

Christian Bauer

play 1...b6

a dynamic and hypermodern opening system for Black



EVERYMAN CHESS

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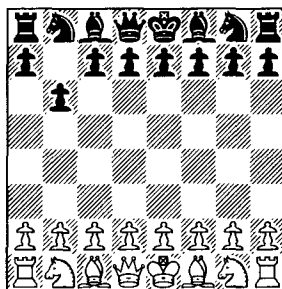
To Nathalie, Elise & Alexandra

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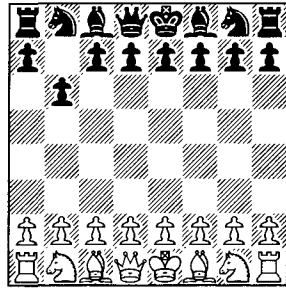
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INTRODUCTION



A book on 1...b6 may sound like a joke to classical players, used to replying with a central push at White's standard first moves. Since the Hypermodernists, of course, we have known that 1...g6 is a perfectly viable opening for Black, though it is a rare guest in the top players' repertoire. But putting pressure on White's pawn centre with the other bishop is even less popular. There are many solid reasons for that:

1) As castling kingside is safer, and indeed happens in the vast majority of games, it is quite useful to speed up the development of that flank. By comparison, after 1...b6 2...♗b7, we can state that Black needs at least three more tempi before he is allowed to castle long.

2) To put extra pressure on the white centre, Black often needs to include his c-pawn in the battle. If one makes a parallel with the Modern Defence (1...g6) again, pushing the f-pawn would weaken the black king much more.

3) Finally, one may say: 'Fianchettoing your queen's bishop is nice, but it's not a priority. Why not logically start with moves you will have to play anyway?'

Well, what can I say? The preceding points are all quite pertinent, but I still see some arguments in favour of 1...b6:

1) First of all the theory of 1...b6 is not as well developed as for more orthodox systems. Openings that are not played by the world's top players can be underestimated; this often means your opponent will be badly prepared and will soon have to think for himself, which is always good news!

2) Another point for Black is the flexibility of his formation. He may use his f-pawn to gain extra control of the e4-square, decide to put his dark-squared bishop on g7 or on e7, or sometimes even on b4, depending on White does. All in all this will leave a free course to imaginative players.

From this second point, and again in comparison with 1...g6, one can state that Black will employ a sort of light-squared strategy. Indeed, nearly all of Black's forces will be directed towards the e4- and d5-squares: his bishop at b7, knight at f6, pawns on e6 and f5 and sometimes c6. The other bishop will add extra pressure on the white centre from b4. This strategy is often effective as White can't keep his centre intact for long, just by protecting it with his pieces. He will thus have to advance his central pawns further, or exchange them, when Black can usually

get a satisfactory game.

As practice will show you, playing 1...b6 does have a recurrent drawback in many cases: in the form of the black queen's knight placement. As the 'natural' ...♘c6 would invite d4-d5 with gain of tempo, this one often lands on a6 rather early. When White has already committed himself with d4-d5, then the horse finds a nice outpost at c5. Otherwise, it may have to be patient.

Apart from this small inconvenience, I see no valid reason not to play 1...b6, at least as an alternative weapon!

This book will deal with 1 e4 b6, 1 d4 b6, 1 c4 b6 and 1 ♖f3 b6. It is thus divided into four sections. As for White's other first moves, I believe 1...b6 is still good (except after 1 g3! of course), but Black has a wide range of satisfactory replies in these cases anyway.

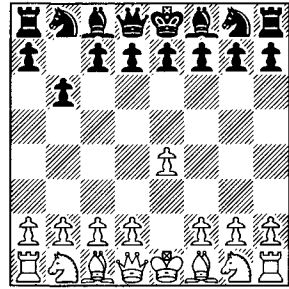
Finally, I would like to address my special thanks to all prolific 1...b6 (or 2...b6) players: GMs Speelman and Blatny, the late Tony Miles, the Latvian duo Kengis and Miezis, IMs Bricard and Filipovic, to name a few. Without your indirect contribution, this book would have had the cherry, but the cake surely would have been missing.

Good reading!

Christian Bauer,
France,
September 2005

CHAPTER ONE

1 e4 b6



1 e4 b6: Introduction

Owen's Defence, 1 e4 b6, is regarded by current theory as suspicious. Not because we are unfamiliar nowadays with hypermodern concepts (1 e4 g6 is much more popular and well accepted), but it appears that some lines make Black's life difficult.

For instance, after 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♘d3 (section 2), Black's task of applying extra pressure on his rival's centre is not easy. Following the most frequently played move 3...e6, Black can end up in a slightly passive, albeit quite playable position, often reminiscent of the French Defence. If Black doesn't like 3...e6, Blatny's speciality of 3...♗f6 4 ♚e2 ♝c6!? (Games 9-10) is a valid alternative. 4 ♚e2 is White's main possibility and presents very special characteristics. White can opt for a different fourth move, but he would have to make a concession in that case.

The other main line, 3 ♝c3 e6 4 ♗f3 ♖b4 5 ♘d3 ♗f6 6 ♘g5 h6 etc., is also delicate for Black to handle (see section 3). It may not promise full equality either, even though the game Glek-Polak went quite nicely, but Black has earlier ways to deviate.

To be honest, I don't think Black can equalise as quickly with 1...b6 as he sometimes

does in standard openings, and he may suffer against a well-prepared opponent. Then again, the well-prepared opponent is rare for such marginal variations as 1...b6, and in any case, with reasonable play I'm sure White can't get more than a slight advantage from the opening – a risk everyone is running as Black, aren't they?

Other possibilities for White, such as 3 f3, 2 g3 and 2 ♗f3, shouldn't worry Black. These lesser lines, along with Black's own early deviations (such as the Hippopotamus), are considered in the first section below.

Game 1

G.Swathi-P.Harikrishna

Indian Championship, Nagpur 2002

1 e4 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♘g2 ♗f6

The thematic 3...f5 is also well playable and is seen in the next game.

4 ♝c3 e6 5 ♗ge2

I like 5 f4 better, as after the closing of the centre White can continue ♗f3 (or even ♗h3), and leave the e2-square vacant for the other knight.

5...d5 6 e5 ♗fd7 7 f4 c5 8 d3 ♝c6

Undermining the centre by means of 8...f6?! is suspicious, as White can just ignore

his opponent's intention. After 9 0-0! (9 f5?! fxe5 10 fxe6 ♖f6 on the other hand is less clear) 9...fxe5? (9...f5 still seems playable for Black, but then it would have been more logical to play it in one go) 10 fxe5 ♗xe5 11 ♗f4, with his king stuck in the middle, Black is in serious trouble.

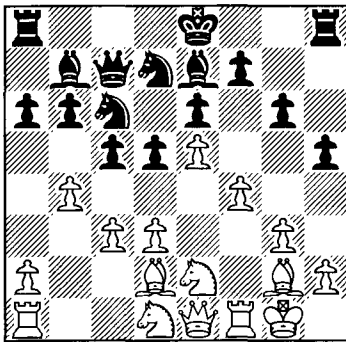
9 0-0 g6

Stopping any f4-f5 ideas.

10 ♖e1 a6 11 ♗d1 ♖c7

11...b5 was possible as well and perhaps better, but having in mind to castle queenside, Black understandably refrains from advancing further on this wing.

12 c3 ♗e7 13 ♗d2 h5 14 b4



14...h4?!

I'm not sure about this move; a natural plan for White is to play for g3-g4, especially when the centre becomes stabilised, as occurs in the coming course of the game. If Black doesn't get an attack then ...h5-h4 only helps his opponent.

15 d4 hxg3 16 hxg3 c4 17 ♗e3 0-0-0 18 ♖b1

18 ♖f2 immediately was worth considering, but in this event Black may open lines with ...f7-f6 and ...g6-g5.

18...f5 19 b5

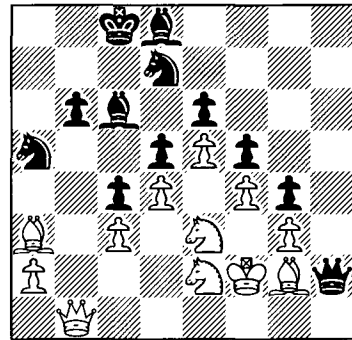
White had two interesting alternatives at her disposal: 19 ♖f2 and the greedy 19 exf6 ♗xf6 (or 19...♗xf6 20 ♖xg6) 20 ♖xg6 ♗dg8 21 ♖c2. Black surely has decent compensa-

tion, but it's not obvious how he will proceed to assault the safely guarded white king.

19...axb5 20 ♖xb5 ♗dg8 21 ♖f2 g5 22 ♗h1 g4

Harikrishna was evidently annoyed by the possibility of 23 ♗xh8 ♗xh8 24 fxg5 ♗xg5 25 ♗xc4, and 22...gxf4 23 ♗xf4 wasn't appealing either. Blocking the kingside, however, means that Black's last few moves were far from ideal.

23 ♗xh8 ♗xh8 24 ♗h1 ♗xh1 25 ♗xh1 ♗a5 26 ♗g2 ♖d8 27 ♖b1 ♖h8 28 ♗c2 ♖h2 29 ♗c1 ♗c6 30 ♗a3 ♗d8 31 ♗e3



31...♖h8?

Black should have prevented the sacrifice that follows with 31...♖h5. In that case his position would have remained defensible.

32 ♗b4 ♗b8

32...♖h5 is already too late: i.e. 33 ♗xa5 bxa5 34 ♗xc4.

33 ♗xf5 exf5 34 ♖xf5+ ♖b7 35 e6 ♖e8 36 ♗xd5

36 ♖f7+! was the simplest, but the text move doesn't spoil anything.

36...♗xd5 37 ♖xd5+ ♗ac6 38 ♗d6 ♗f6 39 ♖xc4 ♖h5 40 d5 ♖h2+ 41 ♖e3 ♗a5 42 ♖e4

Simpler was 42 ♖c7+ ♖a6 43 e7 and wins. **42...b5 43 e7 ♗xe7 44 ♖xe7+ ♖a8 45 ♗xb8?**

45 ♗c5! was far more easy. Now Black can hope again.

45...♖c4+ 46 ♘d3 ♗xb8 47 d6 ♞h1 48 ♘c2?

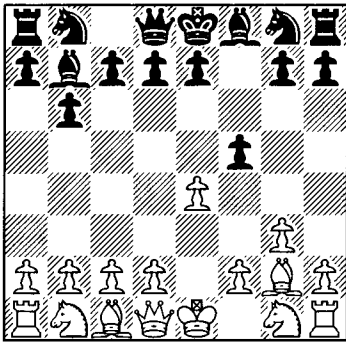
Throwing the win away; either 48 ♞c7+ ♘a8 49 d7 or first 48 ♘d4 would have won for White.

48...♞e1 49 ♞c7+ ♘a8 50 ♞c8+ ♘a7 51 ♞c7+ ♘a8 ½-½

A lucky escape for the current U20 World Champion!

Game 2
M. Olesen-E. Brondum
Copenhagen 1995

1 e4 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 f5



This position reminds me of the 1 c4 b6 2 ♖c3 ♖b7 3 e4 e6 4 g3 f5 line, examined in Chapter 3. Indeed, after the logical moves 4 d3 ♖f6 White may opt for 5 c4 fxe4 6 ♖c3, with a likely transposition to the aforementioned variation, unless Black tries the interesting 6...e5.

4 d3 ♖f6 5 ♖d2

5 ♖c3 seems more natural to me, as blocking the c-pawn isn't that relevant here. According to my sources this position was reached only once before, in a game S. Boden-J. Owen, London match 1858, that ended well for the first player!

5...e6 6 ♖gf3

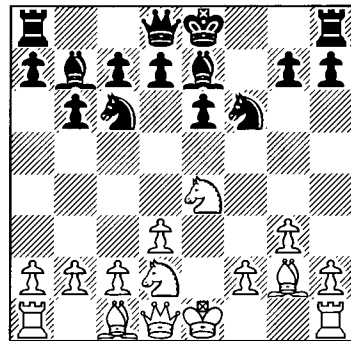
Maybe 6 ♖h3 instead, since White considerably loses influence in the centre when he

has to take back with a piece on e4, as in the course of the game. I'm not sure, though, if White objectively has better chances of an opening edge after, let's say, 6...♙e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 e5 ♙xg2 9 ♗xg2 ♖g4, or 8 exf5 ♙xg2 9 ♗xg2 exf5 10 ♞f3 ♖c6 when 11 ♞xf5 ♖d4 and 11 c3 g6 seem about level to me.

6...fxe4 7 ♖g5 ♙e7 8 ♖gxe4

After 8 dxe4 the drawback of the early knight jump forward becomes obvious: 8...0-0 9 0-0 h6 10 ♖h3 e5 and Black should be fine, while on 9 ♞e2?! ♙a6 causes some nuisance. White must either weaken d4 with 10 c4, go into the self-pin by 10 ♖c4, or remove his queen, when castling will become problematic.

8...♖c6



9 0-0

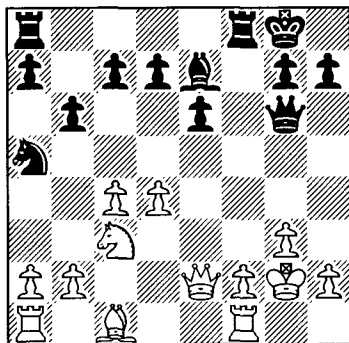
If 9 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 10 ♖e4 (after 10 ♞h5+?! g6 11 ♞h6 *Iritz* advocates 11...♖d4!? 12 ♙xb7 ♖xc2+ 13 ♘d1 ♖xa1 and Black has won some material, though the a1 knight's fate might be not too glorious; instead 11...♞e7 is simpler, when Black is at least equal) 10...0-0 11 ♖xf6+ ♞xf6 12 0-0 then 12...♞ab8, intending either ...♖d4 or ...♖e4, is nice for Black.

9...0-0 10 ♖xf6+ ♙xf6 11 ♖e4 ♙e7 12 c4

Preventing ...d7-d5, which might be annoying. Alternatives for White (12 ♞h5, 12 ♙d2) are considered in the notes to Game 72, as

this position can also arise via the move order 1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 in Chapter 4.

12...♖e8 13 d4 ♖g6 14 ♖c3 ♖a5 15 ♖e2 ♗xg2 16 ♗xg2



16...♖c6?!

16...♗b4! was a more ambitious try to fight for an edge, e.g. 17 ♗d2 ♖c6 18 d5 (if 18 ♖e3 d5 with reasonable hopes of getting a 'good knight vs. bad bishop' type of position) 18...exd5 (18...♖d4!?) 19 ♖xd5 ♖ae8 20 ♗e3 ♖d4 or 20...♗d6, when Black is more active.

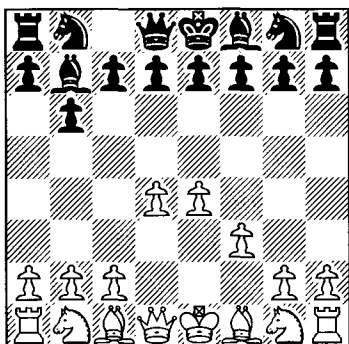
17 ♗e3 ♖ae8 18 ♖ad1 ♗d8 19 ♖d3 ♖h5 20 ♖e2 ♖g6 21 ♖d3 ♖h5 22 ♖e2 ½-½

Game 3

D.Velimirovic-B.Filipovic

Yugoslav Team Cup, Becici 1994

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♗b7 3 f3



A solid, albeit not very ambitious approach. White is restricting the ♗b7, but also takes away the natural (and best) square for his ♖g1.

3...e6 4 ♗e3

4 c4 leads to positions discussed in Chapter 2.

4...d5

The natural 4...♖f6 is also worthy of attention (see the next game).

5 e5

The attempt to maintain the pawn at e4, by either 5 ♖d2 or 5 ♗d3, is wrong. Black would have a vast range of options, among them 5...c5 and 5...dxe4, followed by 6...♖f6, probably being the soundest.

5...c5 6 c3 f6 7 ♖h3?!

Risky from a strategic point of view. Instead 7 f4 looked normal to me and then 7...♖h6! with unclear play. In this atypical Advance French variation, White may not be too happy to have played f2-f4, but the bishop on b7 isn't especially impressive either.

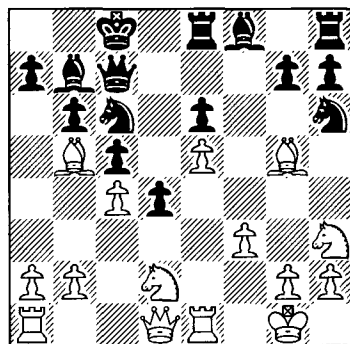
7...fxe5 8 dxe5 ♖c6 9 ♗b5

This means that, in the case of a subsequent ...a7-a6, White will have to relieve himself of the bishops. Not to everyone's taste!

9...♖c7

9...♖h4+!? 10 ♗f2 ♖h5 and, of course, 9...a6 came strongly into consideration.

10 0-0 0-0-0 11 ♖e1 ♖h6 12 ♗g5 ♖e8 13 c4 d4 14 ♖d2



It is true that White 'conquered' the e4-square, but there is still a long way before $\text{d}4\text{-d}6$ can really be troublesome. White's pieces are all over the shop and make me believe that his opponent's play has been more consistent.

14... $\text{d}7$ 15 $\text{d}4$ h6

Maybe Filipovic didn't want to calculate the implications of 15... $\text{e}7$ 16 $\text{d}4$, though White could play in the same vein in the game as well.

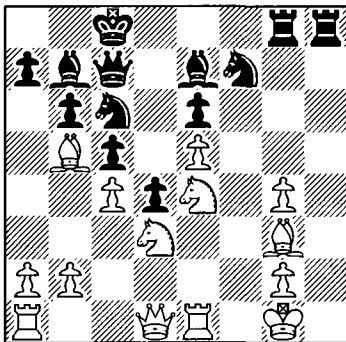
16 $\text{g}3$ g5 17 $\text{d}2$?!)

17 $\text{d}4$ was more accurate in my opinion. Going into the self-pin with 17... $\text{d}2$? is obviously inadvisable: 18 $\text{d}6$ (18 b4!? intending $\text{d}6$ and $\text{d}2$ might be stronger, e.g. 18... $\text{g}7$ 19 $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}2$ 20 $\text{d}2$ and Black is in trouble) 18... $\text{d}6$ 19 $\text{d}2$ $\text{e}8$ and with only one pawn for the exchange, Black does not have full compensation. Instead 17... $\text{d}8$ 18 $\text{d}6$ $\text{d}2$ 19 $\text{d}2$ h5 20 h3 resembles the game continuation, with the significant difference that Black's offensive on the kingside has been slowed down.

17...h5 18 h3 $\text{e}7$ 19 $\text{d}2$ $\text{e}8$ 20 $\text{d}3$ g4 21 fxd3

Trying to keep the g-file closed wasn't any better: 21 hxd3 hxd3 22 f4 $\text{d}6$ and then 23... $\text{d}5$ with a big edge to Black.

21...hxd3 22 hxd3



22... $\text{d}5$

This time 22... $\text{d}2$? was possible, in

view of the 'unpinning means' ... $\text{d}4$ and ... $\text{d}2$ followed by ... $\text{d}6$. However, the game would have remained balanced after the plausible sequence 23 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}4$ 24 $\text{d}2$ $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}2$ 25 $\text{d}6$ $\text{d}2$ 26 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}3$? 27 $\text{d}3$ (not 27 $\text{d}2$? $\text{d}2$ 28 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}6$ which is delicate for White because of ... $\text{d}4$ and/or ... $\text{g}4$) 27... $\text{d}7$ 28 $\text{d}8$ $\text{d}1$ 29 $\text{d}1$ $\text{h}8$ 30 $\text{d}6$ $\text{d}6$ 31 $\text{d}6$ $\text{d}8$ 32 $\text{d}8$ $\text{d}2$ 33 $\text{d}8$ $\text{d}8$ 34 $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}6$ 35 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}4$ 36 a3 with a likely draw.

23 $\text{d}6$ $\text{d}2$ 24 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}7$ 25 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}8$ 26 $\text{d}7$ +

26 $\text{d}3$ was correct. I suppose the players were in time trouble and White was hoping to distract the enemy queen while at the same time opening the diagonal for the g3-bishop.

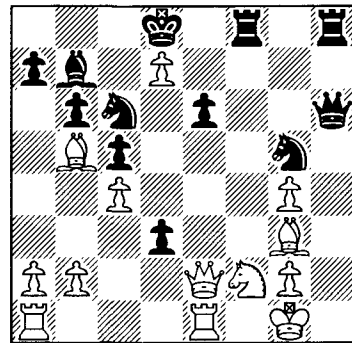
26... $\text{d}8$!

And his bluff works! In fact the pawn could (and should) have been removed, as Black's threat of ... $\text{d}2$ is quite serious, e.g. 26... $\text{d}7$ 27 $\text{d}4$ (the logical complement to White's last move) 27... $\text{d}2$!! 28 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}3$ or 28 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}7$ 29 $\text{d}1$ $\text{d}5$ and it's curtains.

27 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}6$ 28 $\text{d}2$?

28 $\text{d}1$ was a wiser way counter the threat of 28... $\text{d}2$ 29 $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}4$ +, as Black's next should have been a killer.

28... $\text{d}3$!!



Evacuating the d4-square for the knight, after which all of Black's pieces will join the assault.

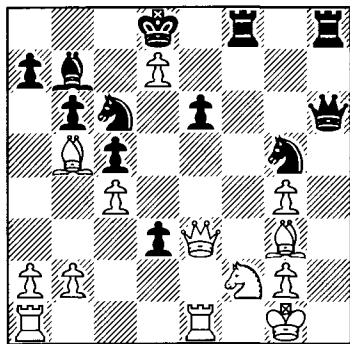
29 ♖e3

Funnily this 'desperado' is ignored too. White's position was hopeless anyway, as the following variations prove. After 29 ♖xd3 ♕d4 all of White's three sensible moves fail to save the day:

a) 30 ♖e3 ♗xf2 (30...♙a8 avoids 31 ♙c7+, prepares the devastating ...♗xf2, and wins too) 31 ♙c7+ ♖xc7 32 ♖e5+ ♕d8 33 ♖b8+ ♖e7 34 d8♖+ (or 34 ♖e8+ ♗xe8 35 dxe8♖+ ♖f6 36 ♖d8+ ♖g7 transposing) 34...♗xd8 and here after both 35 ♖c7+ ♖f8 36 ♖xd8+ ♖g7 37 ♖xf2 ♖h4+ and 35 ♖xb7+ ♖f6 36 ♖xf2 ♖h2!, White's king gets slaughtered.

b) 30 ♖e3 ♗xf2 31 ♖xf2 ♕e4+! 32 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 33 ♖xe4 ♖d2+ 34 ♖g1 ♕e2+ 35 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 with a decisive material superiority.

c) 30 ♙c7+! ♖xc7 31 ♖g3+ e5 (offering White a worse endgame may be too generous; instead Black has 31...♖d8!? 32 ♖b8+ ♖e7 33 d8♖+ ♗xd8 34 ♖xb7+ ♖f6 35 ♖c7 ♖g6 followed by ...♗df8, ...♖h4 or the materialistic ...♕c2) 32 ♖xe5+ ♖d6 33 ♖xd6+ ♖xd6 34 ♙e8 ♕ge6 35 ♙e1 ♕d8 when everything seems under control and Black is ready to cash d7, but after 36 g5! (go!) 36...♕xb5 37 g6 ♖xd7 38 ♙e7+ ♖d6 39 g7 ♕d4, although Black's position remains preferable he might not win.



29...♕d4

29...d2! would have improved on what follows, e.g. 30 ♙e2 ♕d4 31 ♙c7+ ♖xc7 32

♖e5+ ♕d8 33 ♖b8+ ♖e7 34 d8♖+ ♗xd8 35 ♖xb7+ ♖f6 and Black is winning.

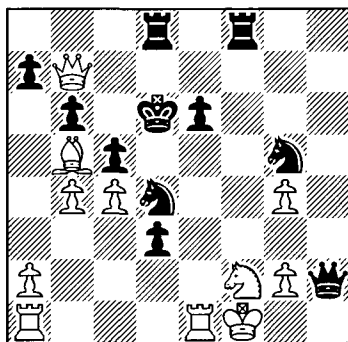
In the rest of the game the Croatian will spoil other rather easy wins and finally drop the full point. A pity, as he had handled the game excellently up to here.

30 ♙c7+ ♖xc7 31 ♖e5+ ♕d8 32 ♖b8+ ♖e7 33 d8♖+ ♗xd8 34 ♖xb7+ ♖d6 35 b4

If 35 ♖xa7 ♖h2+ 36 ♖f1 ♖f4 37 ♖xb6+ ♖e7 and White is powerless against all the threats.

35...♖h2+ 36 ♖f1 ♗hf8

Or 36...♖f4 and wins.



37 bxc5+ ♖xc5??

The last mistake. Instead, 37...bxc5 38 ♖a6+ ♖e7 39 ♖xa7+ ♖f6 40 ♖xc5 ♖g6 and White gets mated.

