}$  23  $\text{c3}$   $\text{c5+}$  Black can then force a draw by perpetual

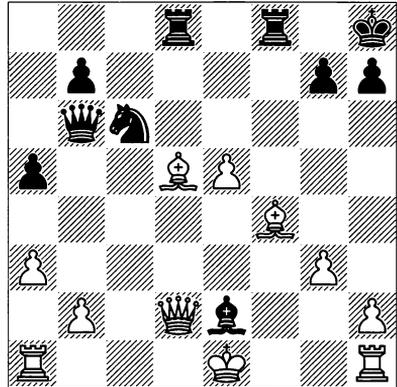
check, whereas the attempts to achieve more (18...♙h3 or 18...♗xb2) do not succeed. Now White starts to have problems.

18...♙b4+!? (D)

It turns out that the b4-square is not so well defended after all! However, besides this attractive bishop strike, there is also another good move: 18...g5.



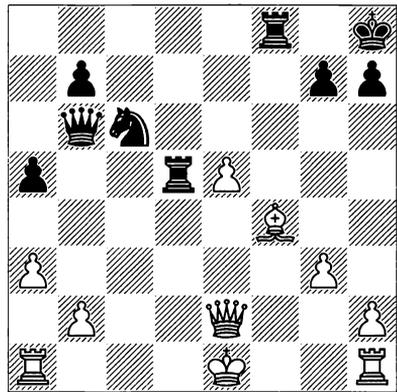
W



W

Passing up a good chance to simplify by 21 ♙e3 ♗b5 (21...♗c7 22 ♖xe2 ♗xe5 23 ♗ad1) 22 a4 ♗xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 24 ♖xe2 ♗xe5 25 ♗a3, reaching an endgame which White should be able to hold without undue difficulty.

21...♗xd5 (D)



W

19 ♖d2?!

It is not so easy to understand exactly what is happening on the board. White's only task is to evacuate her king from the danger zone, and the only question is how high a price she has to pay to achieve this. She again chooses an inferior continuation. Of the other two possible variations, 19 ♖c3 ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♙xc3+ (20...♗xf4?! 21 axb4 ♗e3+ 22 ♖e2 ♗xf3 23 ♗c5 ♖d4 24 ♗xd4 ♗f1+ 25 ♖xf1 ♙xe2+ 26 ♖e1 ♗xd4 27 ♖xe2) 21 bxc3 ♗xf4 22 ♖d4 ♖xd4 23 gxf4 ♖b3 24 ♗d3 ♖xa1 and 19 axb4 ♖xb4 20 ♗b3 ♗xd5 21 ♙e3 ♗xe3 (21...♗xf3 22 ♙xb6 ♗xb3 23 0-0) 22 ♗xe3 ♖c2+ 23 ♖f2 ♖xe3 24 ♖f4, the second looks the better defensive chance.

19...♙xd2+?

A serious inaccuracy in return. White can defend after 19...♖xe5 20 ♙xe5 ♗f2+ 21 ♖d1, but Black could have achieved a clear advantage by 19...♙e6! 20 ♙e3 (20 axb4 ♖xb4 21 ♗c3 ♙xd5 22 ♗f1 ♖c8 23 ♙e3 ♗xe3) 20...♖xe5 21 ♙xb6 ♖xd3+ 22 ♖d1 ♖xb2+ 23 ♖c2 ♗xd5 with an irresistible attack.

20 ♗xd2 ♙xe2 (D)

21 ♗xe2

The smoke of the tactical battle has cleared. The white king remains in the centre and it looks as though her position is bad, although this is not entirely clear.

22 ♗f1

White surrenders the right to castle kingside, which could come in useful after 22 e6!? ♖d4 (22...♗e8 23 ♙e3 ♖d4 24 ♙xd4 ♗xd4 25 ♗f1 and 26 e7) 23 ♗e4 ♗xb2 (23...♗xe6 24 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 25 0-0) 24 0-0.

22...♗e8

More energetic is 22...♖d4 23 ♙e3 ♗f8 (or 23...♗e8). The difficulties of developing the attack are shown by the following remarkable

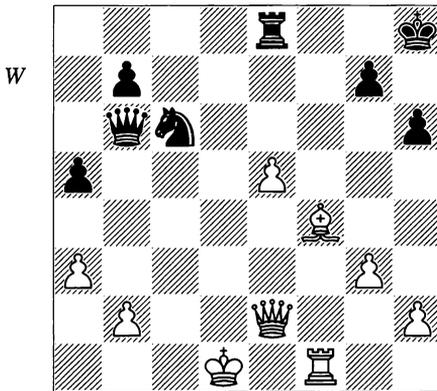
variation: 22...♖fd8 23 e6 (23 ♖f2 is another idea) 23...♟d4 24 e7 ♟xe2 25 ♙c7! ♖d1+! 26 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 27 ♟xd1 ♟c3+! 28 ♟c2 ♖g6+ 29 ♟xc3 ♖c6+, and even winning the e7-pawn does not decide the game in Black's favour.

### 23 ♖d1

23 ♖f2 also deserves attention, opening a path for the king to flee to the kingside.

### 23...♖xd1+ 24 ♟xd1 h6 (D)

The initiative could have been maintained by 24...♟d4 or 24...♖b3+.



### 25 ♟c1 ♟d4?!

But here, it was already time to make a draw by 25...♟xe5. However, the truth is that both players had by now already used almost all of their time, and the remainder of the game was played using the 30-second move-by-move increments, given under the official FIDE time-limit. It is understandable that, in such circumstances, there is no point in being too critical of the standard of play.

### 26 ♖c4?!

After 26 ♖d3 the advantage goes over to White.

### 26...♖e6?!

Here Black had another chance to stay in the game: 26...g5.

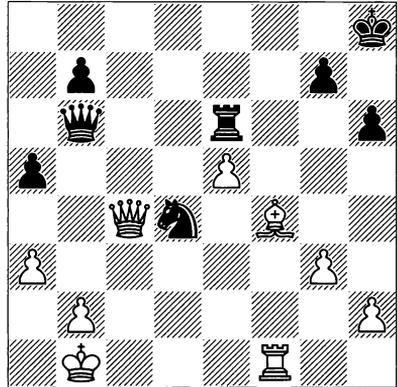
### 27 ♟b1 (D)

The difference between this position and the one after Black's 21st move is obvious. Black has no compensation for the pawn.

27...♟b5 28 ♖b3 a4 29 ♖b4 ♖e8 30 ♖c1 ♖a6 31 ♟a1 ♟a7 32 ♖c7 ♟c6 33 ♖c3

Centralization by 33 ♖e4 looks better.

B



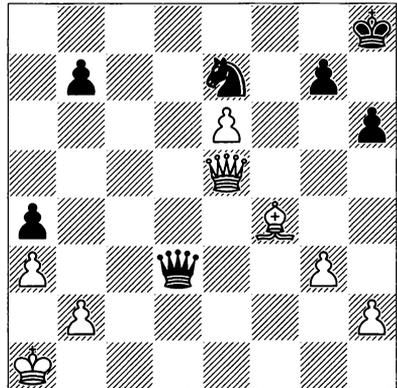
33...♖f1+ 34 ♟a2 ♖b5 35 e6 ♖d5+ 36 ♟a1 ♖d1+ 37 ♟a2 ♖d5+ 38 ♟b1 ♖e4+ 39 ♟a1 ♖e7

39...♖g6 is slightly better, removing once and for all the dangerous passed pawn on e6. By exchanging rooks, Black hopes to give perpetual check on the light squares.

40 ♖xe7 ♟xe7 41 ♖e5 ♖d3 (D)

41...♖h1+ 42 ♟a2 ♟h7 is more resilient.

W



### 42 ♖e1

Neither player noticed that White has the simple 42 ♙xh6.

### 42...♖d5

It was essential to bring the king closer to the pawn by 42...♟g8.

43 ♙d2 ♟c6 44 ♙c3

44 ♙b4 was winning, but now more technical problems arise.

44...♟g8 45 g4 ♖f3 46 h3 ♖d5 47 h4 ♖f3 48 g5 hxg5 49 hxg5 ♖g4

The final mistake. It was still possible to defend by 49...♗f8.

50 ♖b4 ♗xb4 51 axb4 a3 52 e7 axb2+ 53 ♗b1 ♖f5+ 54 ♗xb2 1-0

## Game 14 [C14]

### Kevin Spraggett – Alexander Riazantsev

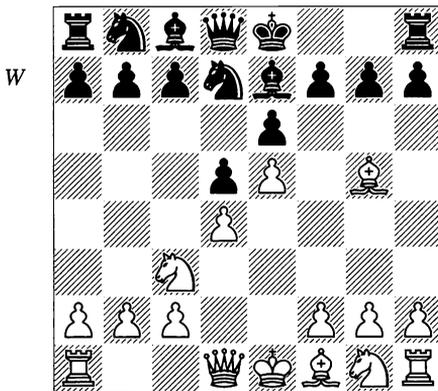
*Portuguese Team Ch, Evora 2006*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♗f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e5

It is also possible to maintain the pawn on e4 by 5 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 6 ♗f3, but this once-standard continuation has long since gone out of fashion.

5...♗fd7 (D)

As usual, in answer to the pawn attack, the black knight retreats to d7. 5...♗e4 has a fairly dubious reputation, although perhaps not entirely fairly.



6 ♗xe7

The gambit continuation 6 h4!? is a serious test of Black's position.

a) The variation 6...♗xg5 7 hxg5 ♖xg5 gives White a lasting initiative, thanks to the open h-file and the gain of a couple of tempi.

a1) As an illustration, we offer the following historical example: 8 ♗h3 ♖e7 9 ♗f4 a6 (in the pilot game Alekhine-Fahrni, Mannheim 1914, Black lost quickly after 9...♗f8 10 ♖g4 f5 11 exf6 gxf6 12 0-0-0) 10 ♖g4 g6 11 0-0-0 c5 12 ♖g3 ♗b6 (12...cxd4!?) 13 dxc5 ♖xc5 14 ♗d3 ♖f8 15 ♗e4! (White is unambiguously preparing to sacrifice a piece on d5) 15...dxe4 16 ♗xe4 ♗d7 (Bogoljubow-Spielmann, Stockholm (4) 1919) 17 ♖c3 with a very strong attack.

a2) Many years later, the same idea was seen in a different form: 8 ♖d3 (the recommendation of modern theory) 8...g6 9 ♗f3 ♖e7 10 0-0-0 a6 11 ♖e3 c5 12 dxc5 ♖xc5 13 ♖f4 ♗c6 14 ♗d3 ♖b4 15 ♗e4!, Grishchuk-Brynell, Bundesliga 2002/3.

It is clear that in taking on g5, Black gives up all ideas of playing ...c5, instead limiting himself solely to defence. Conversely, if he wishes to seek counterplay, he should refrain from taking the pawn. How precisely should he do this? This concrete question poses another problem, which Black has attempted to solve in various ways:

b) 6...h6 unjustifiably weakens the kingside.

c) After 6...f6 there is the unpleasant reply 7 ♖h5+ ♗f8 (or 7...g6) 8 exf6.

d) The advance ...f6 can be prepared by playing 6...♗c6 (meeting 7 ♖g4 with 7...f6), but then the c7-pawn is fixed in its place.

e) 6...a6 is rather slow, and White can continue 7 ♖g4 ♗xg5 (7...f5 8 ♖h5+ g6 9 ♖h6 ♗xg5 10 hxg5) 8 hxg5 c5 9 ♗f3 ♗c6 10 dxc5 (or 10 g6).

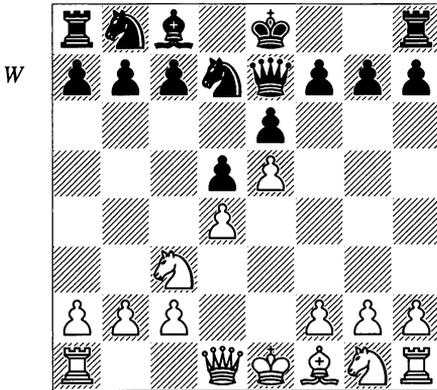
Therefore the following two replies are the most important attempts to respond to White's aggression:

f) 6...c5 attacks White's centre without delay, but also opens the path for the white knight to get to d6. The immediate 7 ♗b5 is met by 7...f6, after which 8 ♗d3 a6 9 ♖h5+ ♗f8 10 ♖h3 is only enough for a draw. However, more promising is 7 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 (7...♗xe7 is more cautious) 8 ♗b5 0-0 9 ♗c7 cxd4, in which Black destroys the enemy centre, at the cost of an exchange, or even a whole rook.

g) 6...0-0 is also suitable only for players with strong nerves. The king marches straight into the teeth of the storm. 7 ♗d3 (it seems that 7 ♖g4!? is more promising) 7...c5! (passive is

7...f5?! 8 ♖h3 and because of the threat of 9 ♗f4 Black has no time to get in 8...c5) 8 ♗h3 (8 ♗h5 g6 9 ♗h6 also does not lead to success) 8...g6 with unclear play – White has no way to force through his attack, and meanwhile his centre is crumbling.

6...♗xe7 (D)



The exchange of dark-squared bishops is in principle favourable to White, but this is only one side of the coin. Black, whose position is cramped, now obtains greater freedom of manoeuvre, and is often able to complete his development quickly.

7 f4

White defends his e5 outpost with a pawn, while being prepared to control d4 with pieces. Trying to maintain the duo d4+e5 requires too much time (e.g., 7 ♗b5 ♗b6 8 c3 a6 9 ♗a3 or 7 ♗d2 followed by ♗d1 or ♗ce2), and Black can head for favourable complications after 7 ♗g4 0-0 8 ♗f3 c5 7 ♗d3 cxd4 (7...f5 is weaker due to 8 ♗g5) 8 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 9 ♗h5+ ♗g8 10 ♗g5 ♗xg5.

7...0-0

Now the king will feel a little uncomfortable, but on the other hand, castling queenside would reduce Black's chances of counterplay. Even so, if Black plans a queenside pawn offensive, it is more logical to proceed with 7...a6 (not 7...c5 because of 8 ♗b5) 8 ♗f3, and now:

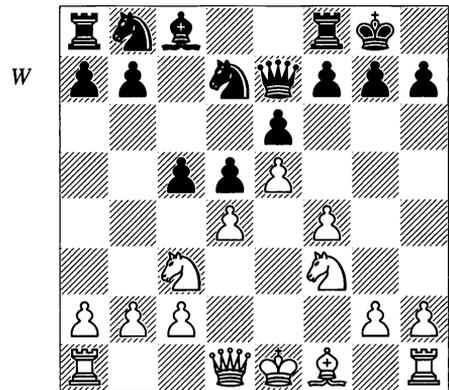
a) 8...c5 9 dxc5 (one way or another, it is hard for White to avoid this exchange on c5) 9...♗c6 10 ♗d2 ♗xc5 (or 10...♗xc5) with a later ...b5.

b) There is also the slower line 8...b6 9 ♗d2 c5.

c) 8...♗b6 is associated with a different plan: 9 ♗d2 ♗d7, when 10 0-0-0?! is suspect in view of 10...♗b5.

It is also possible to play 7...♗b6!? 8 ♗f3 ♗d7 9 ♗d2 c5, temporarily refraining from both castling and the move ...a6.

8 ♗f3 c5 (D)



9 ♗d2

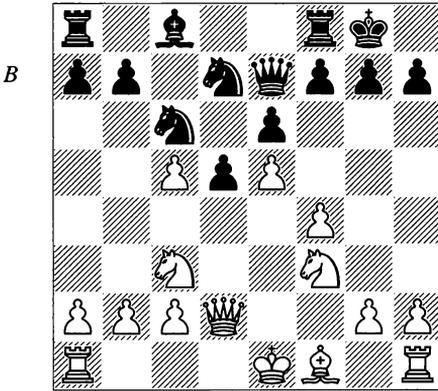
Preparing queenside castling. Another interesting line arises after 9 ♗d3 f6 (this time Black cannot ignore the threat of 10 ♗xh7+) 10 exf6 ♗xf6 11 g3 (11 ♗g5 ♗xf4) 11...♗c6 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 0-0 ♗d7. It is not easy for White to prove his apparent positional advantage – on 14 ♗d2 there follows 14...♗xd3 15 cxd3 e5!? 16 ♗ae1 exf4 17 ♗xd5 ♗d6 18 ♗xf4 ♗g4 with compensation for the pawn.

9...♗c6

The game Rubinstein-Levenfish, Karlsbad 1911 developed as follows: 9...f6 10 exf6 ♗xf6 (10...♗xf6!?) 11 g3 ♗c6 12 0-0-0 a6 13 ♗g2 ♗b6?! 14 ♗he1 ♗c4 15 ♗f2 b5. Without delving into details (for example, why not 14 dxc5?), we shall merely say that the plan of a pawn attack on the queenside does not look so good in conjunction with the preliminary pawn-break in the centre. Admittedly, after 16 dxc5 ♗xb2 17 ♗xb2 b4 18 ♗d4 bxc3+ 19 ♗a1 ♗xd4 20 ♗xd4 Black could have defended more stubbornly by 20...♗xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♗a7!, but the simple 16 ♗e5 (putting pressure on the d5-pawn) would have placed Black in a very difficult position.

**10 dxc5 (D)**

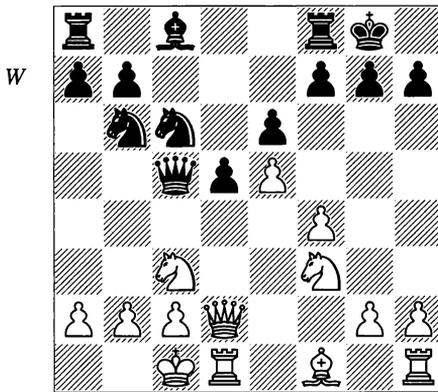
A useful clarification of the pawn-structure. If 10 0-0-0, then in addition to 10...f6 and 10... $\text{c6}$  White must also take into consideration the double-edged reply 10...c4.



**10... $\text{xc5}$**

The obvious alternative is to recapture with the knight: 10... $\text{xc5}$  11 0-0-0 f6 (or 11...a6) 12 exf6  $\text{xf6}$  13 g3  $\text{d8}$ .

**11 0-0-0  $\text{b6}$  (D)**



As in the majority of other variations within this system, the various favourable positional factors for White (good bishop, the weakness of the dark squares in Black's position, control of the d4-square) can work effectively only when the position is stabilized, but for the moment, this is still far off. Over the next few moves, Black completes his development and then directs his fire at the white king, utilizing

the open c-file. In the complications arising in this opposite-castling position, the chances of the two sides are about equal.

**12  $\text{d4}$**

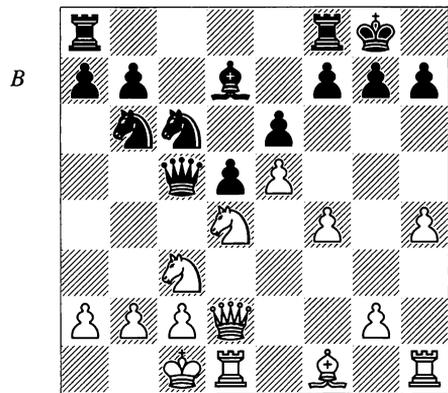
The start of a more restrained plan. Rather than placing his hopes on a blitzkrieg, White first takes steps to restrict his opponent's activity. The text-move is a step in this direction, while similar aims are pursued by the variation 12  $\text{b1}$   $\text{d7}$  13  $\text{b5}$ . Two other moves are worth mentioning, in 'bare-bones' fashion:

a) 12  $\text{d3}$   $\text{d7}$ ?! (12...f6 13 exf6  $\text{xf6}$  and 12... $\text{c4}$  13  $\text{xc4}$   $\text{xc4}$  both play into White's hands). Black does not fear the attack after 13  $\text{hx7+}$   $\text{hx7}$  14  $\text{g5+}$   $\text{g8}$  15  $\text{d3}$ , while after 13  $\text{b1}$  he usually provokes the sacrifice by continuing 13... $\text{ac8}$  or 13... $\text{a5}$ .

b) 12 h4  $\text{d7}$  13 h5  $\text{ac8}$  (13... $\text{fc8}$  and 13...h6 14 g4 f6 are also possible) 14 h6 g6 15  $\text{b1}$  (15 a3  $\text{a5}$ ; 15  $\text{h2}$  f5! 16 exf6 d4) 15... $\text{a5}$  16  $\text{d4}$   $\text{e7}$ , Mukhaev-Matveeva, Tomsk 1998.

**12... $\text{d7}$  13 h4 (D)**

Combining ideas of attack and defence – the pawn advances, and the rook prepares to come to h3.



**13... $\text{a5}$ ?!**

White is well-prepared for this stereotyped knight manoeuvre, but his set-up has its drawbacks as well as its strengths. Here, for example, 13... $\text{xd4}$  14  $\text{xd4}$   $\text{xd4}$  15  $\text{xd4}$  f6 (meeting 16 exf6 with 16...gxf6) was quite reasonable.

**14 b3**

A logical continuation of his containing strategy: the c4-square is taken under control. Less consistent is 14 ♖b3 ♗xb3+ 15 axb3 a5.

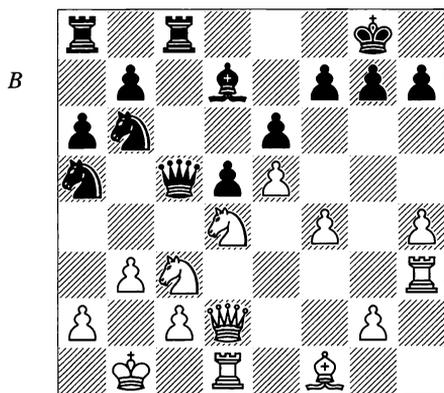
#### 14...a6

This move is not essential. It prevents the knight leap ♗cb5 and so appears to prepare the doubling of rooks on the c-file, but instead, Black should have played 14...f6, or first simply brought the knight back by 14...♗c6.

#### 15 ♖h3 ♖fc8

Now what was a loss of tempo turns into a strategic error – by giving up the chance of a central break, Black risks being left with no means of creating counterplay.

#### 16 ♔b1 (D)



#### 16...♖c7

16...♗b4 could have led to an exchange of queens, but entering an endgame here is much less pleasant for Black than it would have been a few moves earlier.

#### 17 h5 ♖ac8

Agreeing to allow the white pawn to h6, which is the lesser evil. It would have been even worse to play 17...h6 18 ♗ce2 ♗c6 19 g4 with the threat of a direct attack, but now the dark squares around the black king are weakened, and White's positional superiority grows.

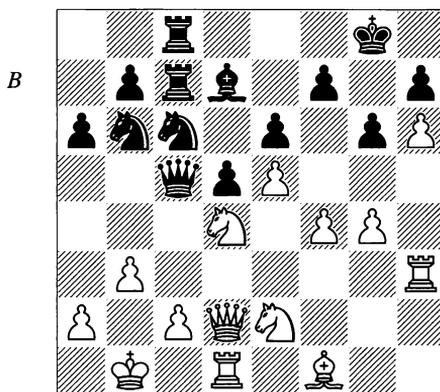
#### 18 h6 g6 19 ♗ce2

Now preventing the move 19...♗b4.

#### 19...♗c6 20 g4 (D)

White now methodically strengthens his position, while Black's initiative on the queenside comes to nothing.

#### 20...♗b4!?



The only way for Black to create any activity consists in the advance ...a5, but here it must be noted that the immediate 20...a5 is not good, because of the loss of the exchange after 21 ♖c3 ♗b4 22 a3 ♗xa3 23 ♗b5, while the preliminary exchange 20...♗xd4?! 21 ♗xd4 does not really help, since it makes it easier for White to play f5.

#### 21 c3 ♗c6

Another two tempi have been lost, but now Black does have some prospects of counterplay. White must now make an important decision.

#### 22 ♗g2

By 22 ♗xc6 bxc6 (the piece recaptures are not really worth considering) 23 ♗d4 ♗xd4 (risky is 23...♗a5 24 f5) 24 cxd4 White obtains an obvious advantage in the endgame, but on the other hand, he really wishes to start an attack on the poorly-defended black king.

#### 22...a5 23 f5

By sacrificing a pawn, White radically sharpens the situation. The play now becomes rather nervous, with mistakes from both sides.

#### 23...♗xe5?

Just on the basis of general considerations, 23...exf5 24 gxf5 ♗xe5 is better.

#### 24 fxe6

Even stronger is 24 ♗g5 ♗c6 25 ♗f6 ♗f8, and here 26 ♗f4 poses Black insoluble problems.

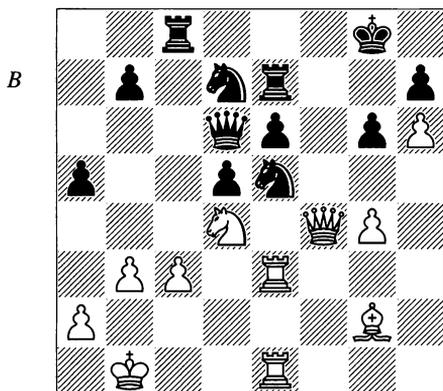
#### 24...♗xe6

24...fxe6 is of about equal merit, although it is still very difficult for Black to hold the balance.

25  $\text{dxe6}$   $\text{fxe6}$  26  $\text{d}d4$   $\text{e}e7$  27  $\text{e}e1$   $\text{w}d6$  28  $\text{w}f4$   $\text{d}bd7$

The variation 28... $\text{dec4}$  29  $\text{w}xd6$   $\text{d}xd6$  30  $\text{e}he3$  is no better for Black.

29  $\text{e}he3$  (D)



29... $\text{f}f8$

The only chance was 29... $a4!$ ; e.g., 30  $\text{e}xe5$   $\text{axb3}$  31  $\text{axb3}$   $\text{e}xc3$  32  $\text{w}d2$   $\text{e}xb3+$  33  $\text{d}xb3$   $\text{dxe5}$ . The black rooks will not be able to create counterplay along the f-file.

30  $\text{w}g3$   $\text{e}ef7$  31  $g5?$

White wins simply enough by 31  $\text{e}xe5$   $\text{dxe5}$  32  $\text{w}xe5$   $\text{w}xe5$  33  $\text{e}xe5$   $\text{f}f2$  34  $\text{dxe6}$   $\text{e}xg2$  35  $\text{dxf8}$   $\text{c}xf8$  36  $\text{e}xd5$ .

31... $\text{f}f2$  32  $\text{e}h3$   $\text{e}d2?$

Caving in prematurely. Black can make things much more complicated by 32... $\text{c}h8$  33  $\text{e}xe5$  (but not 33  $\text{e}xe6?$   $\text{w}a3$  34  $\text{e}3e2$   $\text{e}xe2$  35  $\text{e}xe2$   $\text{f}f1+$  36  $\text{e}e1$   $\text{d}d3$ ) 33... $\text{dxe5}$  34  $\text{e}xe5$   $a4$ , after which at the very least, it would still have required considerable effort from White to find a path to victory.

33  $\text{e}xe6+$   $\text{c}h8$  34  $\text{e}xd7$   $\text{f}ff2$  35  $\text{w}xe5+$  1-0

## Game 15 [C12]

### Andrei Volokitin – Viktor Korchnoi

Igualada 2005

1  $e4$   $e6$  2  $d4$   $d5$  3  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}f6$  4  $\text{e}g5$   $\text{e}b4$

This is the counterattacking McCutcheon Variation, which gives Black another way to force White to clarify the tension in the centre.

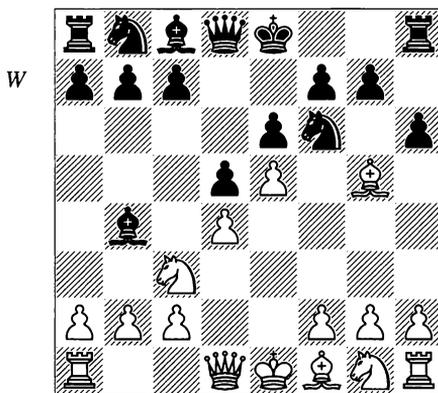
5  $e5$

The McCutcheon is distinguished from those already examined by the fact that in addition to the advance of the e-pawn, in this particular position, the exchange 5  $\text{exd5}$  is not as toothless as usual. Even so, after 5... $\text{w}xd5$  6  $\text{e}xf6$   $\text{e}xc3+$  (somewhat weaker is 6... $\text{gxf6}$  7  $\text{d}e2!$ ) 7  $\text{bxc3}$   $\text{gxf6}$  Black's opening problems are not too great, whereas 5... $\text{exd5}$  6  $\text{w}f3!$ ?  $\text{d}bd7$  (otherwise he must accept doubled pawns) 7 0-0-0  $\text{e}e7$  is worse for him, since the loss of time makes it difficult to neutralize the activity of his opponent's pieces.

5... $\text{h}6$  (D)

The point of Black's idea – he relieves the pin and is preparing to occupy the central square  $e4$  with his knight.

6  $\text{e}d2$



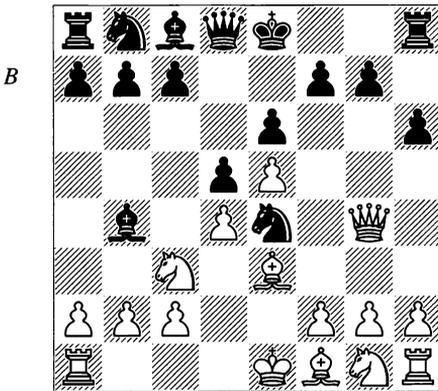
White does not achieve any advantage with 6  $\text{exf6}$   $\text{h}xg5$  7  $\text{f}xg7$   $\text{e}g8$  8  $\text{h4}$   $\text{g}xh4$  (8... $\text{d}c6$  is also possible) or 6  $\text{e}h4$   $g5$  7  $\text{e}g3$   $\text{d}e4$  8  $\text{d}e2$   $f5$ .

He can only maintain the initiative by retreating the bishop along the  $c1$ - $h6$  diagonal, and then attacking the  $g7$ -pawn by 7  $\text{w}g4$ . We should point out that this reaction to the early move of the bishop from  $f8$  is a theme of many

of the lines of the Winawer Variation, which we shall examine in the next three chapters. Besides the text-move, the retreats to c1 and e3 are also not without interest:

a) After 6  $\text{♙e3}$  (seen quite rarely) 6... $\text{♜e4}$  7  $\text{♝g4}$ , Black must either push the g-pawn, weakening his kingside, or defend it with 7... $\text{♞f8}$ , after which he loses castling rights. 7...g6 (7...g5!? is possible; not 7... $\text{♜xc3}$ ? 8  $\text{♝xg7}$   $\text{♞f8}$  9  $\text{♙d2}$ ) 8  $\text{♜e2}$  c5 9 a3  $\text{♙a5}$  (but not 9... $\text{♝a5}$ ? 10 axb4) 10 b4 (10 dxc5!?) 10... $\text{♜xc3}$  11  $\text{♜xc3}$  cxd4 (11...cxb4 12  $\text{♜b5}$ ) 12  $\text{♜b5}$   $\text{♙c7}$  13  $\text{♝xd4}$   $\text{♜c6}$  14  $\text{♜xc7+}$   $\text{♝xc7}$  15  $\text{♙b5}$   $\text{♙d7}$  16  $\text{♙xc6}$   $\text{♝xc6}$  17  $\text{♙e3}$  with an unclear position, E.Berg-Nepomniashchy, Wijk aan Zee 2007.

b) 6  $\text{♙e3}$ !?  $\text{♜e4}$  7  $\text{♝g4}$  (D) and again, Black must decide what to do.