38 ♖e7+ ♙d6 39 ♖xf8 ♕c2 40 ♕xd3+ ♖d4 41 ♖f2+ ♖c3 42 ♙ac1 1-0

Game 4
L.Yudasin-A.Nuevo Perez
Dos Hermanas 1998

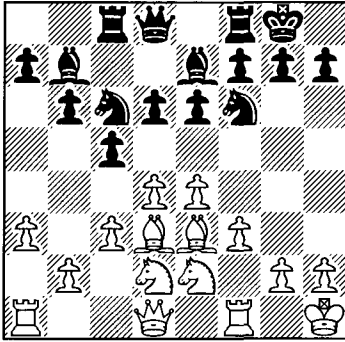
1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 f3 e6 4 ♙e3 ♕f6 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3 ♕c6

Black could also transpose into a French-like position by 6...d5 7 e5 ♕fd7, with the idea of 8...♙a6 exchanging the bad bishop. In that case White enjoys a space advantage and may claim a slight plus.

7 a3 ♖e7 8 ♘e2 d6

Retaining central flexibility. Black may later on decide on either ...d6-d5, or ...e6-e5, depending on the turn of the events.

9 0-0 0-0 10 ♘d2 ♜c8 11 ♙h1

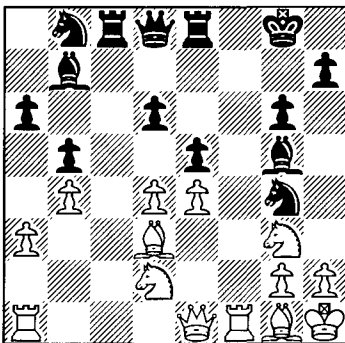


The outcome of the opening is that White stands a bit better owing to his space advantage. However, the game is quite rich strategically and Black has his chances, too.

11...a6 12 b4 cxd4 13 cxd4 b5 14 f4 ♘b8

Still not committing himself in the centre, as after 14...d5 15 e5 ♘g4 16 ♙g1 f5 17 h3 ♘h6 18 ♘b3 White's prospects would be greater. White has more space and can choose between a plan involving g2-g4 or taking action on the queenside.

15 ♘g3 ♜e8 16 ♚b1 g6 17 f5 ♘g4 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♙g1 ♙g5 20 ♚e1 e5?!



Black takes a central decision at last, which paradoxically seems too early to me! I prefer 20...♜f8 21 ♚e2 ♚e7 22 ♜ad1 (making the threat of ♚xg4 effective) 22...♜xf1 23 ♜xf1 (or 23 ♘gxf1 ♘h6!?) 23...♘d7 and White's edge is limited to acceptable proportions.

21 d5!

Naturally White seizes the opportunity to gain more space, and doesn't allow ...e5xd4 followed by ...d5e5.

21...♜c3 22 ♜f3 ♜e7 23 ♚d1?!

More critical was 23 a4! with the idea 23...bxa4 24 ♘e2 ♜c8 25 ♘c4 and a nice advantage for White.

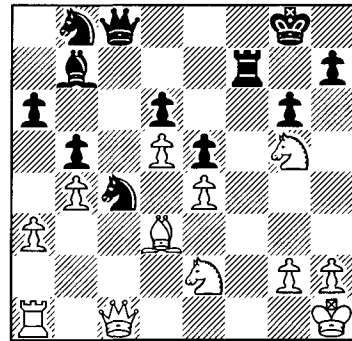
23...♚c8 24 ♘e2 ♜cc7 25 ♙b6 ♜f7!

Thanks to the trick 26 ♙xc7? ♜xf3, threatening a fork at f2, Black stays in the game.

26 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 27 ♘f3 ♙e3 28 ♙xe3 ♘e3 29 ♚c1 ♘c4?

I don't know what spoke against 29...♚xc1+ 30 ♜xc1 h6, preventing the knight jump to g5 and e6. Black will then continue ...♘d7-b6, and as far as I can see, he is not running any particular danger.

30 ♘g5!



30...♜f2?!

This merely helps White bring his king towards the centre for an eventual endgame, and it is very unlikely that his opponent can create serious threats with only the queen and rook tandem. 30...♜f6 was better, though would have left White clearly on top anyway.

31 ♖g1 ♜f6 32 ♙xc4 bxc4 33 ♚e3 ♜d7
34 ♜c1 ♚c7 35 a4 a5

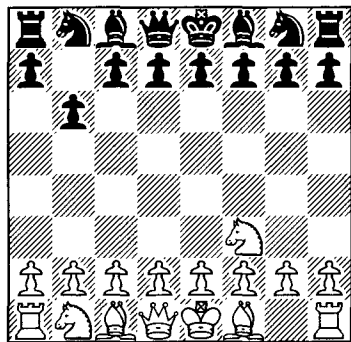
Or 35...♜b6 36 ♜e6 ♜xc6 37 dxe6 ♜xa4
38 ♜f1 and White will win easily.

36 ♜e6 ♚b6 37 ♚xb6 ♜xb6 38 bxa5
♜xa4 39 ♜xc4 ♜c5 40 ♜xc5 dxc5 41
♜xc5 1-0

Not a terribly spectacular game, but the way Yudasin built it and kept control was still exemplary.

Game 5
A.Shchekachev-C.Bauer
French League 2003

1 ♜f3 b6



2 e4

This position arises from the two move orders, 1 ♜f3 b6 2 e4 and 1 e4 b6 2 ♜f3, with roughly the same frequency.

2...♙b7 3 ♜c3

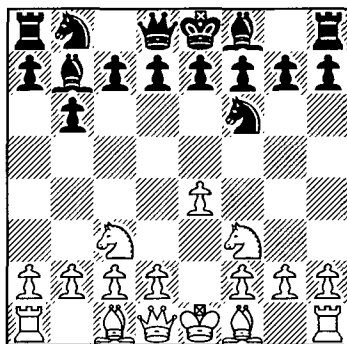
Other third moves are less logical, though also playable:

a) 3 d3 shuts in the f1 bishop and is likely to transpose into King's Indian schemes discussed later in the book; for instance, 3...e6 4 g3 ♜f6 5 ♙g2 d5 6 ♜bd2 ♙e7 7 0-0 (Games 73-75) or 3...g6 4 g3 ♙g7 5 ♙g2 c5 6 0-0 (Games 76-77).

b) 3 ♙d3 blocks the d-pawn, and carrying out the plan c2-c3, ♙c2 and d2-d4 seems a bit fanciful here.

c) The 'coffee house' 3 ♙c4?!, intending 3...♙xe4 4 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 5 ♜g5+ ♜e8 6 ♜xe4 with some advantage, is well met by the simple 3...e6, and a subsequent ...d7-d5 will hit the bishop.

3...♜f6!



Strangely enough, Khalifman doesn't consider this possibility at all in his book *Opening for White according to Kramnik 1.♜f3* (vol. 3)! Of course Black has other options: for instance, 3...g6 is seen in the next game, while 3...e6 4 d4 is the main line introduced in Game 7.

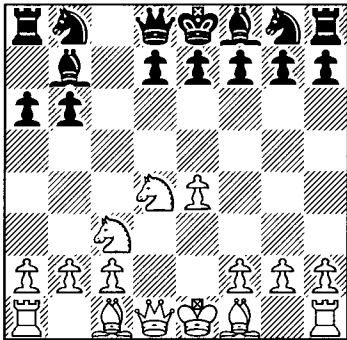
Black can also play 3...c5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♜xd4, transposing to a Sicilian 2...b6 variation. Khalifman's comments on this position are a bit illogical, in my opinion. He claims that White will be better here, on the general grounds that Black's system is slow and not a main line. I believe this can be explained both by the quantity of work he had to do (1 ♜f3 b6 was a minor line in the book) and his approach to chess (Khalifman plays exclusively main lines).

When coming to more concrete matters, he quotes B.Gelfand-V.Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1999 (Black was fine throughout the game), and offers the line 5...a6 6 ♙g5 ♚c7 7 ♜d5 ♙xd5 8 exd5 ♚e5+ 9 ♙e3 ♚xd5 10 ♙e2 e5 11 ♜f3 ♜f6 12 0-0 e4 13 ♜d2 intending 14 ♜xe4! with compensation for White. Let's investigate this interesting line. On Black's 7th move, 7...♙xd5 is indeed the

best choice (after 7...♙e5! White can trans-
pose anyway with 8 ♖e3 ♗xd5 9 exd5, and
has the extra possibility 8 ♘f5!?, with the idea
8...e6? 9 ♙d4! and wins); but instead of his
faulty 8th move Black can try 8...♘f6 9 ♗xf6
gxf6 which is probably only a bit better for
White.

I would also like to note a likely improve-
ment over 11 ♘f3, i.e. 11 ♘f5 when White
has sufficient compensation for the pawn and
even a slight initiative. On the other hand, I'm
less sure about White's counterplay if, after 11
♘f3 ♘f6 12 0-0, Black goes for 12...♘c6,
rather than 12...e4?!

As I believe 3...♘f6 is good enough for
Black, I will just add a little more advice for
anyone who wants to test this original form of
the Sicilian. The first key moment is on move
6, where White has a vast range of options:



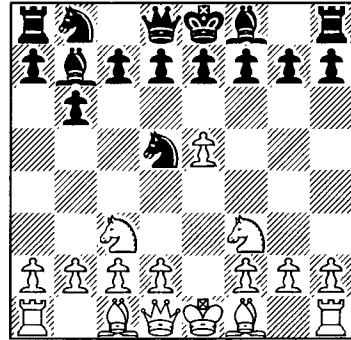
After 6 ♗d3, 6...g6 is the most appropriate
reply (as played in the aforementioned Gel-
fand-Topalov game). Black then develops
with ...d7-d6, ...♗bd7, ...♘f6, ...0-0, ...♖c8 and
eventually ...b6-b5. His only concern in the
opening is not to allow f2-f4, e4-e5 under
unfavourable circumstances.

If White goes for the quiet 6 g3, then ...d7-
d6, ...e7-e6, ...♘d7, ...♖c8 is quite flexible.
Black can then decide how to best develop his
kingside.

Finally, White has two dangerous continua-
tions at his disposal: the English Attack with

♗e3, ♙d2, f2-f3, 0-0-0; against which I think
Black can use the same set-up as with the
pawn on b5, i.e. ...e7-e6, ...♙c7, ...♗b4, ...♘f6.
And secondly, a White system involving a
quick f2-f4 and 0-0-0, e.g. 6 f4 e6 7 ♗d3 ♙c7
8 ♙f3, followed by ♗d2, 0-0-0 and g2-g4.
This kind of position is quite rich and unbal-
anced, both sides 'running the risk of losing
control'. It's a matter of taste, but I believe the
position offers chances for both sides.

4 e5 ♘d5



5 ♘xd5

Others:

a) 5 ♗c4 ♘xc3 6 dxc3 aims for an accel-
erated development. (6 bxc3 is playable as well
and would likely transpose to the next note.)
In general, White's active pieces are about
enough to compensate for his inferior pawn
structure but not more. For example: 6...e6 7
♗f4 (7 ♗g5 doesn't cause any trouble either;
e.g. 7...♗e7 8 h4 d6!?, while 8...d5 9 ♗d3 ♘d7
was equal in S.Djuric-C.Bauer, Stäfa (rapid)
2003; Black will continue ...♘c5(-e4), ...♙d7
and ...0-0-0, when he is by no means worse)
7...d5 8 ♗d3 c5 9 c4 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♙xd1+ 11
♖xd1 with a level endgame, as White's lead in
development can easily be neutralised. It is
also not clear at this point whether the pawn
at e5 will become a source of concern for
White or, less likely in my opinion, will help
him by securing a space advantage. J.Gallagher-J.M.Degraeve, Clermont Ferrand

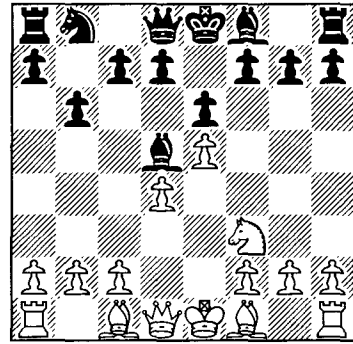
2003, continued 11...♖c6 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 ♜d2 h6 14 h4 ♜d8 15 ♜fd1 0-0 16 ♗e2 ♜xd2 17 ♜xd2 ♜d8 18 ♜xd8+ ♗xd8 19 c3 ♗c7 20 ♗h2 ♖e7 21 h5 ♗d5 22 c4 ♗xf3 23 ♗xf3 f6 24 exf6 ♗xh2+ 25 ♖xh2 gxf6 26 ♖g3 ♖f5+ 27 ♖f4 ♖d6 (or 27...♖d4!?: after the other knight move Black can make a draw if he wishes, simply by doing nothing) 28 ♗e2 ♖f7 29 g4 e5+ 30 ♖e3 f5 31 f4 ♖f6 32 b3 a5 33 a4 ♖e8 34 ♗f3 ♖g7?? (a terrible blunder, whereas after 34...♖c7 it is still White who has to be careful) 35 g5+! hxg5 36 fxe5+ ♖f7 37 h6 (the point) 37...f4+ 38 ♖e4 ♖e6 39 ♗h5+ ♖g8 40 ♗g4 1-0.

b) 5 d4 e6 6 ♗c4 ♖xc3 7 bxc3 d5 (7...d6 was interesting as well, though I figured White would then have more dynamic possibilities; but not the immediate 8 d5?, as both the possible replies 8...dxe5 9 dxe6 ♜xd1+ 10 ♖xd1 f6 or 10...♗xf3+ 11 gxf3 fxe6, and 8...exd5 9 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 10 ♜xd5 c6, followed by either 11...d5 or ...d6xe5, are fine for Black) 8 ♗d3 (8 exd6?! would only help Black's development) 8...♗a6 9 ♖g5 (another option was to play with a2-a4, either after the bishop swap on a6 or not) 9...♗xd3 10 cxd3 h6 (expelling the undesirable horse before ♜h5 arrives) 11 ♖h3 (maintaining the options of f4-f5 and ♖f4-h5; this is far more logical than 11 ♖f3) 11...c5 12 0-0 (or 12 dxc5!?) 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖c6 14 ♗e3 ♜d7 15 ♖f4 and in this balanced position a draw was agreed in V.Akopian-C.Bauer, Enghien les Bains 2003. Black could continue here either with ...0-0-0, or else ...♗e7, after which he must decide whether to allow a subsequent ♖f4-h5 or prevent it by the slightly weakening ...g7-g6.

c) As yet nobody dared to run away with either 5 ♖e2 or 5 ♖e4, though these two moves make sense to me. White is ready to chase the ♖d5 with c2-c4, and can then carry on with ♖g3, d2-d4 etc. Even if White shouldn't achieve an edge, this option keeps a maximum of pieces and complexity, which may suit certain players. Black has a large

range of possible replies, from which ...c7-c5 or ...e7-e6 seem the most natural.

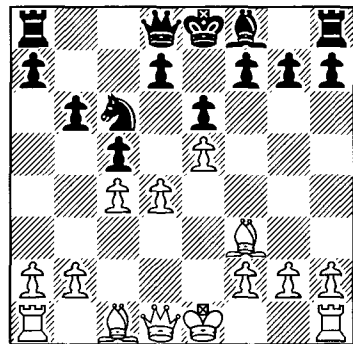
5...♗xd5 6 d4 e6



7 ♗e2

If 7 c4!? ♗b4+ 8 ♖d2 ♗b7 and ...0-0, ...f7-f6 with roughly equal chances. Instead, 7...♗xf3?! 8 ♜xf3 ♗b4+ 9 ♖d1 ♖c6 10 ♗e3 is slightly better for White. The fact that he can't castle anymore isn't that relevant here, as Black can't quickly exploit it by opening up the centre.

7...c5 8 c4 ♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♖c6



10 d5?!

A dubious pawn sacrifice. Safer was 10 ♗xc6 dxc6 11 ♗e3 cxd4 12 ♜xd4 ♗b4+ 13 ♖e2 and anything other than a draw would be a surprising result.

10...♖xe5 11 ♗e4

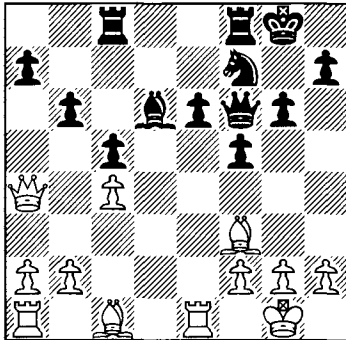
Or 11 dxe6 ♖xf3+ 12 ♜xf3 fxe6 13 ♗g5

♙e7 14 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 and Black is a lot better. With only heavy pieces left on the board, his king won't be bothered too much, and the pawn should tell in the long run.

11...f5 12 ♙f3 ♜c8 13 0-0 ♙d6 14 ♙h5+ g6 15 ♙e2 0-0 16 ♜e1 ♚f7 17 dxe6 dxe6

Black has retained a sound extra pawn and thus has a clear advantage.

18 ♙f3 ♜f6 19 ♜a4



19...♜c7

Stronger was 19...♚e5! 20 ♙e2 ♚c6 and then ...♚d4 with a big plus for Black. Funnily, I remember having feared 20 ♜xa7?! ♚xf3+ 21 gx3 ♜h4 22 f4 during the game!

20 ♜b3 ♜e7 21 a4 ♚e5 22 a5 ♜b8 23 ♜c3 bxa5

Here 23...b5! 24 cxb5 ♜xb5 and Black has a huge advantage.

24 ♜xa5 ♜b4 25 b3 ♜b6 26 h3 ♚f7 27 ♜b5 ♜d7 28 ♙a8? ♚d3! 29 ♜xf6+ ♚xf6 30 ♜d1 ♚xc1 31 ♜xc1 ♙f4 32 ♜b1 ♜xb5 33 cxb5 ♜d2 34 ♙f3 ♙e5 35 ♚f1 ♙d4 36 ♙e2 ♜c2 37 g3 e5 38 ♜d1 g5 39 f3 h5 40 ♚e1 ♜b2 41 ♙c4 ♜h2 0-1

Game 6
B.Lalic-E.Kengis
Pula 1997

1 ♚f3 b6 2 e4 ♙b7 3 ♚c3 g6

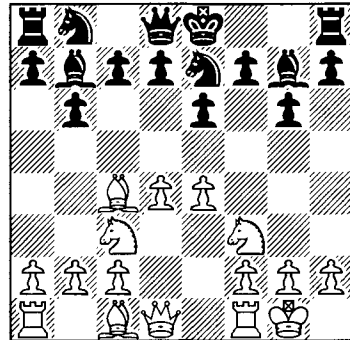
Black agrees to transpose into a Hippo-

potamus, considering that the White set-up without c2-c4 and f2-f4 is not too frightening. Of course this is only because of the current move order; instead after 1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♚c3 g6, White has more options than just transposing with 4 ♚f3.

4 d4 ♙g7 5 ♙c4

5 ♙g5 is sharper and likely to cause Black more headaches.

5...e6 6 0-0 ♚e7



7 e5

7 ♜e1 is a significant alternative:

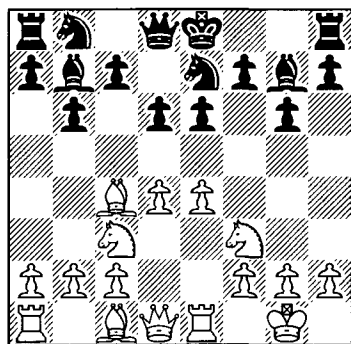
a) 7...0-0 8 e5 d6! (8...d5 may be a more reliable choice; after the bishop's retreat Black continues ...c7-c5 and reaches a satisfactory game) 9 ♙g5 ♙xf3!? (at first sight a confession that something has gone wrong with Black's set-up. With more scrutiny, however, Black's idea doesn't look that bad: first she gets rid of her future bad bishop, then she closes the centre and finally attacks the white pawn chain. The alternatives were anyway pretty grim, e.g. 9...h6 10 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 11 d5 or 9...dxe5 10 dxe5 and White's lead in development makes itself felt in both cases) 10 ♜xf3 d5 11 ♙xd5? (in the event of 11 ♙f1 Black naturally follows up with 11...c5, but the accurate 11 ♜ad1! slows down this counterplay, threatens then to take on d5, and thus secures White a lasting edge) 11...exd5 12 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 13 ♚xd5 and then:

a1) 13...♜d8?? 14 ♚f6+ ♙xf6 15 ♜xa8

♙g7 16 ♖ad1 and White stood much better, which was so until the end when she apparently lost on time 16...a5 17 c4 ♖e7 18 ♖e4 ♟d7 19 b3 ♜c8 20 ♖c6 ♟f8 21 f4 ♜d8 22 ♖f3 ♟e6 23 d5 ♖c5+ 24 ♟h1 ♟f8 25 f5 gxf5 26 ♖xf5 ♖e7 27 ♜d3 ♟g6 0-1 A.Otwinowska-J.Lebel Arias, French League 1996.

a2) 13...♖d7! was correct, when we have a complete change of picture: 14 ♟f6+ (14 ♟e7+ wouldn't solve White's problems either: 14...♖xe7 15 ♖xa8 c6, intending ...♖c7 and ...♟a6, while after 16 d5 simply 16...♙xe5 yields Black a comfortable edge) 14...♙xf6 15 ♖xa8 c6 16 exf6 ♟a6 and White's chances of surviving are quite slim.

b) In the event of 7...d6!?



White may try 8 e5 anyway. After 8...dxe5 he has to take back with his knight, 9 ♟xe5, but this may still be a tad better for him:

b1) 9...♟bc6? 10 ♟xf7! not too surprisingly gives White a wild attack: 10...♟xf7 11 ♜xe6 (or 11 ♙xe6+ ♟e8 12 ♙d5 with the idea of 13 ♙g5) 11...♟a5 (11...♟f8 12 ♙g5 is no fun either) 12 ♙g5 ♟xc4 13 ♜xe7+ with a close to decisive edge for White.

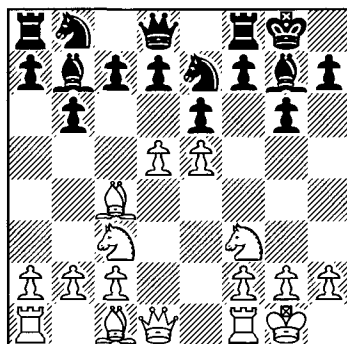
b2) 9...0-0! 10 ♙f4 with a slight advantage. Note that 10 ♟xf7!? is now much less effective because of 10...♜xf7 11 ♙xe6 ♖xd4 unclear.

7...0-0

Attacking the centre at once with 7...d6!,

would have avoided the game continuation. In that case Black's game looks quite satisfactory to me.

8 d5!



8 ♜e1 transposes to Otwinowska-Lebel Arias above. The text is more cunning.

8...h6

Perhaps Black should have tried 8...b5, when 9 ♙xb5 ♟xd5 10 ♟e4!? f6 gives Black counterplay. Instead, Lalic suggests the promising pawn sacrifice 9 ♙b3 b4 10 ♟e4 ♟xd5 11 ♙g5 and now 11...♖e8 and 11...♖c8 lead to twin refutations: 11...♖e8 12 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 13 ♟f6+ ♙xf6 14 ♙xf6 h6 15 ♖d2 ♟h7 16 ♟g5+ ♟g8 17 ♖xb4 followed by ♖h4 (or ♖g4-h3-h8 mate, if Black takes the horse), while with the black queen on c8, White can be even more brutal: 17 ♟xe6 fxe6 18 ♖xh6 ♜xf6 19 exf6 ♖f8 20 ♖xg6+ ♟h8 21 ♜ad1 etc. The only move to hold is 11...♟e7 when White doubtless has a very good compensation for his small material deficit, but I believe Black can defend. For example, 12 ♟f6+ ♟h8 13 ♟d4 h6 (if 13...d6 14 ♖g4 is quite strong) 14 ♖g4 ♟g8 15 ♖h4 and now 15...♖e7, 15...c5 or 15...♟c6 all seem plausible.

9 a4?

This weakens the b4-square, as the Latvian grandmaster will demonstrate. White should have gone for 9 a3! when he is on top; e.g. 9...exd5 10 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 11 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 12 ♖xd5 ♟c6 13 ♙f4 ♖e7 14 ♜ad1 ♜fe8 15

♞fe1 ♞ad8 16 h3!. The immediate 16 b4?! ♞e6 17 c4 g5, followed by ...g5-g4 and the capture of White's e-pawn, would be less clear.

9...♘a6 10 dxe6

10 ♞e2 ♘b4 11 dxe6 fxe6 transposes.

10...fxe6! 11 ♞e2 ♘b4

Black now has a nice platform on d5 for his minor pieces and has obtained considerable counterplay.

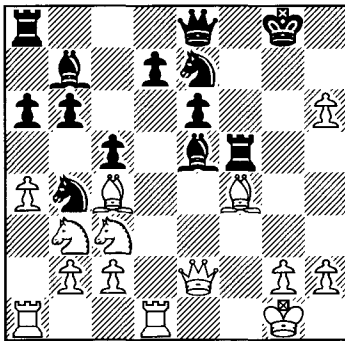
12 ♞d1 ♞e8 13 ♘d4 a6 14 f4 c5! 15 ♘b3

With the idea of a4-a5, undermining the c5 pawn.

15...g5!?

This energetic thrust is strategically well founded: Black will destroy the rest of White's centre, the e-pawn, after which his own d- and e-pawns may start rolling. On the downside Black's king will feel a little airy, so that the more natural 15...♘ed5 was perhaps a sounder option.

16 fxg5 ♞f5 17 gxh6 ♙xe5 18 ♙f4!



A nice shot, which is practically forced if White doesn't want to suffer passively. On the other hand it is very powerful and, contrary to Lalic, I don't see a way for Black to equalise from now on.

18...♞xf4?!

18...♙xf4? 19 ♞xd7! is much better for White, while the winner's recommendation of 18...♘g6!? 19 ♙xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♙d3 ♘bxd3 is

answered by 21 ♞xd3!, and after the logical 21...♞g5 22 ♞g3 ♞xg3 23 hxg3 d6 24 a5, White is slightly better.

19 ♞xe5 ♞g6 20 g3 ♞xc4

Obvious, but knowing the result one may wonder whether 20...♞f5 21 ♞c7 ♙d5 wasn't a better attempt to stay in the game.

21 ♞xd7 ♘bc6 22 ♞e2!

After the faulty advance 22 ♞c7? Black counter-attacks by 22...♞xh6! 23 ♞e1 else 23...♞e3+ 23...♞f8 24 ♞xb7 ♞f6 with the initiative.

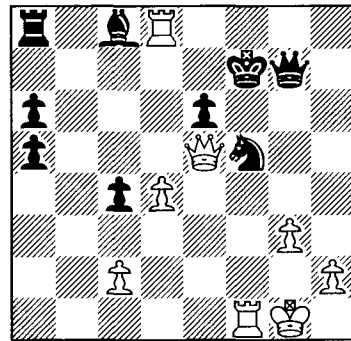
22...♞xc3 23 bxc3 ♙c8 24 ♞d6 ♞xh6 25 a5!

Thanks to this move White is now much better.

25...c4 26 ♘d4 ♘xd4 27 cxd4 ♘f5 28 ♞d8+ ♙f7 29 ♞e5 bxa5?

Black's final mistake. More resilient was 29...♞e3+ 30 ♞xe3 ♘xe3, though White should win anyway after 31 axb6 ♙e7 32 ♞h8 ♘d6 33 ♞a5 etc.

30 ♞f1 ♞g7



31 ♞xf5+! exf5 32 ♞e8+ ♙f6 33 ♞d6+ ♙g5 34 ♞d8+

34 ♞e3+ was mate in three: i.e. 34...♙h5 35 ♞e2+ ♞g4 (35...♙g5 36 h4 mate) 36 ♞e8+ ♙g5 37 ♞g6 mate.

34...♙g4 35 ♙f2! ♞h7 36 ♞g6+! 1-0

After 36...♞xg6 37 ♞h4 is mate, while 36...♙h3 37 ♞g5, intending 38 ♞h6+, is hopeless for Black.

Game 7

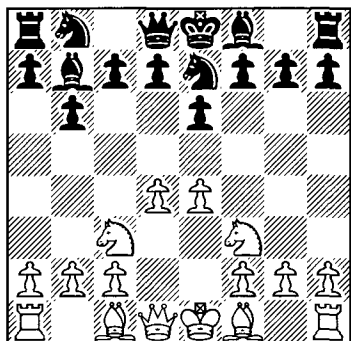
A.Shchekachev-A.Wohl

Metz 2001

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♘f3

After White's fourth move of this unusual opening it may already be time for philosophical questions. Can Black start with...

4...♗e7



Well, it looks like there is no advantage for Black in beginning his Hippopotamus formation this way, whereas the knight move encourages an early h2-h4 from White. Australian IM Wohl experienced this to his expense.

Instead, 4...d6 is seen in the next game, while 4...♖b4 is Games 16-23 below, with 4...♘f6 covered in the notes to Game 16.

5 ♗d3 d6 6 h4

Clearing the path for the c-pawn with 6 ♗e2 proved less effective in M.Pavlovic-A.Wohl, Gibraltar 2003. After some more moves Black achieved approximate equality: 6...♘d7 7 c4 g6 8 d5 exd5 9 exd5 ♗g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♗ed4 ♗e5 and that game eventually ended in a draw on move 54.

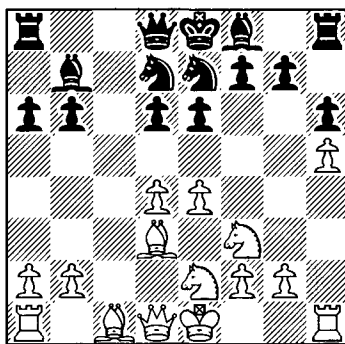
6...♘d7

Black can't afford to prevent White's further kingside expansion. After 6...h5? 7 ♘g5 it's obvious that the cure was worse than the disease.

7 h5 h6 8 ♗f4!

Black's counterplay in the Hippopotamus is linked with the ...c7-c5 and ...f7-f5 advances – or, if an opportunity presents itself, ...d6-d5 or ...e6-e5 might do as well. In the present situation it is quite clear that ...f7-f5 is too weakening, whereas the central pawn moves are ineffective. White must therefore direct his play against the inevitable ...c7-c5.

In that sense 8 ♗e2?!, from A.Rotstein-A.Wohl, Lido Estensi 2003, seems to make Black's life 'too easy', by allowing the immediate 8...c5 9 c3 cxd4 10 cxd4 a6 and then:

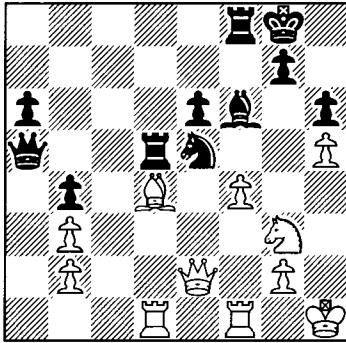


a) 11 a4?! would have prevented ...b6-b5, but conceded a hole at b4 for the rest of the game. Black can then continue 11...d5 12 e5 ♗c6 with an acceptable position.

b) The simple 11 0-0 should perhaps be preferred, when White remains flexible concerning the e2 knight's future. Black then has a wide range of possible replies, but after, let's say, 11...♘g8! or 11...♗c6, White's space advantage confers on him an enduring edge.

c) I'm not convinced by 11 ♘g3 ♗c6 12 ♗d2 ♗e7 13 ♖e2 b5 14 0-0 ♗f6 (14...0-0! was perfectly playable as well) 15 d5 ♗ce5 16 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 17 dxe6 fxe6 when Black was fine, until he made a horrible mistake about ten moves later: 18 ♗c3 0-0 19 ♖ad1 ♖b6 20 ♗c2 b4 21 ♗d2 (on 21 ♗d4! Black had certainly prepared 21...♗f3+, although 22 gxf3 ♗xd4 23 ♖c4 isn't totally clear) 21...♖ac8 22 ♗b3 d5 23 ♗e3 ♖a5 24 exd5 ♗xd5 25 ♗d4

♙xb3 26 axb3 ♖cd8 27 ♖h1 (avoiding the same ...♗f3+ trick as after 21 ♙d4) 27...♗d5?! 28 f4



Black's last move was really unnecessary, but he could still make a fight of it now, provided he had found the amazing resource 28...♗g4!! (instead Wohl went for 28...♗d8?? 29 fxe5 ♗xd4 30 exf6 ♗xf6 31 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 32 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 33 ♗e4 ♗e5, when White simply was a piece up) 29 ♗xe6+ ♖h8 and now White has a choice between three sensible continuations, but none of them seems quite enough to promise real winning chances:

c1) 30 ♗xg4 ♗xd4 with good compensation for the pawn. Black's bishop is stronger than the white horse, while b2 and h5 require permanent protection.

c2) 30 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 31 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 32 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 33 f5 ♗e8 and converting the extra pawn is really tough work.

c3) 30 ♙b6 leads to curious acrobatics after 30...♗xh5+ 31 ♙g1 ♗b5 and now:

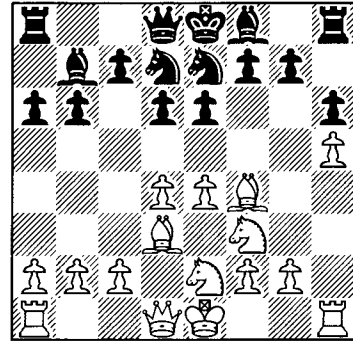
c31) 32 ♗d6?? ♗xb6+!! 33 ♗xb6 ♙d4+ 34 ♗f2 ♙xf2+ 35 ♖f1 ♙xg3 even wins for Black.

c32) After 32 ♗xh5 Black has at least a draw: 32...♗xh5 33 ♗f3 ♗e8 (33...♗h2+!? 34 ♖f1 ♗h1+ 35 ♖e2 ♗xg2+ 36 ♙f2 is unclear) 34 ♗c6 ♗h2+ 35 ♖f1 ♗h1+ 36 ♙g1 ♗h2+ 37 ♖f2 ♗g4+ 38 ♖f1 or 37...♙h4+ 38 ♗g3 ♗g4+ 39 ♖f1.

c33) 32 ♗fe1 ♗c5 (trapping the bishop, of

course!) 33 ♗d6 ♗b8 34 ♙a7 (34 ♙xc5 ♗xc5+ 35 ♖h1 ♗f2+ 36 ♖h2 ♗g4+ 37 ♗xg4 ♗xd6) 34...♗a8 35 ♗xg4 ♗xa7 36 ♗e4 ♙e7! with equality.

8...a6 9 ♗e2



Only now that Black can't involve his c-pawn in the central battle is the knight rerouted to the kingside.

9...♗c6?!

Going for a French-like position with 9...d5 was probably a better bet. After 10 e5 (10 ♗g3!?) 10...e5 11 c3 ♗c6 White has an edge, but as long as the game remains closed, Black doesn't suffer so much from his relative lack of space. He can seek counterplay on the queenside, either with a later ...c5xd4 or ...c5-c4, while at the same time White prepares for a g4-g5 or f4-f5 break

10 c3 e5 11 ♙d2 exd4

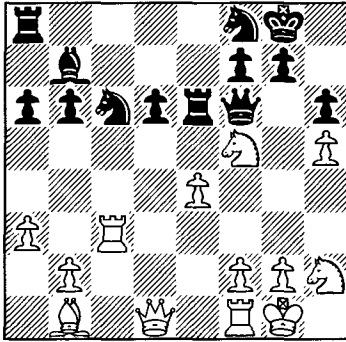
11...♙e7 12 d5 ♗cb8 13 ♗g3 was also clearly better for White.

12 cxd4 ♙e7 13 ♗c1 0-0 14 ♙b1 ♗e8 15 0-0 ♗f8 16 ♗g3 ♙f6 17 ♙c3 ♗a7 18 d5! c5

Otherwise the bishop's diagonal is shut and the knight remains silly at a7, but now d6 is bound to fall.

19 dxc6 ♗xc6 20 ♗f5 ♗e6 21 a3 ♙xc3 22 ♗xc3 ♗f6 23 ♗h2!

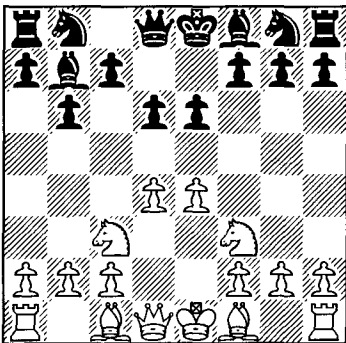
The last touch of this well-played game from Shchekachev. Black can't parry ♗c3-g3 and satisfactorily hang on his weakness on d6.



23...♖h7 24 ♗g4 ♕d8 25 ♙a2 ♜xe4 26 ♙xf7+ ♖h8 27 ♙d5 ♜f4 28 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 29 ♜xc6 ♜xf5 30 ♗e3 ♜b5 31 ♜xd6 ♕e8 32 ♗d5 ♜c5 33 ♗xb6 ♜b8 34 ♗d7 1-0

Game 8
J.Shaw-A.Martin
British League 2004

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♗c3 e6 4 ♗f3 d6



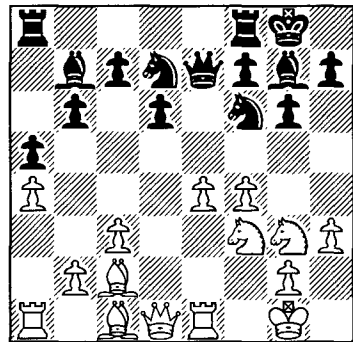
Commenting on this game for *ChessPublishing*, Andrew Martin addresses the same statement as the one that applies for Lalic-Kengis above: ‘The move order Black adopts is rather cunning. He’s aiming for a Hippopotamus system, but by playing ...b7-b6 and ...♙b7 first, he is trying to talk White out of aggressive systems involving f2-f4 and/or ♙e3, ♕d2.’

5 ♙d3 ♗d7 6 0-0

With the f6-square still available for the king’s knight, 6 h4?! would be pointless here.

6...g6

Or 6...♗e7 (now that White has committed himself with 6.0-0 and thus rendered an early h2-h4 inoperative) 7 ♜e1 g6 8 ♗e2 ♙g7 9 c3 0-0 10 ♗g3 e5 11 a4 a5 (11...a6!?) 12 ♙c2 (probing the kingside with 12 h4?! was interesting) 12...♗c6 13 dxe5? (a very cooperative decision, given that Black’s cavalry was short of squares, a problem that ...e5xd4, c3xd4 ♗b4 would only partly have solved; much stronger was 13 ♙g5! ♕e8 14 ♕d2 or 13...f6 14 ♙e3 with better prospects for White in both cases) 13...♗cxe5 14 ♗d4 ♕h4 15 f4 ♗g4 16 ♗f3 ♕e7 17 h3 ♗g6 and now:



a) 18 ♙e3?! (too shy) 18...♜fe8 19 ♗d2 h5 20 ♗h1?! (White should have admitted his mistake and come back with 20 ♗f3!, when he has good chances of holding) 20...♗xe4 21 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 22 ♙xb6 ♗xb6 23 ♜xe4 ♕d7 24 ♗f2 d5 25 ♜xe8+ ♜xe8 26 ♗d3 d4! (planning to install an untouchable rook on e3, as White can’t allow the long diagonal to be opened further; Black is close to winning now) 27 c4 ♕f5 28 ♕f1 ♜e3 29 ♜a3 ♙f8 30 c5 ♙xc5 31 ♗xc5 ♜xa3 32 bxa3 ♕xc5 33 ♗e4 ♕c2 34 ♗f6+ ♖g7 35 ♗e8+ ♖f8 0-1 N.Berry-D.King, British League 2004.

b) White should have tried the more determined 18 e5! dxe5 19 fxex5 ♗d5 20 ♙g5

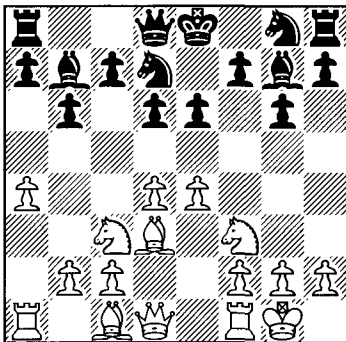
♖e6 (if 20...♗c5?! 21 ♔h1 with the idea of ♖e4 and ♖d4, trapping the enemy queen) 21 ♖h5! ♕xe5! (21...gxf5?? is catastrophic for Black: 22 ♖d4 ♗e8 23 ♗d3 and wins) 22 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23 c4!? ♖b4 24 ♖f6+ ♔h8 25 ♖g4 f6 and now 26 ♕xf6+ ♗xf6 27 ♗xe5 ♗d6 is about level.

7 a4!?

Maybe 7 ♕g5!?, trying to create some disturbance.

7...♕g7?!

I hope Mr. Martin won't resent me too much for the following comments, but when I read his own notes related to 7...♕g7!?, I was astonished. Indeed, he confessed that: 'Of course 7...a6 is forced, I know that now.' Well, in response to 7 a4, 7...a6 seems like an automatic reply to me (unless there is a mate in 2 on the other wing). In fact the usual course of events, which has occurred thousands of times, is: ...a7-a6 (preparing ...b5), a2-a4 (stopping it, while trying to fix the queenside with a4-a5), when Black plays ...b7-b6 (in order to answer a4-a5 with ...b6-b5). Maybe I'm wrong, but I think this scheme is such a classical one, regardless of the opening, that any player rated above 2000 should know it.



8 a5 bxa5

8...♖e7?! was the alternative, when 9 a6 is not yet forced, but if White waits too long Black will get ...c7-c5 in. Furthermore, 9 a6 is very good!, e.g. 9...♕c8 10 ♕g5 h6 11 ♕e3

0-0 12 ♗d2 ♖h7 13 ♗fe1 and I fully agree with Andrew Martin's statement of the present position: Black has no good pawn breaks and cannot dismantle the white centre; so White has got a marked advantage, both after the passive 13...c6 and the risky 13...f5 14 ♕g5!! ♖f6 15 e5 hxg5 16 ♖xg5+ ♔g8 17 exf6 ♗xf6 18 ♗f4.

9 ♕e3 ♖g6 10 ♖d2! 0-0 11 ♖b3 c6

Perhaps 11...♗b8, when after 12 ♗xa5 (but not 12 ♖xa5?! c5 with some counterplay) 12...e5 13 d5 c6 14 dxc6 ♕xc6 White undoubtedly retains the edge, but the game is not finished yet.

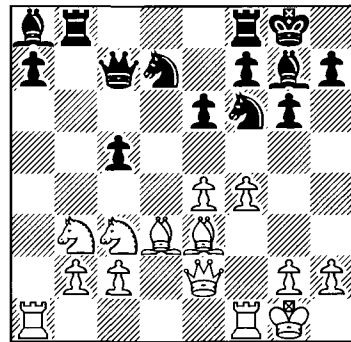
12 ♖xa5 ♗c7 13 f4!?

In the event of 13 ♗a2 ♗fb8 14 ♗f3 ♕c8 15 ♗fa1 Martin judges the position as highly favourable for White, but that may be exaggerated after 15...e5 with the idea 16...exd4 17 ♕xd4 ♖e5 or 16 d5 cxd5 17 exd5 e4 18 ♕xe4 ♗xb2!.

13...♗ab8 14 ♗e2

Of course it's a shame to let the bishop live, but 14 ♖xb7 ♗xb7 15 b3 c5 gave Black enough counterplay.

14...♕a8 15 ♖b3 c5 16 dxc5 dxc5



17 ♗a2

The alternative 17 e5 ♖d5 18 ♖b5 ♗b6 19 ♖d6 was perhaps to be preferred. Black can take the bishop at e3, but this doesn't solve all his problems. The knight at d6 is a monster, whereas Black's fianchettoed bishop is locked

in. More concretely, ♖a1-a6 is coming, and holding both a7 and c5 might prove difficult.

17...♖b4 18 ♖d2

18 ♖b5 ♖b6 is unclear.

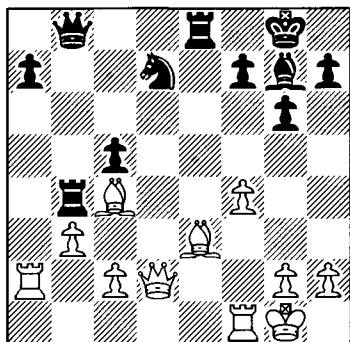
18...♖b8 19 ♖c4 ♖d5!?

This came as a nasty surprise for Shaw and is indeed a good practical decision. Black has suffered rather passively thus far, but suddenly he activates all his forces. Moreover, White can't control events anymore.

20 exd5 exd5 21 ♖xd5?

A blunder, as the game continuation reveals, though the refutation is very pretty and hard to foresee. Instead 21 ♖e5! would have left White on top, but still with a tough fight ahead 21...♖xe5 22 fxe5 d4 23 ♖d2 dxc3 24 ♖xc3 ♖h4! – this seems better than Martin's 24...♖d5?! 25 ♖xb4! ♖xa2 26 ♖xc5 ♖e8 27 b3 ♖xe5 28 ♖f2 or 25...cxb4 26 ♖c4 ♖xc4 27 ♖xc4 ♖xe5 28 h3 with a clear edge to White in both cases.

21...♖xd5 22 b3 ♖e8 23 ♖d2 ♖xc4 24 ♖xc4



24...♖xc4!!

A combination based on White's awkwardly placed pieces.

25 ♖xd7

25 bxc4 ♖xe3 transposes.

25...♖xe3! 26 bxc4 ♖d4 27 ♖h1 ♖xf4!

28 ♖aa1

Unfortunately for White this is forced, since if 28 ♖g1 ♖e5 wins.

28...♖xa1 29 ♖xa1 ♖xc4 30 ♖xa7 ♖xc2

Black is now two pawns up and the rest is just a matter of technique.

31 ♖f1 ♖c4 32 ♖a8+ ♖g7 33 ♖a1+

♖d4 34 ♖a7 ♖f6 35 ♖g1 ♖e7 36 ♖a1+

f6 37 h3 ♖e2 38 ♖h1 ♖e5 39 ♖a7+ ♖h6

40 ♖f7 ♖e1 41 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 42 ♖h2

♖e5+ 43 g3 ♖e2+ 44 ♖g1 ♖d1+ 45

♖f2 ♖d4+ 46 ♖f3 c4 47 g4

Or 47 ♖f8+ ♖g5!, but not 47...♖h5?? 48 g4+ ♖g5 49 h4+ ♖xh4 50 ♖h6 mate.

47...♖d3+ 48 ♖g2 ♖g5 49 ♖f8 ♖e2+

50 ♖g3 ♖e3+ 51 ♖g2 c3 52 ♖c8 ♖h4

53 ♖c7 ♖xh3+ 54 ♖f2 ♖xg4 0-1

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖d3

The continuation that makes 1 e4 b6 such a rare guest at tournament practice is probably 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖d3. In comparison with 3 ♖c3 e6 4 ♖f3 ♖b4, which we will discuss in the next section, the play is often more positional here. I think this system contains more venom than the one initiated by 3 ♖c3, as Black finds it significantly harder to obtain counterplay. For instance, the typical pin of the ♖c3 is out of question in the present case, and after any ...c7-c5 White simply replies c2-c3, and there is still no concrete way for Black to gain counterplay.

Game 9

V. Baklan-P. Blatny

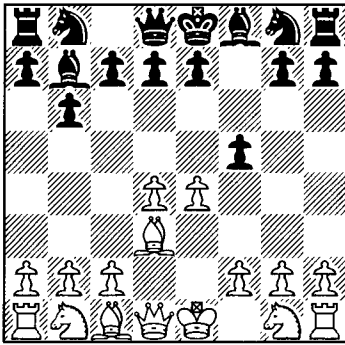
Bastia (rapid) 2003

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖d3 ♖f6

The alternative, 3...e6, is considered in Game 15. Actually, 3...e6 is the most common move here (especially as the position can also arise via 1...e6, 2...b6). Nevertheless, the more forcing 3...♖f6 is the main continuation in the games below, since it gives Black some extra, unique possibilities, notably that of playing ...e7-e5 (as in the first two games). More often than not, the move order makes no differ-

ence, as Black plays both ...e7-e6 and ...f6 at some point.

Instead 3...f5? is simply suicidal.



My initial reflex was: Black's life is already so difficult in the 1 d4 b6 2 c4 e6 3 e4 ♖b7 4 ♙d3 f5 line (in Chapter 2) that 3...f5 can't be any good. Things are not quite so simple... From its initial square the e-pawn will support the knight at f6, and one may dream of repeating the games Akesson-Short or Burnett-Kraai a tempo up (see Game 44). Unfortunately, White has a clear path to victory: 4 exf5 ♙xg2 5 ♖h5+ g6 6 fxg6 ♙g7 (6...f6 is probably the best, saving energy after 7 gxh7+ ♗xh5 8 ♙g6 mate) 7 ♖f5! (7 gxh7+ ♗f8 8 ♗e2 may be good too, but 7 ♖f5 is more efficient) 7...f6 8 ♙h6!! ♙xh6 (8...f8 doesn't make any difference: 9 ♙xg7+ ♗xg7 10 gxh7 ♙xh1 11 ♖g6+ ♗f8 12 ♖h6+ ♗f7 reaches the same position as 8...f6 9 gxh7 ♙xh1 etc.) 9 gxh7 ♗f8 (after 9...f6 10 ♖g6+ ♗f8 11 ♖xh6+ ♗f7 12 ♗h3 Black's king gets slaughtered too, for instance 12...f8 13 ♙g6+ ♗e6 14 ♖f4 and wins) 10 ♖g6 ♙c1 11 ♖xg2 ♙xb2 12 ♗e2 and ♗g1 will prove lethal.

4 ♖e2

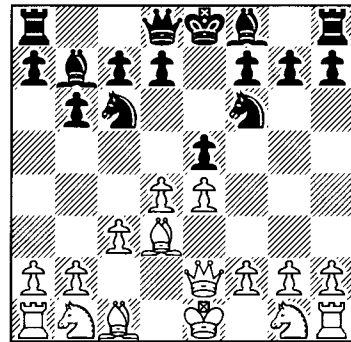
All other moves to defend e4 are good here, but this one is best in my opinion. Instead, 4 ♗d2 e6 is covered in Games 13-14, while 4 ♗c3 e6 5 ♗f3 ♙b4 transposes to the 3 ♗c3 e6 4 ♗f3 ♙b4 main line in Section 3,

unless White fancies the original 5 ♗ge2.

4...f6 5 c3

On 5 ♗f3 Black would obviously steal the two bishops by means of the standard thrust 5...f6.