Either way, with the bishop on e3, White usually continues 8 a3 (offering a pawn sacrifice), since in the event of 8  $\text{♜e2}$  c5 9 a3 the move 9... $\text{♝a5}$  is good. Thus:

b1) 7... $\text{♞f8}$  8 a3  $\text{♙xc3+}$  (8... $\text{♙a5}$  9  $\text{♜e2}$ ) 9 bxc3  $\text{♜xc3}$  (9...c5 10  $\text{♙d3}$ ) 10  $\text{♙d3}$ . In the event of 10...c5 11 dxc5  $\text{♜c6}$  12  $\text{♜f3}$  f5 13 exf6 (13  $\text{♝h5}$ !?) Black's position is shaky, and in recent times he has usually preferred 10... $\text{♜c6}$ , although then White has good compensation for the pawn.

b2) 7...g6 (7...g5 is very dubious here) 8 a3  $\text{♙xc3+}$  9 bxc3  $\text{♜xc3}$  10  $\text{♙d3}$   $\text{♜c6}$  (the possible transition into the endgame by 10...c5 11 dxc5  $\text{♜c6}$  12  $\text{♜f3}$   $\text{♝a5}$  13 0-0  $\text{♝a4}$  does not suffice for equality) 11 h4. Black preserves the option of queenside castling, but the unpleasant positional

threat of h5 poses him difficult defensive problems.

Overall, it must be said that the variation 6  $\text{♙e3}$  is a serious alternative to the game continuation (6  $\text{♙d2}$ ), which is the main line.

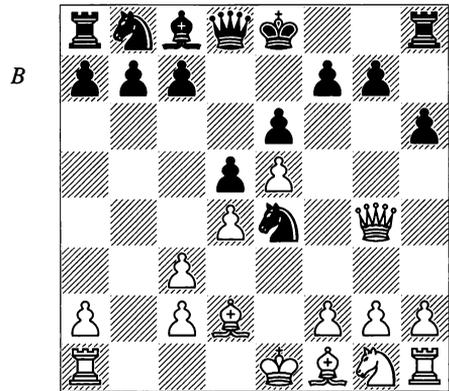
### 6... $\text{♙xc3}$

In conjunction with the move ... $\text{♙b4}$  it makes no sense to play ... $\text{♜fd7}$ , mixing two different systems of development. The bishop must be surrendered, but in consequence its white opposite number immediately comes under attack from the black knight.

### 7 bxc3

The attempt to gain the advantage by the simple 7  $\text{♙xc3}$   $\text{♜e4}$  8  $\text{♙b4}$  (8  $\text{♝g4}$  0-0) 8...c5 9  $\text{♙xc5}$  (9 dxc5?  $\text{♜xf2}$ ) 9... $\text{♜xc5}$  10 dxc5 does not succeed. Instead, the bishop stays on d2, keeping an eye on the h6-pawn.

### 7... $\text{♜e4}$ 8 $\text{♝g4}$ (D)



The basic position of the variation. The g7-pawn is hanging, and White can if he wishes preserve his dark-squared bishop from exchange, although if this is his aim, one might argue that it is more logical to think about this earlier, and play 6  $\text{♙e3}$ .

### 8... $\text{♞f8}$

This reply results in events developing more slowly than 8...g6, after which we shall offer for comparison a brief synopsis of some variations: 9  $\text{♙d3}$  (less energetic, but also deserving attention is 9  $\text{♝f4}$  c5 10  $\text{♙d3}$ ; as mentioned above, White can preserve the bishop from exchange, but the idea is a little artificial: 9  $\text{♙e3}$   $\text{♜xc3}$  10  $\text{♙d3}$   $\text{♜c6}$  or 9  $\text{♙c1}$   $\text{♜xc3}$  10  $\text{♙d3}$  c5

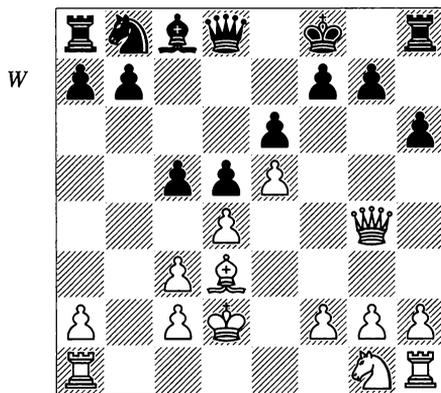
11 dxc5 ♖a5 12 ♗d2 ♖a4) 9...♗xd2 10 ♗xd2 c5 and the white king can feel reasonably safe in the centre, whereas the weakening of Black's kingside is significant. Even so, Black can legitimately reckon on counterplay in variations such as 11 h4 ♗d7 (11...c4 12 ♗e2 ♗d7!? and 11...♖a5 are other ideas) 12 h5 g5 13 f4 ♗c6 or 11 ♗f3 ♗d7!? (planning ...♗c6 and ...♗d7, a set-up that looks more promising than the stereotyped 11...♗c6) 12 ♖hb1 (or 12 ♖ab1; White prepares a tactical rejoinder) 12...♗c6 (12...c4 can be met by 13 ♗xg6 ♖g8 14 ♗xf7+) 13 ♗xg6 fxg6 14 ♖xe6+ ♖e7 (or 14...♗f8).

### 9 ♗d3

9 h4 usually leads merely to a transposition of moves.

### 9...♗xd2 10 ♗xd2 c5 (D)

White does not object to the superior endgame that he would obtain after 10...♖g5+.



As opposed to the lines after 8...g6, here White does not have a clearly-identifiable object of attack. He can attempt to get at the enemy king either by a pawn-storm, or by bringing up his major pieces for a direct frontal assault on the squares g7 and f7. A quite different idea is introduced by the capture dxc5, with the idea of conducting active play on the other flank. Admittedly, though, at this moment, Black would be quite happy with 11 dxc5 ♗d7.

### 11 h4

Although this move is almost always useful, various different forms of the idea are possible here. After 11 ♗f3 c4 (in the event of 11...♗c6 Black must already reckon with 12 dxc5) 12

♗e2 ♗c6 White usually begins with prophylactic measures on the queenside (13 a4 or 13 ♖hb1) and only then plays h4.

### 11...♗c6

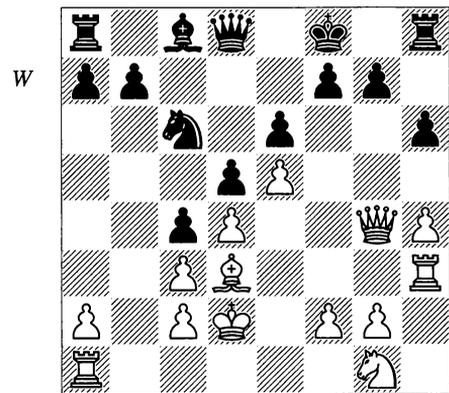
The immediate 11...c4 is similar. There is no hurry to advance the pawn, although the white bishop will eventually need to be evicted from the b1-h7 diagonal.

### 12 ♖h3

A small nuance – in preferring a piece attack, White also disconnects his rooks. This slightly improves the chances of Black's subsequent counterattack, but for the moment, he needs to think of defence.

### 12...c4 (D)

It is hard to do without this move, since both 12...♖a5 13 ♖g3 g5 (Westerinen-Bajović, Reykjavik 1982) and 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖a5+ (or 13...♖b6) look excessively optimistic.



### 13 ♗e2

The choice of retreat-square for the bishop is significant. After 13 ♗f1 White prepares the transfer of his knight to f4 (♗e2-f4), while the h3-rook can remain in its place for the time being, until it becomes clear on which square (f3, g3 or h3) it will be best placed. This subtle plan of attack has brought White good results: 13...b5 14 ♗e2 a5 15 a3 ♗d7 16 ♗f4 b4!? (16...♖g8 17 ♖f3 ♗e7 18 ♗h5 b4 19 ♖f4 bxc3+ 20 ♗e1 ♗e8 21 ♖xc3, Leko-Korchnoi, Essen 2002) 17 ♖f3 bxc3+ 18 ♗d1 and now 18...h5 19 ♗xh5 ♖g8 20 ♗e1 ♖b6 21 ♖d1 occurred in Lutz-Korchnoi, Essen 2002. However, Black did not choose the best line of play –

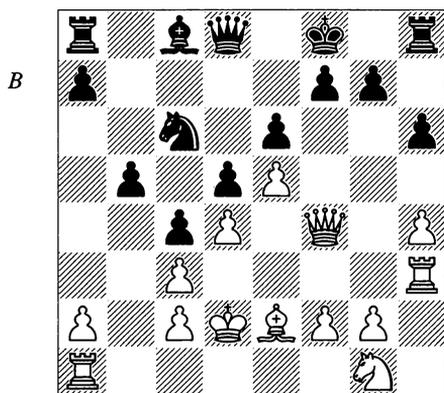
in particular, 18...♖b6 19 ♘g6+ ♔g8 20 ♘xh8 h5 (20...♗xd4!?) 21 ♖xh5 ♖xd4+ 22 ♗d3 cxd3 is sufficient for a draw.

### 13...b5

The universal response.

### 14 ♖f4 (D)

It is interesting that the game Kovchan-Sadvakasov, Kharkov 2003 continued in similar style to Lutz-Korchnoi in the previous note: 14 ♖f3 a5 15 a3 ♗d7 16 ♘h3 b4 (here too this is a straightforward continuation, although with the early transfer of the rook from h3, the move 16...♗e7 is also good) 17 ♘f4 bxc3+ 18 ♔d1. We have reached the same position, but with the white bishop on e2; now Black's best continuation is 18...♖b6 19 ♘g6+ ♔g8 20 ♘xh8 ♗xd4! 21 ♖xf7 ♗f5.



White wants to find a use for the bishop, by bringing it to h5.

### 14...♖e7

As a rule, Black parries the threat against f7 by 14...♗d7 15 ♗h5 ♗e8, but then he has problems with the unfortunate position of his king. In this game, he tries a different arrangement of his forces.

### 15 ♗h5 ♔e8

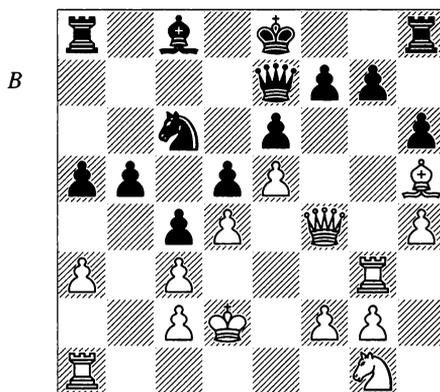
A highly sensible arrangement of his pieces. When necessary, the king is evacuated to the queenside, leaving the task of defending the pawns on g7 and f7 to the h8-rook, which for the present has nothing better to do anyway.

We would also add that Black refrains from the defensive manoeuvre ...♗e7. Instead, in the interests of creating counterplay, the knight

remains on c6, where it attacks the d4-pawn and supports the advance ...b4. All of this is interesting stuff, but it does not change the general assessment of the position as being more pleasant for White.

### 16 a3 a5 17 ♖g3 (D)

White sticks to his plan. 17 ♗e2!? ♖a7 18 ♖hh1 is more flexible, re-establishing contact between the rooks – then there could follow the moves ♖e3 and ♘f4, gradually strengthening the pressure.



### 17...♖g8

As a matter of principle, Black continues to avoid the weakening move 17...g6.

### 18 ♘f3

It is quite rare for the g1-knight not to join the battle until move 18. Now it is ready to travel to h2 and g4, while Black in the meantime gets on with his own plans.

### 18...♖a7 (D)

Now it is hard to stop the ...b4 break. The rook moves under the protection of the queen, while further defending the f7-pawn. The move 18...♖a6, with the possible variation 19 ♘h2 b4 20 ♘g4 ♖h8, looks equally good.

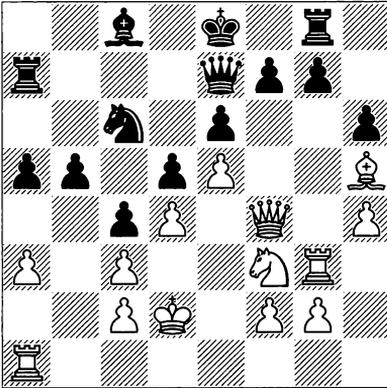
### 19 ♘h2

Consistent at least, although not the best. Approximate equality results from 19 ♔e2 b4 20 axb4 axb4 21 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 22 cxb4 ♘xb4 23 ♗e1 (threatening 24 ♖a3) 23...g6.

### 19...♔d8

Preventing 20 ♘g4 (answered by the simple 20...♖xh4), but this regrouping is unnecessary. 19...b4 is more consistent, with unclear play.

W



**20 ♗e2?**

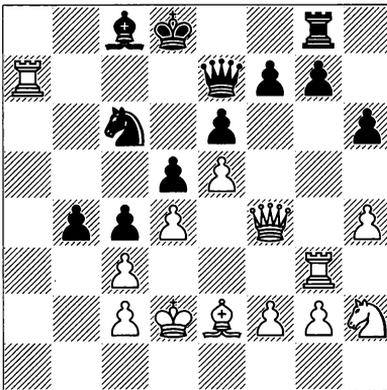
It is strange that White voluntarily removes the attack on f7. He should retreat the king with 20 ♖e1, neutralizing his opponent's only threat. Then the immediate 20...b4 does not work due to 21 axb4, while interpolating the moves 20...g6 21 ♗d1 also fails to justify itself.

**20...b4**

Now Black takes over the initiative.

**21 axb4 axb4 22 ♖xa7 (D)**

B



**22...♗xa7?!**

This move, however, is not the best. After 22...bxc3+ 23 ♖xc3 ♗xa7 (23...♗xa7!?) 24 ♗f3 ♗b4! the position on the board shows a striking metamorphosis – Black's pieces are

active, while White has fallen into a passive position.

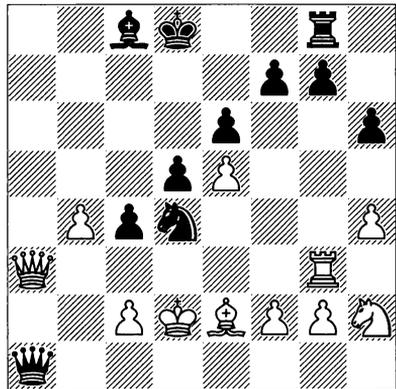
**23 cxb4 ♗xd4 24 ♗e3 ♗a1**

24...c3+ 25 ♗xc3 ♗f5 26 ♖f3 ♗xh4 27 ♖f4 achieves nothing.

**25 ♗a3 (D)**

The queen penetration would also turn out to be ineffective after the cold-blooded reply 25 ♗d1.

B



**25...♗b3+**

Forcing a draw, whereas by 25...♗xa3 26 ♖xa3 ♗c6 Black could win a pawn, and leave White to prove adequate compensation.

**26 ♖xb3 ♗d4+ 27 ♖c1 cxb3 28 ♗a5+ ♖e7**

Nothing is changed by 28...♖e8 29 ♗c7.

**29 ♗c7+ ♗d7 30 ♗d6+ ♖e8 31 ♗b8+ ♖e7**

**32 ♗d6+ 1/2-1/2**

The development of opening theory rarely proceeds in an orderly fashion. Having spent many years in the shadow of the 'more progressive' move 3...♗b4, the classical system with 3...♗f6 is enjoying a major revival in our day. Meanwhile, from White's point of view, the variation 4 e5 ♗d7 5 f4 is scarcely any less popular than 4 ♗g5, which has traditionally been considered stronger. All of these old, but by no means obsolete, variations can be recommended to the reader for further study.

# 6 The Winawer Variation

(3 ♘c3 ♙b4)

We come now to the richest section of the French Defence, which brings together numerous different variations. This method of forcing White to clarify the centre became popular in the 1930s. Under the influence of the Hypermoderns, especially Nimzowitsch, the classical approach of just trying to equalize as Black gave way to a new idea – piece control of the centre and the attempt to create maximum counterplay and disruption of the equilibrium. This gave rise to the emergence of new opening systems. By strengthening his pressure on e4, Black tries to force his opponent to close the centre. Not that White has any great objections to this – the move 4 e5 contributes to the battle for the dark squares, which will be weakened by the likely exchange of Black's king's bishop.

The lines after 4 e5 c5 will be considered in the next two chapters, but in this chapter, we shall look at other possibilities, either those with which White refuses to close the centre (**Games 16 and 17**), or where after 4 e5 Black avoids the reply 4...c5 (**Game 18**). These variations are not so popular today, but they have a rich history and still have their adherents amongst players of all levels. In such lines, a deep understanding of the nuances of the opening is often more important than obtaining an objective advantage.

## Game 16 [C01]

**Nikola Mitkov – Stelios Halkias**

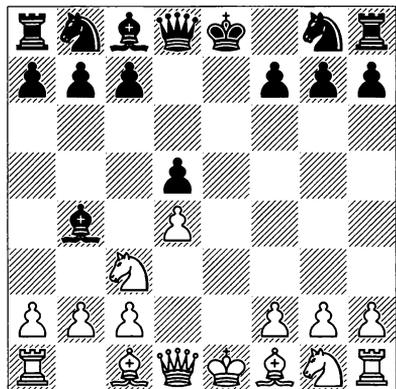
*Vidmar Memorial, Terme Zrece 2003*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 exd5 exd5 (D)

For a fuller picture, we should mention the existence of the more experimental 4...♙xd5 (or in a different form, 3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♙d5 5 ♘c3 ♙b4).

So far, we have not considered the Exchange Variation in this book (in general, quite rightly), but now there are some grounds to say a little about it. The pawn exchange 3 exd5 exd5 takes the strategic content out of the position, and all that remains for White is his extra move, which is not very significant. In its present form, however, there is the additional prospect of being able to force the exchange on c3, or gain further time (as, for example, in the variation 3...♘f6 4 ♙g5 ♙b4 5 exd5 exd5 6 ♙f3 ♘bd7

W



7 0-0-0 ♙e7, mentioned in the previous chapter).

**5 ♗d3**

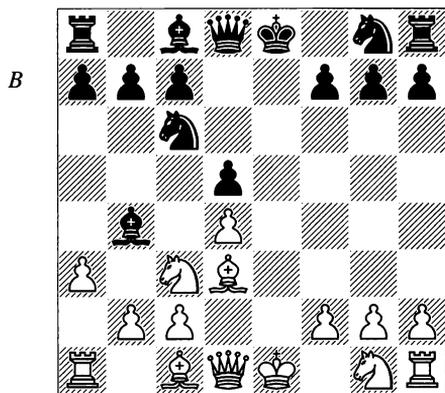
In the well-known game Larsen-Portisch, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964 Black suffered a fiasco after 5 ♖f3 ♖c6 6 ♗b5 ♗e7 7 ♗f4 0-0 8 0-0-0 ♗a5?! 9 ♗ge2. Later, the improvement 5... ♖e7+ was found, but the idea of the queen coming out to f3 or h5 remains one of the bases of the modern interpretation of this whole variation.

**5... ♖c6**

Black has no shortage of continuations, but he should think about a convenient development of his light-squared bishop. White, for his part, will usually try to prevent this, which typically leads to variations such as 5...c6 6 ♖f3!? (6 ♗f3) 6... ♖f6 7 ♗f4 ♖xd4 (7... ♗e7 8 ♖g3) 8 ♗e2, 5... ♗f6 6 ♗e2 0-0 7 0-0 ♗g4 8 f3 ♗h5 9 ♗f4 ♗g6 10 ♗xg6 hxg6 or 5... ♗e7 6 ♖h5 ♗bc6 (6... ♗d7 7 ♗g5) 7 ♗f3 (7 a3). Again, we have given just the bare bones of these lines, so that the interested reader can more easily investigate the matter in greater depth.

**6 a3 (D)**

The most appropriate moment to put the question to the bishop. The variation 6 ♗e2 ♗ge7 7 0-0 ♗f5 is mainly suitable as a basis for starting peace negotiations.



**6... ♗xc3+**

In the event of 6... ♗e7 7 ♗ce2!? (also not bad is 7 ♗f3 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 or the cunning 7 ♗f4!?) with the further c3, the problem of the c8-bishop remains unsolved, and the c6-knight is also not well-placed. If Black wishes to avoid obstructing the e-file with his minor pieces, he

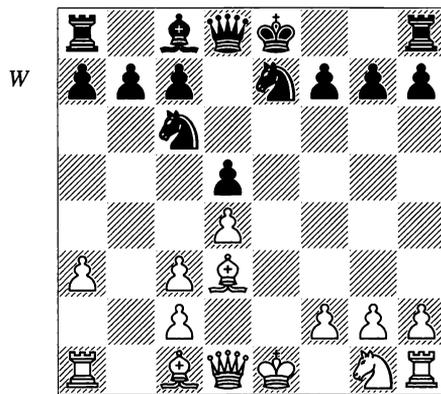
can probably equalize more easily with 6... ♗a5, but it is far from clear that he has any reason to refrain from the exchange on c3.

**7 bxc3**

White's pawn-structure is spoiled, but his dark-squared bishop has no opponent and his influence in the centre (the h2-b8 diagonal) and kingside is increased. The rather dull symmetry no longer exists and it is now interesting to see whose positional advantages turn out to be the more important.

**7... ♗ge7 (D)**

The variation 7... ♖f6 8 ♖b1 b6 9 ♖h5 ♗ge7 10 ♗g5 ♖e6+ 11 ♗e2 ♖g4 12 ♗g3 leads to a development lag and a slightly worse endgame for Black, but 7... ♗f6 8 ♗e2 0-0 9 0-0 ♗a5 (or 9... ♖e8) looks solid enough. White's e2-knight and c1-bishop have a slight conflict of interests – one wants to go to g3, the other to g5, but it is hard to do both, because of the answer ...h6.



With the text-move, Black prepares to play 8... ♗f5.

**8 ♖h5**

A second, and possibly more promising, way to prevent the bishop development is 8 ♖f3. While Black achieves his aim, White will develop his pieces to active positions, maintaining the initiative: 8... ♗e6 9 ♗h3 (or first 9 ♖b1 b6; another continuation is 9 ♗e2 ♖d7 10 0-0!? ♗f5 11 ♗g3) 9... ♖d7 10 ♗f4 (weaker is 10 ♗g5 ♗f5 11 g4?! ♗g6 12 h4 f6) 10... ♗f5 11 0-0 and, whichever side Black castles, he remains with some problems.

**8... ♗e6**

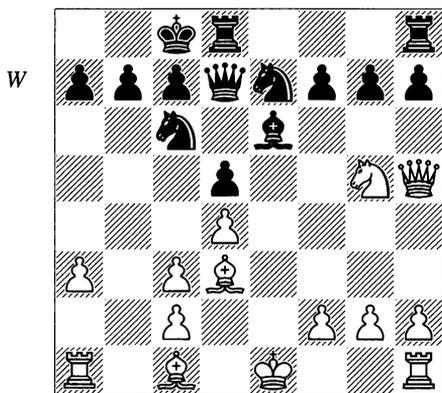
Passing up the chance to save a tempo by 8...g6 9 ♖f3 ♗f5, since then the dark-square holes on the kingside would be a significant weakness.

### 9 ♗f3

Again, the inclusion of the preliminary moves 9 ♖b1 b6 deserves attention. In any event, the attack by ♗f3-g5 clearly gives Black more problems than the line 9 ♗e2 ♗d7 10 ♗f4 (10 0-0 h6) 10...♗g4 – now he will probably have to acquiesce to the exchange of his other bishop for the white knight.

### 9...♗d7 10 ♗g5 0-0-0 (D)

With the queen on h5, the reply 10...♗f5 is not available, but an interesting line is 10...g6 11 ♖f3 0-0-0 (worse is 11...♗f5 12 g4) 12 0-0 (if 12 ♗xe6, then besides 12...♗xe6+, the move 12...fxe6 is also possible) 12...♗g4 13 ♖f6 h6 with sufficient counterplay, K.Müller-Rozentalis, Bundesliga 2006/7. Black instead prefers to castle queenside straightaway.



### 11 ♗xe6

A more radical try for advantage is bound up with the complications of 11 0-0!? ♗g4 (11...g6 12 ♗d1, Gershon) 12 ♖xf7 h6 (12...♖df8 13 ♖xg7 h6 14 ♗h7 ♖fg8 15 ♖f7) 13 f3 ♖df8 14 fxg4!? (14 ♖xg7 ♗f5) 14...♖xf7 15 ♗xf7 ♖e8 16 g5 hxg5 17 ♗xg5 with good compensation for the queen, Brendel-Yusupov, Stockholm 2002.

### 11...♗xe6+ 12 ♗e3

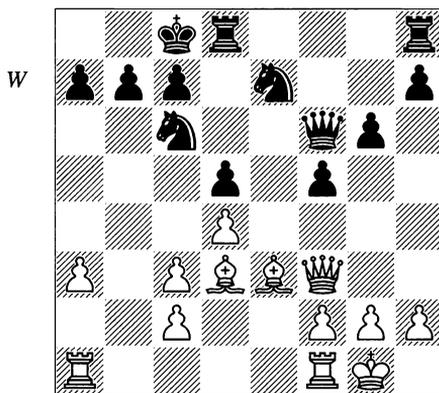
The thematic struggle between White's bishops and Black's knights can best be studied in the endgame after 12 ♖e2 ♗xe2+ 13 ♗xe2:

White stands actively, but Black gains counterplay via the manoeuvre ...♗a5-c4.

### 12...g6 13 ♖f3 f5

Black chooses an ambitious and strategically risky plan, aiming to seize the initiative. More natural and solid is 13...♗f5 14 0-0 (the capture 14 ♗xf5 gxg5 is not in White's favour) – and now either 14...♗d6 or the simplifying 14...♗xe3 15 ♖fe1 ♗e5 (a small tactical trick) 16 ♖xe3 ♗xd3 17 ♖xe6+ fxe6 18 cxd3 ♖d6, simplifying into an approximately equal endgame. It should be noted in passing that with the inclusion of the moves 9 ♖b1 b6, this defence is not available to Black, and he would need to choose between the following continuations: 16...f5 17 ♖xe3 ♗d6 or 16...♗d6 17 fxe3 f5 (move numbers changed to correspond with the extra moves).

### 14 0-0 ♖f6 (D)



Instead of exchanging off the e7-knight, or improving its position, Black prepares to mount a kingside pawn-storm, ignoring the open e-file.

### 15 ♖fe1

A logical reaction to Black's rather cheeky plan is to double rooks on the e-file, and penetrate to the e6-square: 15 ♖ae1 g5 16 ♖e2 ♖df8 17 ♖fe1 g4 18 ♖g3 h5 19 ♗f4 ♗g6 20 ♖e6 ♖f7 21 h4 with an obvious advantage for White, Ziatdinov-Apicella, Biel 1992. Of course, in this example there are several of Black's moves that can be questioned (we shall see a better example in the game) but all the same, it must be said that a poorly-prepared kingside pawn advance can rebound badly on Black.

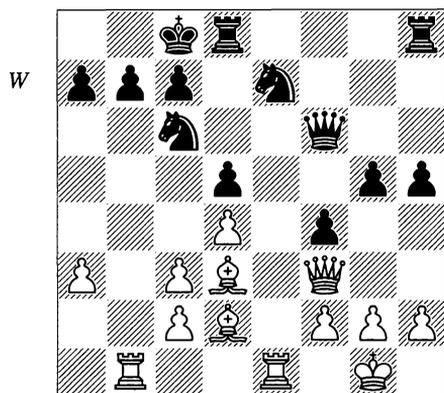
**15...g5 16 ♖ab1**

Clearly connected with the idea of playing c4. As well as 16 ♖e2 considered above, the moves 16 a4 (planning a5 or ♖c1-a3), 16 ♖h5 (blocking the enemy h-pawn) and 16 ♗d2 (e.g., 16...h5 17 ♖e3 ♖hg8 18 ♖e6+ ♖xe6 19 ♖xe6) are all worth considering.

**16...h5 17 ♗d2**

More consistent is 17 c4 f4 (17...g4 18 ♖f4 dxc4 19 ♗xc4) 18 c3 or even 17 h4 gxh4 18 c4. For some reason, White did not like these variations, but now his last move must at best be regarded as an insignificant loss of time, and in the worst case, as the start of an ill-thought-out regrouping.

**17...f4?! (D)**



The black pawn crosses the demarcation line, but without adequate support.

**18 ♖e2?**

Too passive. The advance 18 h4! was now strong, even though it is not usually recommended to make such advances in front of one's king. The white bishops need the space within which to operate: 18...gxh4 (18...♖df8 19 hxg5 ♖xg5 20 c4!) 19 ♖h3+ (stronger than 19 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 20 ♗xf4 ♖hg8) 19...♗b8 20 ♖e6 ♖g5 21 f3 with a subsequent ♗e1xh4.

**18...♖h6 19 ♗b5 ♖f5**

Why not 19...a6?

**20 ♖d3 ♖fe7**

The knight's to-ing and fro-ing creates an odd impression, but Black soon returns to a constructive path, whereas White continues to wander aimlessly around, as if in the dark.

**21 ♗a4?! a6 22 ♖e2 ♖f7 23 ♖be1 ♗b8 24 ♗b3**

One normally has to make considerable effort to drive an enemy bishop into such a dreadful post, whereas here, the bishop has gone there of its own accord.

**24...♖f5**

Parrying the threat of 25 c4.

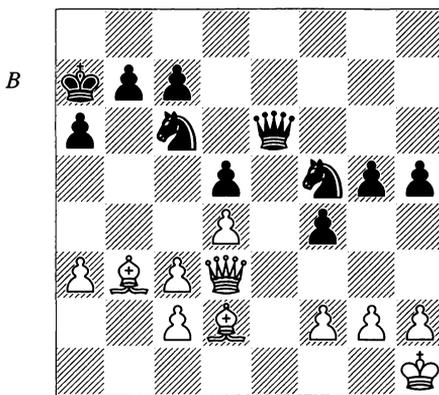
**25 ♗a4 ♗a7 26 ♗c1 ♖f6 27 ♗h1?!**

It is hard to comment on this mysterious king move. It was high time to dispense with all the subtlety, and play 27 ♗xc6 ♖xc6, and then put the rook on e5 and the bishop on a3, after first playing a4.

**27...♖g8 28 ♗b3 ♖d8 29 ♗a4 ♖dd6 30 ♗b3 ♖de6 31 ♖xe6?**

Exchanging off all the rooks is tantamount to suicide. It was still possible to defend with 31 f3.

**31...♖xe6 32 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 33 ♗d2 (D)**



White's position is hopeless.

**33...♖d6**

The simplest way to win is by 33...b5, completely shutting the b3-bishop out of play, and practically ensuring himself an extra piece for the remainder of the game. Admittedly, to play this, Black had to convince himself of the favourable outcome of the variation 34 ♖f3 (or 34 a4 ♗b6 35 axb5 axb5 36 ♖f3) 34...♖h4.

**34 ♗g1**

Good or bad, 34 h4 was essential. Black continues to overlook the possibility of this counterblow over the course of the next few moves.

**34...♖a5 35 ♗f1 ♖ac4 36 ♗c1 ♗b6 37 h4**

At last.

37...gxh4 38 ♖xf4

White starts to breathe a little easier, although his position remains difficult.

38...c6 39 ♖e2 ♖f6 40 ♗e5 ♖g6 41 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 42 c4

The bishop escapes from its prison, at the cost of the a3-pawn.

42...dxc4 43 ♗xc4 ♖g5 44 ♗d3 ♖c1+ 45 ♖e1 ♖xa3

Suddenly White has real drawing chances, but for this he should advance his passed f-pawn as soon as possible.

46 ♖g1?!

46 f4 is indicated.

46...a5 47 f4 a4 48 ♖h2?!

Again delaying 48 f5 without good reason.

48...♖b2 49 ♖e5 ♖b4 50 c4 ♗xc4 51 ♗xc4 ♖xc4

Now it is all over, and the remaining moves could have been dispensed with.

52 ♖d6 ♖c3 53 ♖d8+ ♖b5 54 ♖d7 a3 55 ♖xb7+ ♖a4 56 d5 a2 57 ♖a6+ ♖b3 58 ♖b6+ ♖a3 59 ♖a7+ ♖b3 60 ♖b6+ ♖c2 61 ♖f2+ ♖d2 62 ♖c5+ ♖d1 63 ♖g1+ ♖e2 64 dxc6 ♖xf4+ 65 ♖h1 ♖f1 0-1

## Game 17 [C15]

### Igor-Alexandre Nataf – Sergei Shipov

Montreal 2005

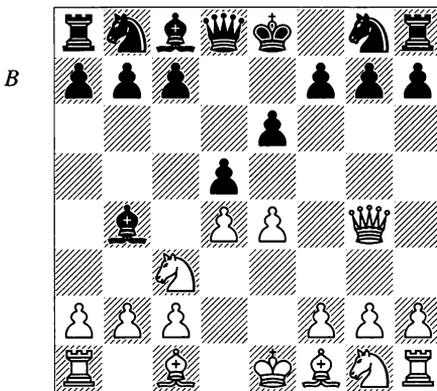
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 ♗b4 4 ♗e2

Apart from the exchange on d5, seen in the previous game, the other alternatives to 4 e5 may be divided into three groups:

- 1) the immediate attack on g7 – 4 ♖g4;
- 2) defence of the e4-pawn – 4 ♗d3, 4 ♖d3 or 4 ♖f3;
- 3) refusal to defend the pawn – 4 ♗d2, 4 ♗e3, 4 a3 and the game continuation.

We shall now examine several of these moves in some depth.

a) 4 ♖g4 (D).



White immediately attacks the g7-pawn, which has been weakened by the bishop move.

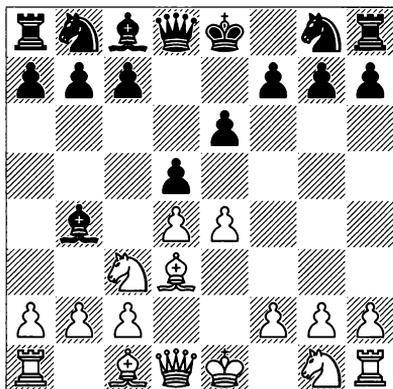
It is not really possible to defend it conveniently, but Black can use the time spent by White in capturing it to launch a counter-attack in the centre: 4...♗f6 (the other, more rarely-seen, set-up is 4...dxe4 5 ♖xg7 ♖f6 6 ♖g3 ♗c6 7 ♗b5 ♗e7 8 ♗e2 ♗d7 9 ♗g5 ♖f5 10 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 11 ♖xc7 and it is not clear if Black has sufficient compensation, Miladinović-Rozentalis, Montreal 2000) 5 ♖xg7 ♖g8 6 ♖h6 ♖g6 (the immediate 6...dxe4 is less convincing after 7 ♗e2 b6 8 ♗g5, but 6...c5 7 e5 cxd4 8 a3 ♗f8 9 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 10 exf6 dxc3 11 ♗e2 ♗d7 12 ♗xc3 a6, with a subsequent ...♗xf6, looks perfectly satisfactory, Campora-Rustemov, Dos Hermanas 2003) 7 ♖e3 c5 8 ♗d2 ♗c6 9 ♗ge2 and now Alekhine recommended 9...♗g4 10 ♖d3 cxd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗xf2 with interesting complications.

b) 4 ♗d3 (D).

This is one of the ways to defend the e4-pawn, but it involves some loss of time, since the bishop will come under attack. Black can choose between the central counterattack 4...c5 and the temporary surrender of the centre, to gain time for development.

b1) In the first case, White can offer a pawn sacrifice: 4...c5 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 ♗d2 ♗xc3 7 ♗xc3 cxd4 8 ♗xd4 ♖xg2 (if he does not wish to take the pawn, the usual way of declining is

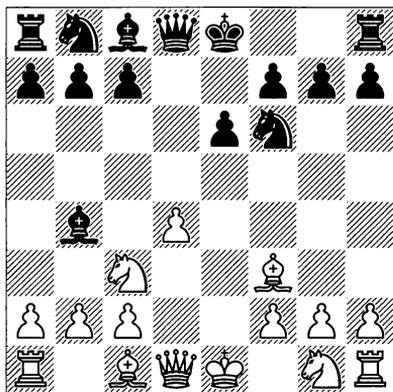
B



8...e5) 9 ♖f3 ♗xf3 10 ♖xf3 with solid compensation for the pawn, in the shape of two powerful bishops and an advantage in development.

b2) Nowadays, the line 4...dxe4 5 ♗xe4 ♖f6 is seen more often. The bishop must now retreat. In the event of 6 ♗d3, Black has no problems in the variation 6...c5 7 ♖f3 cxd4 8 ♖xd4 e5. Nor does 6 ♗f3 (D) pose great problems either. By depriving his knight of the f3-square, White loses control over e5, and cannot prevent a freeing break:

B



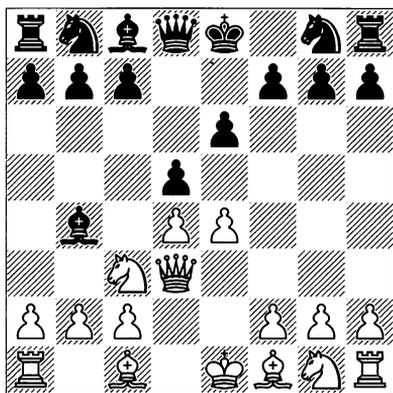
b21) 6...0-0 7 ♖e2 and now one possibility is 7...♖bd7 8 0-0 e5 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 ♗e1 h6 11 ♗h4 c6 12 ♖g3 exd4 13 ♖f5 ♖e5, Finkel-Bogdanov, Metz 1996. The move 7...e5 is also interesting one move earlier, when it is associated with a pawn sacrifice, the acceptance of which gives Black more than sufficient compensation: 8 dxe5 ♗xd1+ 9 ♗xd1 ♖g4 10

♗xg4 ♗xg4 11 f3 ♗f5 12 ♗d2 ♖c6 13 f4 ♗ad8.

b22) The other central break also offers good counterplay: 6...c5 7 ♖e2 ♖c6 8 ♗e3 cxd4 9 ♖xd4 ♖e5 10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♖xf3+ 12 ♗xf3 ♗d5 and the question is what matters more – White's slight initiative or his weaknesses on the c-file, Harikrishna-Dizdar, Abu Dhabi 2003.

c) 4 ♗d3 (D).

B

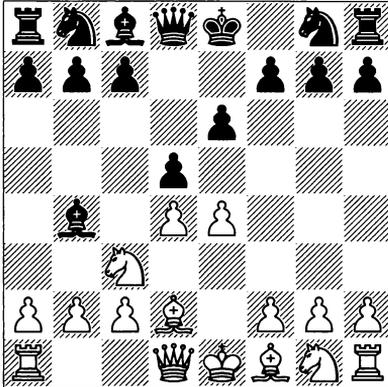


A somewhat provocative continuation, which breaks one of the basic principles of the opening – do not develop the queen too early. It promises no advantage, but nor does White stand worse, and Black will search in vain for a refutation of the move. The queen will stand quite well on h4, and its most dangerous opponent, an enemy bishop on e7, can reach that square only at the cost of a tempo. Black can choose between two methods of development: either 4...dxe4 5 ♗xe4 ♖f6 6 ♗h4 ♗d7 (also not bad is 6...c5) followed by ...♗c6, or 4...♖e7 with a subsequent ...b6 and ...♗a6, exchanging light-squared bishops.

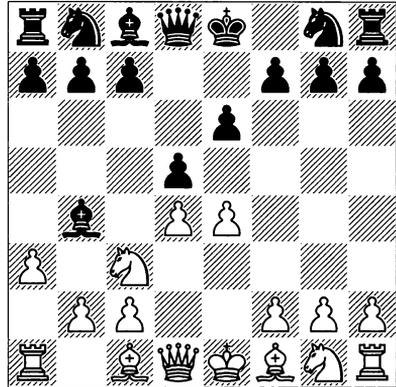
d) 4 ♗d2 (D).

This gambit continuation has a long history; Marshall played this way against Chigorin as long ago as 1901. Black can play along the lines of the McCutcheon with his pawn still on h7, by 4...♖f6 5 e5 ♗xc3 6 bxc3 ♖e4, or choose the quiet 4...♖e7. But the most principled discussion arises after 4...dxe4 5 ♗g4 (5 ♖xe4 was condemned by Alekhine, who showed that after 5...♗xd4 White has no compensation for the

B



B



pawn) 5...♘f6 6 ♖xg7 ♜g8 7 ♖h6 ♖xd4 8 0-0-0 ♙f8 (Bronstein used this novelty in 1950 to beat Boleslavsky and win the right to a world championship match against Botvinnik) and now:

d1) 9 ♖h4 ♜g4 10 ♖h3 ♖xf2 11 ♙e2 (a tactical trick, which sacrifices the queen, in order immediately to win it back) 11...♞h4 12 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 13 g3, but after both 13...e3 and 13...h6 Black has two connected passed pawns for the exchange, and his chances are not worse.

d2) If 9 ♖h3, not inviting the rook to g4 with tempo, then 9...♖xf2 in any case, after which Bezgodov-Kornev, Russian Ch, Krasnoarsk 2003 continued in interesting style: 10 ♘ge2 ♙d7 11 g4 ♜xg4 12 ♘g3 e3 13 ♙e1 ♖f4 14 ♙g2 ♖h6 and the upshot of the complications is an extra pawn for Black.

e) We can also mention the move 4 ♙e3?!, this time gambiting e4 with the d4-pawn protected, but the pin on the c3-knight still in place.

f) 4 a3 (D).

This variation was at one time very popular. By forcing the immediate exchange on c3, White obtains the bishop-pair, and later agrees to exchange the e4-pawn for that on g7. He hopes to show that Black's preponderance in the centre and lead in development are only temporary factors, and that the e4-pawn, although it deprives the white pieces of some natural development squares, is itself insufficiently defended. In addition, the unopposed dark-squared bishop hopes to become the master of the weakened dark squares in Black's camp. 4...♙xc3+ 5 bxc3

dxe4 (on 5...♘e7 White is not forced to transpose into a well-known position by 6 e5, but more often chooses 6 ♙d3 and seeks to give the game a more open character) 6 ♖g4 ♘f6 7 ♖xg7 ♜g8 8 ♖h6. Previously the standard continuation now was 8...c5 immediately or after the inclusion of the moves 8...♞g6 9 ♖e3 (or 9 ♖d2), but nowadays the preference is for completing development, fianchettoing the queen's bishop and preparing queenside castling. We should point out that the immediate 8...b6 involves a pawn sacrifice: 9 ♙g5 ♜g6 10 ♖h4 ♙b7 11 ♘e2 with the threat of ♘f4, and hence 11...h6 12 ♙xh6 ♜g4 13 ♖h3 ♖d5 with reasonable compensation. If Black does not wish to part with the pawn, here too he can first evict the enemy queen with 8...♞g6, leading to a complex position with chances for both sides.

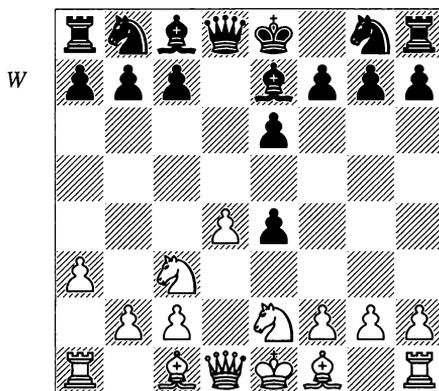
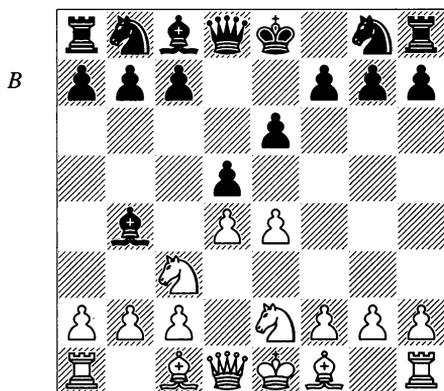
The overall assessment of the non-4 e5 systems is that they are not something over which supporters of the French Defence need lose any sleep.

We now return to 4 ♘e2 (D):

This is yet another way of avoiding the closing of the centre while also preventing the doubling of the c-pawns. The sacrifice of the e4-pawn is usually only temporary, but the real minus of the system is that instead of its usual square f3, the knight takes up a less attractive post, where it obstructs the development of the king's bishop.

#### 4...dxe4

It is also possible to continue trying to provoke the advance e5, by 4...♘f6. Both after 5 ♙g5 dxe4 6 a3 ♙e7 7 ♙xf6 and 8 ♘xe4, and



also after 5 e5 ♖fd7 6 a3 ♗e7, positions arise which are similar to other well-known variations. A more original choice after 5 e5 is 5...♗e4, when following 6 a3 ♖xc3 7 ♖xc3 Black must either agree to a small disadvantage in the variation 7...♗xc3+ or be prepared to venture 7...♗e7 8 ♖g4 ♖f8.

#### 5 a3 ♗e7 (D)

The exchange 5...♗xc3+ 6 ♖xc3 is also a solid option, but the attempt to hang on to the pawn by 6...f5 is risky. Nowadays, the counter-attack 6...♗c6 is usually preferred. Then White may regain the pawn immediately with 7 d5 exd5 8 ♖xd5 ♗ge7 9 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 10 ♖xe4, although after 10...♗f5 11 ♗d3 ♖dc6 12 ♗f4 0-0-0 Black's active pieces offset the bishop-pair and reduce White's advantage to a minimum. More complex play arises in the variation 7 ♗b5 ♖e7 8 ♗g5 (it is too early to re-establish material equality: 8 ♖xe4 ♖d5) 8...f6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 ♖d2 (here too, is not the time for 10 ♖xe4 f5, with complications that favour Black) 10...f5 (10...e5 is fully playable, as is 10...a6 11 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 12 ♖xe4 b6 with reasonable play) 11 0-0-0 with sufficient compensation for the pawn.

#### 6 g4

This move is inspired by a well-known example (6 ♖xe4 ♗c6 7 g4?!, Alekhine-Euwe, Match (7), Utrecht 1935, which leads to a sharp game, but is not considered good) and is fully in accordance with the modern tendency for such early thrusts with the g-pawn. White wishes to seize control of the g5-square, and does not object to the opening of lines on the kingside after

6...h5 7 gxh5. He also prepares to bring the bishop to g2, but of course, it goes without saying that the advance also creates weaknesses in White's own camp.

The main continuation, of course, is 6 ♖xe4, in answer to which Black usually develops one of his knights. We shall look at a few of the possible set-ups, concentrating on the most popular:

a) 6...♗c6 7 g3 ♖f6 8 ♗g2 e5 9 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 10 d5 ♖e7 11 ♗c3 and here Black should play 11...♖f5, since 11...♗f5?? loses a piece after 12 g4.

b) 6...♖f6 7 ♖d2g3 ♗c6 8 c3 ♖xe4 (another possibility is 8...e5 9 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 10 d5 ♖e7, with a double-edged position) 9 ♖xe4 ♖d5 10 ♖f3 0-0 11 ♗f4 ♖b3 12 ♖b1 and Black now fully equalized in Degraeve-Lputian, European Clubs Cup, Kallithea 2002, with the aid of a temporary pawn sacrifice: 12...e5 13 dx5 ♖e6 14 ♖g3 ♗d6.

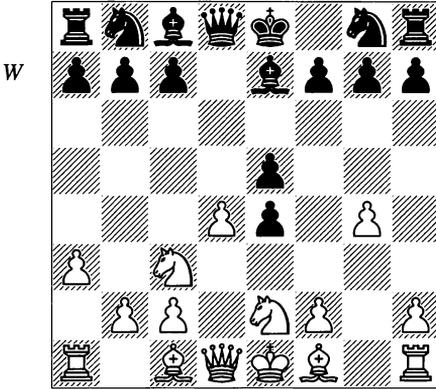
c) 6...♖f6 7 ♖d3 ♗c6 8 ♗f4 0-0 9 0-0-0. In this position there is the unclear pawn sacrifice 9...e5 10 dx5 ♖xd3 11 cxd3 ♖h5 12 d4 ♖xf4 13 ♖xf4 ♗d8, but by returning it, White retains the advantage: 14 ♗c4 ♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 16 ♖d5. The usual continuation 9...b6 leads to double-edged play.

#### 6...e5 (D)

The most natural reaction, answering the flank attack with a counter in the centre. The other replies 6...♗d7, 6...♗c6 and 6...h5 have also been seen.

#### 7 h3

Also interesting is 7 ♖g1, when the attempts to exploit the undefended h2-pawn by 7...♖f6 8

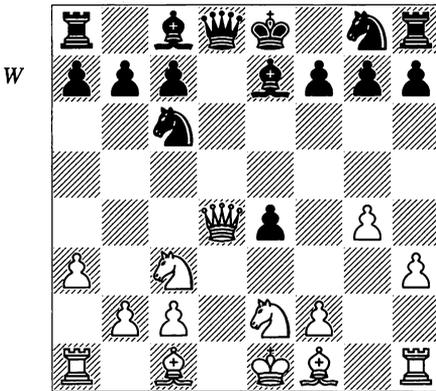


g5 ♖g4 9 ♜xe4 ♜xh2 10 ♙g2 or 7...exd4 8 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 9 ♜xd4 ♙d6 look double-edged.

7...exd4

It is also possible to try 7...h5 here.

8 ♜xd4 ♜c6 (D)



Exchanging on d4 would help White's development. After the text-move, the bishop finds itself temporarily on a slightly awkward square, where it interferes with the coordination of his rooks, but on the other hand, it defends the weak c7-pawn.

9 ♜xd8+ ♙xd8

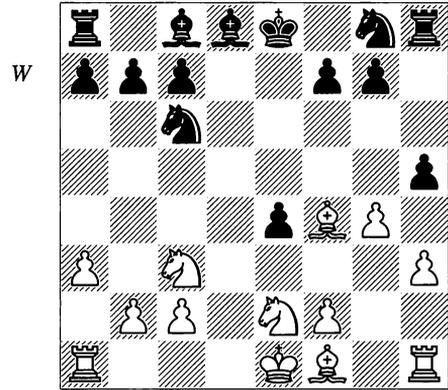
If one ignores the e4-pawn for the moment, the pawn-structure is symmetrical, and White has better development and more space, and, hence, holds the initiative. However, Black has no weaknesses or potentially bad pieces, and if he can neutralize White's pluses, he can hope to turn to account his own, which consist mainly in the weakening of the white kingside.

10 ♙f4

White would like to win back the pawn on c7, so he threatens ♜b5 or ♜d5. Instead, after the immediate 10 ♜xe4, the reply 10...f5 is satisfactory.

10...h5 (D)

Black invites the g-pawn forward, hoping to secure the f5-square for his pieces.



11 g5

It is not possible to maintain the pawn on g4 (11 ♜g1 hxg4 12 hxg4 g5 13 ♙e3 ♜f6), and hence the choice is between the text-move and 11 gxh5.

11...♜ge7 12 ♜g3

This knight goes after the e4-pawn, while the other remains in position to jump to b5 or d5.

12...♜g6 13 ♙e3 ♜ce7

A nice dance ensues around the f5-square. Black would like to exchange this piece, or else use it to harass the enemy's unopposed dark-squared bishop, which currently lacks a stable post. Black must bear in mind that the exchange of light-squared bishops may allow White to penetrate to d7, while the move ...c6 creates a hole on d6.

14 ♜gxe4

14 0-0-0 deserved attention, with the likely follow-up 14...♜f5 15 ♜xf5 ♙xf5 16 ♙g2 and 17 ♙xe4.

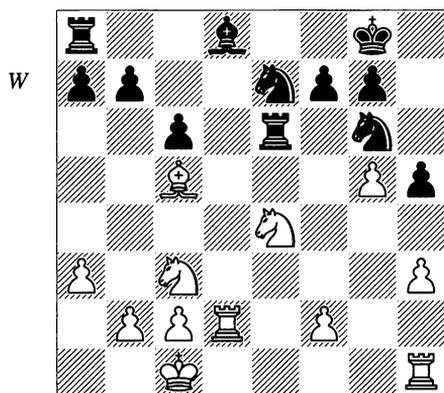
14...0-0 15 0-0-0 ♜f5 16 ♙c5 ♜e8 17 ♙c4

The white pieces are circling menacingly over the black position.

17...♙e6

17...b6 is bad in view of 18 ♙b5, and after 17...♗e5 there is the tactical response 18 ♖he1. If the knight is brought from g6 to e6, then the moment it ceases to control its former square on g6, the white g-pawn can advance, augmenting the dangerous pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal. After deep calculation, Black settled for the move in the game.

18 ♙xe6 ♖xe6 19 ♖d5 ♗fe7 20 ♖d2 c6 (D)



This looks risky, but is based on careful calculation. Black opens the path for the bishop to leave d8, while the complications after 21 ♙xa7

♗d5 favour Black. The game moves into an endgame with equal chances.

21 ♖d7 b6 22 ♖hd1 ♗d5 23 ♗xd5 ♖xe4 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♗f6+

Already accuracy is required of White in order not to stand slightly worse, since his opponent's king is the more active. The alternative was 25 ♗e7+, which leads to a more tense position after 25...♗xe7 26 ♖xd8+ ♖h7 27 ♙d6 (the rook ending is better for Black) 27...♗f5 28 ♙b8. For the purposes of making a draw, the text-move is better, exchanging off one of his weak pawns and slightly opening the position.

25...gxf6 26 ♖xd8+ ♖h7 27 ♙e3 fxf5 28 ♙xg5 ♗f4 29 f3?!

But here the rook ending after 29 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 30 ♖d7 ♖xf2 31 ♖xa7 is equal; notwithstanding the impression that there is plenty of play left, such positions usually result in mass pawn exchanges and a draw. The move played, by contrast, places White on the edge of defeat.

29...♖d4 30 ♖a8?

And this tips him over the edge. 30 ♖xd4 and 30 ♖c8 were the only ways to fight for a draw.

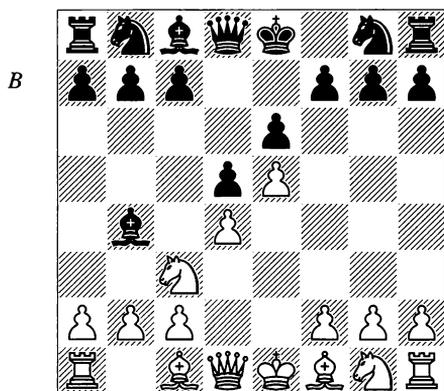
30...♗xh3 31 ♙e3 ♖d7 32 ♖c8 f6 33 ♖xc6 ♖g6 34 ♖c4 ♗g5 35 ♖f4 ♖h7 36 ♙d4 f5 37 ♙e3 h4 38 ♖c4 h3 39 ♖c6+ ♖h5 0-1

## Game 18 [C16]

### Artur Kogan – Alfonso Romero Holmes

*French Team Ch, Clichy 2006*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 (D)



The main response to the Winawer. The pawn advances one square, securing a space advantage in the sector of the board where White has ambitions. One question arises immediately – how does Black plan to meet ♖g4? The answer to this question significantly determines the future course of the game.

4...♗e7

Variations with 4...c5 or 4...♗e7 followed by ...c5 will be examined in the next two chapters.

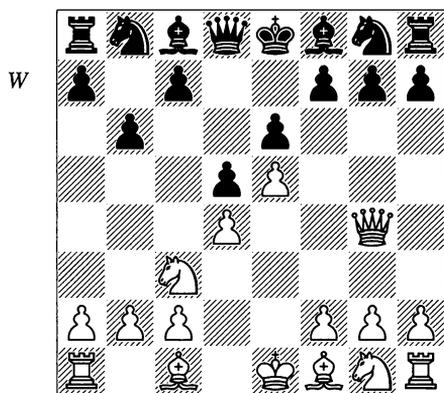
Besides these main replies, we shall also consider another possibility, namely 4...b6. Temporarily refraining from action in the centre, Black prepares the exchange of light-squared bishops, retaining the possibility of defending the pawn

by retreating his other bishop to its starting square. Along with the obvious drawback of this method, namely the loss of time, there are also some advantages: for the time being, Black avoids creating weaknesses, the early development of the white queen allows Black later to develop his pieces with gain of tempo, while in a blocked position, the lag in development is not so dangerous. White has three logical plans:

a) 5  $\text{♙d2}$ , avoiding the doubled pawns. The most often-played replies for Black are 5... $\text{♚d7}$  or 5... $\text{♜e7}$ , with the position frequently being reached by transposition of the fourth and fifth moves. Also seen are the voluntary 5... $\text{♞f8}$  and the immediate 5... $\text{♞a6}$ , but it would be better to play the latter only after White's light-squared bishop has moved, and Black must also reckon with 6  $\text{♝b5}$  or 6  $\text{♚g4}$   $\text{♞f8}$  7  $\text{♝b5}$ , trying to preserve the bishop from exchange.

b) 5 a3  $\text{♞f8}$  (5... $\text{♞xc3}$ + 6  $\text{bxc3}$   $\text{♞e7}$  transposes into a position seen in the game). We should point out two other ways to prevent the bishop exchange: b4 with the idea of meeting ... $\text{♞a6}$  with b5, and  $\text{♞b5}$ +, in order after ...c6 to retreat the bishop to a4, and later c2. In this way, it is hoped to prove that the a6-f1 diagonal is less important than b1-h7.

c) 5  $\text{♚g4}$   $\text{♞f8}$  (D).



In the past, this was a fairly popular variation. Utilizing the time spent on the bishop moves, White tries to seize space over the whole board. Here is one recent example: 6  $\text{♝f3}$   $\text{♚d7}$  7  $\text{♞d3}$   $\text{♞a6}$  8 0-0  $\text{♜e7}$  9  $\text{♞e2}$   $\text{♞xd3}$  10  $\text{cxd3}$   $\text{♝bc6}$  11  $\text{♞d2}$  0-0-0 12 b4  $\text{♝b7}$  13 b5  $\text{♝b8}$  14 a4,

Kamsky-Zugčić, American Continental, Buenos Aires 2005.

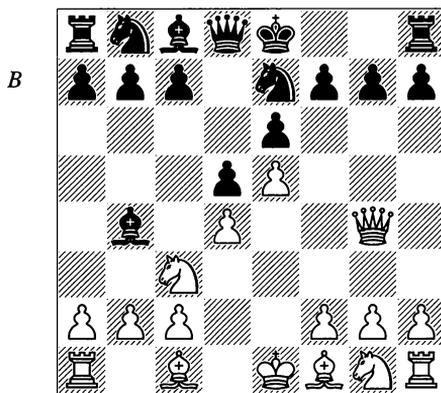
Another rarely-seen potential defence of g7 is 4... $\text{♚d7}$ , to answer  $\text{♚g4}$  with ...f5, and delaying ...b6 and ... $\text{♞a6}$  to another day. On d7 the queen takes part in the battle for the light squares a4, c4 and c6, which are weakened after the exchange of light-squared bishops. However, this plan is very slow.

### 5 a3

The most principled and accurate move. Other moves either transpose into well-known schemes, or lead to positions which are similar. The line 5  $\text{♝f3}$  c5 6  $\text{dxc5}$  reveals White's readiness to play in the style of Nimzowitsch, replacing his pawn-centre with piece control of the vacated central points. Black may capture on c3, ruining his opponent's pawn-structure, but the unopposed dark-squared bishop usually compensates for these weaknesses.

We should note that 5  $\text{♞d2}$  b6 or 5...c5 also amounts merely to a transposition to 4...b6 5  $\text{♞d2}$  (note 'a' to Black's 4th move above) or 4...c5 5  $\text{♞d2}$  (note 'd1' to White's 5th move in Game 19) lines.

If White chooses 5  $\text{♚g4}$  (D), then he must reckon with two possible replies:



a) 5... $\text{♞f5}$  leads to well-known positions: 6  $\text{♝f3}$  (6  $\text{♞d3}$  h5 7  $\text{♚f4}$   $\text{♚h4}$ ) 6... $\text{♝c6}$  with approximate equality.

b) More complex play results from 5...c5:

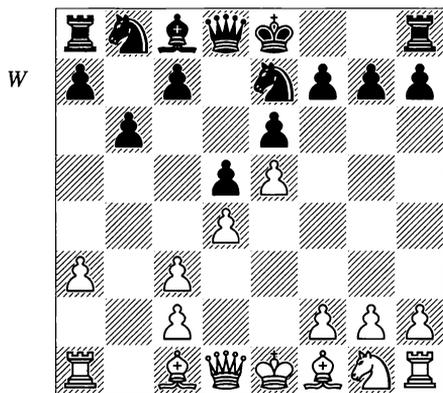
b1) After 6 a3, instead of going back into the main variation with 6... $\text{♞xc3}$ + (or 6... $\text{♞a5}$ , transposing to note 'b' to White's 6th move in

Game 19), Black can choose the unpleasant reply 6...♙a5, which usually results in White trying the dubious exchange sacrifice 7 ♙d2 cxd4 8 axb4 (after 8 ♘b1 ♙xd2+ 9 ♘xd2 White is the one seeking equality) 8...♙xa1+ 9 ♘d1.

b2) The attempt to destroy the black kingside by 6 ♙xg7 (or first 6 dxc5 ♘bc6) leaves Black doing very well after 6...♙g8 7 ♙xh7 cxd4 8 a3 ♙a5 9 axb4.

b3) A more reliable approach is 6 dxc5, striving for a more open position. Black can now choose either 6...♙xc3+, hoping to show that the opponent's pawn weaknesses matter more than his domination of the dark squares, or elect for a rich struggle with chances for both sides after 6...♘bc6 7 ♙d2 0-0 8 0-0 9 f5 9 exf6 ♙xf6 10 ♙d3 e5.

#### 5...♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 b6 (D)



Refraining for the moment from ...c5, and declaring his intention of exchanging light-squared bishops, which it is almost impossible to avoid. With ...c5 played, the check on b5 gives White additional options – either to refrain from the exchange after ...♙d7, or to defend the bishop with a4, inviting the exchange on the b5-square. Now, however, the check makes no sense because of ...c6. The drawbacks of the move 6...b6 are that the delaying of action in the centre leaves White's hands somewhat freer to develop an initiative on the kingside, while in addition, the black queen's path to a5 is blocked.

#### 7 ♙g4

The dominant continuation in contemporary practice. To mention other ideas briefly, the

main point is that the failure of Black to act immediately in the centre, and the absence of threats along the a5-e1 diagonal, leave White free to choose a large variety of methods of development.

One is 7 ♘h3, a flexible square for the knight, which dreams of reaching h5, while retaining the possibility of the move ♘g5. This has the added advantage of leaving the f-pawn free and not obstructing the f1-bishop (which it would do if it went to e2 instead). Possible then is 7...♘g6 (it is important not to allow the knight to reach h5) 8 a4. Now after 8...♙a6 9 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 10 0-0 ♘b8 interesting is 11 f4 ♙d7 12 f5 exf5 13 ♙h5 ♘f8 14 g4, Nunn-L.B.Hansen, Lugano 1989, while 8...c5 9 ♙b5+ ♙d7 10 ♙d3 returns to standard positions.

Another try is 7 h4, with the idea of seizing space on the kingside, which may bring dividends not only in the middlegame, but also in the endgame. In addition, the rook is able to develop via h3, with vertical pressure on the f- and g-pawns.

The move 7 ♘f3 is of independent significance if Black refrains from ...c5 and develops along the following lines: the bishops are exchanged on a6, then Black plays ...♘b8-c6-a5, ...♙d7 and ...0-0-0; White, meanwhile, seeks to break with c4.

#### 7...♘g6

The move 7...0-0 is too risky and is practically never played, while the knight is insufficiently stable on f5 – after 7...♘f5 there follows 8 ♙d3 h5 9 ♙h3, with the threat of g4. The move 7...♙f8 has its adherents, however; by renouncing castling, Black avoids the creation of weaknesses, and the rook remains in place to defend g7, while Black can attempt to create counterplay on the other flank.