5...e5



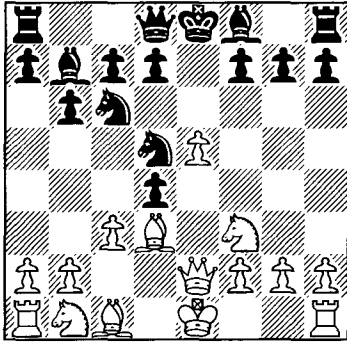
This speciality of the Czech GM Pavel Blatny brought him some successes. Including some rapid games he has, according to my database, achieved 9 out of 16, facing (amongst others) seven 2550+ grandmasters! The game takes an unusual course for which White is usually unprepared, although from an objective point of view White's advantage is indisputable.

6 ♗f3

6 d5 should also give White somewhat the better prospects: 6...f6 7 ♗f3 ♗g6 8 g3 (sensible, as it prevents a later ...f4, though not forced yet) 8...c6 9 c4 ♙c5 when White enjoys a space advantage, and may be a bit better even after the exchange of dark-squared bishops by 10 ♙e3. On the other hand Black can find counterplay either by preparing ...f7-f5 or by opening the queenside. In P.Varga-C.Bauer, Lausanne 2001, after 10 ♗c3 ♖e7 11 ♙e3 0-0 12 ♙xc5 bxc5 13 ♗d2 d6 14 h4 ♗ad8, a draw was agreed.

6...d6

More solid than the capture 6...exd4!, which may be playable as well, e.g. 7 e5 ♗d5 and then:

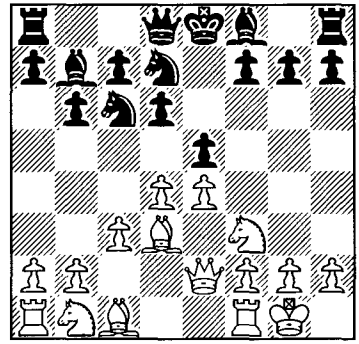


a) 8 cxd4! ♕b4+ is slightly disturbing. White is virtually forced to go for 9 ♖f1, in order to avoid the unpleasant 9...♗f4. That said, losing the right to castle isn't a tragedy for White here as he has other trumps: Black can't castle either on the next move (because of 10 ♜e4), and White is ready to continue with a2-a3 and ♗c3, intending to grab more space with d4-d5 if the knights get exchanged. Also, the h1 rook can easily be activated by h2-h4 and ♖h3. If I remember correctly, a game G.Kaidanov-P.Blatny, New York Open 2000 (I don't have the game but luckily sat at the next table when it occurred!), went 9 ♖f1 ♜c8 10 a3 ♗e7 11 ♗c3 ♗d8 12 ♗c4 c6 with some advantage for White, though it was later drawn.

b) 8 ♗c4 ♗de7 9 cxd4 d5 10 exd6 (if the bishop retreats, 10...♗b4 intending 11...♗a6 is pretty annoying) 10...♜xd6 11 0-0 0-0-0 (obviously risky, but Black has counterplay against d4 and his king isn't in that much danger) 12 ♗c3 f5 13 ♗b5 (perhaps 13 ♗xc6 was a better bet, aiming at concentrating on the weak c7 spot, e.g. 13...♜xc6 14 ♗f4 with the transparent idea of ♖ac1, ♗b5, while if 14...♗g6! 15 ♗g5 ♗e8 16 d5 ♜d7 17 ♜c4 with chances for both sides) 13...♜d7? (13...♜g6 or 13...♜e6! were the correct replies, e.g. 13...♜c6 14 ♗xa7+ ♖b8 15 ♗xc6+ ♗xc6 16 ♗d3 ♜xc2 17 ♗xc2 ♗xd4 with equality, while 14 ♗g5! ♜g6 is unclear) 14

♗xc6 ♗xc6 15 ♗f4 when Black is in serious trouble and eventually lost in Lim Yee Weng-S.Glinert, Goa 2002: 15...♗a6 16 ♜fc1 ♖b7 17 a4 ♗d6 18 d5 ♗e7 19 ♗e5 ♗xc5 20 ♜xc5 c6 21 dxc6+ ♗xc6 22 ♜c3 g5 23 ♗xg5 ♗c8 24 ♜f3 ♖a8 25 ♗d1 ♜g7 26 ♗d2 ♗hg8 27 ♗c3 ♜g4 28 ♜xg4 ♗xg4 29 ♗d7 h5 30 f3 ♗gg8 31 ♗ad1 ♗gd8 32 ♖f2 ♗xd7 33 ♗xd7 ♗d8 34 ♗c7+ ♖b7 35 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 36 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 37 ♖g3 ♗e6 38 ♖h4 ♗c5 39 ♖xh5 ♗xa4 40 ♗f6 ♗c5 41 g4 fxg4 42 fxg4 ♗e4 43 g5 ♖b5 44 ♗e5 ♖c6 45 g6 ♖d5 46 ♗b8 a6 47 g7 ♗f6+ 48 ♖g6 ♖e6 49 h4 ♗g8 50 ♗a7 ♗e7+ 51 ♖h7 ♖f7 52 ♗xb6 ♗g8 53 ♗d4 ♗e7 54 ♗e3 ♗g8 55 ♗g5 a5 56 b3 1-0.

7 0-0 ♗d7



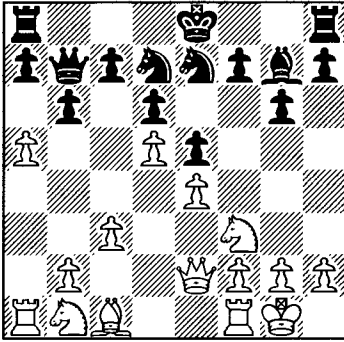
This flexible move avoids the nuisance caused by an eventual ♗b5, threatening to take on e5. At the same time the e7-square is kept free for the other knight, in case of d4-d5.

8 ♗a6

8 ♗a3 is the next game. 8 a4! also looks more promising to me, as Black's cramped position is eased by exchanges. After 8...♗e7 9 d5 ♗cb8 10 a5! bxa5, followed by 11...c6, Black gained counterplay in A.Shabalov-P.Blatny, New York (rapid) 2004. Funnily enough, in G.Kamsky-P.Blatny, New York (rapid) 2004 several weeks later, it seems that Blatny worsened his own play by 8...a5! 9 d5 ♗e7 10 ♗b5 when White could open files on

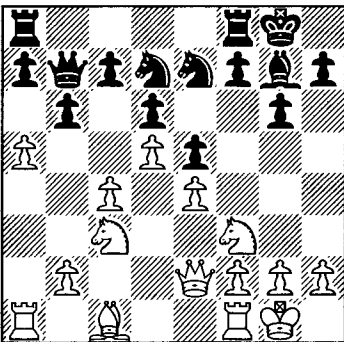
the queenside at leisure by means of b4xa5, without being worried by Black's counter-attack on the other wing.

8...♖c8 9 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 10 a4 g6 11 d5 ♟e7 12 a5 ♙g7



If one wishes to draw a parallel with a more standard opening, then it surely is with the Steinitz variation of the Ruy Lopez: 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 d6 5 c3 ♙d7 6 d4 g6 7.0-0 ♙g7 8 d5 ♟ce7 9 ♙xd7+ ♜xd7 10 ♟c3 h6 etc. The version of this line Black has obtained in the present game is quite decent, and I think he is OK here.

13 c4 0-0 14 ♟c3



14...h6

As so often in this kind of position, 14...f5? was too impetuous: 15 ♟g5! ♟c5 16 ♙e3 and now both 16...h6 17 ♙xc5 hxg5 18 ♙e3 and 16...♟b3 17 a6 ♜c8 18 ♙a3 ♟d4 19 ♙xd4

exd4 20 ♟b5 are bad for Black.

15 ♟e1?!

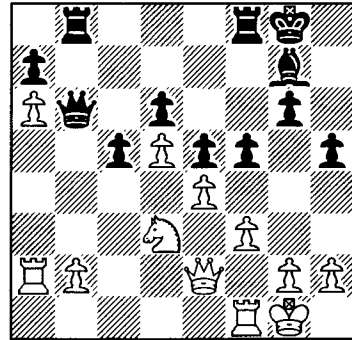
I prefer 15 a6, though it is not so easy for White to carry out the c4-c5 push after 15...♜c8 16 b4 f5 17 ♟e1 ♟f6 etc.

15...♟c5 16 ♙e3 f5 17 ♙xc5?!

Black will soon get the upper hand thanks to the semi-open b-file. For this reason something like 17 ♜c2, preventing a knight jump to b3, should have been preferred.

17...bxc5 18 a6 ♜b6 19 ♟d3 c6 20 f3 cxd5 21 ♟xd5 ♟xd5 22 cxd5 ♙ab8 23 ♙a2 h5!

The bishop will soon enter the game with devastating effect!



24 ♟h1 ♜b5 25 ♙fa1 ♙h6 26 ♙a5 ♜b6 27 ♙5a4 ♜b3 28 ♙4a3 ♜b5 29 ♙a5 ♜d7 30 ♙5a4 ♙b6 31 ♜c2?!

White had no constructive plan but should nevertheless have stopped Black's next.

31...♙e3

And Black has a big advantage.

32 exf5 ♜xf5 33 ♙e1 ♙d4 34 ♜e2 ♙fb8 35 h3 ♙b3 36 ♟d1 h4 37 ♙c4 ♙e8 38 ♜c2 ♙eb8 39 ♜e2 ♟g7 40 ♙c2 ♙e8 41 ♟c1 ♙e3 42 ♟d2 ♙xf3 0-1

After the forced 43 gxf3 ♜xh3+ 44 ♜h2 ♜xf3+ 45 ♜g2 ♜xd1+ Black is totally winning. A great game from Blatny, even if the fast time control (50 minutes + 30 seconds per move) diminished the quality of White's resistance.

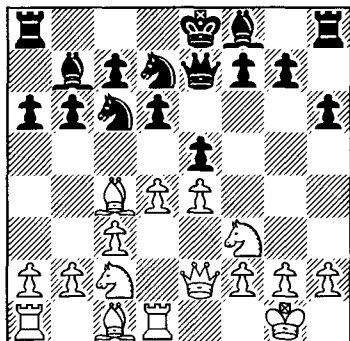
Game 10
V. Epishin-P. Blatny
Bastia (rapid) 2003

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♙d3 ♘f6 4 ♚e2 ♜c6 5 c3 e5 6 ♜f3 d6 7 0-0 ♞d7 8 ♞a3!?

This move, keeping both the central tension and a maximum of pieces on the board, is also worthy of attention. At the time I'm writing only two examples (from Blatny's prolific practice!) are available.

8...♙e7

In a later game Blatny tried 8...h6?!, which doesn't seem to be an improvement on his previous play either. Maybe the Czech GM gets bored when he equalises too easily and so condemns himself to playing weaker moves in order to keep his games more interesting! After 9 ♞d1 a6 10 ♙c4! (the right idea; the bishop will be pretty nasty at d5) 10...♚e7 11 ♜c2 and then:



a) 11...g6? 12 ♙d5 ♙g7 13 ♞b4 ♞db8 14 dxe5 dxe5 15 b3 0-0 16 ♙a3 ♜e8 17 ♜c2 ♚d7? (playing with fire instead of limiting the damage by 17...♚f6; the rest is agony) 18 ♜e3 ♚c8 19 ♞h4 b5 20 ♞xg6 b4 21 ♞f5 ♜e6 22 ♚g4 ♙h7 23 ♙xe6 ♚xe6 24 ♞f4 ♚f6 25 ♞d5 ♚g6 26 ♚xg6+ fxg6 27 ♞xg7 ♙xg7 28 ♙b2 ♜a7 29 ♞xc7 ♙f7 30 ♞d5 a5 31 a3 1-0 N.Mitkov-P.Blatny, Kansas 2003.

b) 11...♞a5! 12 ♞b4! ♜xc4 (taking the

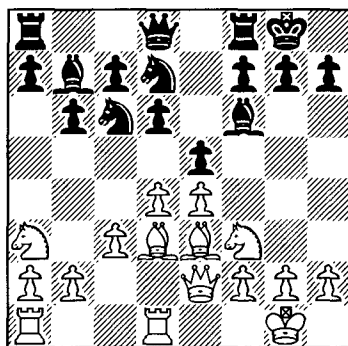
bishop seems to solve most of Black's problems) 13 ♚xc4 and after 13...♞f6 White still has to open the position to emphasise his edge (if he has any). A sample variation is 14 dxe5 (14 ♞d5?! ♞xd5 15 exd5 e4 is not clear; after a subsequent ...f7-f5 Black's threat of ...♚f7, attacking d5, will win a crucial tempo to prevent the deadly sequence ♞d2, ♜e1 and f2-f3) 14...dxe5 15 ♞d5 when Black should play 15...♞xd5! 16 exd5 0-0-0 with reciprocal chances. Instead 15...♜d8? is too clever due to the powerful 16 ♙f4!! ♞xd5 17 exd5 f6 18 ♙xe5! fxe5 19 ♞xe5 ♚xe5 (other choices are no better: 19...♚d6 20 ♚e2 and 19...♜d6 20 ♜e1 ♙xd5 21 ♚xa6 with a clear advantage) 20 ♜e1 ♚e7 21 ♚xc7 ♙xd5 22 ♜xe7+ ♙xe7 23 ♜e1 ♜d7 24 ♚c8+ ♜d8 25 ♚xa6 when b6 will fall too and White's connected pawns will decide the game.

Alternatives to 13...♞f6 look quite shaky, e.g. 13...♙xe4?! 14 ♞xa6 or ♞d2!? and White is much better, while 13...c5?! leaves Black struggling with his king stuck in the middle after 14 ♞d5 (14 dxc5?! dxc5 15 ♞d5 ♚d6 looks grim but I can't see a direct win for White) 14...b5 15 ♚b3 c4 16 ♚c2 ♙xd5 17 exd5 e4 18 ♜e1 f5 19 ♞d2 ♞f6 20 f3.

9 ♙e3

9 d5 is of course possible, but not too frightening. After 9...♞cb8 Black will either play with ...c7-c6 or gradually prepare ...f7-f5.

9...♙f6 10 ♜fd1 0-0



Black can be rather satisfied with the outcome of the opening: his position is quite solid and White only has a small space advantage.

11 ♖ac1 ♖h8

Releasing the tension with 11...exd4?! was premature, as the play against e4 is ineffective: 12 cxd4 ♖b4 13 ♖b1 and White is better. For this reason another way of obtaining counterplay was required, and Blatny's method seems quite adequate.

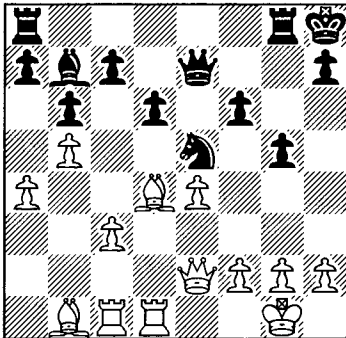
12 ♖b1 ♖g8 13 b4 g5 14 b5 ♖e7

14...g4!? was another possibility.

15 dxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♖c4

16 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♖c4 was more forcing, as in the game Black could take back on e5 with his knight if he'd wanted.

16...♖g6 17 ♖fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19 a4 ♖e7 20 ♖d4 f6



This position should still be slightly favourable for White, but if he cannot implement ideas connected with a4-a5 or f2-f4, his opponent will not be worried too much.

21 ♖a2 ♖g6 22 ♖d5

If 22 ♖b3 then 22...a5!

22...♖xd5 23 exd5 g4

With the idea of ...♖f3+.

24 ♖e3 ♖e8 25 ♖h1 ♖f7 26 ♖g3 ♖g5 27 c4 ♖g6 28 ♖e1 ♖g8 29 ♖c3 h6 30 a5 ♖h7 31 a6 ♖g7 32 ♖e3 ♖h5 33 ♖f4 ♖f5 34 ♖e3 ♖e7 35 ♖g3 ♖e8 36 ♖c1 ♖g5 37 ♖ce3 ♖gg7 38 ♖c2+ ♖g6 39 ♖xg6+

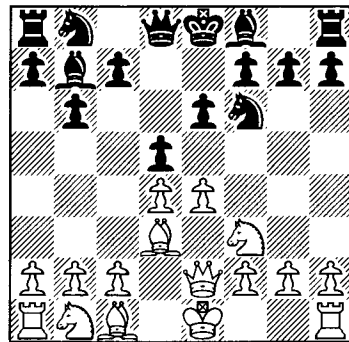
♖xg6 40 ♖e4 ♖f5 41 ♖g1 ♖g6 42 f3 gxf3 43 gxf3 ♖e5 44 ♖g2 h5 45 ♖h4 ♖g6 46 ♖e3 ♖h7 47 ♖f2 ♖f7 48 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 49 ♖xe5 fxe5 50 f4 exf4 51 ♖xf4+ ♖g6 52 h4 ½-½

Game 11

A. Khalifman-C. Bauer

Petrosian Memorial, Internet 2004

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖d3 ♖f6 4 ♖e2 e6 5 ♖f3 d5



The most natural move. 5...c5?! is a dubious attempt to deviate: 6 d5 exd5 7 exd5+ ♖e7 8 c4 b5 9 b3 ♖xe2+ 10 ♖xe2 b4 11 ♖e1 d6 12 ♖f1+ ♖e7 13 ♖f4 ♖d8 14 ♖bd2?! (14 ♖g5 ♖f8 15 ♖d2 was probably more precise with a much better white position; as in the game, the exchange sacrifice on e7 is in the air, but this way ♖de4 is coming as well) 14...h6 (the only move to prevent the aforementioned knight sally) 15 ♖h4! ♖c8 16 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 17 ♖e1+ ♖d7?! (17...♖d8 18 ♖xd6 was very unpleasant for Black, too, but offered better chances to resist) 18 ♖f5 ♖e8 19 ♖xd6 ♖xe1+ 20 ♖xe1 ♖a6 (sadly forced) 21 ♖2e4 ♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖c8 23 ♖xc5+ ♖e8 24 ♖e4 ♖d7 25 c5 a5 26 ♖d6+ ♖e7 27 ♖c4 ♖a6 28 c6 ♖e8 29 ♖b6 ♖c5 30 ♖c4 1-0 C. Bauer-A. Minasian, New York Open 2000.

6 e5

6 exd5 is nothing special for White.

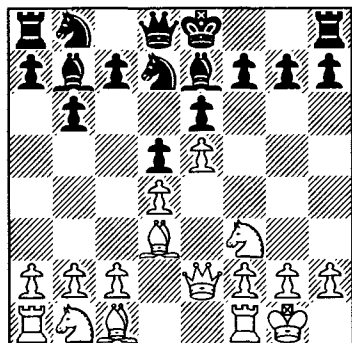
6...d7

6...e4?! 7 dbd2 dxd2 8 exd2 scores very well for White.

7 0-0

White is now at a crossroads: he can opt for autopilot with 7 0-0 or else try one of two more aggressive alternatives: namely 7 h4 and 7 g5. I couldn't find examples of the former in my database, but Comp Deep Junior 6-V.Akopian, Dortmund 2000 illustrates the latter: 7 g5 e7 8 g4 h5 9 g3 f8 10 0-0 e6 11 xa6 dxa6 12 c3 c5 13 d1 c4 14 e1 c8 15 h4 dh7 16 f3 g8 17 g5 dxc5 18 dxg5 db8 19 d2 dc6 20 b3 da5 21 e3 xg5 22 hxg5 g6 23 f3 c7 24 f6 c8 25 f4 f8 26 b4 dc6 27 f3 e7 28 dh4 g8 29 a4 g7 30 c1 c7 31 a5 b5 32 c3 d7 33 h1 a6 34 d1 e8 35 h2 de7 36 h1 dg8 37 f3 de7 38 h3 df5 39 dx5 exf5 40 e1 c6 41 f3 e6 42 h1 c8 43 e3 e7 44 f4 e6 45 e1 1/2-1/2 as the only break, g2-g4, even if well prepared is unlikely to yield White anything.

7...e7?!



A frequent inaccuracy, whose last victim was probably yours truly. Black's main choice is 7...c5! 8 c3 e7 (see the next game) and if 9 a3 (or 9 dbd2) 9...a5, setting up the positional threat of ...e6, while at the same time preventing 10 b4. Closing the position with 9...c4?! 10 e2 b5 makes sense too.

8 c4 dxc4 9 exxc4 a6

If 9...c5?! both 10 dxc5 and 10 d1 are awkward to meet.

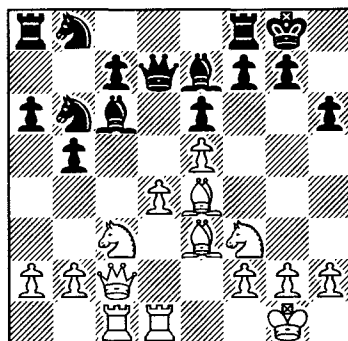
10 c3 b5 11 e3 d6

After 11...c5?! White isn't forced to go in for the wild complications resulting from 12 d5?! exd5 13 e6 fxe6 14 xxe6 b6, but can keep a nasty edge with the simple 12 e4!.

12 e4 e6 13 d1 0-0 14 c2 h6

On 14...h8 I feared 15 d5! followed by 16 exh7, but maybe 14...xe4 was better.

15 e3 d7 16 aac1



16...d8?!

16...b4! offered more chances to save the game: 17 exxc6 (17 d5! exd5 18 e2 is worth considering, but why not take a pawn?) 17...dxc6 (17...xc6? 18 d5 exd5 19 dxd5 dxd5 20 xc6 dxc6 21 d5 is curtains) 18 e4 (18 d5! bxc3 19 dxc6 xc6) 18...a5 19 xc7 xc7 20 xc7 d5 with some compensation for the pawn, though likely not enough.

17 d5! dxd5 18 dxd5 exd5 19 exd5 exd5 20 xc7 xc7 21 xc7 d7 22 f1

22 d5?? dxe5 was the only trap to avoid. Although I could have defended better later on, the rest hardly requires comments.

22...ac8 23 xc8 xc8 24 xd5 c5 25 d1 e6 26 e2 f8 27 c1 xc1 28 xc1 e8 29 d3 d7 30 e3 h5 31 e4 g6 32 e1 c6 33 d3 dc7 34 f4 d5 35 d4 a5 36 f5 gxf5+ 37 xf5

b4 38 e6 fxe6+ 39 xe6 d6 40 e5+ e5 41 xe5 a4 42 h4 e7 43 g3 b5 44 g4 hxg4 45 f2 g6+ 46 e4 c4 47 h5 f8 48 h6 h7 49 e1 a3 50 b3+ 1-0

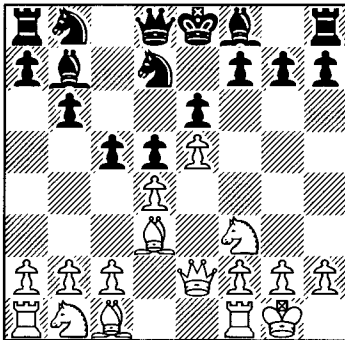
A perfect game by the former World Champion, something of which Khalifman is very capable, when he is in good shape.

Game 12

D.Sermek-A.Minasian

Cannes 1996

1 e4 b6 2 d4 b7 3 d3 f6 4 e2 e6 5 f3 d5 6 e5 fd7 7 0-0 c5!



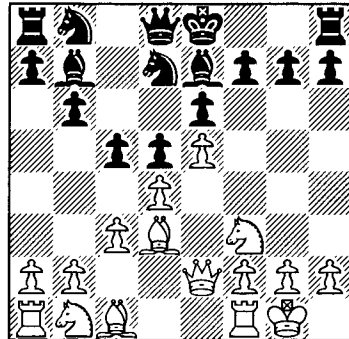
8 c3

a) 8 c4! is now well met by 8...cxd4 9 cxd5 (or 9 dxd4 c5) 9...e5 10 dxd4 c6 11 dxc6 e6 12 d1 h4! or 12...c7 with approximate equality, or if 8 dxc5 then 8...dxc5! (8...bxc5?! 9 c4 is no joy for Black).

b) 8 e5! is quite interesting. The principled answer consists of 8...c8 (if 8...e7 9 e7 e7 10 c3 is slightly better for White, though quite playable for the second player; indeed, after 10...c6 and 11...0-0, Black sometimes 'threatens' ...c5xd4, c3xd4 b4, or he can seek counterplay with ...f7-f6) 9 c3 h6 and play has transposed to the games G.Masternak-D.Krzywicki, Wisla 1992, or A.Grischuk-A.Minasian, Linares 1999, albeit with the significant difference that White has

castled instead of putting his queen's knight on d2. According to Grischuk this is an improvement, as after 10 e4 cxd4 (10...e6?, from R.Morales-H.Elissalt Cardenas, Havana 1999, runs into 11 c4! and Black will suffer from his opponent's superior development) 11 cxd4 e6 12 c1 b7 13 c3 e3 14 xd3 and White's space advantage confers on him a lasting plus.

8...e7



9 bd2

Only one week after my internet debacle (see the previous game) I was confronted with 9 a3!, to which I reacted (apparently) with a novelty, namely 9...c4 (original, isn't it?). Previously 9...a5 had been played (as Black can't allow 10 b4), but I suspect that out of the four possibilities, 10 a4, 10 b3, 10 c4 or 10 dxc5, at least one is annoying for Black. Hence 9...c4 10 e2 b5 and now instead 11 bd2! c6 (or 11...a5!?) 12 b4! a5, which was comfortable for Black, I prefer 11 e1, clearing the path for the f-pawn. Black can erect a temporary pawn wall with 11...h5 12 f4 g6, but then the plan g2-g3, h2-h3, g3-g4 and f4-f5 is natural. White also has the opportunity to play e3 before bd2, and can think about f3-g5 ideas.