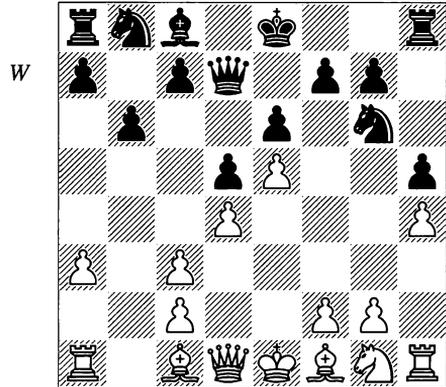
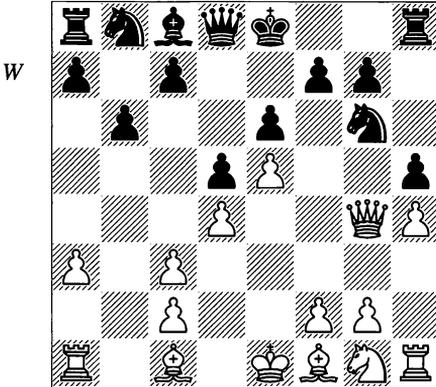
#### 8 h4 h5 (D)

Clearly, this weakening is forced.

#### 9 ♙d1

Compared with the alternatives, this retreat has the merit of maintaining pressure on the pawn at h5, while preventing the capture on h4 (naturally, Black has no reason to open the h-file for his opponent) and defending c2.

There are two other reasonable queen retreats:



a) 9 ♖f3 maintains the pressure on the h5-pawn, but allows h4 to be taken with tempo. Now 9...♙a6 10 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 11 ♙g5 ♞d7 12 ♜e2 followed by 13 ♜g3 leads to the loss of a pawn, with the central counterplay coming rather late. Therefore 9...♜xh4 is correct: 10 ♞h3 ♜g6 11 ♙d3 ♞d7 (11...♜e7 is also interesting) 12 ♜f3 ♙a6 13 ♙xg6 fxg6 14 ♜g5 ♚e7 15 a4 ♞c6 16 ♙a3+ ♜d7 and Black defended successfully in Miton-Potkin, World Junior Ch, Goa 2002.

b) 9 ♖g3 is more common, preparing to attack the h5-pawn, but here too, accurate play by Black allows him to achieve reasonable prospects: 9...♙a6 10 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 11 ♞d3 ♜b8 12 ♙g5 ♞c8 13 ♜e2 ♞a6 14 ♞f3 c5 15 0-0 ♜c6 16 ♞fd1 ♞c4 17 ♞d2 ♜ge7 18 ♞ad1 ♜f5 and by gradually counterattacking against d4, Black neutralizes the pressure on h5 and manages to place his forces harmoniously, Korneev-Rivas, Benasque 2005.

### 9...♞d7 (D)

The standard counterplay with 9...♙a6 is too slow: 10 ♙g5 ♞d7 (also dubious is 10...f6 11 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 12 ♞d3 ♚f7 13 ♜h3 ♜b8 14 0-0 followed by f4, ♞ae1 and it is hard to believe that the attack can be beaten off) 11 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 12 ♜e2 and there is not a great deal of choice. 12...♞c6 momentarily parries the threat to the h5-pawn, but the advance of the f-pawn will be very unpleasant, while 12...♜e7 13 ♜f4 g6 concedes the dark squares. After 14 a4 (prophylaxis to contain the black queen, and the first step towards exchanging off the weak pawn) it is hard to prevent a kingside attack by f3 and g4.

The text-move represents a new idea. Black changes the priority of his plans – first he will create threats along the c-file, and only then exchange light-squared bishops. Of course, the drawback of this plan is that the f1-bishop is able to play a role...

### 10 ♙d3

...which White immediately exploits. The other possibility is more dubious: 10 ♙e2 ♙a6 11 ♙xh5 ♞b5 12 ♙e2 (it is impossible to take 12 ♜d2 seriously) 12...♞a5 and the pawn is regained.

### 10...♜e7

Of course, it looks risky to allow the exchange on g6, but nonetheless, this deserves to be tried. The ossified kingside pawn-structure and massive outpost on g5, plus the rather out-of-play bishop on a6, makes it hard for Black to create active play, but in the typical variation 10...♙a6 11 ♙xg6 fxg6 12 ♜h3 ♜c6 13 ♙g5 ♞f7 14 ♜f4 ♜d7, Black is able to defend the weaknesses on e6 and g6, and the only way for White to develop his initiative is to prepare g4, which is not without its dangers for White's own king.

### 11 ♜e2 ♞c6

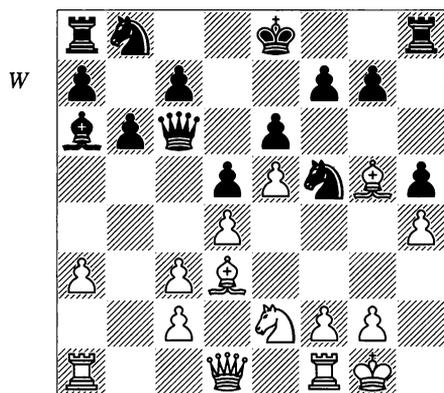
Again delaying the exchange of bishops, Black ties the knight down to e2. In the event of 11...♙a6 12 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 White will arrange his forces in the well-known way – ♙g5, ♜f4 and trying to force ...g6, with a later exploitation of the dark squares. Meanwhile, the c3-pawn can be defended by ♞h3. After the text-move, however, the e2-knight is forced to guard c3, since White does not wish to pass that task

on to the queen's bishop – that piece belongs on g5.

12  $\text{g5}$   $\text{f5}$

Continuing to muddy the waters. Black invites the interesting complications of 13  $\text{c4}$   $\text{dxc4}$  14  $\text{d5}$   $\text{exd5}$  15  $\text{e4}$   $\text{e6}$  16  $\text{f4}$ , but White is able to obtain the advantage without resorting to such sharp measures.

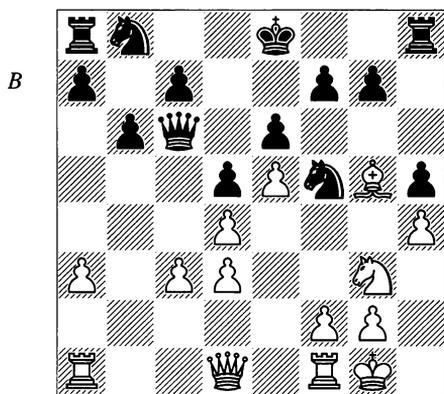
13 0-0  $\text{a6}$  (D)



Black finally achieves his strategic idea, but, as often happens, pays too high a price. White's lead in development allows him to go over to decisive action.

14  $\text{g3}$   $\text{xd3}$  15  $\text{cxd3}$  (D)

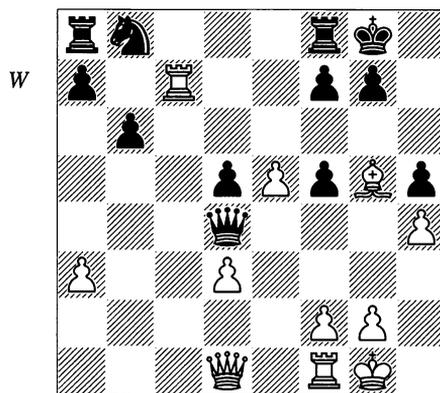
Maybe the natural 15  $\text{xd3}$  is no weaker, but this is a matter of taste. The text-move strengthens the threat of  $\text{c4}$ .



15...  $\text{xc3}$

If Black declines the pawn, he just suffers for nothing. Nor does the preliminary exchange on g3 help: after 15...  $\text{xcg3}$  16  $\text{fxg3}$   $\text{xc3}$  17  $\text{ff4}$ , the attack on the f-file wins just as quickly: 17...  $\text{c6}$  18  $\text{xf7}$   $\text{xf7}$  19  $\text{ff3+}$   $\text{e8}$  20  $\text{ff1}$  or 17...  $\text{bb2}$  18  $\text{fc1}$   $\text{c5}$  19  $\text{fc2}$  and 20  $\text{fc2}$ .

16  $\text{fc1}$   $\text{xd4}$  17  $\text{xf5}$   $\text{exf5}$  18  $\text{fxc7}$  0-0 (D)



19  $\text{e6}$

Decisive.

19...  $\text{a6}$

The attempt to stave off the attack at the cost of the exchange is hopeless after 19...  $\text{fxe6}$  20  $\text{fxh5}$   $\text{a6}$  21  $\text{fe7}$   $\text{ff6}$  22  $\text{xf6}$   $\text{xf6}$  23  $\text{gg5}$ , when White easily realizes his advantage.

20  $\text{xf7}$   $\text{xf7}$  21  $\text{exf7+}$   $\text{xf7}$  22  $\text{e1}$   $\text{g4}$

There is also no hope in 22...  $\text{g6}$  23  $\text{fe6+}$   $\text{f7}$  24  $\text{fe7+}$   $\text{g6}$  25  $\text{we2}$   $\text{dc5}$  26  $\text{fc7}$   $\text{g4}$  27  $\text{we7}$ .

23  $\text{fe7+}$   $\text{g6}$  24  $\text{we1}$   $\text{h7}$  25  $\text{we5}$  1-0

On 25...  $\text{g8}$  the move 26  $\text{f3}$  decides at once.

Practice in recent years has confirmed the view that lines such as the currently popular 4  $\text{exd5}$  and other alternatives to 4  $\text{e5}$  pose a few problems for Black and have the right to exist, but they cannot pretend to be a refutation of the Winawer. As for the final game examined in this chapter, the attempts by Black to postpone immediate central action in favour of resolving other strategic problems are interesting, and similar attempts are likely to be pursued in the future, but for the present at least, White seems to hold the upper hand.

# 7 The Winawer with 4 e5 c5

In this chapter, we look at lines where White answers 3...♙b4 with the main continuation 4 e5, and Black counterattacks in the centre with 4...c5. The most popular line today, 5 a3 ♟xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♞e7 7 ♞g4, will be examined in the next chapter. The examples below are united mainly by the fact that they all involve deviations from this main variation, the great choice of possible continuations making any other form of classification difficult.

**Game 19** is a somewhat special case, where Black does not exchange on c3 but plays instead 5...♟a5.

**Game 20** sees 6...♞a5, with the aim of using the queen to blockade the white queenside.

Finally, **Games 21** and **22** are devoted to the classical set-up with 7 a4 and 7 ♞f3.

There are many modifications of the classical set-up, but generally White follows one of two main strategic plans: either he relies on his strong centre to attack on the kingside, or he voluntarily breaks up the centre, counting on the strength of his two bishops. In the first case, an important factor is the position of the a-pawn. If it manages to advance to a4, then the dark-squared bishop has good prospects along the a3-f8 diagonal (true, the pawn itself often has to act as a kamikaze in such cases), whereas with the pawn on a3, the bishop has fewer active prospects. The surrender of the centre usually begins with the move dxc5, with the later advance c4 to attack the d5-square. There is no universal rule of when such a plan is appropriate, and the choice depends on the concrete details of the position and the opening tastes of the player. For Black, a position with a closed centre is usually attractive, but before playing ...c4, he needs either to exchange his light-squared bishop, or find some way to employ it usefully – either to defend the e6-pawn after the break ...f6, as a blocker on a4, or by activating it on the e8-h5 diagonal.

## Game 19 [C18]

### Daniel Stellwagen – Mateusz Bartel

*Bundesliga 2006/7*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♞c3 ♟b4 4 e5 c5 (D)

If Black intends to play the variation with an early ...♞a5, or the 5...♟a5 variation seen in this game, then he has to play 4...c5 here. In other lines, the move-order choice between ...c5 and ...♞e7 is of no significance.

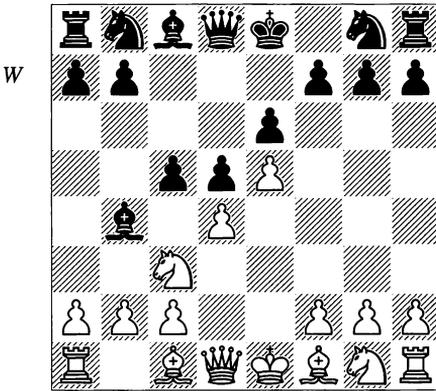
#### 5 a3

Other lines are also played here:

a) 5 ♞g4 ♞e7 transposes to note 'b' to White's 5th move in Game 18.

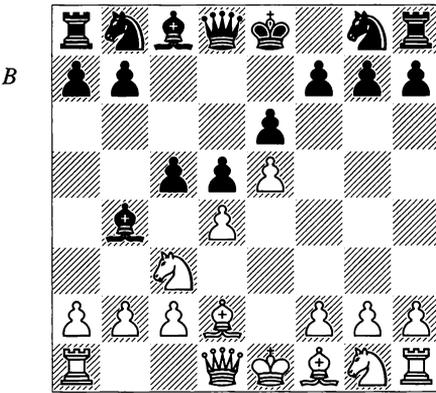
b) 5 ♞f3 also has a sound basis, and a certain novelty value. It leads to a fairly open position, and although it does not pose Black great problems, it does require accuracy from him. The choice between 5...♞c6 and 5...♞e7 is a matter of taste.

c) 5 dxc5 has similar ideas to line 'b', into which it usually transposes. A typical example of how play can develop is 5...♞e7 6 ♞f3 ♞d7 7 ♟d3 ♞c7 8 0-0 ♟xc3 (here the exchange



makes sense, as the c5-knight neutralizes the enemy dark-squared bishop) 9 bxc3 ♖xc5 10 c4 ♗d7 11 ♗a3 h6, Zelčić-E.Berg, European Ch, Kusadasi 2006.

d) 5 ♗d2 (D) has the obvious idea of exchanging off Black's dark-squared bishop and eventually, given the chance, penetrating to d6. Then:



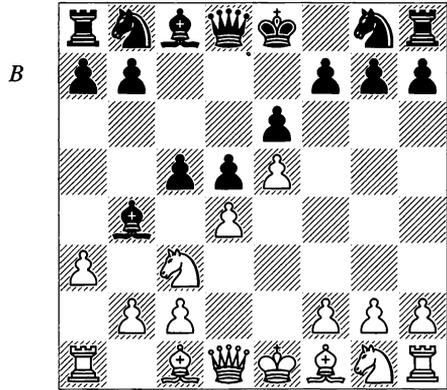
d1) 5...♗e7 is a reliable antidote. Now White can choose to maintain his pawn-centre by 6 ♖b5 ♗xd2+ 7 ♗xd2 0-0 8 c3, followed if need be by f4, but Black has the standard sources of counterplay. Alternatively, there is 6 a3 ♗xc3 7 ♗xc3 ♖bc6 8 ♖f3 cxd4 9 ♖xd4 ♖xe5 10 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 11 ♗xe5 ♖c6, when Black's superior development offsets his isolated pawn and White's two bishops.

d2) The line 5...♖c6 6 ♖b5 ♗xd2+ 7 ♗xd2 ♖xd4 8 ♖xd4 cxd4 is also seen, often leading to a rook and bishop ending, where Black needs

to defend accurately, without having much scope for activity.

d3) In recent times, the move 5...♖h6 has been investigated, the knight often being more usefully placed on h6.

We now return to 5 a3 (D):



**5...♗a5**

From time to time, attempts are made to revive the old line 5...cxd4 6 axb4 dxc3, by which Black destroys the white centre. It is considered that 7 ♖f3, 7 ♗d3 and 7 ♗g4, with a pawn sacrifice, all promise White a clear advantage. His bishop will dominate the dark squares from b2, and looks forward to Black playing ...f6, a move that Black cannot very easily manage without, since he needs to open the second rank for defensive purposes. White also has the half-open a-file and the possibility of transferring his rook into the attack via a3. By contrast, re-establishing material equality by 7 bxc3 offers much less, since it blocks both the rook's line and the bishop's diagonal. The exchange on b2 can usually be forced sooner or later by the move ♗a3.

**6 b4**

Or:

a) 6 ♗d2 is also interesting. By comparison with the same manoeuvre on move 5, here the reply 6...♗e7 has some additional drawbacks (after 7 dxc5, the c5-pawn is not attacked by the bishop), but the move 6...♖c6 has additional pluses: the a5-bishop is defended and does not have to exchange itself on d2, thus saving Black a tempo, while the loss of castling after 7 ♖b5

♞xd4 8 ♞xd4 cxd4 9 ♟b5+ ♟d7 10 ♟xd7+ ♟xd7 is no problem at all.

b) Another move of independent significance is 6 ♖g4 ♞e7 7 dxc5 (here, 7 b4 is bad due to 7...cxb4 8 ♞b5 b3+ 9 c3 ♞f5) 7...♟xc3+ 8 bxc3. Black can now follow Botvinnik's line 8...♞d7, offering the traditional trade of the kingside pawns for preponderance in the centre, but more usually he prefers 8...♞g6. The discussion continues in the variation 9 ♞f3 ♖a5 (a sound and sensible alternative is 9...♞d7 10 ♟d3 ♖c7 11 0-0 ♞xc5) 10 ♟d2 ♞d7 11 c4 ♖c7 12 cxd5 0-0.

### 6...cxd4

Defenders willing to try out 6...cxb4, allowing the white bishop access to the powerful a3-f8 diagonal, are few and far between. White demonstrated a convincing refutation in Topalov-Ermenkov, Burgas 1994: 7 ♞b5 ♞c6 8 axb4 ♟xb4+ 9 c3 ♟e7 10 ♟a3 ♞h6 11 ♟xe7 ♖xe7 12 ♞d6+ ♟f8 13 ♟b5, followed by a textbook blockade of the dark squares.

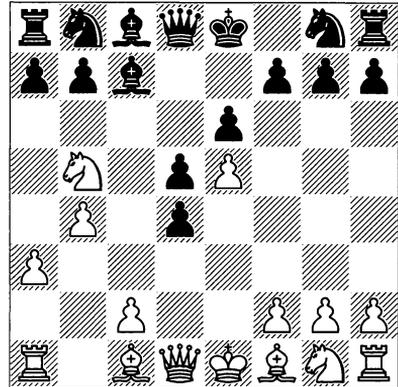
### 7 ♖g4

Without doubt, this is the sharpest and most principled continuation. One question arises – is there any difference between the immediate queen move and the preliminary 7 bxa5 dxc3? In fact, there is. After the move in the game, 7...♟f8 allows White to play 8 ♞b5, keeping his queenside intact, whereas once it has been compromised by 7 bxa5 dxc3, Black has greater reason to decide to keep his own kingside in one piece, by meeting 8 ♖g4 with 8...♟f8 or even 8...g6.

However, the most natural and popular continuation is 7 ♞b5 ♟c7 (*D*).

Here too White can eliminate the dark-squared bishop, but the difference is that it is difficult to imagine how a piece can make its way into d6. We should also note the following points. The e5-pawn cannot be maintained except by playing f4, which shuts in the c1-bishop and creates a weakness at e3. On the other hand, the move f4 opens the possibility of the further advance f5, and with most of the opponent's army concentrated on the other flank, an attack with even the minimum force can become dangerous. In addition, the advanced queenside pawns control extra space, but if they become

W



blockaded, there is the risk that a whole complex of weaknesses will result.

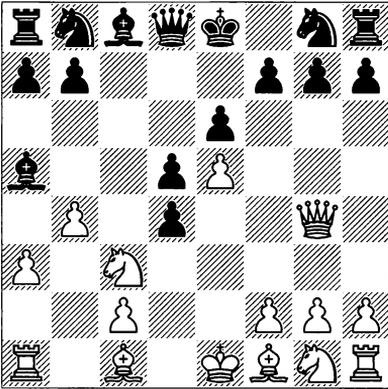
First of all White must decide which bishop to remove with the b5-knight. The normal criteria for determining the strength of bishops, i.e. on which squares one's pawns are located, are not very useful here – even with most of his pawns on light squares, Black's light-squared bishop can become very strong on b5 or a4. If, after 8 f4 ♟d7, White decides to go for his opponent's dark-squared bishop, play may develop as follows: 9 ♞xc7+ ♖xc7 10 ♞f3 ♟a4 11 ♟d3 ♞e7 (the endgame after 11...♖c3+ 12 ♟d2 ♖xd3 is also fine, but retaining the queens is even more promising) 12 ♟b2 ♞bc6 13 ♞xd4 ♖b6 14 ♖d2 a5 15 ♟c3 axb4 16 axb4 ♟d7, Bluvshstein-Lputian, Calvia Olympiad 2004, with fully equal play. The exchange of the other bishop also suits Black fine: 9 ♞f3 ♟xb5 10 ♟xb5+ ♞c6 (or 10...♞d7) with various possibilities of counterplay. There is also a third possibility, namely the simple recapture 9 ♞xd4, but here too Black has no problems.

We now return to the position after 7 ♖g4 (*D*):

### 7...♞e7 8 bxa5

Here too there is 8 ♞b5, when after the forced 8...♟c7 we have yet another example of the black kingside pawns being removed, in return for some concessions by White in the centre: 9 ♖xg7 ♖g8 10 ♖xh7. This version is distinguished by the fact that White manages to keep his queenside intact, but in return, must part with the e5-pawn. Taking it immediately is not good: 10...♟xe5 11 ♞f3 ♖h8 12 ♖d3 ♟f6

B

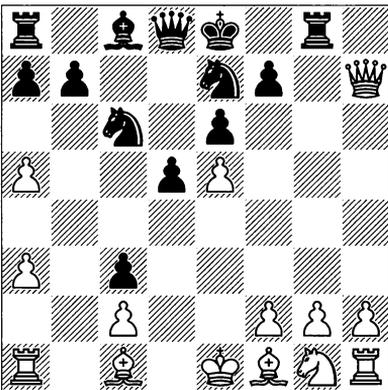


13  $\text{c}4$ . Therefore Black should prefer 10...a6 11  $\text{c}3$   $\text{c}7$  12  $\text{e}2$   $\text{e}5$  13  $\text{d}3$  (or 13  $\text{b}2$   $\text{c}7$  14  $\text{f}4$   $\text{b}c6$  15  $\text{d}3$   $\text{f}5$ ) 13... $\text{c}7$  14  $\text{f}4$   $\text{f}6$ , retaining definite counterplay.

8... $\text{dxc}3$  9  $\text{c}g7$   $\text{g}8$  10  $\text{c}xh7$   $\text{b}c6$  (D)

A different move-order, 10... $\text{c}7$  11  $\text{c}f3$   $\text{d}7$ , is rarely seen. The idea is to avoid the variation with the white bishop developing to b5, but nowadays such a plan is not considered dangerous anyway.

W



We should take note of several features of the present position, which is a critical one for the 5... $\text{a}5$  variation. White has a potentially dangerous passed h-pawn and the two bishops, while if White succeeds in castling, he will have the safer king. The a5-pawn does not look like much of an extra pawn, but it is extra, and will remain so unless Black expends a tempo in taking it off, a tempo he may prefer to spend on achieving other ends.

In comparison with the analogous position reached in the main 5... $\text{c}3$ + variation, here the centre is determined, and the white knight is freed from having to defend c3. Instead, it can come to an active post on f3, threatening to jump to g5, and also defending the e5-pawn, thus avoiding the need for the move f4. Black is ahead in development and has the better pawn-centre, and White's pawns are weak, the c2 weakness being especially important. The majority of his pluses are of a temporary nature, with the result that energetic play is required for Black; otherwise White's advantages will become more important.

11  $\text{c}f3$

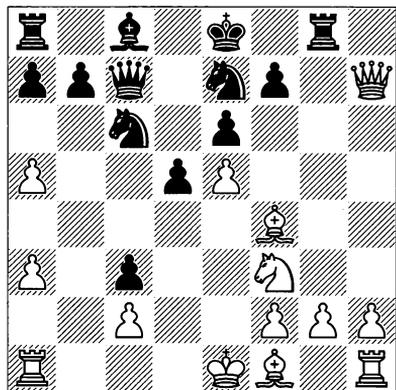
The other defence of e5, 11  $\text{f}4$ , also leads to a highly interesting battle. Black usually continues 11... $\text{c}xa5$  (Vaganian's idea 11... $\text{d}4$  also deserves attention). One interesting plan is that successfully implemented in the game Kulaots-Vaganian, Calvia Olympiad 2004: 12  $\text{c}f3$   $\text{d}7$  13  $\text{b}1$  0-0-0 14  $\text{d}3$   $\text{d}4$  15  $\text{g}3$   $\text{b}8$  followed by the transfer of the bishop via c8 to a6.

11... $\text{c}7$

Black has a choice – either invite the bishop to f4, or capture with 11... $\text{c}xa5$ . After 12  $\text{b}1$  (a double-edged struggle results from 12  $\text{c}g5$   $\text{f}8$  13  $\text{f}4$   $\text{d}7$  14  $\text{b}1$  0-0-0 15  $\text{c}xf7$   $\text{xf}7$  16  $\text{c}xf7$   $\text{e}8$ , sacrificing the exchange to get through to the pawn at c2) 12... $\text{c}7$  13  $\text{c}f4$   $\text{d}7$  14  $\text{g}3$  0-0-0 15  $\text{d}3$  the difference from the main game is that the a5-pawn is gone, but White has time to activate his rook via b1.

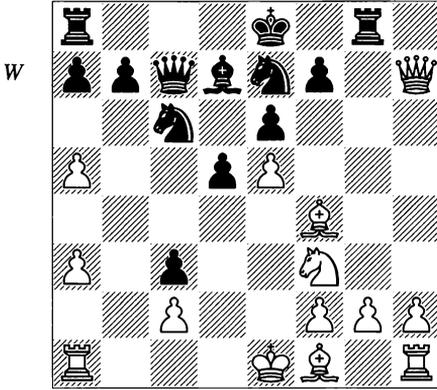
12  $\text{c}f4$  (D)

B

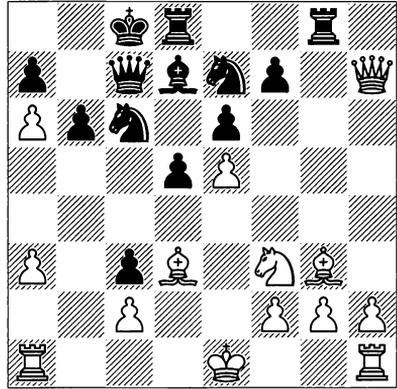


**12...♔d7 (D)**

The attempts to make use of the last chance of taking the a5-pawn, and so eliminating the possibility of a5-a6, have not generally been successful. In the game Fressinet-Lputian, Internet 2004, after 12...♖xa5 there followed 13 ♖b1 ♔d7 (13...♖xa3 also looks suspicious) 14 ♘g5 ♗xe5 15 h4 and Black was in trouble.



B



The rook is in trouble and Black did not manage to consolidate.

**14 ♘g3 0-0-0 15 ♔d3 (D)**

Another critical position, in our day the key to the controversy over the variation 5...♔a5.

**15...♖h8**

The first move tried here was 15...♗g6, and then 15...♗df8 was seen in several games. Interesting complications occurred in Klimov-Gorovykh, St Petersburg 2007: 16 0-0 ♗a5 17 ♖h4 ♖c5 18 ♖f6 (moving out of the attack with tempo and seemingly preventing 18...♔b5) 18...♔b5 (nevertheless!) 19 ♔xb5 ♗f5 20 ♔d3 ♖g6 21 ♖xf5 exf5 22 ♔xf5+ ♖e6 and the queen proved to be stronger than the pieces. Now the discussion centres around the game continuation.

**16 ♖g7**

Again, after the capture 16 ♖xf7, the same exchange sacrifice 16...♗df8 17 ♖g7 ♖hg8 18 ♖h6 ♖xf3 leads to complications which are not unfavourable for Black, and therefore the search for an advantage starts with the queen's indirect route back home.

**16...♗dg8 17 ♖f6 ♔e8 18 0-0 ♖h5 19 ♖f4 ♗f5 20 ♔xf5**

White cannot have been too happy at exchanging off this bishop, but the black knights control too many squares and it is hard to see a sensible alternative plan. Simply defending the e5-pawn by 20 ♖fe1 does not in itself solve the problem of finding a plan. Black too does not find it easy to identify a clear object of attack, but he can start by transferring his queen to c5.

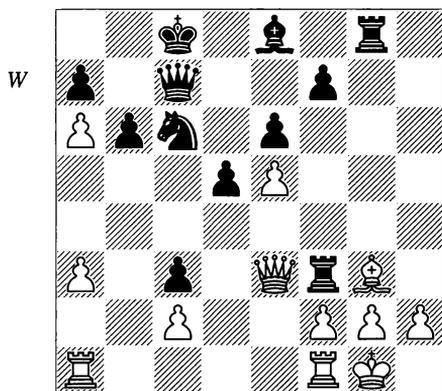
**13...a6**

White usually does not allow himself to be distracted by the a-pawn, and chooses 13 ♔d3. The critical position arises after 13...0-0-0 14 ♔g3 ♖xa5 15 0-0 ♖h8 16 ♖g7 (on 16 ♖xf7 ♗df8 17 ♖g7 ♖hg8 18 ♖h6 the exchange sacrifice 18...♖xf3 gave Black sufficient counterplay in Galkin-Khalifman, Hoogeveen 2000) 16...d4 17 ♖g4 ♗f5 18 ♖fe1 (worse is 18 ♖fb1 ♗xg3 19 ♖xg3 ♖c7 20 ♗f1 ♗dg8 21 ♖f4 f5 with advantage for Black, J.Polgar-Khalifman, Hoogeveen 2000).

**13...b6**

It is clear that the interpolation of the last two moves favours White, in comparison with the variations given above. The question therefore arises as to whether Black is obliged to play 13...b6, or whether he can use the tempo more effectively by 13...0-0-0. On the basis of the game Volokitin-Lputian, Calvia Olympiad 2004, it seems that he cannot: 14 axb7+ ♗b8 15 ♖d3 ♖g4 16 g3 ♗g6 17 ♖xc3 ♗xf4 18 h3 ♗xh3 19 ♖xh3 ♗xe5 (the immediate 19...♖e4+ is also bad after 20 ♔e2 ♗xe5 21 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 22 ♗g5! ♖a4 23 f4 f6 24 ♗h7) 20 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 21 ♗xe5 ♖e4+ 22 ♗d2 ♖xe5 23 ♔d3.

20...♖xf5 21 ♖e3 ♖xf3 (D)



What does Black get for this sacrifice of the exchange? The main point is that, for the moment, while the position remains closed, the normal piece values are changed. The knight could potentially pose a danger to the c3-pawn, an important piece in Black's scheme of counterplay, while the knight also has ambitions to reach the d6 or f6 outposts. Furthermore, the scope of the white rooks is relatively limited in this structure. The next few moves are largely forced.

22 ♖xf3 ♘d4 23 ♖d3 ♖c5

Creating the threat of ...♙b5.

24 a4

Attacking the knight with 24 ♖fd1 proves to be a loss of tempo: 24...♖g4 25 a4 ♖e4 and, for example, 26 ♖db1 ♙xa4 27 ♖xa4 ♘e2+ 28 ♙h1 ♘g3+ 29 ♖xg3 ♖xa4 30 ♖g8+ ♙d7 31 ♖xf7+ ♖e7 with an unclear position.

24...♖g4

The black rook stands well on its fifth rank, where it restricts the mobility of the enemy bishop.

25 ♖fb1

Only with this move does the game assume an independent course. Its immediate predecessor was Lopez Martinez-Bartel, Portuguese Team Ch, Evora 2006: 25 ♖h7 ♖g6 26 ♖h8 ♙d7 27 ♖ab1 ♘xc2 28 ♖b5 ♖c4 29 ♖f8 ♘d4, and White did not manage to create any real threats, while the c-pawn eventually decided the game.

25...♘f5

White has repelled the first invasion, and his future plans to strengthen his position depend on finding a way to activate his bishop. It cannot emerge via f2, and Black is ready anyway to exchange it off at the last moment. Given that before White can play f3 he needs to make a preparatory move, such as ♙h1, a move like 25...♙c6 deserves attention, keeping White's hands tied for a little longer.

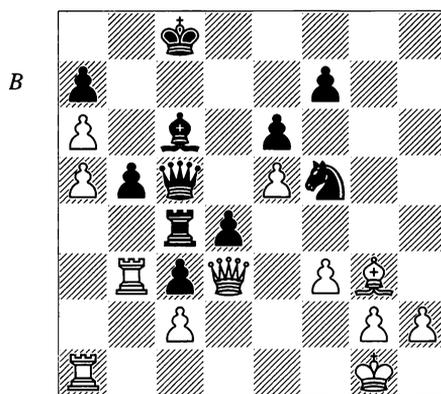
26 ♖b3 ♖c4 27 ♖aa3

As long as the c4-rook is over-protected, the advance 27 a5 can be met by 27...bxa5.

27...d4 28 a5 b5 29 ♖a1 ♙c6

A very sharp and unclear game would result from the transfer of the knight to d5 (via e7), and if necessary to b4, to relieve the blockade on d3.

30 f3 (D)



Agreeing to surrender the e5-pawn, to force simplification. Otherwise, the transfer of the knight to d5 would be highly unpleasant for White.

30...♘xg3 31 hxg3 ♖xe5 32 ♙f2 ♖g5

White's rooks now have some scope. As well as the h-file, Black must also beware of the rooks doubling on the b-file, with the threat of ♖b4, or a return exchange sacrifice on b5. Here, he could have taken the h-file by 32...♖h5 33 ♖ab1 ♖c5 34 ♖h1 ♖a4 or 34 g4 ♙c7.

33 ♖h1 e5 34 ♖h8+ ♙c7 35 ♖h7 ♖f6 36 ♙g1 ♖a4?

The first serious mistake, and already decisive. Black allows the sacrifice on b5, which he cannot accept, whereupon both white rooks start

playing and his counterattack is overwhelming. The position would have remained unclear after 36...♖c5 or 36...♜d6.

37 ♖xb5 e4 38 fxe4 ♖a1+ 39 ♜h2 ♜f1 40 ♜xf1 ♖xf1

In the resulting endgame, the doubled a-pawns prove faster than the threatening-looking pair of black pawns in the centre.

41 ♖c5 ♜d6 42 ♖c4 ♜xe4 43 ♖h8 ♜d5 44 ♖c7 ♜xc2 45 ♖xa7 ♜e4 46 ♖d8+ ♜c4 47 ♖e7 c2 48 ♖c8+ ♜d3 49 ♖xc2

Forcing an easily winning rook ending.

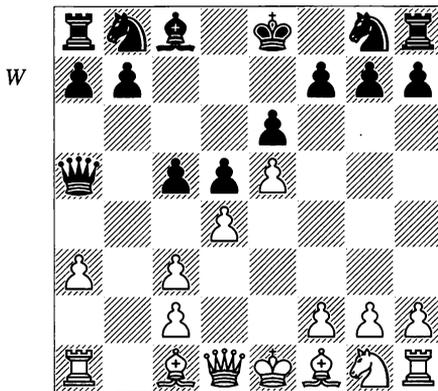
49...♜xc2 50 ♖xe4 ♖f5 51 ♖xd4 ♖xa5 52 ♖d6 f5 53 ♜g1 ♖a1+ 54 ♜f2 ♖a3 55 ♖f6 ♜d2 56 ♖xf5 ♖xa6 57 ♖d5+ ♜c3 58 ♜e3 ♜c4 59 ♖d8 ♖f6 60 g4 ♖f7 61 ♜e4 1-0

## Game 20 [C18]

### Oleg Korneev – Ildar Ibragimov

Montreal 2006

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♜b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♜xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♜a5 (D)



This continuation has become popular in recent years. The idea is to blockade the queenside immediately.

7 ♜d2

The move 7 ♜d2 has hardly ever been played, but leads to a less well studied position. With his two bishops, White plans to open the position with dxc5 and then c4, and to use the dark-squared bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal. Black has many reasonable ways to continue, aiming to develop rapidly and break in the centre; for example, 7...♘c6 8 ♘f3 f6. He should avoid the early exchange of queens, which is only good if he can force the move c3 from White (for example, by attacking the d4-pawn when his rook is on c8, so that ♜c3 is impossible because of ...♜xe5) and direct his knight via a5 to c4. As

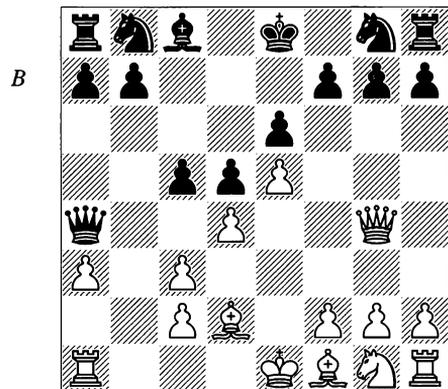
long as White's bishop controls a5, he usually has the advantage in such endings.

7...♜a4

The queen takes aim at three different pawns, moves out of the potential discovered attack from the bishop, blockades the queenside, and prepares the exchange of light-squared bishops.

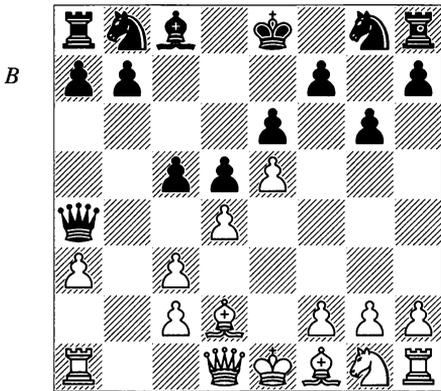
8 ♜b1

This is one of two main options. The other is the attack on the undefended g7-pawn, with a move typical throughout the Winawer: 8 ♜g4 (D).



With the black queen on a4, and c3 defended, the standard reply 8...♘e7 is clearly inferior, since after taking on g7 and h7, the white queen will defend c2. Even if Black wins back one pawn, he will have no compensation for the second, and therefore he must instead choose between 8...♜f8 and 8...g6. The latter, as normal

in such positions, is not terribly attractive, but it has more basis than usual in this case, since the need to defend c2 forces White into some kind of concession, be it in the form of material, time (9 ♖d1), or an unnatural development of one of his pieces (9 ♖a2, for example). Almost all of the various possibilities have been tried, but the most popular move these days is to retreat the queen by 9 ♖d1 (*D*).



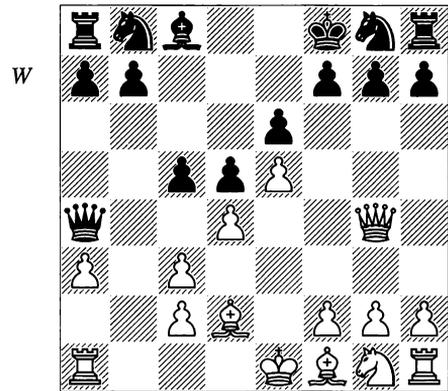
Two tempi have then been spent to achieve the aim of weakening the dark squares in the enemy camp. Now the black king will be in serious danger on the kingside, and since his residence on the other wing is none too safe either, he may well end up having to stay in the centre. The question then is whether, and how quickly, White will be able to get through to him. White does not mind sacrificing the d4-pawn, as opposed to that on c2, since he wants to open the position anyway.

After the instructive way in which Anand executed his opponent in the game Anand-Nikolić, FIDE Knockout, Groningen 1997, there have been few players willing to take the d4-pawn: 9...cxd4 10 ♖b1 d3 11 ♗xd3! ♖xa3 12 ♗f3 ♖c5 13 h4! h6 14 0-0 and castling on either side looks very dubious for Black. White's advantage in development quickly proved decisive.

Hence, Black usually adopts his other standard plan, for which the queen is well-placed on a4: 9...b6 10 h4 h5 11 ♗d3 ♗a6 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 ♗f3 ♗d7 14 0-0 ♗e7 15 ♗g5 ♗f5 16 ♖e1 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 ♖xd1, Bobras-Akopian,

Port Erin 2006, and with queens off the board, Black has more chances of equality.

Players who are more scrupulous about avoiding weaknesses prefer the move 8...♗f8 (*D*), but this also has its drawbacks – the king loses the right to castle and it will be a long time before the black rooks can be connected.



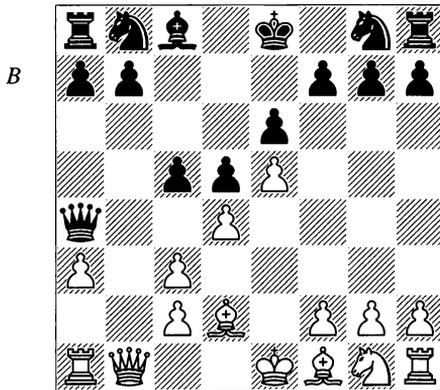
Here too, the retreat 9 ♖d1 is far the most popular move, thanks largely to the capable hands of Fischer, who was one of the first to employ the idea. Once again, Black's main idea for counterplay is based on the exchange of light-squared bishops: 9...b6 10 h4 ♗a6 11 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 12 h5 h6 13 ♖h4 ♖c8 14 ♖f4 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♗e7 (taking on c2 is dangerous: 15...♖xc2 16 ♗c3 ♖b3 17 ♖f3 ♗e7 18 ♗e2 and it is not clear how Black can untangle) 16 ♖f3 ♗e8, Cheparinov-Nikolić, Wijk aan Zee 2005, with chances for both sides.

Occasionally, White tries to develop his kingside initiative in other ways. We shall consider 8 h4, with the idea of a further advance of the h-pawn, plus the development of the rook along the third rank, with pressure along the f- and g-files. Kingside castling is hardly feasible for Black, but queenside castling is much more realistic: 8...♗c6 (the plan with 8...b6 is rather slow, as shown by 9 h5 h6 10 ♖g4 ♗f8 11 ♖h3 ♗a6 12 ♖f3 or 12 ♖g3, nor is it clear that weakening the light squares on the queenside is such a good idea when the black king will have to castle that side; instead, the bishop is sufficiently well-posted on d7) 9 ♗f3 ♗ge7 (9...f6 is interesting, with counterplay in the centre) 10

h5 h6 11 ♖h4 c4 12 ♜f4 ♘d7, Khalifman-Shulman, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005.

The most natural move, 8 ♘f3, is often a prelude to the opening of the centre with c4 or dxc5, while after 8...c4, the strategic picture is similar to that which occurs in the present game.

We now return to 8 ♗b1 (D):



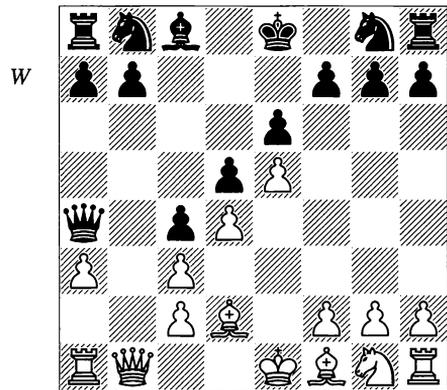
The continuations looked at above are all based broadly on trying to exploit the fact that on a4, the black queen is slightly cut off from the centre of operations. The text-move instead tries to exploit the weakness of the a4 post itself – the threat is ♘b5+.

### 8...c4 (D)

The other attempt to meet White's threat, 8...a6, is seen more rarely. After 9 ♗b3 ♗xb3 10 cxb3 ♘c6 no advantage is promised by 11 ♘f3 ♘a5 12 ♜b1 c4 13 bxc4 dxc4 14 ♘g5 ♘e7 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♘d6 b5, when the position of the knight on d6 is offset by Black's absolute control of the no less valuable d5-square, the blockade of the white central pawns, and Black's extra pawn on the queenside. More promising is 11 dxc5, to obtain a queenside majority himself, with the two bishops providing White with an additional incentive to open the position. After 11...♗xe5 12 ♘f4 ♘g6 13 ♘d6 e5 14 0-0-0 White's chances were preferable in Areshchenko-Socko, Bundesliga 2006/7. The text-move is better-founded.

### 9 ♘h3

The position which has arisen, and the plans of the two sides, reminds one of Game 2. The



only real difference is that, instead of one pawn-island, White has an isolated pawn on a3 and doubled c-pawns, which of course gives Black more counterplay. Black's general set-up is the same as in Game 2 – queenside castling, counterplay in the centre with ...f6 or ...f5 if the chance arises, and material gain on the queenside. White is obliged to take action on the side where he has more space, and, hence, room for manoeuvre. The position of the kings is in this case of secondary importance, since the main aim of the advance is not a mating attack, but the creation and exploitation of weaknesses. White has many possible variations, set-ups and move-orders, and we shall just look at some of the most logical:

a) The standard pawn raid 9 h4 seizes space and to some extent fixes the enemy's pawn-structure. We shall mention a couple of typical responses at Black's disposal:

a1) 9...♘c6 10 h5 h6 11 g3 ♘d7 12 ♘h3 ♘ge7 13 ♘e2 0-0-0 14 ♘f4 ♗b8 15 0-0 ♘c8 16 ♗h2 ♘b6, Kobaliya-Akopian, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2006. Black directs his knight to a4, to tie White down to the weakness at c3.

a2) He can start counterplay in the centre, with the aim of securing more space for his pieces: 9...f6 10 h5 fxe5 11 dxe5 ♘c6 12 f4 ♘h6 13 ♘e2 ♘d7 14 ♗b2 0-0-0 15 ♘d4, Yakovenko-Zhang Pengxiang, China-Russia, Ergun 2006.

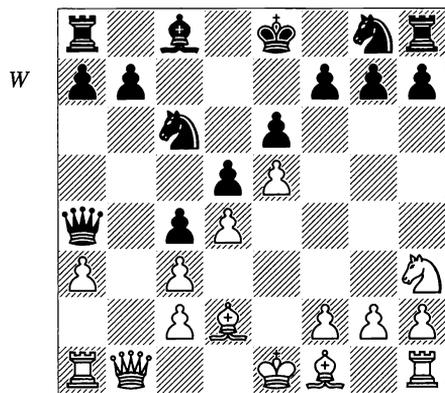
b) 9 ♘e2 has the aim of directing the knight to h5. In this case, Black can answer ...g6 with relatively little risk, since it is hard for White to exploit the dark-square weaknesses with his

queen and bishop not yet active: 9...♖c6 10 ♘g3 ♙d7 11 ♗h5 g6 12 ♗g3 0-0-0 13 ♙e2 f6, Yakovenko-Zhang Pengxiang, Taiyuan 2006.

The text-move also envisages the knight march to h5, but on the one hand, without obstructing his other pieces, and on the other, retaining for the moment greater control over the central squares.

9...♖c6 (D)

The question arises whether Black can exploit the knight's distance from the e5-square to challenge immediately with 9...f6. In the event of 10 exf6 ♗xf6 Black hopes to achieve the favourable advance ...e5. It is more logical to maintain the pawn on e5, planning to answer the exchange on e5 with dxe5, when White has a pawn-majority on the kingside and can use the d4-square for his pieces. But Black is not obliged to hurry with the exchange on e5, and he showed an interesting way to handle the position in Konguvel-Moskalenko, Andorra 2006: 10 f4 ♖c6 11 ♗f2 ♗ge7 12 g3 0-0 13 ♙h3 ♖b8 14 0-0 ♙d7 15 ♙d1 f5 16 ♙g2 b5 17 h3 ♙a5 18 ♙e2 ♙c7 with the idea of the standard advance ...a5 and ...b4. Of course, this approach needs further tests.



10 ♗f4 ♙d7

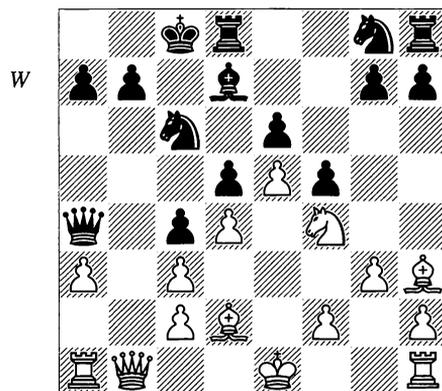
Practically the same position as in the previous note, but with the knight on f4. From there, it can still jump to h5, but it can also choose the different route f4-g2-e3, from where it will support the f5 break, as well as threatening sacrifices on d5 or c4. Black must now decide whether to prepare a defence of g7 which does

not involve weakening his dark squares, i.e. 10...♗ge7 11 ♗h5 ♖g8. However, the knight on h5 is unpleasant, supporting an advance with f4, g4 and f5, while preventing Black from countering by a move of his own f-pawn. Alternatively, Black can continue his development, planning to meet 11 ♗h5 with 11...g6, when the f6-square is defended. The prophylactic 10...g6, aiming to free the g8-knight from having to defend f6, does not look like such a high priority.

11 g3

Incidentally, it goes almost without saying that taking on b7 is bad now; after 11 ♙xb7 ♖b8 12 ♙c7 ♙xc2 the queens are placed symmetrically *vis-à-vis* one another, but there is a big difference in their respective scope.

11...0-0-0 12 ♙h3 f5 (D)



In analogous positions, Black usually develops according to the scheme ...g6, ...♙b8 and ...♗ge7-c8-b6 with the idea of replacing the queen with the knight as the blockader on a4. However, this has certain problems, notably the fact that as soon as the queen moves from a4, White can advance his a-pawn, offering it as a sacrifice, to obtain another open line against the enemy king. Such play usually develops in his favour. The move played in the game is a new approach. The threat is ...g5, and if White captures *en passant* 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 0-0, Black has several tempting possibilities, such as 14...♗e4, 14...♖he8 or 14...e5. Consequently, White's reply, exposing the e6-pawn, seems best.

**13 g4 fxg4**

13...g5 unwisely provokes a sacrifice on e6, but 13...h6 and 13...g7 are both interesting. Then it would be risky to grab the pawn by 14 gx5 hxf5 15 xf5 exf5 16 hxd5 a5, with the potential ...xe5 and the white king exposed.

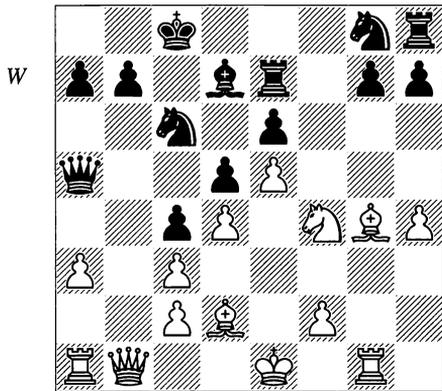
**14 xg4 e8 15 h4**

The sacrifice 15 hxd5 is incorrect: 15...exd5 16 xd7+ xd7 17 xb7+ e6 18 xg7 hge7, but with the inclusion of the moves 15 h3 h6 it works, because of the bad position of the knight on h6. White instead prefers to include some non-forcing moves, which will be useful however the game develops. Planning to develop pressure on the g-file, he hopes that the move played will prove useful for the later attack, if he manages to induce the move ...g6.

**15...e7**

But the opponent answers with an apparently mysterious rook move. It is also multi-functional: defence of the g7-pawn, prophylaxis against a possible sacrifice on d5, and freeing the e8-square for a possible redeployment of the bishop.

**16 g1 a5 (D)**



Preparing to return the queen to the main theatre of operations, and in the process, tying the bishop to the defence of c3.

**17 h3 h6 18 h5?!**

Play would have been about equal after a move such as 18 b2, gradually improving the position of White's pieces. Instead he decides that it is time to start forcing matters. Within a

few moves, it becomes apparent that his opponent has calculated more accurately.

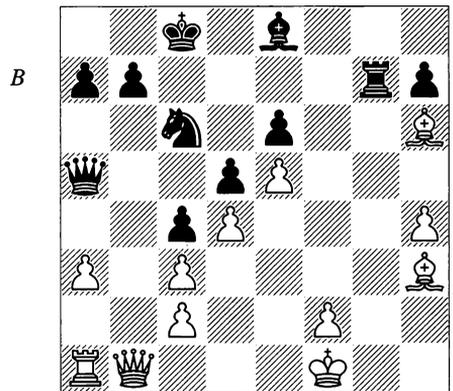
**18...e8 19 h7**

It was still not too late to return with 19 h4.

**19...g8 20 f1?**

The losing move. White could have maintained approximate equality by 20 b2 g7 21 xg7 xg7 22 h6 (stealing another black pawn loses: 22 xe6+? b8 23 xh6 g6) 22...g1+ and after both 23 e2 h5+ 24 f3 g6 25 b1 c7 26 g5 f7 27 f6 b6 with the threat of a promising exchange sacrifice, and 23 d2 xa1 24 xe6+ b8 25 xa1 h4 play assumes a double-edged character. Instead, after the continuation chosen in the game, it is all over.

**20...g7 21 xg7 xg7 22 h6 (D)**



**22...xc3**

The move White had underestimated. Offering a choice of an exchange or a pawn, Black brings his remaining forces to bear against the enemy king, and White's own pieces cannot get back in time to help.

**23 xe6+ d7 24 xd7+ xd7 25 e3 h4 26 e1 xe1+**

The simplest. The rook ending is winning by force.

**27 xe1 h2 28 e2 h3+ 29 xe3 d4 30 e4 c3 31 e1 d3 32 d1 d2 33 c4+ c7 34 xc7+ xc7**

And in a pawn ending, if the move can be transferred to the opponent, three connected passed pawns win by themselves.

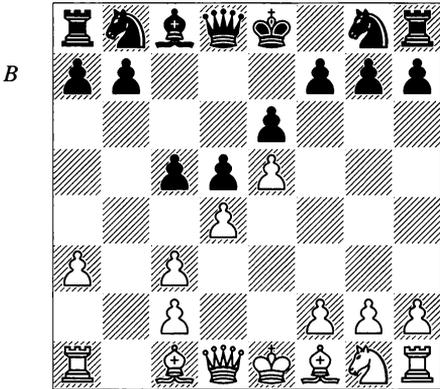
**35 a4 b6 36 f4 a6 37 f5 d7 38 f6 e6 0-1**

## Game 21 [C19]

## Lazaro Bruzon Bautista – Walter Arencibia

## Capablanca Memorial, Havana 2003

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙xc3+  
6 bxc3 (D)



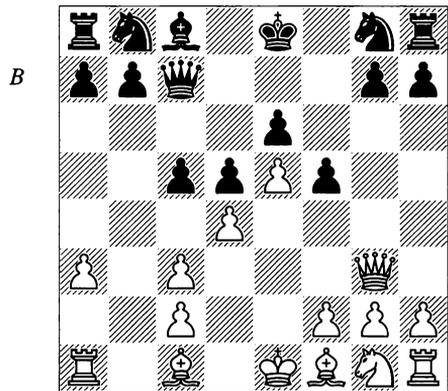
6...♗e7

Apart from 6...♙a5, examined in the previous game, and the main line 6...♗e7, there are two other moves that deserve consideration:

a) 6...♗c6 is a relatively fresh idea. Now 7 ♗f3 or 7 a4 returns us to well-known variations, but in that case Black has avoided the line 6...♗e7 7 ♙g4. If White answers 6...♗c6 with 7 ♙g4, Black plans to reply 7...g6. In the majority of cases, this move is considered dubious – are there grounds for thinking otherwise in this case? The adherents of the line hope to show that the weakening of the dark squares is of a purely temporary character, and that White will not be able to fix the weaknesses, nor to open the position. By giving the right of first development to his colleague, the g8-knight retains control of the hole on f6 and supports a future advance of the f-pawn, which if achieved, will begin Black's counterplay on the kingside: 8 ♗f3 ♙d7 9 ♙f4 f5 10 h4 h6 11 ♙d2 c4 12 a4 ♙a5 13 ♙e2 ♗ge7 14 0-0 0-0-0, Cheparinov-Ponomarev, Cuernavaca 2006.

b) The move 6...♙c7 has a longer history. Here too, only the reply 7 ♙g4 is of independent significance, on which Black replies 7...f5,

using the queen to defend g7 along the second rank (the move 7...f6 has the same idea, but is less good, since the tension created in the centre usually rebounds in White's favour). Usually White retreats with 8 ♙g3 (D), whereupon Black has two conceptually different plans:



b1) The quieter option is 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♗e7 10 ♙d2 0-0 11 ♙d3 b6 12 ♗e2 ♙a6 13 ♗f4 ♙d7 14 h4 ♙xd3 15 ♙xd3 (the more committal 15 cxd3 also has its adherents – the move covers the c4-square, but gives Black the superior pawn-structure) 15...♙c8 16 h5 ♙c4 17 h6 g6, when each player has his trumps on his own side of the board.

b2) The second option is sharper and much more irrational, and was used in Tal-Botvinnik, World Ch (1), Moscow 1960: the immediate 8...♗e7, giving up the pawns on the kingside. After 9 ♙xg7 ♙g8 10 ♙xh7 cxd4, the f5-pawn blocks the queen's diagonal and delays its return home, as a result of which the position of White's king is more dangerous. Two options are popular in this position:

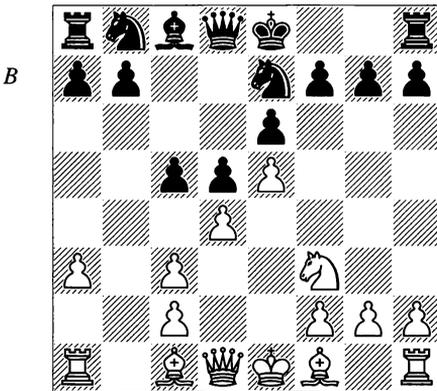
b21) One begins with the paradoxical 11 ♗d1 – the king remains in the centre, but steps out of the way of the immediate tactical threats, while a more secure home for the king is not obvious anyway. A typical continuation then is

11...♙d7 12 ♖h5+ ♗d8 13 ♘f3 ♗xc3 14 ♖a2 ♗bc6 15 ♖b2 ♗c7 with sharp play, Nakamura-E.Berg, Bermuda 2003.

b22) The second, more standard, choice is 11 ♗e2 ♗bc6 12 h4 dxc3 13 ♙g5 ♗xe5 14 ♗h5+ ♗g6 15 f4 ♗e4 16 ♖h3 d4 17 ♗h7 ♗ge7 18 0-0-0 and Black did not manage to hold the balance in E.Berg-Berelovich, European Clubs Cup, Fügen 2006.

### 7 ♗f3 (D)

Other moves will be examined in the remaining games. For now, we shall only note that the move 7 a4 usually transposes into the same positions. If the pawn remains on a3, it is less vulnerable, but it limits the activity of its own dark-squared bishop, and further restricts White's space on the queenside. The choice of move-order gives the opponent various different options.



### 7...b6

In particular, this standard plan of exchanging light-squared bishops, if met by 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♙d3, can now lead to the blockading plan 9...♙a4, which is impossible after 7 a4.

Black has tried all the normal moves in this position: 7...♗bc6, 7...♗c7, 7...♗a5, 7...♙d7, 7...h6 (neutralizing the possible ♗g5) and the move in the game. Here, we present two recent examples:

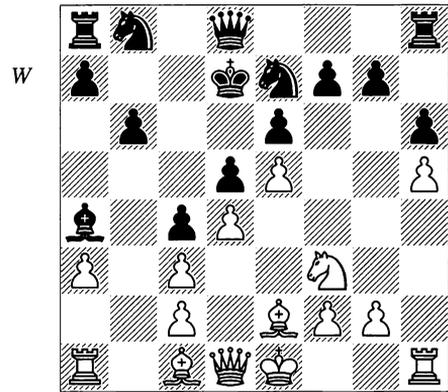
a) 7...♗c7 8 h4 ♙d7 9 h5 ♙a4 (creating a threat to the c2-pawn, and dispensing with prophylaxis on the kingside) 10 h6 gxh6 11 ♙d3?! (11 ♙xh6 cxd4 12 cxd4 ♙xc2 13 ♖c1 ♙xd1 14 ♖xc7 keeps the initiative) 11...cxd4 12 cxd4

♗c3+ 13 ♙d2 ♗xd3 with a comfortable endgame, Bologan-Bareev, Internet blitz 2005.

b) 7...♗a5 8 ♙d2 ♙d7 9 h4 ♗bc6 10 h5 0-0-0 (10...h6 is better, so as not to allow the kingside to be broken up) 11 h6 gxh6 12 ♙d3 ♖dg8 13 ♗f1 c4 14 ♙e2 ♗f5 15 a4 f6 16 exf6 ♖g6 17 ♗h4 ♗xh4 18 ♖xh4 ♖xf6 and White has an advantage, Spraggett-Fernandez Romero, Seville 2007.

### 8 a4

If White wishes to preserve the bishops, he can choose 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♙d3 c4 (there is no pressing need to hurry with closing the queenside; the immediate 9...♙a4 is also perfectly playable) 10 ♙e2 ♙a4 11 h4 h6 12 h5 ♗d7 (D).



This is Yusupov's move, and the quickest way to transfer the queen to h7. 13 0-0 ♗g8 14 g3 ♗a6 (the knight heads for c7, so as to replace the bishop as the guard of the e6-pawn after a later ...f6 break) 15 ♗h4 ♖f8 16 ♙g4 ♗h7 17 ♖a2, Leitão-Arencibia, Capablanca Memorial, Havana 2003. The rook on a2 detracts from White's attacking potential on the kingside, and Black has adequate counterplay. The attempt to defend c2 with the king on d2 lends impetus to the attack with ...a5 and ...b5-b4.

### 8...♙a6 9 ♙xa6

The line 9 ♙b5+ ♙xb5 10 axb5 is not considered dangerous. Black has various ways to achieve a satisfactory position – we shall illustrate just one: 10...♗d7 11 ♖b1 a6 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 ♙a3 axb5 14 ♙xc5 0-0 15 ♗d3 ♖c8, Varavin-Bareev, Russian Ch, Elista 1996. If the moves 11 ♗e2 c4 are included, then the defence

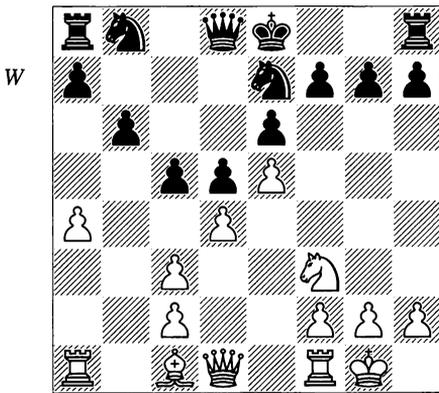
of the pawn by 12 ♖b1 a6 13 bxa6 ♗xa6 leaves the bishop unable to take up its active position on a3, while the pawn sacrifice 12 ♗a3 (or 12 0-0) is principled, but double-edged.

### 9...♗xa6 10 0-0

White has two plans: either to seek the initiative on the kingside after ♗g5, or to open the centre and enhance the scope of his bishop. The move 10 ♖e2 doesn't help White in either case – in the first plan, the queen wastes a tempo taking up a less active square, while in the second, Black gets the chance to recapture on c5 with a piece: 10...♗b8 11 dxc5 ♖c7 12 ♗a3 ♗d7.

### 10...♗b8 (D)

There is no need to hurry with this manoeuvre. 10...0-0 is quite possible, since there seems to be no way to exploit the double attack on a6 and h7 from d3.



### 11 dxc5

White does not achieve anything much by 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♖h5 g6 13 ♖h3 cxd4 14 cxd4 ♗bc6 15 ♗f3 ♗d7, Karpov-Short, London 1982. The move played aims to increase the scope of the bishop and show that the c5-pawn is relatively weak.

### 11...bxc5 12 c4 h6

White's idea was once tested twice in Candidates matches. On both occasions, Black replied 12...0-0. Evidently, in the present game, Black was afraid of Geller's suggested improvement (see the note to White's 16th move below), and chose instead the prophylactic text-move.

### 13 cxd5 ♖xd5

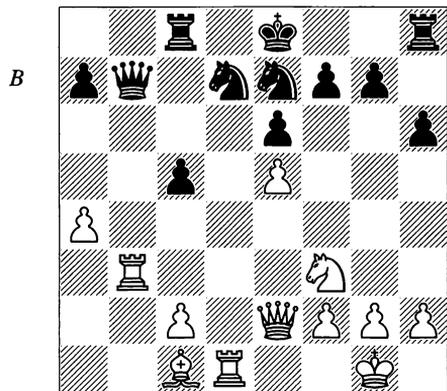
In the analogous position with 12...0-0 instead of 12...h6, Yusupov preferred 13...♗xd5. There followed 14 ♖d3 h6 15 c4 ♗e7 16 ♖e4 ♗d7 17 ♖b1 ♖a5 18 ♖d1 ♖ad8. Having placed his rooks badly, White lost the initiative, and now 19 ♖c2? turned out to blunder after 19...♗xe5! in A.Sokolov-Yusupov, Candidates (3), Riga 1986, the tactical point being 20 ♗xe5 ♖c3! 21 ♖e2 ♖xe5!. Arencibia instead follows in the footsteps of Spassky.