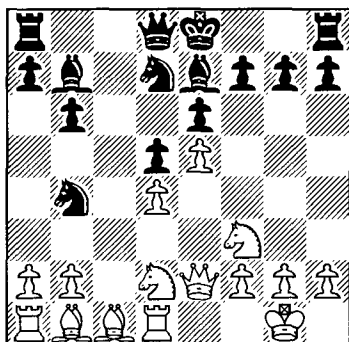
9...c6

The actual move order was 4 d2 e6 5 g3 c5 6 c3 d5 7 e5 fd7 8 e2 c6 9 0-0 e7, and only transposes here.

10 ♖d1

White is planning to transfer his d2 knight to the kingside via f1 and g3. He could have spent a tempo on 10 a3 to prevent what follows, but as said before, Black would probably have replied 10...c4, followed by the advance of his queenside pawns.

10...cxd4 11 cxd4 ♖b4 12 ♖b1



12...♞c8?!

12...♞a6!? was the alternative. Everything depends then on Black's ability to obtain something concrete on the queenside before his pieces get repelled... 13 ♖e3 ♞c8 14 ♖e1, preventing 14...♖c2, while a2-a3 is coming. Now the forcing sequence starting 14...♞g5?! doesn't seem adequate for Black: 15 f4 ♞xf4 16 ♖xf4 ♞e2 17 a3 ♞xd1 18 axb4 ♞xc1 19 ♖e4 dxe4 (otherwise 20 ♖d6+) 20 ♖xc1 and White wins at least a pawn. Nevertheless, Black's queenside operation cannot be considered a failure as White's forces are a little disorganised, whereas the problem b7-bishop has been activated. Instead Black can try 14...♖c7!? (having ...♖xc1 in mind) 15 a3 ♖c6, and if White stops ...♖a5 with 16 b4, then Black isn't worse thanks to the combination 16...♖xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♞e2 18 ♖b3 ♞xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖xe5.

13 ♖f1 ♞a6 14 ♖d2

White is not so embarrassed by his pieces as after 12...♞a6. I don't see anything better for Black than Minasian's next, so I guess

something already went wrong.

14...♞xf1

Even if at some time bad, it's always a pity to give up a bishop! But 14...♖c7 15 a3 ♖c6 16 b4 is clearly better for White: he has more space everywhere and Black's monarch will come under attack if he castles.

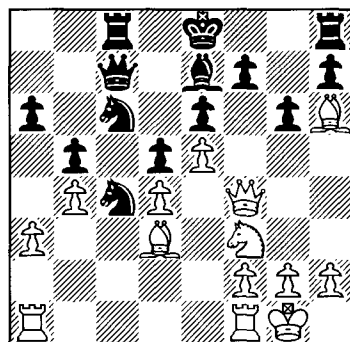
15 ♞xf1 ♖c7 16 a3 ♖c6

16...♖c2?? 17 ♞a2 was of course out of question.

17 b4?!

I would have preferred 17 ♞d3 ♖a5 18 ♖f4 with a pleasant edge for White, whereas now Black gets the c4-square and some queenside counterplay.

17...b5 18 ♞d3 a6 19 ♖f4 ♖b6 20 ♖g4 g6 21 ♞h6 ♖c4 22 ♖f4!



Perhaps 22 h4, but then Black can consider 22...a5. Sermek's decision was probably difficult to reach... Black's will obviously reply with 22...f5, in order to eliminate the direct threat of 23 ♞g7 ♞g8 24 ♖h6 and the potential ♖g5. And White can't take en passant, as exchanging queens would kill his attacking chances. So 23 g4 is the only logical follow-up, looking for a path to the black king.

22...f5 23 g4 ♖d8 24 ♞g5

24 ♖h1!? was possible.

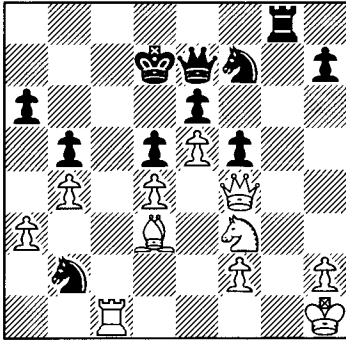
24...♖f7 25 ♞xe7 ♖xe7 26 gxf5 gxf5

26...exf5 deserved attention, intending to blockade the passed pawn with ...♖d8-c6.

27 ♖h1 ♞g8 28 ♞g1 ♖d7 29 ♞ac1 ♖b2?

This should have been the decisive mistake. Instead, after 29...♖xa3 30 ♜xg8 ♜xg8 31 ♙xf5 ♜d8 the outcome of the game would have remained unclear.

30 ♜xg8 ♜xg8



31 ♙xf5 ♜f8

31...exf5? 32 e6+ ♙e8 33 exf7+ ♙xf7 34 ♜c7 and 32...♙xe6 33 ♜c7+ ♙e8 34 ♜e1 were both unacceptable for Black.

32 ♙xe6+?!

Stronger was 32 ♙g3! when the bishop remains immune (32...exf5? 33 e6+ ♙xe6 34 ♜c7+ wins) and White has got a big extra pawn.

32...♙xe6 33 ♜g5 ♜xg5 34 ♙xf8 ♜c4 35 ♜g1 h6?!

After 35...♙g6! 36 f3 h6 37 ♙a8 ♙f5 38 ♙xd5+ ♙c7 Black is still fighting. Now, however, it's all over.

36 f4 ♙g6 37 f5 ♙h5 38 e6+ ♙c7 39 ♙c5+ ♙b8 40 ♙xd5 ♜b6 41 ♙c6 ♜c8 42 ♜c1 1-0

Game 13

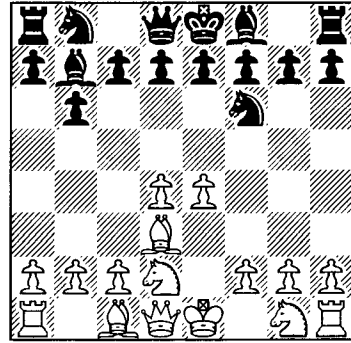
T.Luther-P.Blatny

Frohnleiten 2002

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♙d3 ♜f6 4 ♜d2

After this the game is likely to take on the contours of the French Defence. In the arising positions White enjoys a space advantage on the kingside, whereas Black's counterplay

is located on the other wing. In general White is theoretically a bit better, though Black is difficult to break down.



4...e6

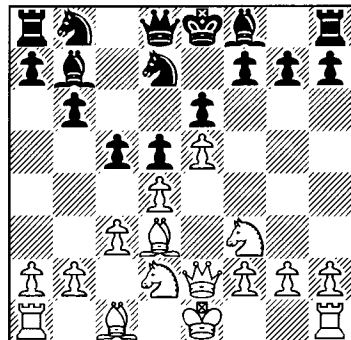
On 4...c5 5 d5! grabs more space and seems to ensure White of a lasting advantage. Instead, 5 dxc5 bxc5 6 ♜gf3 ♜c6 7 ♜c4 d6 8 0-0, from S.Atalik-E.Kengis, Baile Herculane 1994, would have been unclear after 8...♜d7 9 ♙f4 ♜b6!, according to Atalik.

5 ♜gf3 c5

5...d5 is usually only a question of move order, since Black can hardly do without ...c7-c5.

6 c3 cxd4

6...♜c6 is examined in the next game, while after 6...d5 7 e5 ♜fd7 8 ♙e2,



we have reached a position comparable with the following French variation: 1 e4 e6 2

d4 d5 3 ♖d2 ♙e7 4 ♗g3 ♗f6 5 e5 ♗fd7 6 ♙d3 c5 7 c3 b6 (7...♗c6 is more common) 8 ♚e2, the difference being that there is a bishop on b7 rather than e7. Here Black has gained the extra option of exchanging his bad bishop by means of ...♚c8 (instead of the more weakening ...a7-a5) and ...♙a6. The problem lies in the fact that 8...♚c8 is suspicious due to 9 ♗g5. We can therefore conclude that 'our' version is worse than the one arising from the French, albeit not too much. For a practical example see the previous game, Sermek-Minasian (which in fact took this route, continuing 8...♙e7 9 0-0 etc.).

7 cxd4 ♙e7

7...d5 8 e5 ♗fd7 9 0-0 would transpose to Y.Schwartz-P.Blatny, Connecticut 2000 (where Black had begun with 5...d5). After the typical exchange of his bad bishop, Black delayed castling to commence his queenside counterplay immediately: 9...♙a6 10 ♙xa6 ♗xa6 11 a3 ♙e7 12 ♙e1 ♗ab8 13 ♗f1 ♗c6 14 ♙d2?! (14 ♗g3 intending ♗h5 seems more to the point) 14...b5 15 ♙c1 ♚b6 (threatening ...♗xd4) 16 ♙h1 a5 when Black was fine and went on to win on move 32.

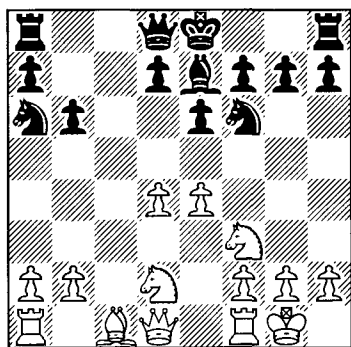
8 0-0

Possibly 8 ♚e2!? would cause Black more problems.

8...♙a6

Here we see what Black had in mind.

9 ♙xa6 ♗xa6



10 ♚e2

10 e5?! is strategically dubious: White concedes the important d5-square for an illusory attack on the kingside. After 10...♗d5 11 ♗e4 0-0 12 a3 (12 ♙g5 comes to roughly the same thing after 12...f6 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♙h6 ♙f7 with advantage to Black in B.Belotti-A.Miles, Forli 1991) 12...♗ac7 13 ♚d3 f5 14 exf6 gxf6 15 ♙h6 ♙f7 and Black was clearly better (if not by too much) in J.Dobos-B.Carlier, Budapest 1991. He has by far the more flexible position, and can contemplate such ideas as ...♙h8, ...♙g8-g6, ...♙g8, and/or dislodge the ♗e4 with a well-timed ...f7-f5 (though he shouldn't hurry with this, as White would then get the e5- and g5-squares for his knights).

10...♗c7 11 d5! d6

Not 11...exd5?! 12 e5 ♗g8 13 ♗d4 ♗e6 14 ♗f5 with ♚f3 and ♚xd5 to follow. White will regain his sacrificed pawn with advantage, as d7 is isolated and ♗e4, f4-f5 is in the air.

12 dxe6 ♗xe6 13 b3

After 13 ♗c4 the little combination 13...♗xe4 14 ♚xe4 d5 15 ♚c2 dxc4 allowed Black gradually to equalise in L.Van Wely-P.Blatny, Bastia (rapid) 2003: 16 ♙d1 ♚c8 17 ♚a4+ ♙f8 18 ♗e5 f6 19 ♗xc4 ♚e8 etc.

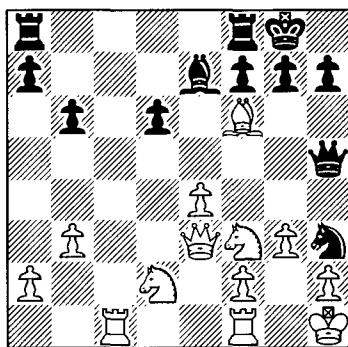
13...♚c8 14 ♙b2 0-0 15 ♙ac1

15 ♗d4!? came into consideration.

15...♗f4 16 ♚e3 ♚g4

So 13...♚c8 didn't only plan ...♚b7!

17 g3 ♗h3+ 18 ♙h1 ♚h5 19 ♙xf6 ½-½



The position is indeed level. So Black is well alive after 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 ♖e7 and accuracy is demanded from White in order to demonstrate an edge.

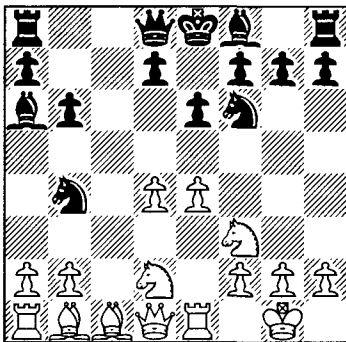
Game 14
M.Narciso Dublan-S.Lputian
Linares 1996

**1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♗b7 3 ♗d3 ♘f6 4 ♘d2 e6
5 ♘gf3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6**

There is a hidden point to postponing the natural exchange ...c5xd4: Black may be inclined to close the queenside with ...c5-c4 and then push his a- and b-pawns. This is particularly true if White has committed himself with an early a2-a3. In that case, Black can think about the long-term plan ...b7-b5-b4xc3, ...a7-a5, ...♗b6, ...a5-a4, ...♘c6-a5-b3. The (small) drawback of delaying ...c5xd4 is that White may be able to take back with his knight at some stage. More rarely, White may benefit from modifying the pawn structure by means of d5xc5, and if ...b6xc5, then e4-e5 and c3-c4.

7 a3

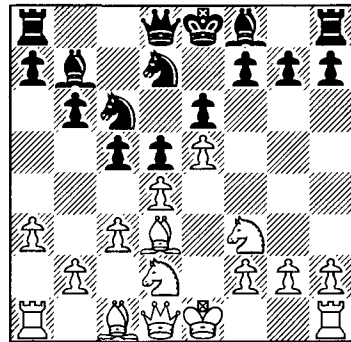
White can call Black's threat a bluff, by means of 7 0-0!?. In that case, after the natural sequence 7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♘b4 9 ♗b1 ♗a6 10 ♖e1, Black is at a crossroads:



a) 10...♘d3!?. at once was tried by Blatny, but he soon experienced difficulties: 11 ♗xd3

♗xd3 12 d5 (12 ♘e5!?. was even more tempting) 12...♖c7 13 d6 ♖b7?! (he had to try 13...♖c5, when something like 14 ♘b3 ♖c2 15 ♖xc2 ♗xc2 16 e5 ♗xb3 17 axb3 ♘d5 seems unclear to me, as Black is ready to undermine White's advanced centre with ...f7-f6) 14 ♖a4 ♖c8 15 ♖d4 ♗a6 16 b3 ♖b8 17 ♗a3 (now Black is practically playing without two pieces and his position is pretty dull) 17...♖c6 18 ♖b2 b5 19 ♗b4 ♗b7 20 ♘d4 ♖c8 21 ♘b5 ♗a6 22 a4 ♗xb5 23 axb5 ♖xb5 24 ♖ec1 ♖d8 25 ♖d4 ♘g4 26 h3 ♘e5 27 ♗a5 f6 28 ♗xd8 ♘xd8 29 ♖xa7 ♘e8 30 ♖cc7 ♖e2 31 f4 ♘d3 32 ♖xd7 ♘xf4 33 ♖d8+ 1-0 J.Roselli-P.Blatny, Buenos Aires 2000). 10...♖c8 deserved serious attention, when 11 ♘f1! (11 a3?! ♘d3 12 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 13 ♘e5 ♗c2! 14 ♖e2 ♗e7 is fine for Black, while 11 ♘e5 ♖e7 looks OK as well) 11...d5 (on 11...♖c7?! 12 ♘e3 covering c2 is strong, followed by 13 a3) 12 e5 ♘d7 (after 12...♘e4 13 a3 ♘c6 14 ♗xe4 dxe4 15 ♖xe4 I don't think Black has quite enough for the pawn) 13 a3 ♘c6 14 ♘g3!?. may be a bit better for White.

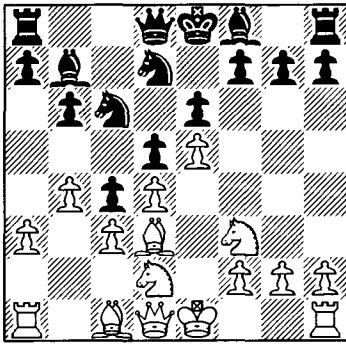
7...d5 8 e5 ♘d7



9 0-0

9 b4 looks sensible too, more or less forcing Black to close the queenside: 9...c4 (9...cxd4? is strategically erroneous, as after 10 cxd4 Black can't play ...a7-a5 in view of b4-b5, and the plan ...a7-a6, ...b6-b5, ...♘b6-c4, ...a6-

a5 is far too slow; while the final possible source of counterplay, ...f7-f6, would expose the black king too much)

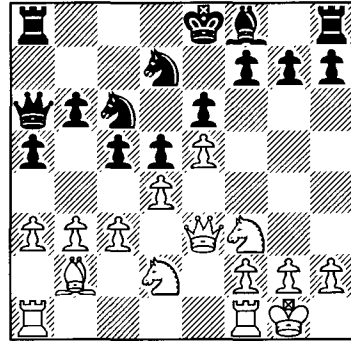


10 ♔c2 b5 (again if 10...a5? 11 b5) 11 ♖f1 a5 12 ♔d2 (preventing an eventual piece sacrifice on b4) 12...f6 (Black now lands into a somewhat worse position, so I think he should look for an improvement either here, e.g. 12...♙e7!? 13 ♗g3 0-0, or on the next move where the two other recaptures, 13...gxf6 and 13...♙xf6!?, look more interesting) 13 exf6 ♗xf6 14 ♗g3 axb4 15 axb4 ♙xa1 16 ♙xa1 ♔d6 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♗g5 ♙c8 19 f4 (White has built a bind, hindering the freeing ...e6-e5, and stands thus slightly better) 19...♙c7 20 ♙e1 ♗d8 21 ♙b1 ♔d7 22 ♙c1 ♙c8 23 ♗e2 (preparing g2-g4 with ♗h1-f2 was perhaps more efficient, as then Black doesn't plonk a knight on e4) 23...♗f7 24 ♗f3 ♙e7 25 ♗e5 ♗d6 26 g4 ♗fe4 and the rest of the game seems 'dynamically in equilibrium': 27 ♗g3 ♙h4 28 ♗g2 ♙e8 29 ♙c2 ♙a8 30 ♙b2 ♙b7 31 ♙e3 ♙xg3 32 hxg3 ♙g6 33 ♙a1 ♙a8 34 ♙c1 ♙a6 35 ♙a5 ♙xa5 36 bxa5 ♙a6 37 ♙a1 b4 38 ♙a4 (not 38 cxb4?? as 38...c3 39 ♙xc3 ♙e2+ is killing) 38...bxc3 39 ♙a3 ♗b5 40 ♙b4 ♗ed6 41 ♗xg6 hxg6 42 ♙xg6 ♙a7 43 ♙a4 c2 44 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 45 ♙xc2 ♙xd4 46 a6 ♗e4 47 ♗h3 ♙g1 48 ♙e8+ ♗h7 49 ♙h5+ ♗g8 50 ♙e8+ ♗h7 51 ♙h5+ ♗g8 52 ♙xe4 dxe4 53 ♙e8+ ♗h7 54 ♙h5+ ♗g8 55 ♙e8+ 1/2-1/2

B.Macieja-T.Polak, Budapest 2000.

9...a5 10 ♙e1

10 b3!? was seen in A.Ivanov-P.Blatny, Philadelphia 2000. At first Black reacted cautiously with 10...♙c8 11 ♙b2 ♙a6 12 ♙e2 ♙xd3 13 ♙xd3 ♙a6 14 ♙e3, but then began to be over-optimistic:



14...a4? (aiming to weaken the c4-square) 15 c4! (after this strong reply White's lead in development made itself felt; Black's resistance could have been more tenacious, but the initiative was definitely in White's hands) 15...dxc4?! (better 15...♗e7!) 16 d5 ♗d4 (or 16...exd5 17 e6 ♗f6 18 exf7+ ♗xf7 19 ♗g5+ ♗g6 20 f4 and Black's king gets slaughtered) 17 bxc4 ♗c2 18 ♙f4 ♗xa1 19 ♗g5 with a winning position that White converted on move 36.

Instead of 14...a4?, Black would have been better inspired to take on d4 at once and obtain a comfortable game, i.e. 14...cxd4! 15 cxd4 ♙e7 16 ♙fc1 ♙c8 with equality. White's bishop is passive at b2, the traditional kingside attack hasn't started yet, and finally his temporary possession of the c-file doesn't bring anything concrete.

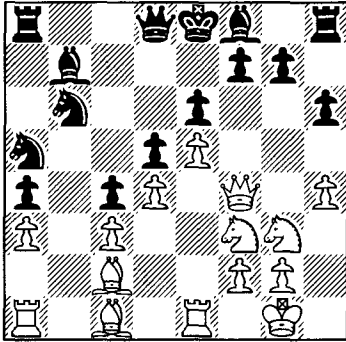
10...c4 11 ♙c2 b5 12 ♗f1 h6!?

An alternative to the 'traditional' move here, 12...♙e7, which also prevents the jump to g5. Black's move invites ♗g3-h5, but it is still unclear then how to break through for White.

13 h4?!

This move leaves me somewhat perplexed, as Black was certainly not going to commit hara-kiri with ...g7-g5.

13...b4 14 ♖d2 ♜b6 15 ♖f4 bxc3 16 bxc3 a4 17 ♜g3 ♜a5

**18 ♗b2**

The bishop is not best employed at b2, but in the event of 18 ♗e3 ♜b3 19 ♖a2, Narciso was probably anxious about the reply 19...♜c8, redirecting the knight to b5, just as in the game.

18...♜b3 19 ♖ad1 ♜c8 20 ♜h5 ♖e7?!

Possibly an inaccuracy. 20...♜a7 21 ♖g3 ♜d7 22 ♜xg7 ♜b5, taking revenge on a3, would have led to a double-edged position, but was probably a better choice.

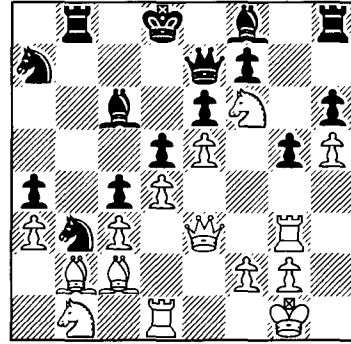
21 ♖e3?

Losing a crucial tempo. If 21 ♖g4?! ♜d7 and White can't take on g7, but 21 ♖g3 would have improved the game continuation a lot, e.g. 21...g6 (if 21...♜d7? 22 ♜xg7 ♖g8 23 ♜f5! turns out badly for Black) 22 ♜f6+ ♜d8 23 h5 and after either 23...gxh5 or 23...g5, then 24 ♜h7 is strong, swapping the key bishop.

21...♜a7 22 ♜d2 ♗c6 23 ♜b1

Now a3 is safely guarded, but the hanging bishop on b2 is another source of problems for White.

23...♗b8 24 ♖g3 g6 25 ♜f6+ ♜d8 26 h5 g5 27 ♖e3



27...♜xd4 28 cxd4 ♖xb2 29 ♖c3 ♖a2?!

Black should have kept his extra pawn with 29...♖b7.

30 ♗xa4 ♖c7 31 ♗xc6 ♜xc6 32 ♖f3 ♜e7 33 ♖h3 ♗g7 34 ♜e4?

A blunder due to time-trouble.

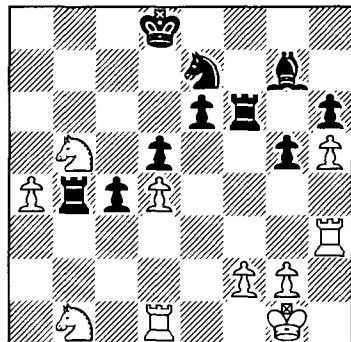
34...♖f8?

Black returns the favour. After 34...dxe4 35 ♖xf7 ♜d5 36 ♖xe6 both players probably forgot the fork 36...♜f4, when Black is a rook up and wins easily.

35 ♜ec3 ♖b2 36 a4?

Better 36 ♜a4! and ♜c5.

36...f6 37 ♜b5 ♖a5 38 ♖a3 ♖b4 39 exf6 ♖xf6 40 ♖xb4 ♖xb4



Black now is in the driver's seat. He has a strong protected passed pawn and superior pieces, while d4 is very weak.

41 ♜1c3 ♜c6 42 ♖e3 ♜d7 43 ♖de1 ♖b2

44 f3 ♖d2 45 a5 ♜xa5 46 ♜xd5 exd5 47 ♜e7+ ♜c6 48 ♜a7+ ♜b6 49 ♜xg7 c3 50 ♜c8+ ♜b5 51 ♜c7 c2 52 ♜c3 ♜b4 53 ♜c5 ♜b3 54 ♜e7 ♜xc5 55 ♜xd5+ ♜b3 56 ♜xf6 ♜d1 0-1

Game 15
Kir.Georgiev-A.Miles
Biel 1992

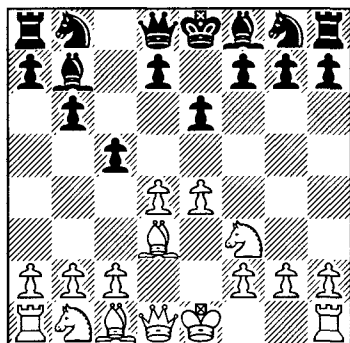
1 d4 e6

This will soon transpose to the main line 1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖d3 and now 3...e6 (rather than 3...♜f6 as in the previous games). Black's move order is designed to keep his opponent guessing, as White must take into account a different opening arising, such as the Nimzo-Indian, Queen's Indian or French Defence.