### 14 ♖e2 ♗d7 15 ♖d1 ♖b7 16 ♖a3

In an earlier Candidates cycle (also with 12...0-0 instead of 12...h6) White chose 16 ♖d3 ♖fd8 17 ♗g5 ♗f8 18 ♖c4 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♗d5, Geller-Spassky, Candidates (5), Sukhumi 1968. Black held the draw, but was under pressure for the whole game. In his notes to the game, Geller recommended the immediate 16 ♗g5. It is logical to presume that the defence will not be any easier without castling.

### 16...♖c8 17 ♖b3 (D)

The best square for the white knight is c4, and this seems the logical moment to transfer it there, while also opening up the third rank for the rook: 17 ♗d2 0-0 18 ♗c4 ♗f5 19 ♖ad3, and White's initiative is becoming menacing.



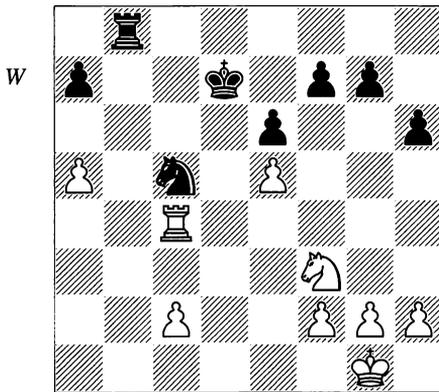
### 17...♖c7 18 ♖a6 ♖b8 19 ♖xb8+ ♖xb8 20 ♗a3 ♖b6 21 ♖d3

Thus far, the defence has been hanging on move by move, but here White has the possibility of 21 ♖d6, when 21...♖b1+ 22 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 23 ♗xf1 gives White an extra tempo over the game, which could prove decisive.

21...♖c7 22 ♖d6 ♗xd6 23 ♙xd6 ♜c8 24 ♙d3

24 ♙c6 does not threaten anything because of 24...♗d8, when 25 ♙xc5? cuts off the rook's retreat after 25...♜b8. The other way to attack the c5-pawn is too slow: 24 ♙a6 0-0 25 ♙a5 ♙d8 with possibilities of counterplay.

24...♜cb6 25 a5 ♜c4 26 ♙xc5 ♜xc5 27 ♙c3 ♗d7 28 ♙xc4 ♙b8 (D)



With the white king on f1, this resource would not be available. Now he must choose which way to defend against the back-rank mate.

29 h4

29 ♖f1 brings the king closer to the centre and leaves the fourth rank free for the rook, and, at the very least, retains the extra pawn: 29...♙b5 30 ♙g4 g6 31 ♙h4 ♙xa5 32 ♙xh6.

29...♙b5 30 a6 ♜xa6

Judging by the further course of the game, both players were short of time. Black could try to regain the pawn by 30...♙a5 31 h5 f5 (or 31...♖e7), but prefers compensation in the form of active pieces.

31 ♙a4 ♜c7 32 ♙xa7 ♙c5 33 ♙a2 ♙c4

White has kept his extra pawn, but the active black rook provides compensation, and some time is required to strengthen the white position, time that Black can make use of himself. It is hard to guess which pawn advance will prove the most useful; ...g6 weakens the f6-square, while ...h5 gives up the g5-square and allows f7 to come under attack. However, 33...f6 deserved attention – any exchange is welcome,

while the central pawns and black king gain more mobility.

34 g3

Sooner or later the rook will break through to the kingside, and for the moment, Black has the possibility of ...g6. Bearing in mind the possible 4 vs 3 ending, the blockading move 34 h5 looks attractive.

34...♖c6 35 ♖f1 ♜b5

On 35...♗d5? there is the possibility 36 ♙a3 with the following possible, but far from forced, variation: 36...♙xc2 37 ♙d3+ ♖e4 38 ♙d4+ ♖f5 39 h5 and there is no defence to g4#.

36 ♙a8 ♗d7 37 ♙g8 g6 38 ♜d2

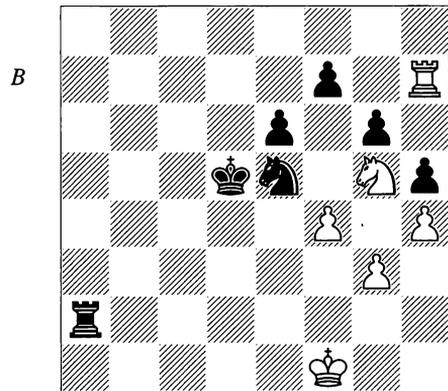
The aforementioned ending could be reached by 38 ♙h8 ♜d4 39 ♜xd4 ♙xd4 40 ♙xh6 ♙c4, but now the position becomes completely equal.

38...♙xc2 39 ♜e4 ♙c7 40 ♜f6+ ♖c6 41 ♙g7 h5 42 ♖g2 ♜d4 43 ♜e8 ♜f5 44 ♙h7 ♙a7 45 ♜f6 ♖c5 46 ♖f3 ♜d4+ 47 ♖g2 ♜c6 48 ♜e4+

White avoids 48 f4 for fear of a mating attack, but luckily for him the ending a pawn down proves to be drawn.

48...♖d5 49 ♜g5 ♜xe5 50 f4 ♙a2+ 51 ♖f1

(D)



51...f6

White can hold the rook ending. The cunning preliminary check 51...♙a1+ poses more problems to White, but rather than falling in with his opponent's hopes by 52 ♖g2 f6 53 fxe5 fxg5 54 hxg5 ♖xe5 55 ♙f7 ♙a4 56 ♙f6 ♙g4 57 ♙xg6 h4, with good winning chances for Black, White can return to the game with the correct move 52 ♖e2.

52 fxe5 fxc5 53 hxc5 ♖xe5 54 ♜f7 ♜a4 55 ♜d5 59 ♜g8 e5 60 g6 ♖e6 61 g7 ♖f7 62 ♜h8  
 ♜f6 ♜g4 56 ♜xg6 ♜xg3 57 ♖f2 ♜g4 58 ♖f3 1/2-1/2

## Game 22 [C19]

## Ruben Felgaer – Yuri Shulman

*American Continental, Buenos Aires 2005*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙xc3+  
 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 a4

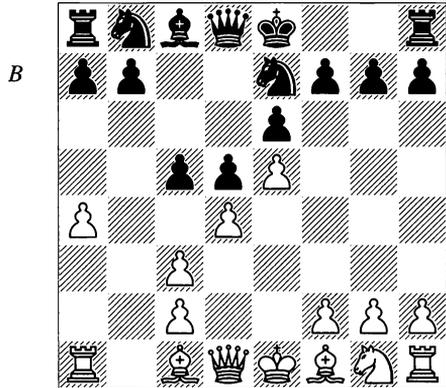
7 ♘f3 was considered in the previous game, and 7 ♜g4 is the subject of the next chapter. There are also two other continuations which deserve attention:

a) 7 h4 is an idea we have already met, but here it has some original features if Black allows the pawn to go all the way to h6: 7...♜a5 8 ♙d2 ♘bc6 9 h5 ♙d7 10 h6 gxh6 11 ♘f3 0-0-0. Here 12 ♙d3 c4 13 ♙e2 ♘g8 followed by ...f6 leads to reasonable prospects for Black, so White tends to prefer 12 ♜xh6 with the better prospects. Lputian has tried 11...♘g8 two moves earlier, when there followed 12 c4 ♜c7 13 cxd5 exd5 14 dxc5 0-0-0 15 ♙e2 ♙g4 16 ♖f1 h5 with very unclear play in Short-Lputian, Taiyuan 2004. This line has not so far found any other followers.

b) With 7 ♙d3 White agrees to give up a tempo to induce ...c4, strengthening the threat of ♜g4 and removing any ...b6 ideas. 7...♜c7 8 ♜g4 leads to a well-known variation, while the drawbacks of the early development of the bishop were revealed after 7...♘bc6 8 ♘f3 c4 9 ♙f1 ♜a5 10 ♜d2 f6 in Sulskis-Lputian, Port Erin 2003. Another possibility for White is 8 ♜g4 ♜a5 9 ♙d2 c4 10 ♙e2 0-0 (also reasonable is 10...♘f5 with an improved version of a well-known set-up) 11 h4 f6, Short-Shulman, Dhaka 1999.

We now return to 7 a4 (D):

This move eliminates any potential blockade on the a4-square, prepares to develop the bishop to a3, and reduces the attractiveness of the plan beginning with 7...b6, since after 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♙d3 the exchange of light-squared bishops is avoided. The variation became popular in the middle of the last century, but later was eclipsed by the move 7 ♜g4.

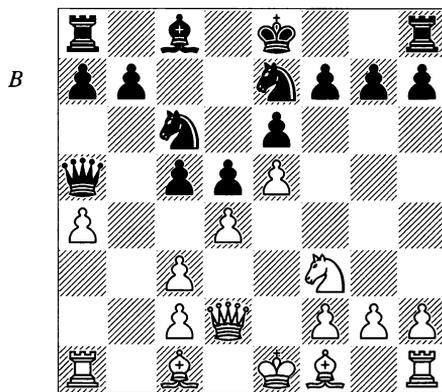
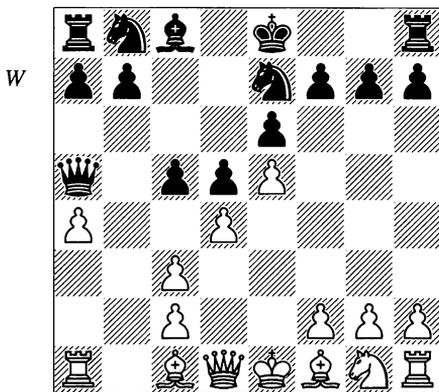


## 7...♜a5 (D)

If Black is determined to adopt the plan with ...b6, he usually does not hurry to reveal his intentions, but first makes some useful preparatory moves, waiting for the enemy bishop to lose a tempo: 7...♜c7 8 ♘f3 (the queen excursion to g4 does not fit very well with the move a4, since Black can exploit the tempo thus gained) 8...h6 (prophylactically defending the g5-square, and inviting White to commit himself; since ♙a3 is not good before castling, due to the queen check on c3, the next move seems the most natural) 9 ♙d3 b6 10 0-0 ♙a6 11 a5 ♙xd3 12 axb6 axb6 13 ♜xa8 ♙xf1, de Firmian-Ibragimov, New York (Marshall CC) 2005.

## 8 ♜d2

8 ♙d2 is played more often, creating the potential threat of c4 at some stage, opening the centre for White's bishops. The reply ...c4 used to be very popular, but nowadays this move tends to be avoided whenever possible, since it gives White too free a hand in choosing his set-up. The basic position of the variation arises after 8...♘bc6 9 ♘f3 ♙d7. Now White has a choice between developing the bishop to e2 or b5:



a) The former has a rich history, but these days it is considered unambitious and perfectly satisfactory for Black, as in the following rare modern example: 10  $\text{♙e2}$  0-0-0 11 0-0 f6 12 c4  $\text{♚c7}$  13 exf6 gxf6 14 cxd5  $\text{♜xd5}$  15 c3  $\text{♞de7}$  16  $\text{♞e1}$  e5, M.Müller-Hübner, German Ch, Saarbrücken 2002. Black is more active in the centre, while White places his hopes on his two bishops.

b) In response to 10  $\text{♙b5}$ , several different moves are possible:

b1) One is 10... $\text{♚c7}$ , immediately moving the queen away from the possible discovered attack, supporting a future counterattack against the e5-square, and freeing a5 for the knight. Here is one recent example: 11 0-0  $\text{♞a5}$  12  $\text{♙c1}$   $\text{♙xb5}$  13 axb5  $\text{♞c4}$  14  $\text{♞d2}$  cxd4 15 cxd4  $\text{♞f5}$  16 c3 0-0, A.Hunt-Bartel, Warsaw 2006.

b2) There is also the immediate 10...f6, allowing the standard opening of the centre: 11 c4  $\text{♚c7}$  12 exf6 gxf6 13 cxd5  $\text{♞xd5}$  14 dxc5 0-0-0 15 0-0  $\text{♞hg8}$  16 a5 e5 with a sharp position, Nunn-Wang Hao, Amsterdam 2006.

b3) And finally there is 10...a6, immediately putting the question to the bishop. The most common reply is 11  $\text{♙e2}$ , hoping that the weakening of the b6-square will significantly reduce Black's ability to resist the pressure along the open b-file.

8... $\text{♞bc6}$  9  $\text{♞f3}$  (D)

9...f6

This central break is one of Black's main resources, although it is usually played on the next move, after the preliminary 9... $\text{♙d7}$ . Then 10  $\text{♙b5}$  allows 10... $\text{♞xe5}$ , while 10  $\text{♙a3}$  gives

up control of a5 and allows Black a comfortable endgame after 10...cxd4 11 cxd4  $\text{♚xd2}$ + 12  $\text{♞xd2}$   $\text{♞f5}$  13 c3  $\text{♞a5}$  (sometimes this type of ending is even reached with Black having lost a tempo on ... $\text{♚c7}$  and then ... $\text{♚a5}$ ). There remains a choice between 10  $\text{♙d3}$  and 10  $\text{♙e2}$ . This decision depends largely on how White intends to react to ...f6:

a) White allows the exchange on e5. The resulting positions are distinguished by the following factors – whether Black flicks in ...c4, which side he castles, and whether White exchanges off the f3-knight for that on c6, or whether he instead recaptures on e5 with the pawn. Various of these different schemes have been tried, and nowadays White tends to castle kingside and not hurry with the move c4. 10  $\text{♙d3}$  f6 11 0-0 fxe5 12 dxe5 0-0 13  $\text{♞e1}$  h6 14  $\text{♞h4}$   $\text{♙e8}$  15 c4 (the exchange of queens in such positions was played even by Fischer, and is frequently seen) 15... $\text{♚xd2}$  16  $\text{♙xd2}$ , N.Mariano-Wang Hao, Kuala Lumpur 2005. Black can instead close the position with ...c4 and allow White to exchange on f6. Here too, there are a few options – either queenside castling, or kingside castling, and recapturing on f6 with the rook or the pawn. Naturally, if the white bishop is on d3, Black gains a tempo, which makes this plan more attractive than usual.

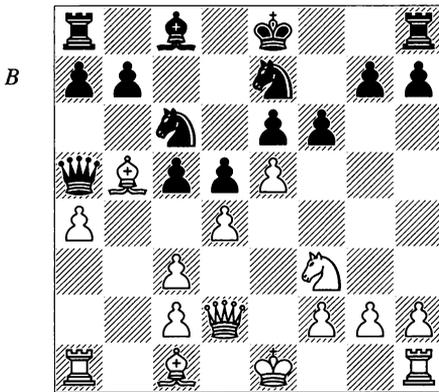
b) White combines the exchange on f6 with the clearance of the whole centre by dxc5 and c4, thereby granting his opponent a central pawn-majority, but hoping to show that he can 'restrain, blockade and destroy' it. In this case, it is more logical to play 10  $\text{♙e2}$ , so that the enemy

pawns do not advance with tempo: 10...f6 11 exf6 gxf6 12 dxc5 e5 13 0-0 0-0-0 14 c4 dxc4 15 ♖xa5 ♜xa5 16 ♙d2 ♝ac6 17 ♙xc4, Felgaer-Rojas, Santiago 2006. With the bishop on e2, we should also mention the move 10...♞c8. By taking advantage of the bishop's lack of control over f5, Black prepares the well-known exchanging operation 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♖xd2+ 13 ♙xd2 ♜f5, to force 14 c3, since 14 ♙c3 is impossible because of 14...♜xe5.

**10 ♙b5 (D)**

A fairly new idea, which Felgaer has played a number of times. Previously, the moves 10 ♙a3 (when 10...cxd4 can be met by 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♜xd4), 10 exf6 and 10 ♙d3 had been tried.

As an example of a thematic exchange sacrifice by Black in such positions, we can mention the game Felgaer-Korchnoi, Bled Olympiad 2002: 10 ♙d3 fxe5 11 dxe5 0-0 12 0-0 ♞xf3 13 gxf3 c4 14 ♙e2 ♜xe5.



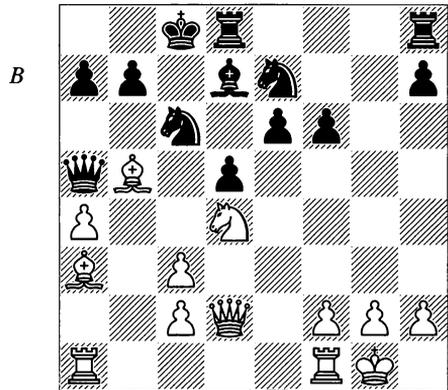
**10...♙d7**

Since Black does not manage to equalize in the following forcing continuation, we should mention his last chance to play 10...cxd4. White can satisfy himself with a small advantage after 11 cxd4, but in the only practical example to date he preferred 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♜xd4 0-0 13 0-0 a6 (a risky move, weakening the b-file). Now after the natural 14 ♙d3, this version of the queen exchange (14...♜xd4 15 cxd4 ♖xd2 16 ♙xd2) would usually favour White, but instead 14 ♜b3 was played in Felgaer-Giaccio, Buenos Aires 2006, and Black achieved a reasonable position.

**11 exf6 gxf6 12 0-0 0-0-0**

The present game was not the first played with this position, so we can assume that the consequences of the following complications had been studied by both players in home analysis.

**13 ♙a3 cxd4 14 ♜xd4 (D)**



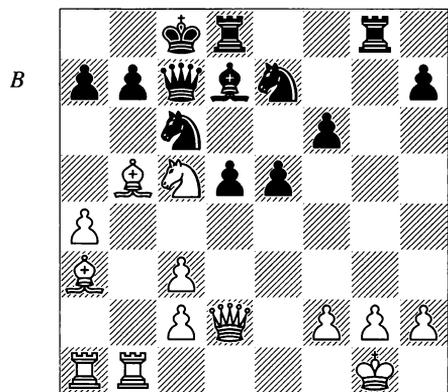
**14...e5**

A natural move, but it has one drawback – the weakening of the d5-pawn. If the future course of the game does not satisfy Black, it would make sense to investigate the variations arising after 14...♞he8.

**15 ♜b3 ♖c7 16 ♙c5 ♞hg8**

The variation 16...♙f5 17 ♞fb1 ♜a5 18 ♜xb7 ♜xb7 19 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 20 ♙d7+ is clearly not attractive for Black, but it would be worth testing whether the grass is greener in the lines after 16...♜g6 17 ♖xd5 ♜f4.

**17 ♞fb1 (D)**



The white pieces have all abandoned their own king, but hover menacingly over the enemy king. The issue is whose attack will arrive first.

**17...♗g6**

Up to now, the play had been following an earlier game Felgaer-Rustemov, Dos Hermanas 2005. Rustemov played 17...♗f5, but it is not clear what merits this route has, since in addition to retreating the bishop to f1, as in the present game, White could also play 18 ♖xd5 ♗h4 19 g3 (he also has a winning attack after 19 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 20 g3) 19...♗g4 20 ♗xc6 (even simpler is 20 ♖xc6) 20...♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 with a winning position.

Shulman's improvement preserves the possibility of a knight jump to h4, but also allows another option. Black's next few moves are forced.

**18 ♗f1 ♖a5**

18...♗h4 is bad due to 19 ♖h6.

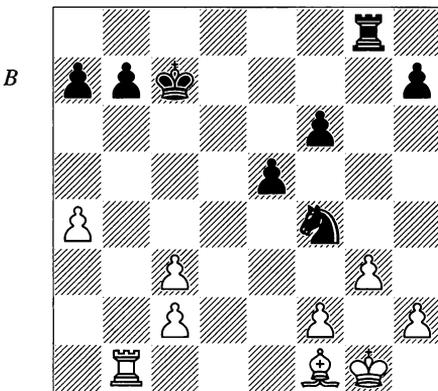
**19 ♖a6 ♖c6 20 ♗b4 ♗c4**

Only here does Black have a choice – he could instead try 20...♖e6 21 ♖xd5 ♗f4 22 ♖c5+ ♗c6 (22...♗c6), but in this variation too, White's chances look superior.

**21 ♖xd5 ♗f4**

Threatening perpetual check by ...♗h3+ and ...♗xf2+, so the next move is virtually forced.

**22 ♖xc6+ ♗xc6 23 g3 ♗xa3 24 ♗xc6 ♗xb1 25 ♗e7+ ♗c7 26 ♗xg8 ♗xg8 27 ♗xb1 (D)**



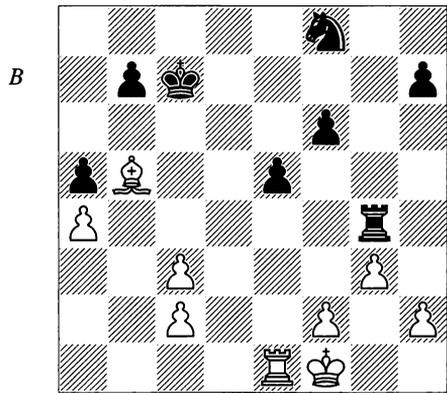
The forcing sequence has resulted in an endgame that is better for White. This is due not so much to the extra pawn, as the poor coordination

of the black pieces, the weaknesses in his structure, and the superiority of the bishop over the knight in a position with play on both flanks.

**27...a5**

This move prevents the white rook from becoming active along the fourth rank, and fixes the weakness on a4, but also gives the enemy bishop a strong post on b5. 27...♗g7 deserves attention, protecting Black's second rank and trying to coordinate his pieces at the first opportunity.

**28 ♗c4 ♗g4 29 ♖f1 ♗g6 30 ♗b5 ♗f8 31 ♗e1 (D)**



Taking another route to the fourth rank, and also preventing the further march of the knight, since both 31...♗e6 and 31...♗d7 are unpleasantly met by 32 f4.

**31...♗g7 32 ♗e4 ♖d6 33 ♗c4**

Maybe it is better first to play 33 ♖e2, ensuring that the king can operate on both flanks, and only then choose between c4 and h4 for the rook.

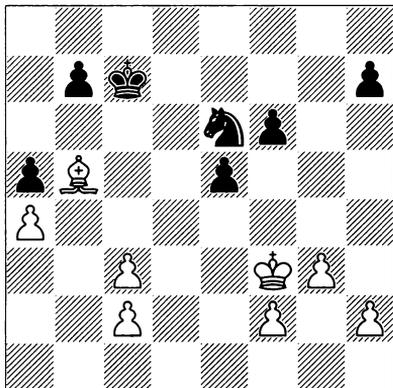
**33...♗c7**

33...♗e6 looks better, preparing 34...♗c7 or 34...♗c7, so that the king will not be decentralized in the event of the rook exchange. If White avoids the exchange, the rook will be very active on c7.

**34 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 35 ♖e2 ♗e6 36 ♖f3 (D)**

Threatening to penetrate via e4 or g4. The endgame would be untenable with the knight passively placed on g7 – White will play f4, recapture with the king, and then place the pawn on g4 and the bishop on f7 or d5, completely

B



stalemating the knight. Then the white king will return to the centre, and after c4-c5 will force its way to the b5-square, using the typical endgame device of zugzwang. Seeing no chance of active counterplay in such a line, Black decides that his next move is forced.

**36...f5 37 h4 h6 38 e3 d6 39 d3 e4?!**

But this advance is hard to understand, since on e5 the pawn significantly limited the activity of the white king. To make progress on the kingside, White will have to sacrifice the a4-pawn, and therefore Black should hurry to take it and start his counterplay; thus 39...d3 promised sufficient counterchances.

**40 d4 c5 41 f4 e3**

The idea of this is to free the e4-square for the knight, so as in some lines to be able to fork the white king and the pawn on g3. However, it is possible that more chances were offered by 41...dxa4 42 fxf5 b2 43 f7 d1 44 xe4 dxf2+.

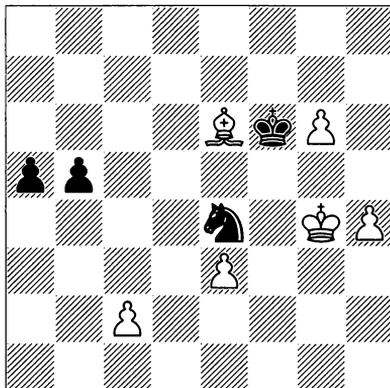
**42 fxe3 dxa4 43 fxf5 dxc3 44 g4 b5 45 g5 h5 46 e6 e7 47 g6 f8 48 g5 g7 49 xh5 d4 50 g4 f6 (D)**

**51 f7?**

This move proves to be a decisive loss of time. He could have kept good winning chances after 51 f4:

a) The attempt to exploit his passed pawn by 51...d2 fails. Then 52 f7 a4 53 h5 d3 54 e4 a3 55 dxc4 bxc4 56 e5+ g7 57 e6 a2 58 e7 a1 59 e8 60 g5 g2+ 61 f5 xc2+ 62 e4 d3 only leads to an ending that

W



looks drawn, but after 52 h5 xe6 53 h6 f6 54 g7 f7 55 e4 d3 56 e5 g8 57 e6 h7 58 g5 a4 59 e7 d6 60 f6 a3 61 e8 62 f7 d6+ 63 f8 White queens first.

b) 51...d6 52 g7 (or 52 d5) 52...xg7 53 e5 and White's extra pawn and more active pieces should ensure victory.

**51...d6 52 f4**

The pawn ending turns out to be drawn. The two passed pawns, separated by two files and not far enough advanced, are not only unable to force their way through, they cannot even defend each other.

**52...xf7 53 gxf7 xf7 54 e4 g6 55 d4 h5 56 e4 a4 57 e5 a3 58 c3 b4+ 59 b3 g6 60 c3 bxc3 61 xc3 f5 1/2-1/2**

Fashion in chess – and not only in chess – is a fickle lady. The popularity of a particular variation is determined by a number of factors. A line may go out of fashion because of a temporary theoretical problem, or simply because it is overshadowed by a trendy new idea in another variation. It may gain popularity because of successful use at the highest level, or it may lose popularity because one or more of its best-known practitioners stops playing it. Nowadays, there is a noticeable falling-off in the use of the once-popular variations 7 a4 and 7 f3, and at the same time increasing popularity for Black's sidelines 6...a5 and 6...d3. As far as the system with 5...d5 is concerned, this line is currently undergoing something of a crisis.

# 8 The Main-Line Winawer: 7 ♖g4

One of the drawbacks of the Winawer is the weakening of g7, and an immediate attack by the queen is the most energetic response for White. Refraining from a positional continuation of the struggle, he invites his opponent onto a path of great complications.

Black is forced to confront a difficult problem. The range of his strategic choices is quite wide – either he can wash his hands of the kingside, and seek active counterplay elsewhere on the board, or he can defend the g7-pawn. However, although there are several methods of doing this, they all have their problems.

The simplest reaction looks to be 7...0-0 (**Game 24**), but then the king castles ‘into it’, as it were – the white pieces are very active on the kingside.

Because the prospect of having to fend off such pressure is not to everybody’s taste, various alternative defensive methods have been worked out over the years, including 7...♗f8 (**Game 23**).

The principal alternative to kingside castling is the sharp and uncompromising 7...♛c7 (**Game 25**). Here the elimination of the black g- and h-pawns is followed by the destruction of White’s centre, after which the play takes on a quite irrational character.

It must be added that, in choosing the move 7 ♖g4, White must understand that the weaknesses of his queenside pawn-structure will become even more serious, and he must be prepared for all manner of possible developments. The whole variation consequently demands from him extremely thorough theoretical knowledge.

## Game 23 [C18]

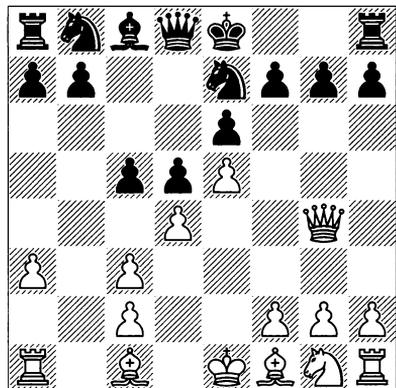
### Vladimir Belov – Bartosz Socko

*Hastings 2004/5*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+  
6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♖g4 (D)  
7...♗f8

We have already encountered this method of defending the pawn. Black avoids any weakening advances and uses the king and rook to defend the h- and g-pawns. As a result, the king stands badly, although for the time being it is fairly safe, and the rooks will not be connected for a long time. On the other hand, the white queen’s position severely reduces its own ability to defend the white queenside, and Black will at least gain some tempi for the standard

B



counterattack with ...♖a5-a4, ...b6 and ...♗a6. The other defence of the g7-pawn, 7...♟f5, does not enjoy a good reputation. After the exchange of queens with 8 ♗d3 h5 9 ♖f4 ♖h4, it is difficult to develop any activity. In recent times, an attempt to rehabilitate this variation has been made by Pelletier. He relies on 9...♖c7 10 ♟e2 ♟e7. The knight retreat threatens ...c4, forcing White to give up the centre, but in return he has the two bishops, and the position of the black king looks rather precarious: 11 dxc5 ♟d7 12 0-0 ♖xe5 13 ♖a4 ♖c7 14 ♗e3 e5, Carlsen-Pelletier, Biel 2005.

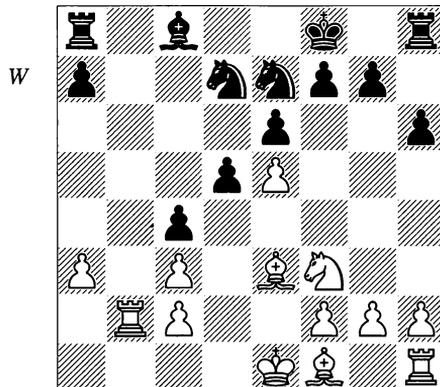
### 8 a4

The most principled reply, and the one most dangerous to Black. White has pretensions to a serious advantage. He has also tried some other continuations:

a) 8 h4 prepares a road for the rook to attack g7 directly. However, Black can handle this threat, while in the meantime preparing his standard counterplay: 8...♖a5 9 ♗d2 ♖a4 10 h5 h6 11 ♖h3 ♟bc6. It would be suicide to take on c2 and give White a crucial tempo for ♗d3, whereas now 12 ♗d3? (intending 12...c4? 13 ♖g3 ♖g8 14 ♗h7) is met by the counter-blow 12...♟xe5. No other attacking scheme is apparent, so White must choose a different route: 12 ♖f4 ♗d7 13 dxc5 ♖xf4 14 ♗xf4 ♖c8 15 ♖b1 ♟a5, Macieja-Socko, Polish Ch, Poznan 2005.

b) 8 ♟f3. This natural developing move is clearly not the most energetic, and gives Black an adequate choice of counter-measures. One further plan for White could be to advance the pawn to h5, provoking the reply ...h6, and then play ♟h4, eyeing up the g6-square, and use the rook and queen to attack f7. Another possibility, as seen in the previous variation, is to open the position with dxc5, in conjunction with an exchange of queens, and try to exploit the open b-file. Black's counterplay begins as usual: 8...♖a5 9 ♗d2 ♖a4. Here there is no value in sacrificing the pawn, and sometimes it is defended by 10 ♟d1. More often, though, White prefers 10 ♖a2, whereupon there can follow 10...b6 11 ♖f4 h6 12 dxc5 ♖xf4 13 ♗xf4 bxc5 14 ♗e3 ♟d7 15 ♖b2 c4 (D).

A typical move, the drawback of which is obvious – it gives away the d4-square and obstructs



Black's own bishop. However, the advantages of the move count for more: the weak white pawns are fixed, the possibility of White playing c4 is eliminated, and, most of all, the weakness of e5 forces White to concede the b-file: 16 g3 ♟c6 17 ♗d4 ♟e7 18 ♗g2 ♗a6 19 ♟d2 ♖hc8 (so that after an exchange on d4, the c3-pawn cannot recapture) 20 ♖e1 ♖ab8 with advantage to Black, T.Ernst-Eingorn, Tallinn 1989.