2 e4 b6 3 ♖d3 ♖b7 4 ♜f3

As his e-pawn is not attacked, White still has the option of 4 c4 reaching a position examined in Chapter 2 (see Game 44).

4...c5



4...g6! is dubious in the present position, as White can involve his c-pawn in the battle and thus enjoy a comfortable central predominance. White may, incidentally, be a clear tempo up on the line 1 c4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 a3 g6 5 ♖g5 (5 c4!?) 5...♖e7 (5...f6!?) looks ugly at first sight, but in connection with the manoeuvre ...♜h6-f7, may suit open-minded players) 6 h4! d6 7 ♜bd2 ♜c6 8 c3 ♜f6 9

♖e2 with a pleasant game for White in L.Gofshtein-L.McShane, Arco 2000.

5 c3

5 ♜c3 cxd4 6 ♜xd4 leads to a Sicilian 2...b6 variation, where after 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 b6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♖b7 5 ♖d3, Black has played ...e7-e6 instead of the probably best ...g7-g6 (at least, this is what my own experience leads me to believe). That said, Black was doing reasonably well in the few games featuring 6...♜c6. For instance, 7 ♜xc6 ♖xc6 8 0-0 ♜e7 9 ♖g5 f6 10 ♖e3 ♜g6 11 f4 ♖c5 12 ♖xc5 bxc5 13 f5 ♜e5 (what a horse! Black already has the upper hand) 14 ♖h5+ ♜e7 15 ♜h1 ♖b6 16 ♖ab1 ♖ag8 17 ♖e2 ♖b8 18 a3 ♖a8 19 ♜d1 ♖d6 20 ♜f2 h5 21 ♜h3 ♖h6 22 ♜f4 ♖g8 23 fxe6 dxe6 24 ♖c4 ♜xc4 25 ♖xc4 g5 26 ♖bd1 ♖e5 27 ♜d3 ♖d4 28 ♖xc5+ ♖xc5 29 ♜xc5 ♖c6 30 ♜d2 g4 31 ♖fd1 f5 32 ♖d6 ♖c8 33 e5 f4 34 ♜d3 ½-½ R.Forster-Y.Pelletier, Biel 1994. A remarkable fact is that Black seldom reaches the position after 6...♜c6 via a Sicilian, as after 5 ♖d3 e6 White usually refrains from 6 ♜c3, while 5 ♜c3 e6 would allow the annoying 6 ♜db5.

5...♜f6 6 ♖e2

6 ♜bd2 would transpose to Games 13-14. Instead, 6 ♖g5!? h6 7 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 is a sort of Trompowsky. White's play is easier, but Black's bishop pair shouldn't be neglected.

6...♖e7

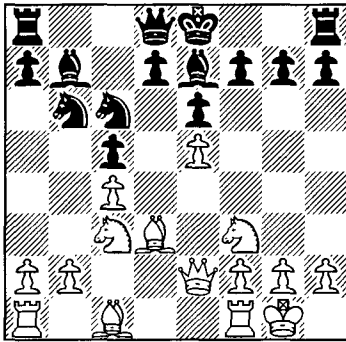
Here 6...d5 7 e5 ♜fd7 8 0-0 returns to Sermek-Minasian (Game 12). Obviously 6...♜c6? 7 d5 is not advisable as it concedes too much space.

7 0-0 ♜c6 8 a3

Parrying the threat of ...c5xd4, c3xd4 ♜b4 when Black steals the bishop pair (while ♜f3xd4 is not exactly what White is aiming for). Alternatively:

a) 8 e5!? is legal (here or one move earlier) and represents a quite respectable choice. After 8...♜d5 9 dx5 (otherwise Black might himself take on d4 and secure a first-class outpost at d5 for his knight) 9...bxc5

(9...♙xc5?! 10 b4 ♗e7 11 a3 d6 12 c4 ♘c7 13 exd6 ♜xd6 14 ♖b2, as in M.Dreyer-A.Miles, Auckland 1992, doesn't inspire confidence for Black, who was indeed quite happy to escape with a draw), Black is doing well from a strategic point of view as he has more pawns in the centre. On the downside, White's piece play is easier and this factor might prevail in the present case: 10 c4! ♘b6 (the best square for the knight; after 10...♘db4?! 11 ♗e4 Black had problems in T.Florian-I.Polgar, Hungary 1974: the horse will soon be driven to a6, while White can harmoniously finish his development by means of ♘c3, ♗f4, ♖ad1 etc.; instead, the silly-looking retreat 10...♘c7?! would have a point, i.e. covering e6 in preparation for ...f7-f6, and after White captures then ...d7-d5 would be possible, but unfortunately Black lacks the time for this whole idea) 11 ♘c3 and now:



a1) 11...f5? was overoptimistic and severely sanctioned in T.Thorhallson-H.Poettinger, Liechtenstein 1996: 12 exf6 gxf6 13 ♘h4! 0-0 14 ♜g4+ ♖h8 15 ♘g6+ hxg6 16 ♗xg6 and Black had to resign. It's mate in 5, as you can check!

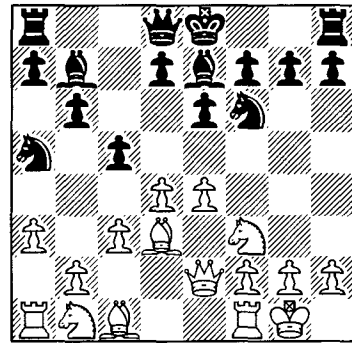
a2) 11...♜b8!? 12 ♗f4 and then 12...f5 was a better idea. Instead, 12...g5!? seems suspicious, as after the likely sequence 13 ♘xg5 ♗xg5 14 ♗xg5 ♜xe5 15 ♗e3 I don't see any effective way for Black to use the combination of the g-file and his powerful bishop

(15...♖g8?! is simply met by 16 g3); though, on the other hand, 15...d6 16 f4 ♜g7 17 ♖f2 0-0-0 isn't that clear to me.

a3) 11...0-0 12 ♜e4 g6 13 ♗h6 ♖e8, followed by a quick ...d7-d6, might also be tenable.

b) 8 dxc5 is analogous to 8 e5, and not really an independent sub-variation. Indeed, White doesn't achieve anything without e4-e5, and he does best to play it before Black gets in either ...d7-d6 or ...d7-d5.

8...♘a5!



White's seemingly neutral last move had the drawback of weakening the b3-square, which Black immediately exploits.

9 ♘bd2 c4 10 ♗c2

10 ♘xc4 ♘xc4 11 ♗xc4 ♘xe4 is about equal.

10...♜c7 11 ♘e5

If 11 e5?! ♘d5 12 ♘e4 f5 and White has obtained less than the beautiful square he conceded, while 11 d5 e5 leads to a sort of closed Ruy Lopez, where the queenside configuration suits Black well.

The more positional 11 ♖e1, which gives the game a quieter character and balanced chances, also has its adherents. Black's best reaction then seems to be 11...0-0 12 ♖b1 (a useful precaution against ...♘b3) 12...♖ae8 13 ♘f1 d6 and now 14 e5 ♘d7 was interesting, while 14 ♘g3 e5 15 ♘f5 ♗d8 was equal in R.Lau-H.Teske, German Bundesliga 1994.

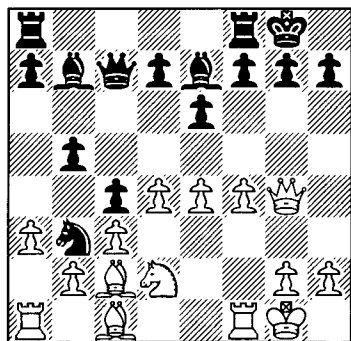
11...b5 12 f4

12 a4 a6 may discourage Black from castling long, but this doesn't really fit in with his plans anyway.

12...0-0 13 ♖g4

13 f5!? was seen in L.Goldgewicht-J.L.Chabanon, Cannes 1995. Black had no particular opening problems after 13...exf5 14 ♖xf5 d6 15 ♖ef3 a6, and 13...d6 14 ♖g4 a6 looks reasonable too.

13...♗xg4 14 ♖xg4 ♖b3!



The equaliser according to the late Tony Miles himself. This way of deflecting a white piece, thus reducing his control over e4, had been in the air since Black's 8th move and is really very original. Without exaggeration, I think that such a concept emerging right from an opening line (8...♖a5, fighting for the e4 spot) is something unique.

15 ♖b1

Capturing the invader was also OK for Black:

a) 15 ♖xb3 cxb3 16 ♔d3 (worse is 16 ♔xb3?! ♔xe4 with a small edge for Black) 16...♔xe4 17 ♔xe4 f5 with equality.

b) 15 ♔xb3?! cxb3 16 f5 exf5! when White faces the difficult choice of how to take back, as all three ways look sensible. In the encounter J.Dorfman-A.Miles, Tilburg 1992, White choose the 'safest' 17 exf5 (after 17 ♖f5 d5! immediately springs to mind – Black is threatening 18...♔c8 and achieves a nice position;

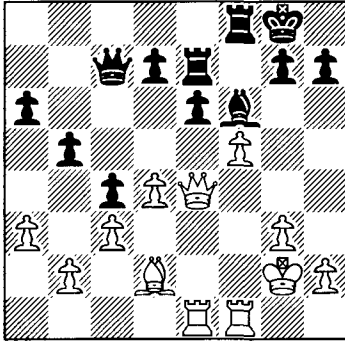
while on 17 ♖xf5 d5 is less obvious but seems appropriate as well, when White can either opt for 18 exd5 ♖ad8 19 ♖xb3 ♔xd5 with full compensation for the pawn, or embark upon the unclear 18 e5 f6! 19 e6) 17...♔d6! 18 ♖e4 (whom the inclusion 18 f6!? g6 favours remains unclear; of course 18...♔xh2+?? loses on the spot to 19 ♖h1 ♖g3 20 ♖xg7+) 18...♔xc4 19 ♖xe4 ♔xh2+ 20 ♖h1 ♖ae8 21 ♖f3 ♖g3! 22 a4 (not 22 ♖h5? ♖e4 and ...♖h4 next) 22...♖xf3 23 ♖xf3 ♔d6 24 ♔e3 g5! (surely a superb idea worth two exclamation marks, but with hindsight the correct implementation was probably 24...bxa4! 25 ♖xa4 g5 26 g4 h5 27 d5 hxg4 28 ♖xg4 f6 and Black stands much better; instead 24...♖e4? lets the advantage slip: 25 axb5 ♖fe8 26 ♖xa7 and if 26...♖xe3? 27 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 28 ♖a8+ ♔f8 29 b6 wins) 25 g4? (25 fxg6? fxg6 and 25 axb5? g4 were equally erroneous, but the consequences of 25 ♔xg5! aren't totally clear to me, e.g. 25...bxa4 26 ♔h6 ♖e2 27 ♔xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♖b1 ♖c2 29 ♖g1 a3 30 bxa3 b2 31 a4 ♖c1+ 32 ♖f1 ♔a3 33 f6, all of which is more or less forced, and at first sight White seems well tied up. However, his king will begin his march to d2, while his dark colleague's trip to a useful place takes longer. The far advanced f-pawn may also provide White with a source of counterplay in some cases. All in all Black is at no risk of losing, but still has to demonstrate he can win) 25...♖e4 26 axb5 ♖fe8 27 ♔xg5 ♖e2 28 ♖g1 (in the case of 28 ♖xa7 White was lost anyway: 28...♖xb2 29 ♖f1 ♖be2!, followed by ...b2, ...♖e1 etc.; but not the terrible blunder 29...♖ce2?? which would reverse the roles: 30 ♖a8+ ♔f8 31 ♔f4 or 30...♖g7? 31 f6+ ♖g6 32 ♖g8 mate) 28...♖xb2 29 ♖f2 ♖ce2 30 b6 ♖xf2 31 bxa7 ♖g2+ 32 ♖f1 ♖bf2+ 33 ♖e1 ♖g1+ 0-1.

15...♖xd2 16 ♔xd2 ♔xe4!

A welcome simplification, as White was going to launch an attack with f4-f5.

17 ♔xe4 f5 18 ♖f3 fxe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖ae8

20 ♖be1 a6 21 g3 ♙f6 22 ♚g2 ♜e7 23 f5



23...♞fe8

23...exf5?! was inadequate after 24 ♖d5+ ♗h8 25 ♞xe7 ♙xe7 26 ♞xf5 ♞xf5 27 ♖xf5 with some pull for White, but 23...d5!? was possible, with the idea 24 ♖g4 e5 or 24 ♖f3 ♖c6.

24 ♙f4 ♖b6 25 g4 h6

Not 25...exf5? 26 ♖d5+ ♗h8 27 ♞xe7 when both 27...♙xe7 28 ♖xd7 and 27...♞xe7 28 g5 ♞e2+ 29 ♗f3 are bad news for Black.

26 ♙g3 ♗h8 27 h4 exf5 28 ♖xf5 ♖b7+ 29 ♖f3 ♞e2+!?

After the massive liquidation 29...♖xf3+ 30 ♗xf3 ♞xe1 31 ♞xe1 ♞xe1 32 ♙xe1 d5 33 ♗f4 g6 (note that Black's last two moves were forced) the bishop ending is a draw, as White's active king can't penetrate the enemy camp.

30 ♞xe2 ♞xe2+ 31 ♞f2 ♖xf3+ 32 ♗xf3 ♞e1?

32...♞xf2+ 33 ♙xf2 d5 34 ♗f4 g6 would reach the same drawish endgame that Black rejected three moves before. This time, however, it was a much wiser decision.

33 g5! ♙e7

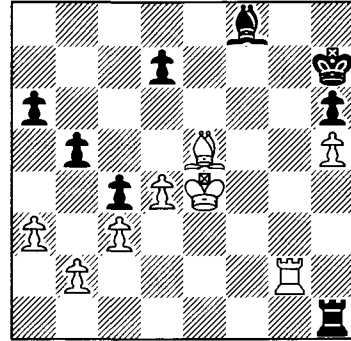
Not 33...hxg5?? 34 hxg5 and the double threat of 35 gxf6 and 35 ♞h2+ nets a piece.

34 gxf6 gxf6 35 ♞g2 ♞f1+?

35...♞e6! 36 ♙e5+ ♙f6 37 ♗e4! ♙xe5 38 dxe5 d6 39 ♗d5 ♞xe5+ 40 ♗xd6 was as-

essed as being clearly better for White, but after 40...♞c4 I don't think Black has serious troubles in drawing, e.g. 41 ♗c7 ♗h7 (41...♞xh4!?) 42 ♗b6 ♞xh4 43 ♗xa6 ♞h5 44 ♗a5 ♞g5 45 ♞h2 ♗g6 46 ♗b4 h5 47 a4 bxa4 48 ♗xc4 ♗f6 49 ♗b4 ♞g4+ 50 c4 h4 51 ♗b5 ♗e7 and the king arrives on time to stop the passed pawn.

36 ♗e4 ♗h7 37 ♙e5 ♙f8 38 h5 ♞h1



39 ♙h2

This move was criticised afterwards and 39 ♞g6!? suggested as a better winning attempt. It is true that Black could then easily go astray, but I believe he can still escape, provided that he finds 39...d6!.

a) 39...a5? 40 ♞b6, intending ♞b7, and White is much better.

b) 39...♞h4+?! 40 ♙f4! (not 40 ♗d5? d6!) 40...a5 41 ♞b6 ♗g8 (or 41...♞xh5 42 ♞b7 ♗g6 43 ♞xd7) 42 ♞xb5 ♙d6 43 ♞f5 ♗g7 44 d5 ♙c7 45 a4! ♙d6 46 ♗f3 ♙xf4 47 ♞xf4 ♞xh5 48 ♞xc4 ♞xd5 49 b4 and Black is in bad shape.

c) 39...d6! 40 ♙xd6 ♞xh5 41 ♞f6 ♙xd6 42 ♞xd6 ♞h2 and I may be wrong, but I think Black just has about enough counterplay to hold this one, e.g. 43 ♞xa6 ♞xb2 44 d5 h5 45 a4 b4 46 cxb4 h4 47 b5 h3 etc.

39...♞e1+ 40 ♗d5 ♞h1 41 a4 bxa4 42 ♗xc4 a3 43 bxa3 ♙xa3 44 ♙e5 ♙f8 45 ♞a2 ♞xh5 46 ♞xa6 ♞f5 47 ♗d5 h5 48 ♗e4 ♞f1 49 c4 ♙g7 50 ♞a7 ♞f7 51 ♙d6

♙f8! 52 ♙b8

52 ♙xf8 drops the exchange, but it's a draw anyway: 52...d5+ 53 ♗xd5 ♜xa7 54 c5 ♗g8 55 ♙d6 ♗f7 56 c6 and so on.

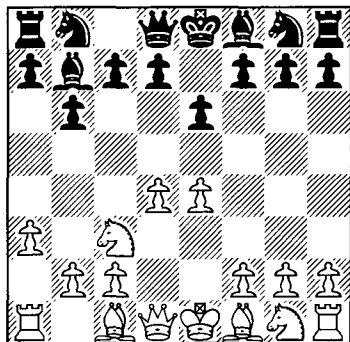
52...h4 53 c5 ♗g6 54 ♞a1 ♗h5 55 ♞g1 h3 56 ♙f4 ♙e7 57 ♙e5 ♙f8 58 ♞g8 ♞f1 59 ♞h8+ ♙h6 60 ♙g7 ♞f6 61 ♙xh6 ♞xh6 62 ♞xh6+ ♗xh6 63 ♗f3 ½-½

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♗c3 e6 4 ♗f3 ♙b4 5 ♙d3

Game 16
V. Akopian-J. Speelman
Elista Olympiad 1998

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♗c3 e6 4 ♗f3

4 a3, preventing 4...♙b4, is a significant alternative, when Black can play:



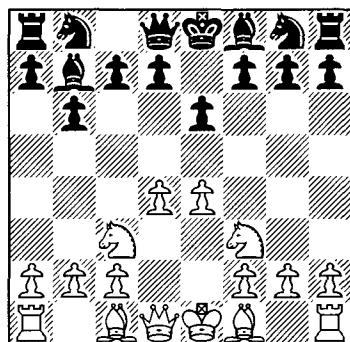
a) 4...g6!?, adopting a Hippopotamus formation, has been Black's choice on several occasions. This solution is quite acceptable, as 4 a3 is rather useless in that case. Here is an illustration of Black reaching an unclear position: 5 ♗f3 ♙g7 6 ♙g5 ♗e7 7 ♞d2 h6 8 ♙c3 d6 9 h4 ♗d7 10 ♙d3 ♗f6 (having in mind both ...d6-d5 and ...♗g4) 11 ♙f4 a6 12 0-0-0 b5 ½-½ R.Martin del Campo-D.Garcia Ilundain, Villa Clarin 1998.

b) 4...♗f6 and then:

b1) 5 e5 ♗e4 6 ♞f3 (6 ♗xe4 ♙xe4 is

equal) 6...♗xc3?! (better 6...♗d6) 7 ♞xb7 ♗c6 8 ♙g5! ♙e7 9 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 10 ♞a6 when White is much better and would win a piece in case of 10...♗xd4? 11 ♞d3. One may notice that had the white a-pawn not moved, Black still wouldn't be saved, as 10 ♞a6 ♗b4 would then run into 11 ♞a3+!.

b2) 5 ♙d3 c5! (5...d5 6 e5 ♗fd7 isn't such a bad French, but statistics are terrible for Black here!) 6 ♗f3 (if 6 dxc5 ♙xc5 or 6...bxc5 offers chances for both sides) 6...cxd4 7 ♗xd4 should be a tiny bit better for White. The move a2-a3 is not necessary; but on the other hand, Black would probably have preferred a more aggressive Sicilian ...a7-a6, ...b7-b5 expansion (though compare 5 ♗c3 in the notes to Game 15).



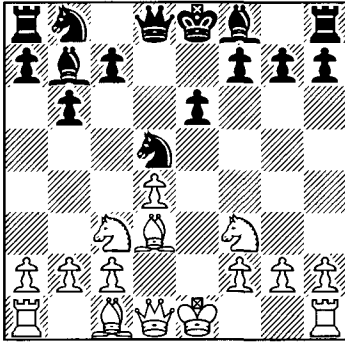
4...♙b4

Almost always played, though Black can also try 4...♗f6! and then:

a) 5 e5?! ♗e4 is just equal.

b) 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙xf6 ♞xf6 7 ♙d3 resembles a Trompowsky (1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♙g5 e6 3 e4 h6 etc.) with White having got the centre for the pair of bishops. Chances are about even.

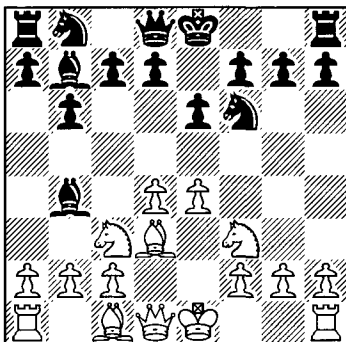
c) 5 ♙d3 d5 (after 5...c5 6 0-0 cxd4 7 ♗xd4 White has a good version of the Sicilian Defence; see 4 a3 if you're not convinced!) 6 exd5! (6 e5?! ♗e4 and 6 ♙g5 dxe4 7 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 8 ♗xe4 ♙e7, with approximate equality in each case, are not really convincing) 6...♗xd5



Strangely, this seemingly 'anodyne' position has occurred only twice in praxis, according to my database. Even if it is far from a dream for Black, his position looks quite decent to me. He will continue with natural moves, such as ...Re7, ...0-0, ...Qd7, ...c7-c5, and has reasonable prospects of equalising.

I dislike 6...exd5, even if Black's position should still be defensible. GM Lau had a sad experience with it: 7 0-0 Re7 8 Re1 0-0 9 We2 Re8 10 Qg5 Qbd7 11 Qe5 h6?? (not the best! 11...Qxe5 would have kept White's plus within bearable proportions) 12 Qxf7 We8 13 We6 Qf8 14 Qxh6+ Qh8 15 Wg8+ 1-0 H.Namyslo-R.Lau, Dresden 1996. I won't risk causing offence by explaining what happens after 15...Qxg8.

5 Qd3 Qf6

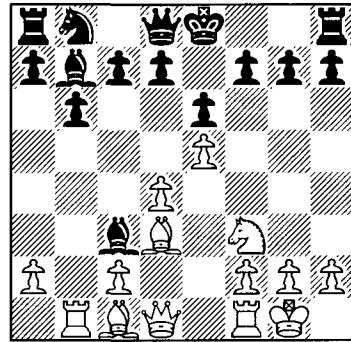


6 e5!?

The main moves, 6 We2 and 6 Qg5, are examined in the rest of this chapter.

6...Qe4 7 0-0 Qxc3 8 bxc3 Re7

A safe choice, although taking the pawn is playable as well and more principled: 8...Qxc3! 9 Reb1 (on 9 Qg5?! the simplest is 9...We8 10 Reb1 c5 with a slight advantage to Black, whereas the alternatives 9...f6 10 exf6 gxf6 11 Qe5 Qe7 and 9...Qxf3 10 Wxf3 Wxg5 11 Wxa8 Wd8 12 Read1 Qc6 13 Wb7 are difficult to assess) and now:



a) 9...Qc6 10 Reb3 Qxd4 led to a forced draw in C.Joecks-M.Weyrich, German Bundesliga 1994: 11 Qxd4 Qxd4 12 Wg4 Qxb3 13 Wxg7 Qxc1 14 Wxh8+ Qe7 15 Wf6+ Qe8 16 Wh8+ Qe7 1/2-1/2. Whether White can deviate on move 10 and obtain reasonable play for his pawn is unsure.

b) 9...Qd5 can be considered an attempt to play for more, and indeed Black was fine each time he tried it:

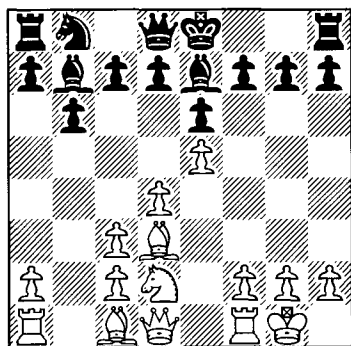
b1) 10 We2 Qc6 11 Qc4 Qxd4 12 Qg5 We8 13 Qxd5 exd5 left Black on top in M.Shereshevski-V.Kupreichik, Minsk 1976.

b2) 10 Qg5? led to a surprisingly quick defeat in G.Lorscheid-A.Czebe, Budapest 1999: 10...Qxd4 11 c4 Qb7 12 Qxh7 Qxh7 13 Qxh7 Wh4 14 Wd3 Qc6 15 Qe4 Qxe5 0-1, as after 16 Wxd4 We4 17 Wxe4 Qxe4 the c-pawn will be lost too.

b3) 10 Qg5! (best) 10...We8 (10...f6?! would be similar to 9 Qg5?! f6 with the con-

siderable difference that the ♖a1 is not en prise; after 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♖e5 ♖e7 13 ♖h5 ♖e8 14 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 15 ♖h6+ ♖e7 16 ♖g7+ ♖d8 17 ♖f7+ ♖c8 18 ♖xh8 White is an exchange up for insufficient compensation) 11 ♖c1? (11 ♖d2! was called for, and on the natural 11...♖xd2 12 ♖xd2 ♖xa2 13 ♖a1 ♖d5 14 ♖g4 White has about enough initiative for the sacrificed pawns, for instance 14...0-0 15 ♖e4 ♖h8 16 ♖f6 gxf6 17 ♖h4 f5 18 ♖f6+ ♖g8 19 ♖g5+ with perpetual check) 11...h6 12 ♖f4 ♖xf3?! (grabbing the bishop at once was dangerous because of 12...hxg5 13 ♖xg5 ♖f8 14 ♖xf7, but the prophylactic 12...♖f8! was winning for Black; after the text move Black is still better, but his opponent is back in the game) 13 ♖xf3 ♖c6 14 ♖e3 (better 14 ♖f4! with the idea 14...♖xd4 15 ♖e3 and 16 ♖e4) 14...♖xd4 15 ♖g4 ♖c6 16 f4 0-0 17 ♖f3 f5 18 exf6 ♖xf6 19 ♖g3 ♖f8 20 ♖f3 ♖d4 21 ♖e4 ♖xe3+ 22 ♖xe3 ♖xf4 23 ♖h7+ ♖f7 24 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 25 ♖xf1 ♖c5 26 ♖f2 ♖f5+?? (a terrible blunder in a won position) 27 ♖f3 1-0 Vorstermans-Nieto, Antwerp 1994.