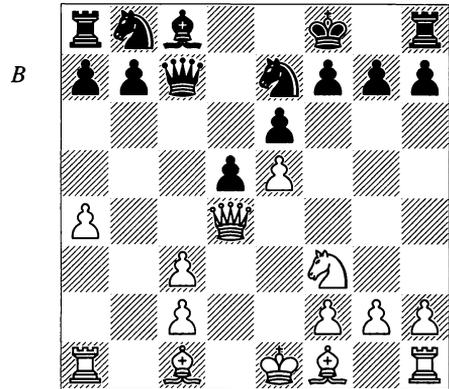
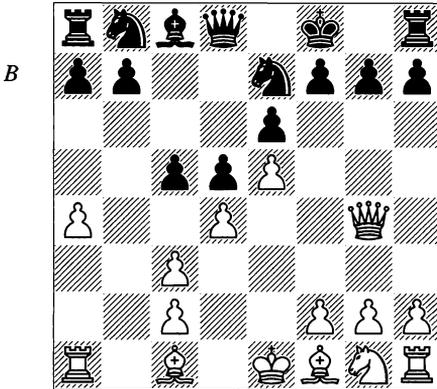
c) 8 ♗d2 defends c3 in advance, and this takes the point out of the move ...♖a5, which can now be answered by a4. However, the bishop is now a long way from the a3-f8 diagonal, and Black usually responds with the standard plan of exchanging light-squared bishops: 8...b6 9 ♟h3 ♗a6 10 ♗xa6 ♟xa6 11 0-0 ♖c8, Hraček-Kristjansson, Selfoss 2002, although after 12 ♗g5, with the threat of 13 c4 dxc4 14 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 15 d5, Black still has to demonstrate equality.

d) 8 ♖d1 – the queen considers that its work has been done, and returns home, so as not to get under the feet of a kingside pawn advance, and to secure the queenside. Now if Black again chooses 8...b6, then by comparison with the similar variations, White has lost two tempi. Admittedly, one of these has been spent on 7...♟f8, which cannot be considered a great achievement, but even so, the relatively closed character of the position allows Black to look to the future with confidence.

We now return to 8 a4 (D):

### 8...♖c7

White's last move also deprived the black queen of any useful role on a5, so it seeks



another post. From c7, the queen eyes the c3- and c2-squares, and threatens to destroy the white centre. White could maintain his pawn-structure with 9 ♖a2 or 9 ♖d1, but both moves are rather unappealing, and anyway, the white bishops would welcome the opening of the position. The universal remedy 8...b6 has also been tried here, with interesting play; after the exchange of bishops, Black will stand satisfactorily if he can complete his development and evacuate his king, but any inaccuracies can be costly: 9 ♘f3 ♟a6 10 ♟b5 ♟xb5 11 axb5 cxd4 (why open the diagonal? It looks better to eliminate the weakness immediately with 11...a5) 12 ♖xd4 ♘d7 13 ♟a3 ♖g8 14 c4 (a temporary pawn sacrifice, which gives White total domination) 14...♘f5 15 ♖f4 ♖c7 16 0-0 dxc4 17 ♖e4 ♖c8 18 g4 ♘h6 19 ♖fd1, Areshchenko-Kristjansson, European Clubs Cup, Fügen 2006.

#### 9 ♘f3 cxd4

Opening the discussion as to which is more important – the pawn weaknesses or the open a3-f8 diagonal. The preliminary 9...h5 10 ♖f4, securing the f5-square for the knight with tempo, has hardly ever been tried, but 9...b6 has also been seen in this position, although the combination of ...♖c7 and ...b6 does not appear very logical.

#### 10 ♖xd4 (D)

#### 10...♘bc6 11 ♖c5

The retreat to e3 is less dangerous, since the queen will be attacked again, and it is difficult to defend the e5-pawn: 11 ♖e3 ♘f5 12 ♖f4 (12 ♖c5+ ♖g8 13 ♟b5 ♟d7 14 ♟f4 b6 15 ♖a3

♘ce7 16 g4 ♘g6) 12...♘ce7 (bad is 12...♘cd4 13 cxd4 ♖c3+ 14 ♖d2 ♖xa1 15 ♟b5 and the queen has no clear way back into the game) 13 ♖d2 ♘g6 14 ♟e2 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 16 ♟a3+ ♖g8 17 0-0. White has compensation for the pawn, but no more than that, Areshchenko-B.Socko, European Ch, Warsaw 2005.

#### 11...f6

Given the position of his king, Black hardly wishes to open the position any further, but he must free himself in some way. 11...b6 pushes the queen into d6, where it is heading anyway, and after the exchange of queens the pawn will not be a weakness, but a permanent threat. It is possible to go into the endgame with 11...♖a5 12 ♟a3 (Volokitin-Wisniewski, Polanica Zdroj 2000 saw an incorrect sacrifice: 12 ♟b5 a6 13 ♟a3 axb5 14 axb5, and by 14...♖e8 and a later ...b6, Black could have defended successfully), but the dark-squared bishop gives White the initiative.

#### 12 ♟b5

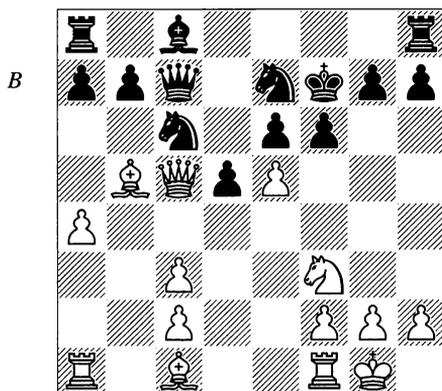
12 exf6 leads to complicated play. Notwithstanding the fact that Black's pawn-centre acquires mobility and his pieces some degree of freedom, his king will not feel very comfortable in the resulting position. The game continuation is also interesting – White counts on winning the battle for the dark squares, but perhaps the same idea can be realized more accurately by 12 ♟a3 ♖f7 13 ♟b5 b6 14 ♖d6 ♖d7 15 c4 d4 16 a5, and White's consistent play to open the position brought success in the game Lahno-Kruljac, European Clubs Cup (Women), Fügen 2006.

**12...♙f7**

The exchange 12...fxe5 is very risky, since once White completes his mobilization, Black will find it impossible to protect the central dark squares.

**13 0-0 (D)**

White obtained only a minimal advantage after 13 ♙f4 ♘g6 14 ♙g3 ♖e7 15 ♖e3 ♗cxe5 16 ♙xe5 ♗xe5 17 ♗xe5+ fxe5 18 ♖xe5 in Stepovaia Dianchenko-Matveeva, European Women's Ch, Chisinau 2005.

**13...a6 14 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖d4**

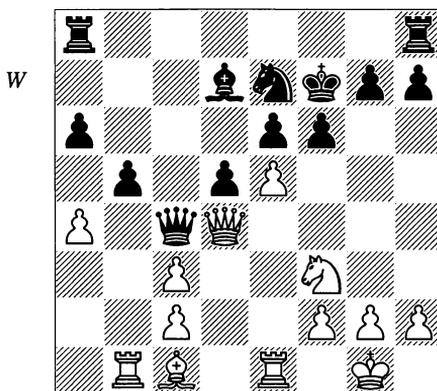
In this position, the chances can be considered roughly equal. Black's pressure against the weak white pawns is offset by the strength of White's dark-squared bishop. The development of Black's rook from h8 will be met by exf6, and an attack on the kingside pawns.

**15...♙d7 16 ♖b1**

Offering the a4-pawn. White refrains from 16 a5, because he does not wish to concede the b5-square any earlier than necessary.

**16...b5**

Rather than take the pawn, Black prefers to blockade the queenside, but this blockade turns out to be less than absolute. It seems Black should have accepted with 16...♖xa4. Now 17 ♖xb7 ♖hb8 is satisfactory for Black, so White may prefer to seek the initiative after 17 ♖b4 ♖c6. Now, however, Black is holding after 18 c4 a5 19 cxd5 ♖xd5 20 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 21 ♖xb7 ♖hd8, while 18 ♖b6 ♖c7 19 exf6 gxf6 20 ♙g5 ffg5 21 ♗xg5+ ♙g8 22 ♖xe6 leads to double-edged play.

**17 ♖e1 ♖c4 (D)****18 ♖d2**

After the exchange of queens, White would have no advantage, so he again offers Black the chance to gorge himself on the a4-pawn. However, this time it looks extremely risky to take.

**18...♖ac8 19 axb5 axb5**

The bishop does not dare to leave the e6-pawn without over-protection.

**20 ♖b3 ♗g6 21 ♙b2**

Another confirmation of the well-known fact that the queen is a poor blockader. The unhurried text-move prepares ♖b4 followed by c4, activating the bishop.

**21...♖c7**

Playing the queen towards the kingside with 21...♖f4 22 ♖d1 or 21...♖g4 22 h3 is risky, because of the threats of ♖b4 and ♙c1.

**22 ♖b4 ♖b8**

After 22...♗xe5 23 ♗xe5+ fxe5 24 c4 the initiative on the dark squares is no less dangerous. Possibly 22...♖d8 is more resilient, with the idea of meeting 23 c4 by 23...dxc4, when the b4-rook is offside, while the complications after 24 exf6 gxf6 25 ♗g5+ ffg5 26 ♙xh8 ♗xh8 27 ♖d1 ♖c7 28 ♖xb5 ♖f6 lead to an unclear position.

**23 c4 ♖xc4 24 h4**

Black has an extra pawn, but White has an extra bishop!

**24...♖xb4 25 ♖xb4 f5**

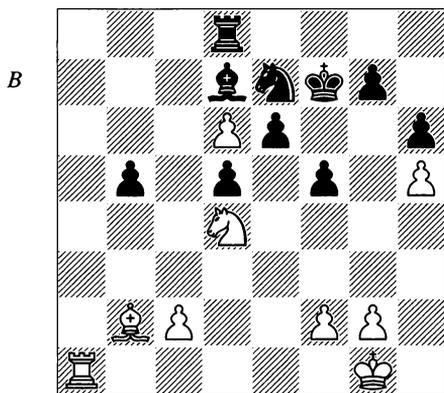
Black does not want to take the pressure off the e5-square, but the threat was to run the h-pawn to h6, tearing open the long diagonal

completely. It is already hard to know what to advise Black.

### 26 h5 ♖e7 27 ♖d6

Also good is 27 ♖g5+ ♜e8 28 ♖d6 with similar play, but with the black rook remaining offside – 28... ♖c8 29 ♙a3 ♖c6 30 h6 gxh6 31 ♖xh7 ♜f7 32 ♖f6.

27...h6 28 ♖d4 ♖d8 29 ♖a1 ♖xd6 30 exd6 (D)



### 30...♖c8

Other knight moves are no better:

a) If 30...♖c6, then 31 ♖xc6 ♙xc6 32 ♖a7+ ♖d7 33 ♖a6 ♙b7 34 ♖b6 and it is not clear how to stop the white king's raid to c5.

b) 30...♖g8 31 ♖a7 and then:

b1) If 31...♜e8, there follows 32 ♖b3 ♖f6 (32... ♖c8 33 ♙xg7 ♖xc2 34 ♖d4 and the further transfer of the knight to e5 leaves Black

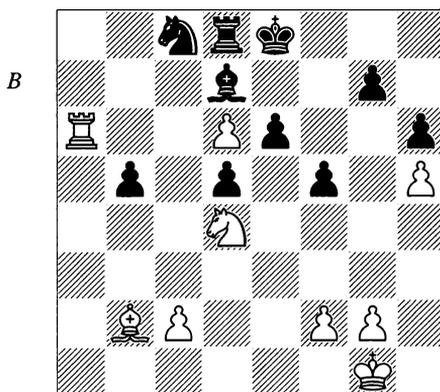
virtually stalemated) 33 ♙xf6 gxf6 34 ♖c5 e5 35 f4 ♙c8 and now 36 ♖e7+ ♜f8 37 ♖c7 ♜e8 38 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 39 d7+ or 36 ♖h7.

b2) 31...♖f6 32 ♖c6 ♖c8 33 ♖e5+ ♜e8 34 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 gives White the pleasant choice between 35 ♙xg7 and 35 ♖c7.

### 31 ♖a8 ♜e8

He cannot free himself by 31...e5 32 ♖b3 ♜e6 (32...d4 33 f4) 33 ♖c5+ ♜xd6 34 ♖b7+, while if 31...♖e8, then 32 ♖a6.

### 32 ♖a6 (D)



### 32...b4

After 32...e5 there follows 33 ♖b3 d4 34 f4. The rest requires only elementary accuracy.

33 f4 ♜f7 34 ♜f2 g6 35 hxg6+ ♜xg6 36 ♖f3 ♜f7 37 ♖a8 ♙b5 38 ♖b8 ♙a4 39 ♖a8 ♙b5 40 ♖b8 ♙a4 41 ♙d4 ♜f8 42 ♖e5 ♜e8 43 ♙c5 ♙d7 44 ♖xb4 1-0

## Game 24 [C18]

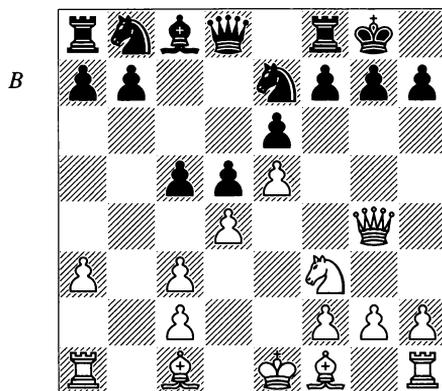
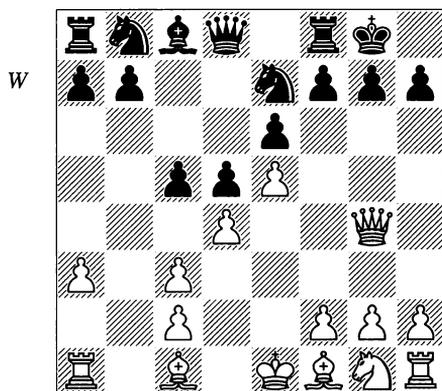
### Mikhail Kobaliya – Smbat Lputian

*Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2006*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 e5 ♖e7 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 ♖g4 0-0 (D)

This move spent many years in the shadow of 7... ♖c7. The first impression was that Black is castling into a strong attack. Gradually, however, it was realized that if Black can beat off the attack, his superior pawn-structure and lead in development give him good counterchances. As a result, the variation has become progressively

more popular, and is now the most common reply to 7 ♖g4. With the pawn on f7, it is difficult to bring up the reserves for defence of the kingside, and so in practice, the game normally develops in one of two ways. One is that Black advances the f-pawn; after the capture exf6, White obtains the e5-square, but loses his space advantage on the kingside, while the e6-pawn constantly threatens to advance. Alternatively,



the d3-bishop, when attacked by ...c4, is exchanged for the g6-knight, whereupon Black recaptures with ...fxg6. Then his structure in the centre and on the kingside loses its flexibility, and the c8-bishop spends some time staring at his own pawns.

### 8 ♗d3

This move, which takes immediate aim at h7, also has a rather complicated biography. One of the first games in which it appeared, Zhuravliov-Tukmakov, Leningrad 1974, ended in a victory for Black after 8...c4 9 ♗h6 ♘g6 10 ♗xg6 fxg6 11 ♗e3 ♗e7 12 h4 ♗f7 13 h5 ♗f5 14 ♗e2 gxh5 15 ♗xh5 ♗g6; in the subsequent play, Black killed his opponent's initiative with an exchange sacrifice, and successfully carried out an attack on the queenside. As a result of this, it was assessed as not good, a judgement that was copied uncritically from one source to another. The start of the move's rehabilitation was the game Sznepik-Schmidt, Polish Ch playoff 1988, where the players repeated the opening of the earlier game, but the result was reversed. Then White scored an effective victory in the game Van der Wiel-Hübner, Wijk aan Zee 1988, which showed that Black was not well-prepared to meet the immediate raid by the h-pawn, and after this, the move 8...c4 disappeared from serious practice.

Nowadays, 8 ♗d3 has eclipsed all other moves in this position, but not before the main alternative 8 ♘f3 (D) had been deeply studied, and we shall also take a brief look at it.

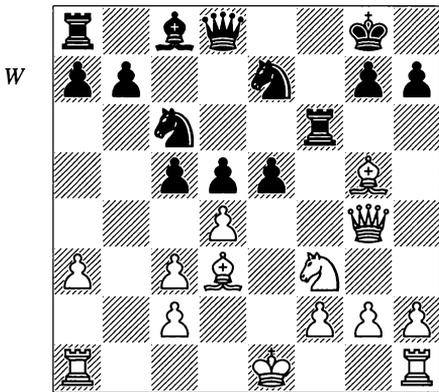
Firstly, a few words about 8...♗a5, temporarily tying the bishop to the defence of c3, and

having in mind an attack on c2. The Andersen-style attack with 9 ♗d3? ♗xc3+ 10 ♗d2 ♗xa1+ 11 ♗e2 is not correct; Black contents himself with just taking one rook, continuing 11...♗b2, when the sacrifice on h7 fails, since the queen can defend from c2. Therefore 9 ♗d2, and now 9...♗a4? was refuted by 10 ♗d3 c4 11 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 12 ♗h4+ ♗g8 13 ♗xe7 ♗xc2 (White retains an attack even after the exchange of queens) 14 h4 ♘c6 15 ♗g5 ♗e4+ 16 ♗f1 ♗f5 17 ♗xf5 exf5 18 h5 ♘a5 19 h6 ♘b3 20 ♗g5 in Balashov-Farago, Dortmund 1987. Instead, Black can choose between 9...c4 or 9...♘bc6, followed ...f5, and the standard counterplay.

The immediate 8...f5 9 exf6 ♗xf6 10 ♗g5 is more common. In this position, lovers of ultra-sharp play have preferred 10...♗a5, and now both 11 ♗xf6 ♗xc3+ 12 ♗d1 (or 12 ♗e2 ♘g6 13 ♗c1 gxf6 14 h4 ♘c6 15 h5 e5) 12...♗xa1+ 13 ♗d2 ♘g6 14 ♗d3 and 11 ♗d3 ♗xc3+ 12 ♗e2 e5 13 ♗xh7+ lead to lively and unclear play. Another idea is the exchange sacrifice 10...♘d7, when, if White accepts, Black's advantage in development and the rapid pressure against c3 outweigh the material. Consequently, White usually prefers 11 ♗d3 or 11 dxc5.

The most common reply is 8...♘bc6. Then it is hard to imagine anything more natural than 9 ♗d3, threatening the typical sacrifice on h7. The king cannot defend itself alone, and hence 9...f5 must be played, so as to allow other pieces to participate in the defence. It is not very logical for White to keep the centre closed, so 10 exf6 ♗xf6 is normal. The threat of 11...e5 can

be stopped by 11 ♖h5, 11 ♖h4 or 11 ♖e5, but all three have been tried without great success. But the obvious response is 11 ♕g5. For a long time, Black used to play 11...♗f7, and after the exchange on e7 (either immediately, or after 12 ♖h4 h6), the mutual weaknesses justify an assessment of 'equal'. But then the move 11...e5 (D) was discovered, and effectively ended discussion of the entire variation with 8 ♖f3.



White has three possibilities, but in all cases Black has at least equal chances: 12 ♕xh7+ ♖xh7 13 ♖h5+ ♖g8 14 ♕xf6 gxf6 15 dxe5 ♗f8; 12 ♖h4 e4 13 ♕xf6 gxf6 14 ♖xf6 exd3 15 cxd3 ♕f5; or 12 ♖g3 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 c4 14 ♕e2 ♖a5 15 ♕d2 ♖f5 16 ♖g5 ♕d7 and Black has excellent compensation for the exchange, Gagunashvili-Lputian, FIDE Knockout, Tripoli 2004.

### 8...♖bc6

The move 8...♖d7, aiming to recapture on f6 with the knight, is not popular, since instead of answering ...f5 with exf6, White prepares the advance g4, with the better chances.

Very sharp positions result from 8...♖a5; for example, 9 ♕d2 ♖bc6 (here 9...c4? loses a pawn to 10 ♕xh7+ and 11 ♖h4+) 10 ♖f3 f5 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♖h5 ♖f5 13 g4 c4 14 gxf5 cxd3 15 ♗g1 ♕d7 16 ♖g5 ♗f7 17 f6 ♖d8 18 ♖e5 ♖xe5 19 dxe5 dxc2 20 ♕e3, although one has the impression that Black is on the back foot in this line.

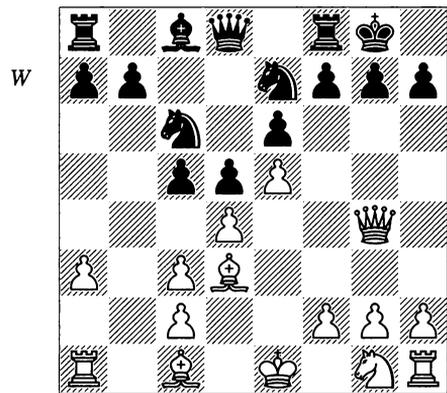
The main alternative to the game continuation is 8...f5. Then there follows 9 exf6 ♗xf6 10 ♕g5 ♗f7 11 ♖h5 g6 (in recent times, the

risky-looking 11...h6 has also been tried) 12 ♖d1. Black now has two set-ups:

a) Either he tries to achieve the break ...e5, when play might continue 12...♖a5 13 ♕d2 ♖bc6 14 ♖f3 ♖c7 15 dxc5 e5 16 ♖g5 ♗f6 17 c4 e4 18 cxd5 exd3 19 d6 ♖d8 20 dxe7 ♗xe7+ 21 ♕e3 with good chances of equality.

b) Or he keeps the position relatively closed, although in this case White has more space and can hope for some advantage: 12...♖bc6 13 ♖f3 ♗f8 14 0-0 c4 15 ♕e2 h6 16 ♕c1 ♕d7 17 ♖e1 g5 18 g3 ♖f5 19 ♖g2, Ponomarev-Ivanchuk, Linares 2002.

We return to 8...♖bc6 (D):



### 9 ♖h5

9 ♖f3 f5 transposes into the relatively unpromising lines already considered above. If he wishes, White can aim for quieter lines with an exchange of queens by 9 ♖h4 ♖g6, but Black has few problems here.

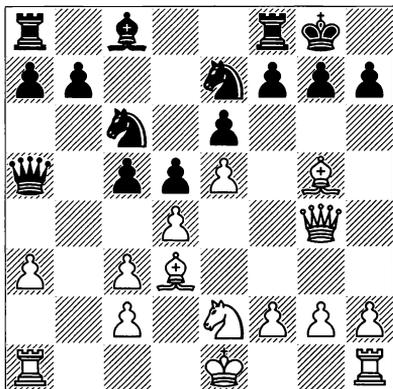
However, apart from the game continuation, the move 9 ♕g5 is also dangerous. If White is given time for h4, his attack will already be too strong, so Black must respond actively with 9...♖a5 and after 10 ♖e2 (D) he must make a major decision:

a) Taking the pawn is risky, because after 10...cxd4? 11 f4 White has a strong attack.

b) The careless 10...c4? fails to the typical tactic 11 ♕xh7+ ♖xh7 12 ♖h4+ ♖g8 13 ♕xe7, winning a pawn for no compensation.

c) Vaganian's idea 10...♗e8 is interesting, when 11 ♕h6 ♖g6 12 ♕xg6 fxg6 13 ♕e3 is now met with 13...♖a4 and both the c2- and

B



e5-pawns are attacked. However, things ended catastrophically for Black after 11 h4 ♖xd4 12 ♖h3 ♖xe2 13 ♖xe2 ♖g6 14 h5 ♖xe5 15 ♖g3 ♖xd3 16 ♖f6 ♖f4+ 17 ♖d2 ♖g6 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♖xh7 1-0 in Bologan-Vaganian, European Clubs Cup, Fügen 2006.

d) Doubts were cast on the move 10...♖a4 by the game Bobras-Can, European Ch, Dresden 2007: 11 h4 c4 12 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7 13 ♖d2 ♖f5 14 ♖h3 and Black was unable to defend.

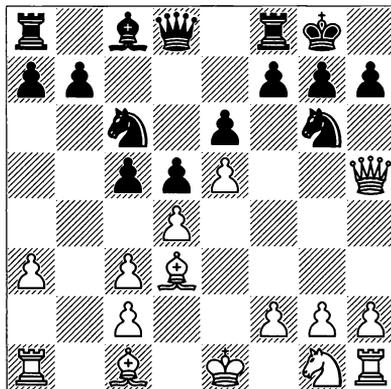
e) The most dependable move is 10...♖g6 and only after 11 0-0 does Black play 11...c4, now that the rook has left the h-file and the march of the h-pawn is less dangerous. After 12 ♖xg6 fxg6 13 a4 ♖c7 14 ♖c1 ♖f7 15 ♖g3 Black's position is solid, but he has little active counterplay.

### 9...♖g6 (D)

9...h6? is unplayable due to 10 ♖xh6 gxh6 11 ♖xh6 ♖f5 12 ♖xf5 exf5. For some time in the late 1980s it was thought that White had no more than perpetual check, but after the game Maus-Hübner, Lugano 1989, the line was dead and buried: 13 0-0-0! f4 14 ♖h3 ♖e7 15 ♖g5 ♖f5 16 g4 ♖e4 17 ♖he1 ♖b6 18 e6 ♖g6 19 ♖d3 1-0.

The move 9...♖f5?! meets a similar fate. The decisive blow was struck by the game Khalifman-Nikolić, GMA Qualifier, Moscow 1990: 10 ♖f3 (10 g4 is premature owing to 10...♖h4) 10...f6 11 g4 c4 12 gx5 cxd3 13 ♖g1 exf5 (also bad is 13...♖e7 14 exf6 ♖xf6 15 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 16 ♖g5+ ♖g6 17 fxg6 hxg6 18 ♖f4) 14 ♖h6 ♖f7 15 ♖d2 ♖e6 16 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 17 ♖xg7+ ♖xg7 18 ♖g1+ 1-0.

W



### 10 ♖f3

Occasionally 10 ♖h3 is seen. As well as keeping the road open for the f-pawn, White also retains the possibility of answering ...c4 by ♖e2-g4, with some pressure on the h3-c8 diagonal. The drawback of this move is that the d4-pawn lacks protection.

### 10...♖c7

The other way to defend against the threat of 11 ♖g5 h6 12 ♖xf7 is 10...♖ce7. White can then choose between 11 h4, with the idea of further targeting the black king, or 11 dxc5 and a later c4, playing to open the position for the bishop-pair.

The text-move is more active, since it creates counter-threats.

### 11 ♖e3 (D)

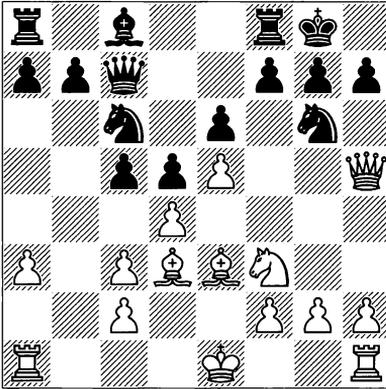
Castling would reduce White's attacking potential: 11 0-0 c4 12 ♖xg6 fxg6 13 ♖g4 ♖a5 forces the bishop to take up a post far from the a3-f8 diagonal, while without the h1-rook in support, the plan of marching the h-pawn is not so dangerous.

The exchange of queens after 11 ♖g5 h6 12 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 13 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 14 ♖xg6 is perfectly satisfactory for Black: 14...cxd4 15 cxd4 ♖xd4 – the half-open f-file and active knight compensate for the two bishops.

11 h4 is more interesting, when in the event of 11...c4 12 ♖g5 h6 13 ♖xg6 fxg6 14 ♖xg6 hxg5 15 hxg5 ♖xe5 16 ♖h5 the attack can hardly be resisted, while 11...cxd4 12 ♖d1 dxc3 leads to fighting play with chances for both sides.

### 11...c4

B



Why does Black accept a structure that he rejected at move 8? In the first place, he has an extra tempo, and in the second, the only change in White's position is not all that helpful: the f3-knight obstructs the queen's retreat. It is also possible to avoid closing the centre, but it is already rather late to work up real counterplay. Play usually continues 11...♘ce7 12 h4 ♘d7 13 ♖g4 (prophylaxis against the exchange of bishops is also not bad: 13 ♜b1 b6 14 ♖g4 f5 15 ♖h3 cxd4 16 cxd4 ♙a4 17 h5 ♘h8 18 ♘d2 {depriving Black of a check on c3, and transferring the bishop to a better diagonal} 18...♞ac8 19 ♖h4 ♖d7 20 ♞b2, and Black's threats have been neutralized, while White's play is only just beginning, Kariakin-Yusupov, Amsterdam 2006) 13...f5 14 ♖h3 cxd4 15 cxd4 ♙b5 16 ♙xb5 ♖a5+ 17 ♘d2 ♖xb5 18 h5 ♘h8 19 h6 g6 20 ♙b4 ♞fe8 21 ♖h4 ♖d7 and White retains a lasting initiative, Volokitin-Yusupov, Bundesliga 2006/7.

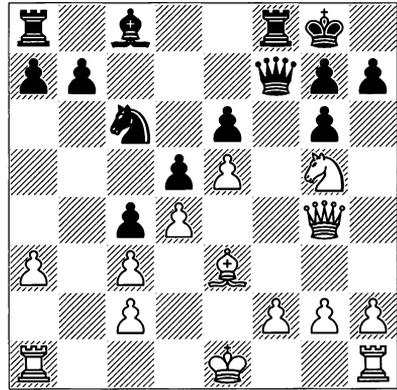
**12 ♙xg6 fxd6 13 ♖g4 ♖f7**

A doubtful try is 13...♘d7?!, hoping to defend the kingside with the bishop, and use the queen actively on the other wing: 14 h4 ♖a5 15 ♘d2 ♞f5 (it is already too late to meet h5 with ...♙e8; for example, 15...♘d8 16 h5 ♙e8 17 h6, when the dark squares are very draughty and the light-squared bishop is a poor piece) 16 h5 gxh5 17 ♞xh5 ♞xh5 18 ♖xh5 ♙e8 19 ♖h3 ♘d8 and now 20 ♘g5! (Nunn) is very strong. Instead, 20 ♞h1 ♙g6 21 ♘h4 ♙e4 22 ♞c1 (Volokitin-Timman, Leon (rapid) 2005) 22...h6 is equal.

**14 ♘g5 (D)**

The immediate 14 h4 can be met with the queen exchange 14...♖f5 or by 14...h6, in both cases with a satisfactory position.

B



**14...♖e8**

Here 14...♖f5 15 ♖e2 is unfavourable for Black.

**15 h4 ♘d7**

The other possibility is 15...h6, which leads to a controversial pawn sacrifice: 16 ♘h3 ♘d7 17 ♖e2 b5 18 g4 a5 19 h5 gxh5 20 g5, Van den Doel-Psakhis, Bled Olympiad 2002. So far, White's results have been better.

**16 ♘h3**

16 ♖e2 has also been tried, not retreating the knight from its advanced position, but then Black can create counterplay on the queenside by 16...b5 17 g4 ♖d8 18 h5 gxh5 19 ♞xh5 h6 20 ♘f3 ♖a5, and after the mistaken 21 ♘d2 he even seized the initiative with 21...♞f4 in Lahno-Galstian, Stepanakert 2005.

**16...h6 17 ♘f4**

It is not clear that the knight is very useful in the attack on f4. White can instead return to the pawn-sacrifice plan with 17 ♖e2.

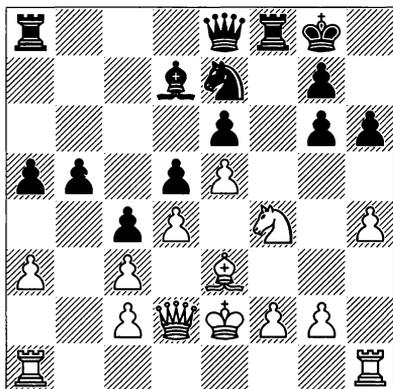
**17...♘e7 18 ♖e2 b5 19 ♖d2**

The standard 19 g4 only presents Black with a tempo: 19...a5 20 h5 g5 21 ♘h3 b4, C.Balogh-Almasi, Budapest 2000. White instead turns to positional channels, but the initiative gradually passes to Black.