9 ♖d2!



Clearing the path for both her majesty and the f-pawn.

9...d6 10 ♖g4 g6 11 ♖e4

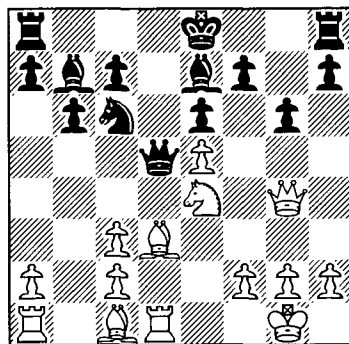
I believe 11 f4! was stronger. In that case I wonder what was Speelman's intention, as White's plan of transferring his knight to g5

looks dangerous. Maybe 11...♖c6, 12...♖d7 and to shoot the knight when it appears at g5.

11...dxe5 12 dxe5 ♖c6 13 ♖d1

All the direct ways to cover e5 (13 f4, 13 ♖f4, 13 ♖g3) would have been met by the same reply.

13...♖d5!



Now White could opt for 14 f4 0-0-0 15 ♖e3, with roughly equal chances. Akopian probably didn't trust his position and went instead for simplifications:

14 ♖a6 ♖xe5 15 ♖xd5 ♖xg4 16 ♖xb7 exd5 17 ♖xa8 dxe4 18 ♖c6+ ♖f8 19 h3 ♖e5 20 ♖h6+ ♖g8 21 ♖xe4 ♖f8 22 ♖f4 ♖d6 23 ♖h6 ♖f8 24 ♖f4 ♖d6 ½-½

Game 17

E. Bareev-C. Bauer

Engbien les Bains 2001

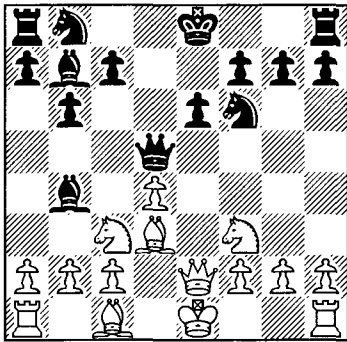
1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♖b7 3 ♖c3 e6 4 ♖f3 ♖b4 5 ♖d3 ♖f6 6 ♖e2 d5 7 exd5

7 e5 is more ambitious: 7...♖e4 8 0-0 (8 ♖d2 ♖xd2 is just equal) 8...♖xc3 (taking first with the bishop is also correct: 8...♖xc3!? 9 bxc3 ♖xc3 10 ♖e3 ♖c6 or 10...♖e4, when White has compensation but likely no more than that) 9 bxc3 ♖xc3 10 ♖b1 ♖c6 and now the game K.Pommerening-G.Matrisch, correspondence 1980, shows an impressive crushing White victory, but it is hard to believe that Black can't defend better: 11 ♖a3! ♖xd4 12

♟xd4 ♙xd4 13 ♚fd1 a6 (the most suitable move to avoid prevent ♙b5+, since 13...c6 allows the unpleasant 14 ♙d6, while 13...c5?? just drops a piece to 14 ♙b5+ ♖f8 15 ♚xd4) 14 c4 ♗g5 (if 14...dxc4 15 ♗g4) 15 c5 ♗xe5 16 ♗c2 b5 17 c6 ♙c8 18 ♚e1 ♗f6 19 ♙e2 e5 20 ♚b4 ♙e6 (if 20...0-0 21 ♙xh7+ ♖h8 22 ♚xd4 followed by ♙xf8 and the extra piece decides the outcome) 21 ♚xd4 exd4 22 ♗c5 (intending 23 ♗xd5) 22...♙d8 23 ♙b2 ♚e8 24 ♙xd4 ♗g5 25 g3 ♙h3 26 f4 ♗h5 27 ♙xg7 f6 28 ♙xf6+ ♖c8 29 ♗xd5! and Black resigned. Indeed, if 29...♗xd5 30 ♚xc8 mates, while after 29...♙g4 30 ♙f5+! ♖b8 31 ♗d7 or 30...♙xf5 31 ♗xf5+! Black loses a lot of material.

7...♗xd5!?

For 7...♟xd5 see the next game.



8 0-0

Three weeks earlier, M.Caposciutti-N.Giffard, French League 2001, saw the double-edged plan of White castling queenside. Although Black lost that game, he doubtlessly could have improved: 8 ♙d2!? ♙xc3 9 bxc3 (9 ♙xc3 ♟bd7 10 0-0 ♟e4 was equal in A.Mikhailchishin-B.Gurgenidze, Volgodosnk 1981) 9...0-0 10 c4 ♗h5 11 0-0-0 ♟bd7?! (too slow! 11...c5! was already preferable for Black) 12 ♚hg1 ♗g4 13 h3 ♙xf3 14 gxf3 ♗h5 15 ♚g5 ♗h4 16 ♚g3 ♖h8 17 ♙e4 ♟xe4?! (here 17...♚ad8!? 18 ♚dg1 ♟h5 with unclear play was probably better) 18 fxe4 f6 19 ♚dg1 ♚f7

20 ♗f3 ♚af8 21 ♚g4 ♗h5 22 ♗g3 (now White clearly has the better of it and finishes the game abruptly) 22...g5 23 ♙xg5 fxe5 24 ♚xg5 ♗h6 25 f4 ♟f6 26 e5 ♗xg5 27 ♗xg5 ♟e8 28 ♚g4 ♟g7 29 d5 ♚c8 30 ♚h4 ♚ef8 31 ♚h6 ♖g8 32 dxe6 ♚xf4 33 ♚f6 ♚xc4 34 e7 ♚e8 35 ♚f8+ ♚xf8 36 exf8 ♗+ ♖xf8 37 ♗f6+ 1-0.

8...♙xc3 9 bxc3 0-0

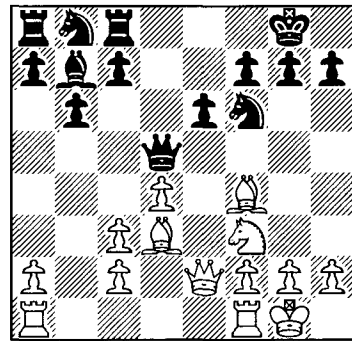
If 9...♟bd7 10 ♙a3!? is annoying.

After the text move Black has solved his opening problems, and White should probably settle for an equal endgame in the next few moves.

10 ♙f4

10 c4 ♗h5 11 ♟e5 ♗xe2 12 ♙xe2 ♟c6 (or 12...♟bd7) 13 ♙f3 ♟a5 is roughly equal, while 13...♟xe5!? 14 ♙xb7 ♟xc4 15 ♙xa8 ♚xa8 gives Black interesting compensation for his small material deficit; the cavalry will perform a great job from the untouchable outposts at c4 and d5.

10...♚c8



11 ♚fe1?!

Now Black's position becomes more pleasant. Bareev's decision was probably dictated by the tournament situation: he was fighting for the podium, whereas I was the 'also ran' of the event. Instead 11 c4 ♗h5 12 ♟e5 ♗xe2 13 ♙xe2 c5 14 c3 was equal.

11...c5 12 dxc5

Now 12 c4 comes too late (12...♗h5 13

dx5 ♖xf3 and Black is clearly on top), so White is forced to accept his doubled c-pawns being isolated.

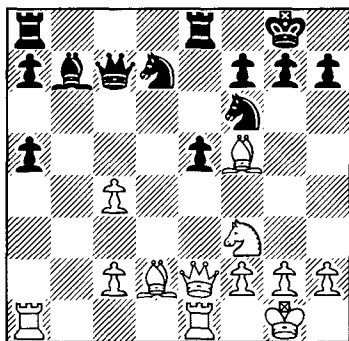
12...♖xc5 13 c4 ♘bd7 14 a4 ♖e8 15 a5 e5 16 ♗e3 ♖c7 17 ♗f5?!

Another inaccuracy. 17 axb6 axb6 18 ♗f5 would have limited the damage.

17...bxa5

Now Black enjoys a marked and rather stable edge.

18 ♗d2



18...e4?!

Instead:

a) 18...♗xf3?! 19 ♖xf3 ♖xc4 isn't so clear, as White's pair of bishops is quite powerful in this open position; after 20 ♖h3!?, for example.

b) 18...♘b6? 19 ♘xe5 is just erroneous since Black has no satisfactory way to use the pin on the e-file.

c) 18...a4! seems the right way to proceed: 19 ♖xa4 ♘b6 20 ♗a5 ♖c6 21 ♖b4 e4 22 ♘h4 (22 ♘d4? ♖c5 loses material) 22...♖c5 23 ♖b5 ♖xc4 24 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 and Black is much better.

19 ♘d4

Or 19 ♗xa5 ♖c5 20 ♘h4 ♘e5 with a slight plus for Black; if 20...g5? 21 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 22 ♗c3 is unclear.

19...♘b6 20 ♗g5

20 ♗xa5?! ♖xc4 was worse.

20...♖xc4 21 ♖xc4?!

We were now both in time-trouble, and objectively White should have chosen 21 ♗xf6 ♖xc2 22 ♘xe2 gxf6 23 ♘g3 ♖e5 24 ♗xe4 ♖ae8 25 f3 when he has reasonable chances to make a draw. Due to my poor form, however, Bareev's suspicious choice brought him more...

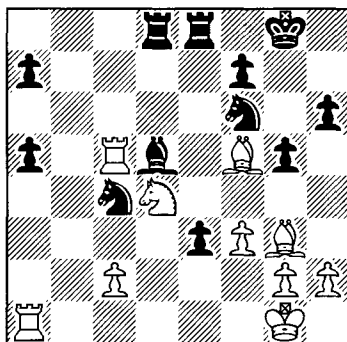
21...♘xc4 22 ♖eb1 ♗d5 23 ♖b5 ♖ad8 24 ♖c5 h6

On 24...e3 25 f3 a4 the a-pawn is immune because of 26...e2, but after something like 26 ♗f1, Black's task of converting his tangible edge remains difficult.

25 ♗h4

Or 25 ♗f4!? g6 26 ♗h3 g5 (26...e3 is perhaps cleaner) 27 ♗c7 g4 28 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♘c6 and the position is messy.

25...e3 26 f3 g5 27 ♗g3



27...h5??

Any other move was preferable, though converting Black's edge would definitely have been hard.

28 ♗c7 ♘f4 29 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 30 c3

Despite my blunder I still had some chances to hold. The pressure of time, however, made me collapse, and when I overstepped the limit the final position was lost anyway.

30...♘e6 31 ♗xe6 fxe6 32 ♗f1 ♖b8 33 ♖b5 ♘d2+ 34 ♗e1 ♖c8 35 ♖bxa5 ♖xc3 36 ♖xa7 ♗f8 37 ♖7a3 ♖xa3 1-0

Not a very linear game, but defensive skills

are part of chess, and Bareev did well to confuse matters as much as possible.

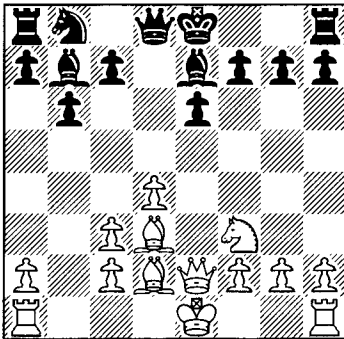
Game 18
E.Mortensen-R.Keene

Aarhus 1976

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♟b7 3 ♞c3 e6 4 ♜f3 ♟b4
5 ♟d3 ♜f6 6 ♚e2 d5 7 exd5 ♞xd5 8
♟d2 ♞xc3

8...♞d7!? doesn't change anything if White goes for 9.0-0 ♞xc3 10 bxc3 ♟e7, whereas Black avoids the sharp 10 h4 from Kovalev-Minasian in the next note. (9 h4 is still playable, but would make less than in the above-mentioned game). The drawback of 8...♞d7 is illustrated by the following continuation, where Black will find it hard to win: 9 ♞xd5 ♟xd2+ 10 ♞xd2 ♟xd5 11 0-0 0-0 12 c4 ♟b7 13 ♟e4 ♟xe4 14 ♞xe4 ♜f6 15 ♚ad1 ♞xe4 16 ♚xe4 ♚d6 with a level endgame in G.Marcotulli-K.Gawehns, correspondence 2001.

9 bxc3 ♟e7

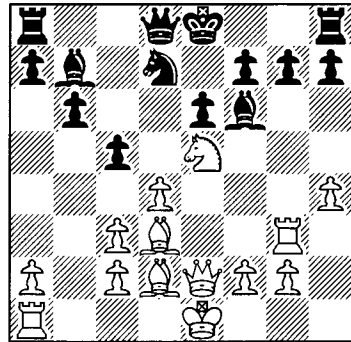


10 0-0

A draw by perpetual check is the logical outcome of 10 ♞e5?! 0-0 11 ♚h5 g6 12 ♞xg6 (otherwise 12...♞d7 and Black is not worse) 12...fxg6 13 ♟xg6 hxg6 14 ♚xg6+ ♟h8 etc.

The aggressive 10 h4!? was first seen in A.Kovalev-A.Minasian, Cappelle la Grande 1996, though only one more time since.

10...♞d7 11 ♚h3 c5?! (in his annotations for *Informator* 67, Kovalev suggests 11...♟d6!?, to stop ♚g3, as a likely improvement; I agree with him, even if the continuation chosen by Minasian isn't so bad) 12 ♚g3 ♟f6 13 ♞e5 and then:



a) 13...♚c7!? 14 ♟b5 ♟xe5 15 ♚xe5 (not mentioned by Kovalev, who only analyses 15 dxe5 0-0-0 16 ♚xg7 ♞xe5 with counterplay; this is true, but it looks like recapturing with the queen retains a small edge...) 15...♚xe5+ 16 dxe5 ♚g8 (safer than 16...g6?! 17 ♚d3 0-0-0 18 ♟g5 ♞xe5 19 ♚xd8+ ♚xd8 20 ♟xd8 ♟xd8 when maybe Black can hold this ending, but he will surely suffer) 17 ♟h6 a6 18 ♟xd7+ ♟xd7 19 ♟xg7 and White has won a pawn, though converting it into a win will be tough with the opposite-coloured bishops. All the same, a pawn is a pawn!

b) 13...♟xe5 14 dxe5 ♚xh4? (14...♚c7! was the last chance to keep the game afloat, and after 15 f4 g6 Black should be able to resist) 15 0-0-0 and now:

b1) 15...♚a4 16 ♟b5! ♚xa2 17 ♟g5 when Black has no defence anymore and resigned after 17...♟c8 18 ♚d3 0-0 19 ♟xd7 ♟a6 20 ♚e3 g6 21 ♟f6 ♚a3+ 22 ♟d2 ♚fd8 23 ♚h6 ♚xd7+ 24 ♚d3 1-0. Instead, 17...♟d5 failed to 18 c4 ♚a1+ 19 ♟d2 ♚a5+ 20 ♟e3 h6 21 cxd5 hxg5 22 dxe6 ♚c3+ 23 ♚d3 ♚xe5+ 24 ♚e4, while if 17...♚a1+ 18 ♟d2 ♚a5 19 ♟e1 ♟d5 20 ♚xd5! exd5 21 e6 wins for White.

b2) 15...0-0 wasn't really any better, as White has two moves to claim an edge: 16 ♖xg7 c4!? 17 ♕xc4 ♘xe5 18 ♕xe6+ fxe6 19 ♗xe5 ♗c4 20 ♖h1 and White has a decisive advantage, as his opponent will have to sacrifice both e6 and h7 in order to prevent the fatal 21 ♕f4; or 16 ♕g5 ♗a4 17 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 and now 18 ♕b5! ♗f4+ 19 ♖c3 or 18...♗xa2 19 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7 20 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 21 ♖xg7 in both cases with a huge advantage to White.

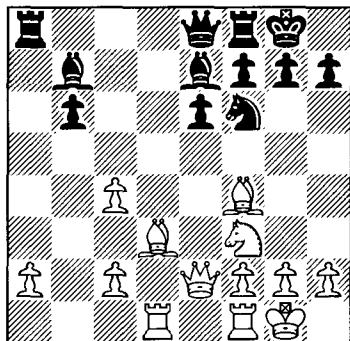
10...0-0 11 ♖ad1 ♘d7 12 ♕f4?!

Immediately putting the reserves in motion by means of 12 c4! c5 13 c3 was best. White then has ideas such as ♖fe1 and d4-d5 (if the ♕e7 remains insufficiently protected), while his d2 bishop can reach the most incisive g5 outpost.

12...♘f6 13 c4 c5 14 dxc5

14 c3 was still interesting. The text move grabs a pawn due to the threat of ♕xh7+, but Black gets enough play for it.

14...♗e8 15 cxb6 axb6



16 ♘e5!?

White could have tried to keep the pawn for a while with 16 c3, when 16...♗c6 is about equal. The Danish IM probably thought this too passive, and so let his opponent restore the material balance for some activity.

16...♖xa2 17 ♕g5 ♗h8!

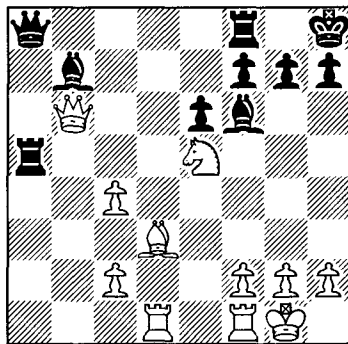
Stopping the threat of ♕xf6 and ♘d7.

18 ♗e3 ♖a5 19 ♕xf6?

After 19 ♖fe1! the position would have

remained balanced; White's dynamism compensates for his doubled c-pawns. Instead Mortensen embark upon a dubious pawn fishing expedition.

19...♕xf6 20 ♗xb6 ♗a8!



A good example of a multi-purpose move! Black covers both the bishop and the rook, while attacking g2 and e5.

21 ♘d7 ♕xg2 22 ♘xf8 ♖g5 23 f4 ♕xf1+ 24 ♗xf1 ♗g2+ 25 ♗e1 ♖e5+ 26 fxe5 ♕h4+ 27 ♗f2 ♗xf2 mate

A very nice and astonishingly quick finish from a rather quiet position.

Game 19

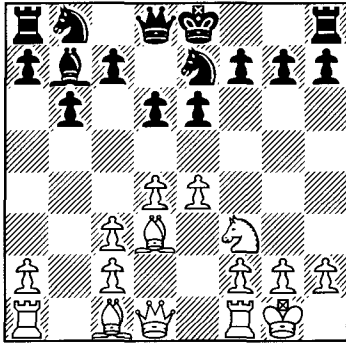
V.Kramnik-J.Ehlvest

Moscow Olympiad 1994

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♕b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♘f3 ♕b4 5 ♕d3 ♘f6

Black has two other valid possibilities:

a) 5...♘e7!? 6 0-0 ♕xc3 (by comparison with the line 1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 ♕b7 3 e4 e6 4 ♘f3 ♕b4 5 ♕d3 ♘e7 in Chapter 3, White's position is considerably easier to handle. The main thing is that White doesn't need to move the ♕d3 in order to push his d-pawn, and if he has time to amass his forces on the king-side with ♘e2-g3, both the ♕b4 and the black king will be embarrassed. This explains why the exchange is Black's most advisable move here) 7 bxc3 d6



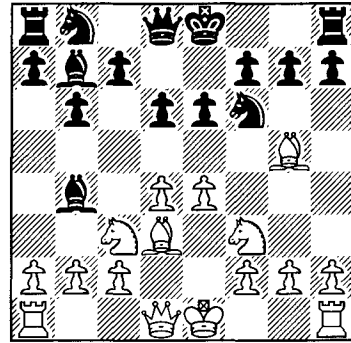
Black has a solid position and needs just a couple of moves to complete his development. That's why I suggest going for the throat before that with 8 $\text{d}g5$ (apparently a novelty) 8...h6 9 $\text{Wh}5$ (9 $\text{d}h3!$?) 9...0-0 10 e5 (after the timid 10 $\text{d}h3$ $\text{d}d7$ consolidates) 10...dxe5 11 dxe5, and now 11...d7? is highly suspicious because of 12 $\text{d}h7!$ $\text{E}e8$ 13 $\text{d}xh6$ g6 (13...gxh6? 14 $\text{Wh}6$ is immediately over) 14 $\text{Wh}3$ $\text{d}xh7$ 15 $\text{d}g5+$ $\text{d}g8$ 16 $\text{Wh}6$ $\text{E}f8$ 17 $\text{Ad}1$ (not 17 $\text{d}f6??$ $\text{d}xf6$ 18 exf6 $\text{d}f5$ 19 $\text{d}xf5$ $\text{W}xf6$) and Black is in big trouble: his queen is fixed because of $\text{d}f6$, so he can move nothing except his queenside. On the other hand, either 11...d7? or 11... $\text{We}8$ (having in mind the trick 12 $\text{d}h7??$ f5!) seem to repel the attack and leave a game with mutual chances.

b) 5...d5 6 exd5 (probably the most logical; instead 6 e5 would reach a French-type pawn structure, and if 6...d6 Black has lost a tempo, but this is not so important in closed positions, especially since $\text{d}f1-d3$ was also half-wasted time. These kinds of position are not to everyone's taste, but objectively Black's side is playable here) 6...d5! (on 6... $\text{W}d5$ 7 0-0 $\text{d}xc3$ 8 bxc3 White has an improved version of Bareev-Bauer, as he didn't have to play $\text{We}2$, so his chances of an opening advantage are quite good) 7 0-0 $\text{d}xc3$ 8 bxc3 when the assessment will depend on how Black copes with the combination of ideas c3-

c4, $\text{d}a3$ and $\text{d}g5$. After 8...d6! 9 $\text{d}d2$ $\text{d}ce7$ or 9 $\text{d}g5$, I would assess the position between unclear and slightly better for White.

6 $\text{d}g5$ h6

After the provocative 6...d6! White should probably decline the challenge of complications caused by 7 e5. He is more likely to maintain his opening edge if he sticks to his original plan with the simple 7 0-0.



a) 7 e5! h6 8 $\text{d}h4$ g5 9 $\text{d}xg5$ hxg5 10 $\text{d}xg5$ and then:

a1) 10...dxe5 11 dxe5 $\text{W}d5$ 12 $\text{d}xf6$ $\text{W}xg2$ 13 $\text{d}f1$ $\text{d}xc3+$ 14 bxc3 $\text{W}e4+$ 15 $\text{We}2$ $\text{W}xh1$ 16 $\text{d}xh8$ $\text{W}xh2$ or 13 $\text{d}b5+$ $\text{d}c6$ 14 $\text{E}f1$ $\text{E}xh2$ is about equal.

a2) 10...d6! seems playable as well: 11 $\text{d}f1!$ $\text{E}g8$ 12 $\text{d}xf6$ (12 h4! looks worse in view of 12... $\text{E}xg5$ 13 hxg5 $\text{d}e4$ 14 $\text{E}h8+$ $\text{d}f8$ and if material is still level, Black's threats of taking on c3 or g5 yield him the better chances) 12...dxf6 13 exf6 $\text{W}xf6$ 14 $\text{W}d2$ $\text{E}g4!$ (14...d5? loses to 15 $\text{E}g1$ $\text{W}f3$ 16 $\text{We}3$, while after 14...0-0 15 f3 White keeps his extra pawn, though Black has some compensation) 15 0-0-0 $\text{d}xg2$ 16 $\text{E}g1$ $\text{d}f3$ with mutual chances.

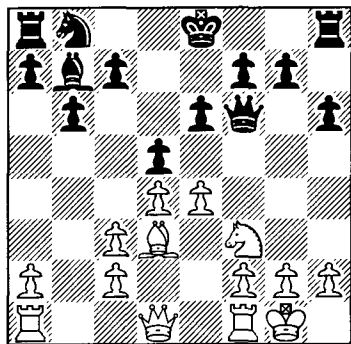
b) 7 0-0! $\text{d}xc3$ (once again 8 $\text{d}e2$, threatening to trap the black bishop, can't be allowed) 8 bxc3 $\text{d}bd7$ 9 $\text{d}d2$ with a slight edge for White, though Black has a defensible position; for instance, 9...h6 10 $\text{d}xf6$ $\text{d}xf6$ 11 f4 0-0 12 e5 (otherwise Black may play ...e6-e5

himself) 12...♖d5 13 ♜f3 ♜b8 is unclear.