**19...a5 20 ♙e2 (D)**

White wishes to connect his rooks, which is natural enough, but in fact, each of them has to concern itself with defending its own flank. As

B



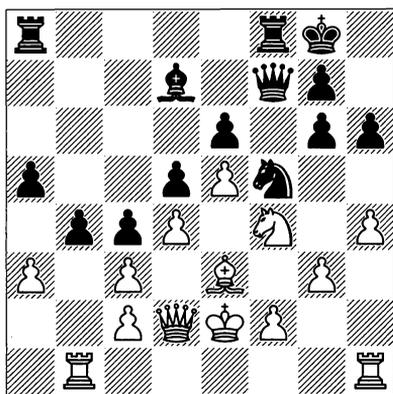
a result, White never does manage to coordinate them effectively, and meanwhile, his king proves more vulnerable on e2.

20...♖f7 21 ♜ab1 ♘f5 22 g3

This further weakening of the light squares was forced, because of the threat of ...♘h4.

22...b4 (D)

W



White's position is beginning to creak. With his next move he tries to avoid opening the a-file (which allows pressure against c2), the third rank (when a black rook on a3 would create threats against e3), or giving the c4-pawn any freedom to advance. At the same time, the rook moves out of any double attack (after a later ...♖f3+) and prepares to double rooks on the h-file, which could be useful after a later ...g5.

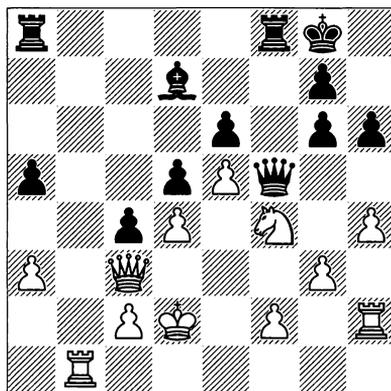
23 ♜h2 bxc3?

This incomprehensible exchange loses a great part of Black's advantage. Instead, this could

have become decisive after both 23...bxa3, with a later penetration along the b-file, or after 23...♘xe3, with the queen infiltrating via f5, in combination with the threats of ...g5 and ...b3.

24 ♖xc3 ♘xe3 25 ♙xe3 ♖f5 26 ♙d2 (D)

B



26...♖ab8

Now White manages to consolidate. 26...♖g4 27 ♖e3 c3+ 28 ♙xc3 g5 29 hxg5 hxg5 30 ♘d3 ♜ac8+ 31 ♙d2 ♜f3 32 ♖e2 ♖xd4 33 ♜bh1 leads to a double-edged position.

27 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 28 f3 g5 29 hxg5 ♖xg5 30 ♖e3?

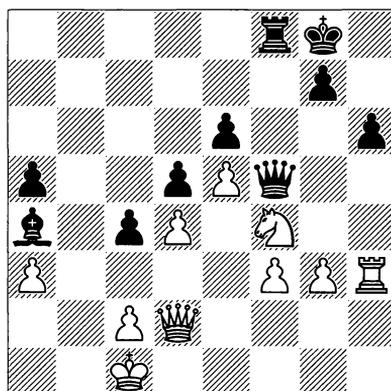
A mistake which goes unpunished. More solid was 30 ♙e3 or 30 ♜h3.

30...♜f8?

White's abandonment of the attack on the a5-pawn allows the enemy pieces into his position after 30...♙a4, with the threat of ...♙xc2, combined with the rook penetrating to b1 or b2.

31 ♜h3 ♙a4 32 ♙c1 ♖f5 33 ♖d2 (D)

B



**33...g5**

This forces a draw. Black could continue the fight with 33...♖b8, and a combination of the threats ...g5, ...♗f8 and the transfer of the queen to the b-file. In this case White's position would remain very unpleasant.

**34 ♜xh6 gxf4 35 g4 ♖g5 36 ♗h2**

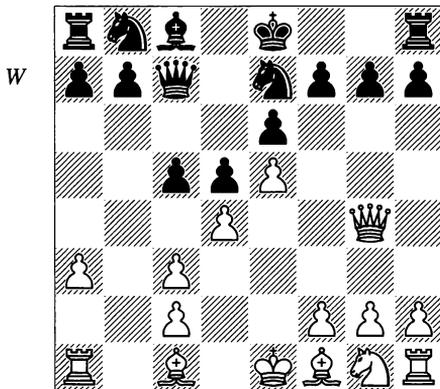
Taking on e6 and conceding the h-file to his opponent would be suicide, of course. Now neither side can avoid a repetition of moves.

**36...♔f7 37 ♜h5 ♖g6 38 ♜h6 ♖g5 39 ♜h5 ♖g6 40 ♜h6 ♖g5 1/2-1/2**

## Game 25 [C18]

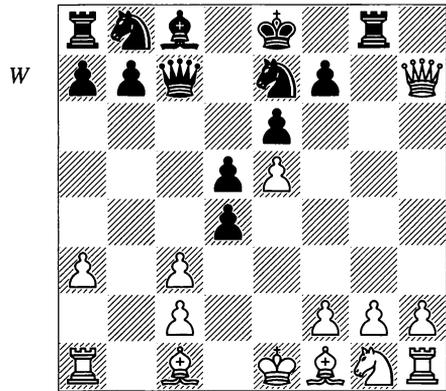
**Sergei Kariakin – Ni Hua***Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2005***1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♗g4 ♗c7 (D)**

In this game, we see Black follow the plan of sacrificing his kingside in return for destroying White's centre. Instead of the move played, this plan is sometimes introduced by the move 7...cxd4. What is the point of this? After 8 ♗xg7 we return to the main line, while White gets the additional option of 8 cxd4. The reason for Black's choice is that against another option, 8 ♙d3, there is the reply 8...♗a5, attacking the c3-pawn; e.g., 9 ♘e2 0-0 (9...♘g6 is also playable, aiming for a rapid counterattack against the e5-pawn, which still lacks its defender on d4) 10 ♙xh7+ ♔xh7 11 ♗h4+ ♔g8 12 ♗xe7 ♘c6 13 ♗g5 dxc3 14 h4 d4 15 f4 f6, Rocha-de la Villa, Linares (Anibal) 2002.

**8 ♗xg7**

8 ♙d3, an idea we obliquely discussed in the previous note, attempts to develop the bishop before the knight blocks its path by coming to

e2. With the enemy queen on c7, White is committing himself to sacrificing the e5-pawn, but few players are willing to take it. After 8...cxd4 9 ♘e2, both 9...♗xe5 10 ♙f4 ♗f6 11 ♙g5 ♗e5 12 cxd4 h5 13 ♗h4 and 9...dxc3 10 ♗xg7 ♜g8 11 ♗xh7 ♗xe5 leads to positions where the activity of the white pieces more than compensates for the pawn. With the growth in popularity of 7 ♗g4 0-0, here too nowadays Black more often chooses 8...c4, followed by kingside castling, as in the following very interesting example: 9 ♙e2 0-0 10 h4 ♘bc6 11 ♙g5 f5 12 exf6 e5 13 fxe7 ♙xg4 14 exf8 ♗+ ♜xf8 15 ♙xg4 exd4, Baklan-Korobov, Ukrainian Ch, Poltava 2006.

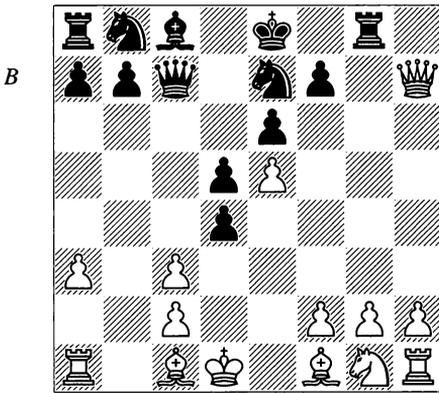
**8...♜g8 9 ♗xh7 cxd4 (D)**

The queen's diversionary raid has destroyed the opponent's position on the kingside, but White's own centre has collapsed. In the opening, central achievements are usually considered more important, so one can legitimately

ask why White would allow such a radical unbalancing of the position, especially when he is also behind in development. What benefits does he see? His pluses are mainly longer-term. He has two bishops and a passed h-pawn, factors which will grow in importance as the endgame approaches. In addition, he usually retains his extra pawn, although in return, his king has to remain in the centre for a long time. Consequently, Black's chances lie in the activity of his pieces and an attack on the enemy king – in other words, in dynamic play.

### 10 ♘e2

Two pawns are threatened, both with check. At first sight, the move played looks forced – White defends against the queen capture on c3, prepares to defend e5, and renders the immediate capture on e5 dubious, because of 10...♙xe5 11 cxd4, with an extra pawn for no compensation. However, there is also another, more extravagant possibility – 10 ♔d1 (D).



The drawbacks of this continuation are obvious enough, but there are also some pluses. The main one is that the knight can come to f3, where it is more active and does not obstruct the bishop. More concretely, after 10...♙xe5 there is 11 ♘f3 and 12 cxd4, while in the event of 10...♙xc3 White can reply 11 ♖b1. Nonetheless, the insecure position of the white king is more important, and this variation's best years are now in the past. Here is one of the more recent examples of its use: 10...dxc3 11 ♘f3 ♘bc6 12 ♘g5 ♘d8 (both 12...♘xe5 and 12...♙xe5 are also playable) 13 f4 ♔d7 14 h4 ♙c5 15 h5

♔b5 16 ♔xb5+ ♙xb5 17 h6 ♖g6, Short-Neeletpal, Dhaka 1999, and after 18 ♙h8+ ♘d7 19 h7 ♖h6, the attack in the centre looks more dangerous than the h-pawn.

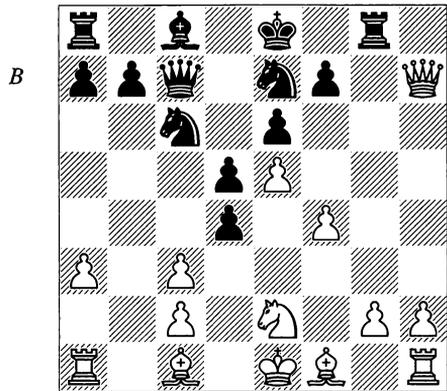
### 10...♘bc6

10...dxc3 is played less often, even though it does not give White any additional options. Usually, it amounts to no more than a transposition of moves, but Black does have a couple of original paths after 11 f4:

a) 11...b6 is the traditional attempt to develop the bishop to a6. In this instance, it is quite dubious, because the immediate cavalry raid ♘g3-h5-f6 is very dangerous; the black king lacks just one tempo to castle out of range in time.

b) With 11...♔d7 Black does not hurry to develop the knight from b8, keeping the option of playing it via a6-c5-e4, and meanwhile guards the b5-square. Play can continue 12 ♙d3 ♘f5 13 ♖g1 (13 g3 ♘a6 14 ♔g2 ♖c8 15 ♘d4 ♘c5 does not seem dangerous, Korneev-Fernandez Romero, Santo Antonio 2002) 13...♙b6 14 g4 ♘c6 15 ♙xc3 ♘fd4 16 ♖g3 ♖c8, Volokitin-Firman, Lvov 2001.

### 11 f4 (D)



### 11...♔d7

Here there is also 11...dxc3, with the idea 12 ♙d3 d4. Black sacrifices a different pawn, obtaining in return the open d-file, the long diagonal for his bishop, and the d5-square. Then:

a) The attempt to exploit the weakening of the e4-square is met by a piece sacrifice: 13 ♘g3 ♔d7 14 ♘e4 0-0-0 15 ♖b1 ♘xe5 16 fxe5

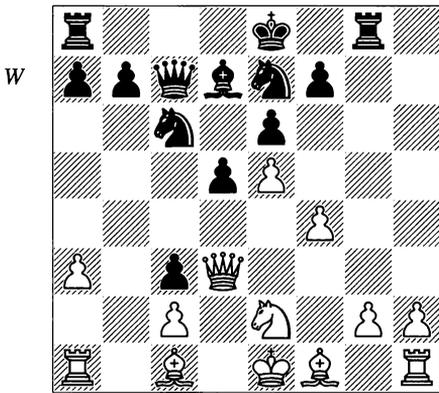
♖xe5 with a strong attack, Oll-Eingorn, USSR Ch, Odessa 1989.

b) In the interests of development, it is also possible to defer the capture of the pawn for a couple of moves, but Black can maintain equality: 13 ♖b1 ♗d7 14 ♖g1 0-0-0 15 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♖xd4 ♗b5 17 ♖xa7 ♗xf1 18 ♗xf1 ♖c4+ (transposing into the game Luther-Gdanski, Aegina 1993) 19 ♗f2 ♖e4 20 ♖b4 ♖xg2+ 21 ♖xg2 ♖xc2+ and perpetual check.

c) White can only fight for an advantage by 13 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♖xd4 and the extra pawn, the prospect of another falling on c3, the two bishops and the passed h-pawn, should prove more important than Black's compensation.

After 11...dxc3, it is also possible to transpose into the main line by 12 ♗xc3 a6, since the complications after 12...♗xe5 or 12...♗d4 do not lead to anything favourable for Black.

### 12 ♖d3 dxc3 (D)



### 13 ♗xc3

White has a wide choice here. We shall examine the main options in ascending order of popularity:

a) 13 ♗g3 has the idea of castling. After 13...0-0-0 14 ♗e2 (or 14 ♖xc3) 14...♗f5 15 ♗xf5 exf5 the f5-pawn blocks White's king-side majority and controls the important e4-square, while the ...d4 advance will secure the bishop an excellent diagonal. Black has good play.

b) 13 ♗e3 came to prominence after the game Spassky-Korchnoi, Candidates (2), Belgrade 1977. The bishop moves to a different

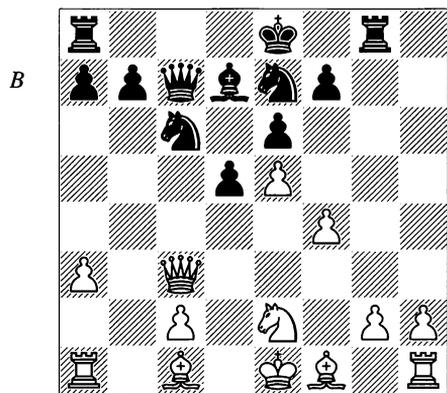
diagonal and strengthens control over the d4-square.

b1) Even so, the immediate 13...d4 is still possible (as indeed Korchnoi played): 14 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♗f5 16 ♖c5 ♖c6, Moreno Carnero-Matamoros, Suances 1997, and Black's threats are no less real than his opponent's two extra pawns.

b2) More often played is 13...♗f5 14 ♗f2 0-0-0, when both sides have their trumps; for example, 15 h3 d4 16 g4 ♗fe7 17 ♗g2 ♗e8 18 ♗h4 ♗a5 19 ♗g3 ♗c6 20 ♗xc6 ♗axc6, Bakre-Neelotpal, Indian Ch, Nagpur 1999.

c) 13 ♖b1 invites Black to reveal whether he plans to play ...♖c8 or to castle queenside. Also possible is 13...d4, going into positions considered above. One possible scenario is as follows: 13...0-0-0 14 ♗xc3 ♗a5 (Black usually tries to gain some benefit from this move, saving a tempo on ...a6; although 14...a6? is in any case a blunder here, because of 15 ♖xa6!) 15 g3 ♗b8 16 ♗e2 (White should probably seek an advantage in the line 16 ♗b5 ♗xb5 17 ♖xb5 ♖c8 18 ♗e3 b6) 16...♗a4 17 c3 ♗f5 18 ♗h3 d4 and Black seized the initiative in Svidler-Ivanchuk, Linares 1999.

d) 13 ♖xc3 (D) is the main alternative to the move played in the game.

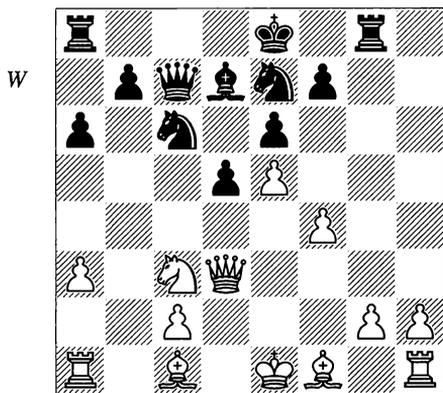


After 13...0-0-0 14 ♖b1 ♗f5 15 ♖g1 d4 16 ♖d3 ♗a5, how should Black exploit his evident advantage in development, to counter-balance his opponent's extra pawn and other trumps? One possibility is to open the centre by ...f6 and ...e5, although this means giving

White further pawns on the kingside; here is an example: 17 ♖b4 ♘c6 18 ♖b2 f6 19 g4 ♘h4 20 exf6 e5 21 f7 ♖h8 22 f5 e4 23 ♗xe4 ♘e5 24 ♘xd4 ♘xf7, Smirnov-Kornev, Russian Team Ch, Sochi 2006. Black's threats are serious, of course, but he has sacrificed a lot of material. The other method is to attack the c2-pawn, although White can choose whether to allow this; e.g., 17 g4 ♙a4 18 c3 ♙c2 19 ♗xc2 d3 20 ♗a2 ♗c5 21 ♖g2 ♘e3 22 ♘g3 ♖xg4 and Black proved stronger in Volokitin-Ganguly, Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2007.

### 13...a6 (D)

The other defence to the check on d6 is 13...♘f5, which is less popular, but cannot be immediately refuted. In the variation 14 g4 ♖xg4 15 ♙h3 the piece sacrifice 15...♘xe5 gives Black excellent play. The a6-pawn fulfils not only defensive functions, but also supports the bishop or knight jumping out to b5.



### 14 ♖b1

Since the knight can no longer go forward, the retreat 14 ♘e2 has also been played, by which the knight seeks a new sphere of activity. To neutralize his opponent's activity in the centre, White is prepared to sacrifice the c2-pawn, if he can exchange queens in the process, since any such simplification is in his favour.

### 14...♘a5

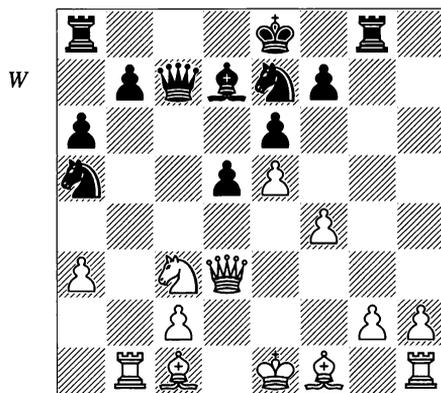
For the time being, Black wishes to retain the possibility of queenside castling; we should note that White's last move prevented the immediate 14...0-0?, because of 15 ♗xa6.

The alternative is 14...♖c8 with immediate pressure along the c-file. Then White will either return to the plan of regrouping with 15 ♘e2, or defending the knight with ♖h3 or ♙d2.

First we should note that 15 ♘e2 ♘f5 16 ♙d2 ♘a7 17 ♘d4 ♘xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♘b5 19 ♗d3 ♗xc2 20 ♗xc2 ♖xc2 21 a4, Khalifman-Shulman, FIDE World Cup, Khanty-Mansiisk 2005, illustrates White's aforementioned willingness to return the c2-pawn to achieve a favourable simplification.

The move 15 h4 seems the most versatile, opening a path for the rook, while the pawn itself advances towards the queening square. The tactical blow 15...♘xe5 16 fxex5 ♗xc3+ is dubious, since the open diagonal for the bishop should prove to be worth more than the pawns. As a typical example of the tactical possibilities of the variation we shall show a recent miniature: 15...♘f5 16 ♖h3 ♘cd4 (16...♘ce7 is more often played) 17 h5 ♗c5 18 ♖xb7 ♘b5? 19 ♘e4 1-0 Nijboer-Timman, Dutch Ch, Hilversum 2006.

We now return to 14...♘a5 (D):



### 15 ♙d2

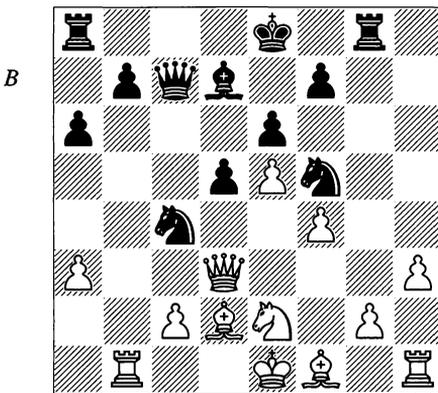
Not a novelty, but not a move seen before at professional level. And with good reason – the d2-bishop immediately comes under attack. The main line is 15 h4 with complicated play; the weakening of g3 gives Black the possibility of battling the passed h-pawn by tactical means, as in the game D.Petrosian-Lputian, Armenian Clubs, Erevan 2006: 15...♘f5 16 ♖h3 ♗c5 17 h5 0-0-0 18 ♙d2 ♘c4 19 h6 ♖g6 20 h7 ♖h8 21 ♗f3? ♘xd2 22 ♗xd2 ♖xh7.

**15...♟c4**

As long as g3 is defended, 15...♟f5 is refuted by 16 g4 ♜xg4 17 ♙h3, followed by 18 ♙xf5 and 19 ♟xd5.

**16 ♟e2**

Black is not concerned about the possibility of 16 ♟e4 dxe4 17 ♜xc4, since after 17...♜xc4 18 ♙xc4 ♜xg2 his pieces acquire active positions. White cannot take on b7 because the reply ...♙c6 would create dangerous threats down the long diagonal, and the h-pawn will not be able to advance beyond h5.

**16...♟f5 17 h3 (D)****17...♜c5**

17...♙b5 18 g4 ♟xd2 19 ♜xd2 ♙xe2 20 ♙xe2 ♟g3 21 ♟g1 ♟e4 suits White. The excellent knight does not fully compensate for the extra pawn and passed h-pawn.

**18 g4**

In this variation, the advance g4 usually signifies a critical moment.

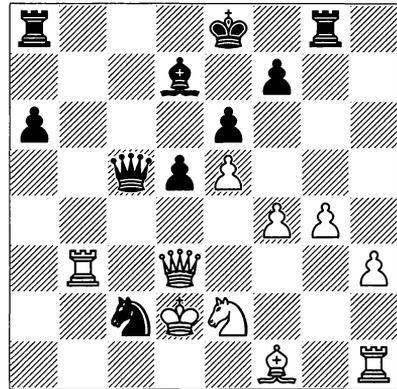
**18...♟xa3 19 ♜b2 ♟c4 20 ♜xb7 ♟fe3 21 ♙xe3 ♟xe3 22 ♜b3?**

Evidently, this move is a mistake. He could retain reasonable chances by 22 ♜c3 ♜xc3+ 23 ♟xc3 d4 24 ♟e4 ♙c6 25 ♟d6+ ♟d8 26 ♟xf7+ ♟e8 27 ♟d6+ ♟d8 28 ♜h2 ♙xb7 29 ♟xb7+ ♟e7 30 ♟a5, with chances for both sides in a sharp ending.

**22...♟xc2+ 23 ♟d2 (D)****23...♜c8**

It seems that this was the move White had underestimated, believing that Black was instead forced to play 23...♟b4 24 ♜c3 with the

B



exchange of queens, when White has the better endgame.

**24 ♜c3**

The win of a piece by 24 ♜c3 ♜b4 25 ♟xc2 ♟e7 26 ♜xa6 ♙a4+ 27 ♟d2 ♜gd8 loses the game, which means that the queens stay on the board, and the white king faces a grim future.

**24...♜a7 25 ♜b2 ♙a4 26 ♜c3 ♜xc3 27 ♜xc3 ♟d7 28 f5 ♜c8 29 ♜f3 ♜c5**

The last accurate move, ensuring the evacuation of the black king and finally neutralizing the white queen's attack.

**30 fxe6+ fxe6 31 ♜f7+ ♟d8 32 ♜f6+ ♟c7 33 ♜f4 ♟b8 34 ♟g3 ♜c3+ 35 ♟e2 ♜e1+**

A simpler finish was 35...♙b5+ 36 ♟f2 ♜c5+ 37 ♟g2 ♜f8, but the move chosen is good enough.

**36 ♟f3 ♜c3+ 37 ♟g2 ♟e3+ 38 ♟g1 ♙b5 39 ♜f8+ ♟b7 40 ♜f2 ♜b1 41 ♟h2 ♟xf1+ 42 ♟xf1 ♜d3 43 ♜f7+ ♟b6 44 ♜f2+ ♟c6 0-1**

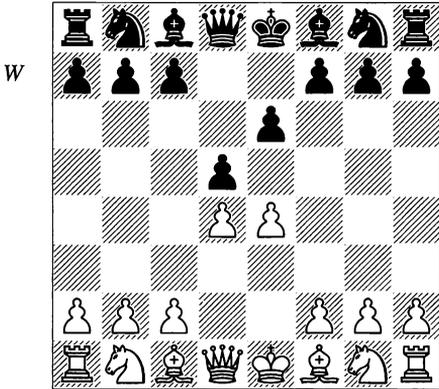
The 7 ♜g4 system has passed through several periods in its development. In the middle of the last century, the dominant variation was that in which Black sacrificed his kingside pawns, whereas in the last 20-30 years, it has been the variation with kingside castling. Today, one has the impression that interest in this line is beginning to pall, and attention is beginning to shift back towards the uncompromising variation seen in Game 25. As for the move 7...♟f8, this variation is still comparatively young, and has its fans, but at this moment, the line appears to be experiencing a few problems, and is in need of one or two new ideas.

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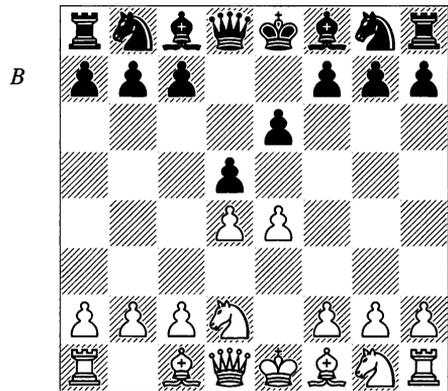
# Index of Variations

1 e4 e6  
2 d4 d5



- a) 4...♙d7 6 5 ♗f3 ♖b6 7 (5...♗c6 15)
- b) 4...♖b6 5 ♗f3 ♗c6 – 4...♗c6 5 ♗f3 ♖b6
- c) 4...♗c6 10 5 ♗f3 15 5...♖b6 6 a3 10:
- c1) 6...♗h6 16
- c2) 6...a5 10
- c3) 6...♙d7 16
- c4) 6...c4 10

We now return to 3 ♗d2 (D):



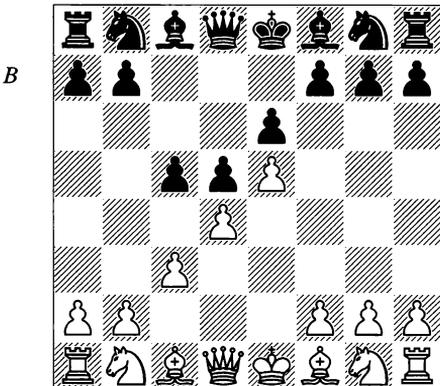
Now:

A: 3 ♗d2 and others

B: 3 ♗c3

A)

1 e4 e6  
2 d4  
2 ♗f3 d5 3 ♗c3 ♗f6 4 e5 ♗fd7 5 d4 6 2  
2 ... d5  
3 ♗d2 20  
3 e5 6 3...c5 4 c3 (D) and then:



3 ... c5  
3...dxe4 4 ♗xe4 47  
3...♗c6 20  
3...♙e7 with ...♗f6 29  
3...♙e7 with ...c5 43  
3...h6 with ...♗f6 31  
3...h6 with ...c5 43  
3...a6 43  
3...♗f6 24

4 exd5  
4 ♗gf3 33

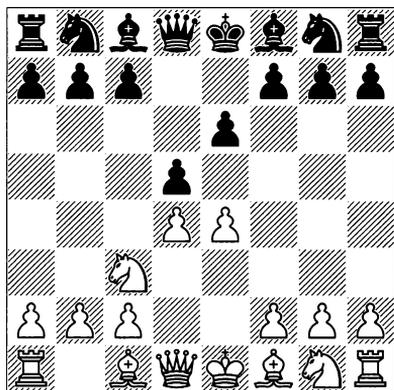
Now (after 4 exd5):

4...exd5 38  
4...♖xd5 5 ♗gf3 cxd4 34

B)

1 e4 e6  
2 d4 d5  
3 ♗c3 61

B



3 ... ♖b4 80

3...dxe4 4 dxe4 47

3...♘f6 61 and then:

a) 4 e5 62

b) 4 ♖g5 and now:

b1) 4...dxe4 51 5 ♘xe4 ♖e7 6 ♖xf6:

b11) 6...♖xf6 51

b12) 6...gxf6 56

b2) 4...♖e7 67

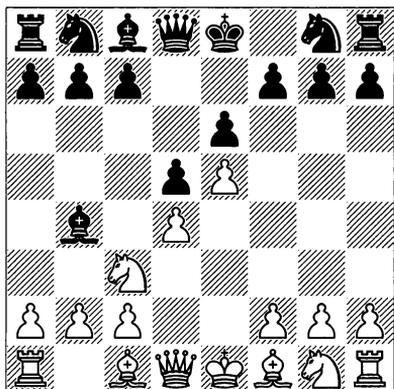
b3) 4...♖b4 71

4 e5 85

4 exd5 76

4 ♘e2 80

B



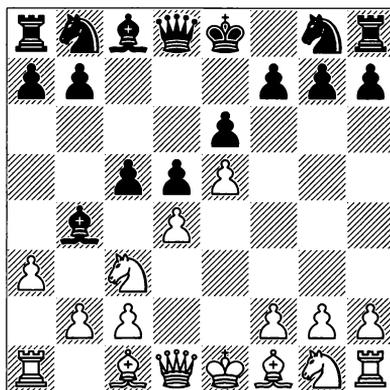
4 ... c5 90

4...b6 85

4...♘e7 85

5 a3 90

B



5 ... ♖xc3+

5...♖a5 91

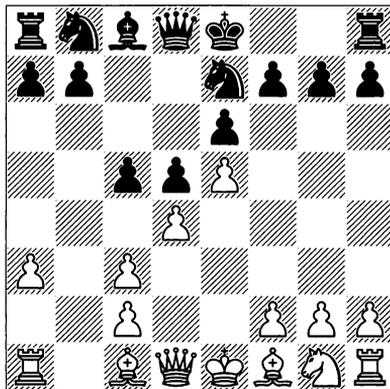
5...cxd4 91

6 bxc3 101

6 ... ♘e7 105

6...♙a5 96

W



7 ♙g4 110

7 ♘f3 102

7 a4 105

Now (after 7 ♙g4):

7...cxd4 120

7...♙f8 110

7...0-0 114

7...♙c7 120

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**The French Defence** is one of the most important chess openings. Its qualities are such that it appeals to a wide range of chess temperaments: it is solid yet uncompromising, and with a variety of chaotic variations to appeal to the most bloodthirsty of players, but also offering more tranquil lines to those seeking a quieter existence. While it is hard for White to avoid at least some imbalance in the position, he also has a wide choice. In some of the most critical lines, he accepts major structural weaknesses in return for piece-play and dynamic chances, while he can also seek to establish a modest space advantage without such heavy positional commitments.



**Viacheslav Eingorn** is an extremely experienced grandmaster from Ukraine. He played regularly and successfully in the Top League of the USSR Championship in the 1980s, and is the author of *Decision-Making at the Chessboard* and *Creative Chess Opening Preparation*. International Master **Valentin Bogdanov** has over thirty years' experience as a chess trainer, and is also from Ukraine. His pupils include Moskalenko, Savchenko and Drozdovsky, and he has acted as a second for Eingorn since the late 1970s.