7 ♖xf6 ♜xf6

7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♜xf6 9 0-0 reaches the same position.

8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 d5?!

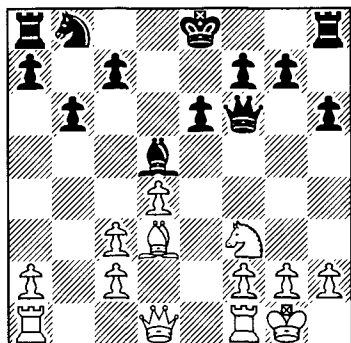


A dubious attempt to reduce White's activity based on ♖d2 and f2-f4. Unfortunately, White can open up the position anyway, taking advantage of his lead in development, when instead of having to deal with a knight on d2, Black is facing the very same animal at e5! The stronger move, 9...d6, is considered in the remaining games of this chapter.

10 exd5!

I believe Black experiences serious difficulties against both this move and 10 e5 ♜e7 11 a4 ♖c6 12 ♖d2, again with f4-f5 in mind.

10...♙xd5



11 ♖e5

White enjoys a nasty initiative and excellent attacking prospects on the kingside.

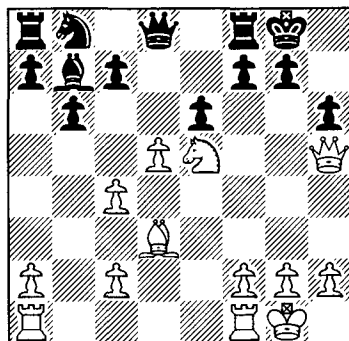
11...0-0

In a more recent game, J.Horvath-M.Sharif, French League 2002, the latter tried to improve Black's play by 11...♜g5, but after the obvious 12 g3 quite a bit of work is needed from Black just to stay in the game.

12 ♜h5 ♜d8

After 12...♜g5 White obviously declines the generous offer with 13 ♜h3 and retains good chances of a victorious assault (i.e. with f4-f5, for those who still have no clue of White's intentions).

13 c4 ♙b7 14 d5!



This pawn sacrifice diverts the black e-pawn, enabling White to gain access to the key f5-square. The coming battery ♙d3+♜f5 will then force Black to further weaken his kingside, creating a target for the enemy minor pieces.

14...♜d6 15 ♜ae1 exd5 16 ♜f5 g6 17 ♜h3

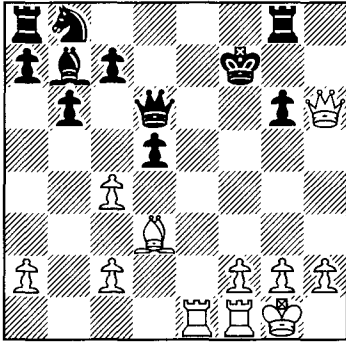
17 ♜g4!? was also worth consideration, as the following lines (mostly borrowed from Kramnik's comments) illustrate: 17...h5 18 ♜g5 ♖c6 (bad is 18...♙g7? 19 ♖xg6 fxg6 20 ♜e7+ ♜f7 21 ♜fe1 and the imminent landing of a white rook on e6 will spell the end of the game) 19 ♙xg6 fxg6 (or 19...♖xe5?! 20 ♙f5+ ♖g6 21 ♜e6 and Black has to give up his queen in order to avoid getting mated) 20

♟xg6 ♜f6 21 ♛e7+ ♚h7 22 ♛f5 ♜xf5 23 ♜xf5+ ♜g6 24 ♜d7+ ♜g7 and here both 25 ♜xd5 and 25 ♜xg7+ ♚xg7 26 cxd5 yield White a significant advantage.

17...♚g7 18 ♛xf7 ♚xf7

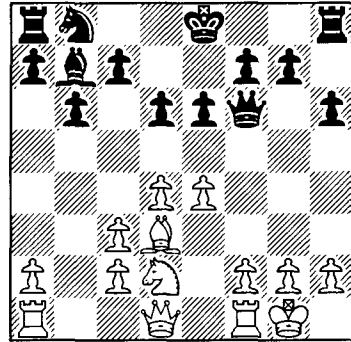
18...♜xf7 19 ♜e6 is no better.

19 ♜xh6 ♜g8



Game 20
K.Nikolaidis-A.Minasian
Panormo 1998

**1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♟b7 3 ♛c3 e6 4 ♛f3 ♟b4
5 ♟d3 ♛f6 6 ♟g5 h6 7 ♟xf6 ♜xf6 8 0-0
♟xc3 9 bxc3 d6 10 ♛d2!**



20 f4?

White's only mistake in the game. Naturally he needs to add fuel in his offensive, but the right way to finish the job was 20 ♜e3!. Black can try to defend with either 20...d4 or 20...♛d7, but huge material losses are unavoidable:

a) 20...d4 21 c5! (vacating the c4-square for a deadly bishop check) 21...♜xc5 (21...bxc5 doesn't change much: 22 ♜h7+ ♜g7 23 ♟c4+ ♚f6 24 ♜h4+ g5 25 ♜h6+ ♜g6 26 ♜e6+ ♜xe6 27 ♜f8+ and wins) 22 ♟c4+ ♜xc4 (if 22...♚f6 23 ♜e6+ ♚f7 24 ♜fe1 and Black succumbs to the assault) 23 ♜f4+ ♚g7 24 ♜e5+ and mate next move.

b) 20...♛d7 21 ♜h7+ ♚f8 22 ♜f3+ ♛f6 23 ♟xg6 ♜e6 24 cxd5 ♟xd5 25 ♜h6+ ♚e7 26 ♜e3 ♛e4 27 ♜h7+ ♚d6 28 ♟xe4 and White is two pawns up, never mind about the running black monarch.

20...♛d7 21 f5 ♜h8 22 fxg6+ ♚g8 23 ♜f4 ♜xf4 ½-½

Black is a piece up for only two pawns, but White's rooks will invade the 7th rank and provide sufficient counterplay.

This is it! 10 ♛d2, clearing the path for the f-pawn, is what has traumatised many 1...b6 players. White is planning to use his space advantage to launch an attack against the enemy king, and f2-f4 followed by e4-e5 proves difficult to prevent. From the present position Black's most natural move is 10...e5, which is the subject of Games 22-23. But first let's examine Black's possible attempts to deviate from this critical line.

10...g5

With his last move Black obviously aims at stopping the advance f2-f4 that causes him so much nuisance. The drawback of such a radical measure lies in its weakening aspect, and Black already more or less abandons plans involving castling short.

A third option for Black, 10...♜g6!? with the idea 11 f4 f5, is considered in the next game.

11 ♜e2

White has a wide range of possibilities: 11 f4?!, 11 e5?, 11 a4 and finally the text move, 11 ♜e2. Lets have a look at each of them:

a) 11 f4?! (the straightforward attempt at refuting 10...g5, but Black is well equipped to deal with it) 11...gxf4 12 g3 (or 12 ♖g4 e5) 12...♙g8 13 ♖h1 e5 14 gxf4 exd4 and as his king can quickly evacuate the danger area, Black is fine here.

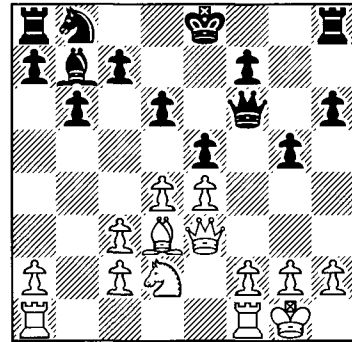
b) 11 e5? is not recommendable: 11...dxe5 12 ♘e4 ♖e7 (the greedy silicon suggestion of 12...♙g7 13 ♙f3 ♔d8!?, threatening ...f7-f5 while hiding the king on c8, deserves serious consideration too) 13 dxe5?! (13 ♙f3 was better, even if Black obtains a comfortable position after 13...♘d7 14 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 15 ♙xb7 0-0 16 dxe5 ♘d5) 13...♘d7 14 ♙e1 0-0-0 15 ♘d2 ♖c5 when Black was already on top in R.Akhayan-M.Jadoul, Belgian League 2003, and converted his edge into a win as follows: 16 ♖e2 ♙xc3 17 ♘b3 ♘c5 18 ♘xc5 ♙xc5 19 ♙a6 ♙xa6 20 ♙xa6+ ♖b8 21 ♖e2 ♙d5 22 a4 a5 23 ♙ab1 ♙hd8 24 ♙b5 ♖c3 25 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 26 h3 ♖a7 27 ♙d1 ♙xe5 28 ♙h5 ♙e1+ 29 ♙xe1 ♖xe1+ 30 ♖h2 ♙xf2 31 ♙xh6 ♙f4+ 32 ♖h1 e5 33 c3 e4 34 ♖c6 e3 35 ♖e8 f5 36 c4 0-1.

c) 11 a4, on the other hand, quite sensible: if Black wishes to move his king on the queenside, then starting operations there is logical. G.Marcotulli-K.Gawehns, correspondence 2002, continued 11...a5 12 ♙b5+ ♘d7 13 ♖e2 (13 f4?! gxf4 14 g3 e5 was far from great for White, but 13 ♙e1 was perhaps better) 13...e5 14 ♙xd7+ (unnecessary; covering d4 by any legal move was stronger) 14...♖xd7 15 d5 ♙a6 16 c4 h5 17 ♙a3 ♙g6 and Black was at least equal. In the rest of the game he was helped a lot by White's incoherent play: 18 ♙b3 ♙hf8 19 ♙b1 f5 20 ♖e3 f4 21 ♖c3 g4 22 ♖h1 ♙f6 23 f3 ♙g8 24 c5 bxc5 25 ♙g1 ♙h4 26 fxg4 hxg4 27 g3 ♙h6 28 ♙g2 f3 29 ♙f2 ♙gb8 30 h4 ♙b4 0-1. It may look a bit early to throw in the towel, but White really has no constructive ideas, while something like ...♙d4 and ...♙e2 is coming.

11...e5 12 ♖e3

Black should be OK by now, but as he

soon ran into difficulties, an improvement should be looked for around here.



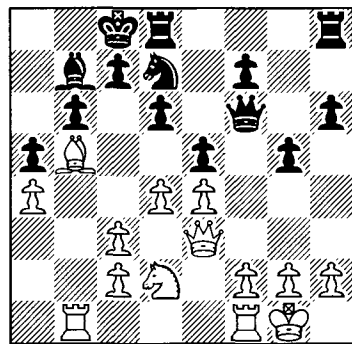
12...♘d7

12...♘c6!? was another possibility.

13 ♙b5 0-0-0

Questioning the bishop at once with 13...a6 makes sense too.

14 a4 a5 15 ♙ab1



15...♙he8?!

As the pressure against e4 will turn out to be ineffective, trying to annoy the enemy king with a flank attack (15...h5 etc.) was probably more to the point.

16 ♙fe1 ♙g6 17 ♖d3 ♖b8

If 17...d5?! then 18 ♙a6 dxe4 19 ♖b5, followed by ♘c4xa5, will prove awkward to meet.

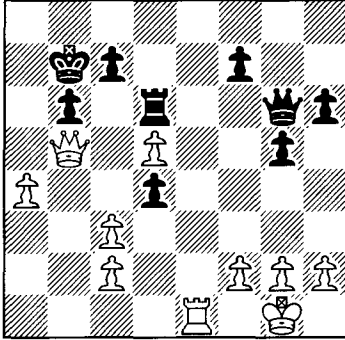
18 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 19 ♖b5 ♙ee7 20 ♘c4 exd4 21 ♘xa5

White might also have played 21 cxd4! first.

21...d5

Worse was 21...♙xe4?! 22 cxd4 ♙a8 23 d5 ♜f6 24 ♜f1!, when the idea of 25 ♘c6+ ♙xc6 26 dxc6 and a4-a5 should bring White to victory.

22 ♘xb7 ♚xb7 23 exd5 ♜xe1+ 24 ♜xe1 ♜d6



25 a5?

Spoiling most of his winning chances. After the precise 25 ♜c4! Black can't take on c3 because of 26 ♜c7. So White will continue 26 ♜xd4 and keep an extra pawn in much more favourable circumstances than the game. Whereas now Black can more or less maintain the balance and a draw seems a fair outcome to me.

25...♜xc2 26 cxd4 ♜c3 27 a6+ ♚a7 28 ♜d1 f5 29 h3 g4 30 hxg4 fxg4 31 ♜e8 ♜xd5 32 ♜c8 ♜c6 33 ♜xg4 ♚xa6 34 ♜c8+ ♜b7 35 ♜e6 h5 36 ♜a1+ ♜a5 37 ♜xa5+ ♚xa5 38 ♜a2+ ♚b4 39 ♜b2+ ♚c4 40 ♜c2+ ♚d5 41 ♜b3+ ♚xd4 42 ♜e3+ ♚c4 43 ♜e2+ ♚c5 44 ♜c2+ ♚d4 45 ♜d1+ ♚c5 46 ♜c2+ ♚d5 47 ♜d3+ ♚e5 48 ♜g3+ ♚f5 49 ♜h3+ ♚f6 50 ♜h4+ ♚g6 51 ♜g3+ ♚f7 52 ♜f4+ ♚e6 53 ♜h6+ ♚d7 54 ♜h7+ ♚d6 55 ♜g6+ ♚c5 56 ♜c2+ ♚d5 57 ♜d3+ ♚e5 58 ♜g3+ ♚d4 59 ♜e3+ ♚c4 60 ♜e2+ ½-½

Game 21

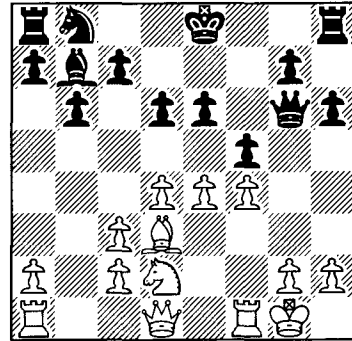
Z. Ilincic-B. Filipovic

Yugoslav Team Championship 1997

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♘f3 ♙b4 5 ♙d3 ♘f6 6 ♙g5 h6 7 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 d6 10 ♘d2! ♜g6!?

Plans the counter-push...

11 f4 f5

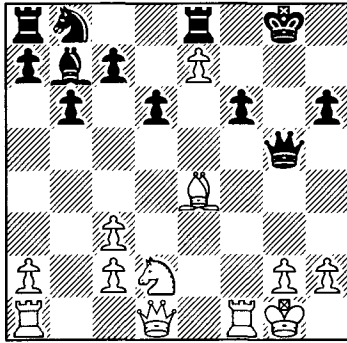


But this is placed under severe test by...

12 ♜f3

...with the simple idea of taking on f5.

Actually 12 d5!? may be even better: 12...0-0 13 dxe6! (White must rush to open the position as quickly as possible; the slow 13 c4? would let Black breathe, as Ilincic indicates 13...♘d7 followed by ...♘c5, and Black has no reason to complain) 13...fxe4 14 e7 ♜e8 (14...exd3 is insufficient: 15 exf8♜+ ♚xf8 16 ♘f3 dxc2 17 ♜d2 and White is much better; the c2 pawn will fall and, more importantly, the annoying f4-f5 is coming) 15 f5 ♜g5. Ilincic assesses this position as clearly better for Black in his annotations (of the present game) in *Informator* 70. I have to disagree, however, because of the strong 16 f6! (the immediate 16 ♙xe4? doesn't work: 16...♜e3+ 17 ♚h1 ♙xe4) 16...gxf6 and now 17 ♙xe4 is possible and yields White the better play:



a) 17...♖e3?! 18 ♔h1 ♕xe4 19 ♖g4+ with a crushing attack.

b) 17...♕xe4? 18 ♖xe4 ♖e3+ 19 ♖f2 when Black may win a pawn, but his wrecked kingside leaves him with very slim chances of surviving.

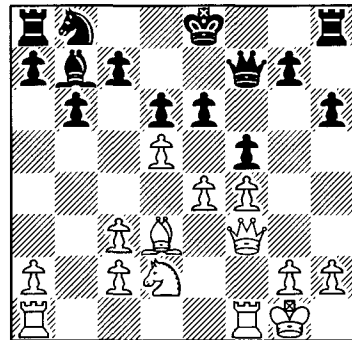
c) 17...♕c6?! 18 ♖f3 ♖c5+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xe7 20 ♖g3+ ♖g7 21 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 22 ♖f3 (after 22 ♖g4+? ♖g5 White should repeat moves by 23 ♖e6! ♖e5 24 ♖g4+ ♖g5 etc., since if 23 ♖c8 the unexpected 23...♖a6!! makes the day for Black: 24 ♖xa6 ♖xd2 25 ♕xc6 ♖xc3 and Black has snatched two pawns for nothing) and now the following continuation is long but looks rather compulsory to me: 22...f5 23 ♖f1 ♕xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖d5 25 ♖g3+ ♔h8 26 ♖f6 ♖f7 27 ♖f3 c6 28 ♖xf5 ♖a6 29 ♖f4 ♖g7 30 ♖xd6 ♖f8 31 ♖xc6 ♖c5 32 ♔g1 and White is two sound extra pawns up with the safer king.

d) 17...d5 18 ♖f3 dxe4 (allowing ♖g3 and ♖h5 is too dangerous, so the queen sac seems the lesser evil) 19 ♖g3 ♖xe7 20 ♖xg5+ hxg5 21 ♖c4 ♖d7 22 ♖e3 ♖e5 when Black has reasonable compensation for his queen from a material point of view, and if his pawn were still on g6 to cover the f5-square, he would stand OK. Here, however, he is likely to suffer before saving a draw.

12...♖f7 13 d5!

Stronger than 13 ♖ae1 ♖d7 14 d5 0-0-0 15 c4 (maybe 15 dxe6!? ♖xe6 16 ♖h3 was more

promising; if instead 16 exf5, both 16...♖xa2! and 16...♖xe1 17 ♕a6 ♖xf1+ 18 ♖xf1 ♖he8 are unclear) 15...♖c5 16 ♖h3 exd5 17 exd5 g6, when the position is in equilibrium and Black only spoiled his game on move 41, probably due to a miscalculation: 18 ♖b3 ♖de8 19 ♖xc5 bxc5 20 ♖e3 ♖xe3 21 ♖xe3 ♖c8 22 ♖d2 c6 23 dxc6 ♕xc6 24 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♖f6 26 c3 ♔c7 27 ♖d2 ♖e6 28 ♔f2 d5 29 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 30 ♕xe2 d4 31 cxd4 cxd4 32 g4 fxg4 33 ♕xg4 ♖d6 34 a3 ♕e4 35 ♔e2 ♕f5 36 ♕xf5 gxh5 37 ♖d2 ♔c6 38 ♔c2 ♔b6 39 ♖d2 ♔c6 40 ♔c2 ♖d6 41 ♖d2 h5?? (41...♔c6 again draws) 42 ♖d3 ♔c5 43 a4 h4 44 a5 h3 45 a6 ♔b6 46 ♖xd4 ♖xa6 47 ♔e5 ♔b6 48 ♖xf5 a5 49 ♔e4 a4 50 ♖d4 ♔c6 51 f5 a3 52 ♔c3 ♖d6 53 ♔b3 ♔e5 54 ♖xa3 ♖xf5 55 ♔b4 1-0 E.Tsuboi-E.Limp, Brasilia 2000.

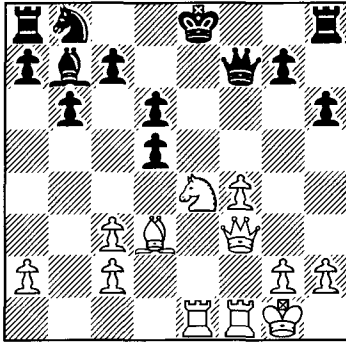


13...fxe4?

13...exd5! leads to a favourable position for White according to Ilincic, who gives the following continuation: 14 exf5 0-0 15 ♖h3 ♖d7 16 ♖f3 ♖c5 17 ♖d4. But firstly, I'm not sure whether this evaluation is correct if Black tries to get rid of the f5 pawn with 17...♖ae8 and 18...♕c8. And secondly, Black's play can be improved earlier, by means of 15...♕c8 with the idea 16 g4 h5!. Perhaps White shouldn't play 15 ♖h3, as he cannot then answer ...h6-h5 with h2-h3, but Black's side looks playable anyway.

14 ♖xe4 exd5

If instead 14...0-0 15 dxe6 ♖xe6 16 f5 intends f5-f6 and a devastating attack, or 14...♙xd5 15 c4 ♙c6 16 ♖h3! ♙xe4 17 ♙xe4 c6 18 ♖d3 and Black faces serious troubles, though 16...0-0!? 17 ♖g5 ♖f6 might be playable.

15 ♜ae1!**15...♙d8**

The most resilient defence. After other attempts to deal with the threatened discovered check, White would finish the game in style:

a) 15...dxe4? 16 ♙xe4 is instantly over.

b) 15...♙f8? 16 ♖g5!! (very brutal!)

16...hgx5 17 fxg5 ♖xf3 18 ♜xf3+ ♙g8 19 ♜e8 mate.

c) 15...0-0? 16 ♖g5! hxg5 17 ♖h3 g6 18 fxg5 ♖g7 19 ♜xf8+ and here both 19...♙xf8 20 ♖e6 ♖f7 21 ♜f1 and 19...♖xf8 20 ♙xg6 win for White.

16 ♖g3 ♙c6

Guarding the e7 spot, which would be invaded after either 16...♖d7 17 ♖f5 ♜e8 18 ♜xe8+ ♙xe8 19 ♜e1+ ♙d8 20 ♜e7 or 16...♙c8 17 c4 ♙b7 18 ♖f5 and so on, with a large plus for White.

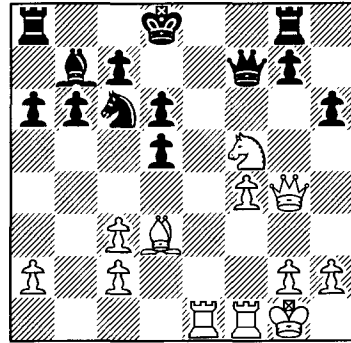
17 ♖f5 a6

After 17...g6 18 ♖h4 ♜g8 19 ♜e3 Black's pieces are horribly coordinated and powerless against White's various threats.

18 ♖g4 ♜g8

18...♙c8 19 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 20 ♖xg7 was

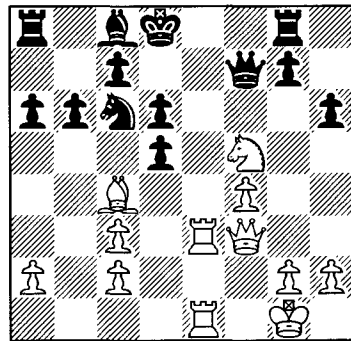
relatively to be preferred. Black stands badly here too, but at least the enemy number one has disappeared.

**19 ♜e3! ♖f6**

19...♙c8 20 ♖h4+ ♙d7 21 ♜fe1 and 20...g5 21 ♖hx6 are equally hopeless for Black.

20 ♜fe1 ♙c8 21 ♖f3! ♖f7

If 21...♙xf5 22 ♖xd5 ♜f8 23 ♖xc6 wins.

22 ♙c4!**22...dxc4**

After 22...♙xf5 23 ♙xd5 ♖f6 24 ♙xc6 White grabs a whole rook thanks to the threat 25 ♜e8+.

23 ♖xc6 ♙xf5

23...♜a7?! would lose even more material: 24 ♜c7 ♖f8 25 ♖d4 ♖xe7 (if 25...b5?! 26 ♖e4 ♙d7 27 Rdx7+ ♙xd7 28 ♖e6+ ♙d8 29 ♖c6 mate) 26 ♜xe7 ♙xe7 27 ♖xc4 ♙f8 28

♖c6 ♖a8 29 ♖e4 ♗f7 30 ♘d8+ ♗xd8 31 ♖xa8 when White is much better and will win in the long run.

24 ♖xa8+ ♙c8 25 ♖e4 ♖f8 26 h3 h5 27 ♗h2 g6 28 ♖1e3 b5 29 a3 ♖f5 30 ♖c6 ♖d7 31 ♖d5 ♖f5

31...♖f7 loses to 32 ♖g5+ ♖f6 33 ♖e8+ ♗d7 34 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 35 ♖3e7+ ♗c6 36 ♖xc8.

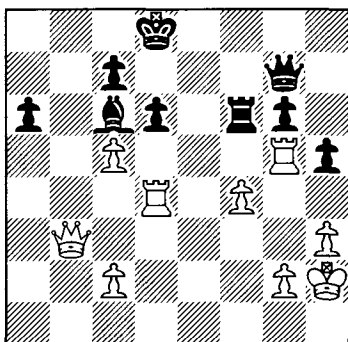
32 ♖a8 ♖d7 33 ♖g3 ♖f7 34 ♖c6 ♙f5 35 ♖d4 ♙c8 36 ♖g5 ♖g8 37 a4! bxa4

If 37...♖d7 38 axb5 axb5 39 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 40 ♖xb5 with a trivially winning endgame.

38 ♖xa4 ♖e8 39 ♖e5 ♖f8 40 ♖c6 ♖d7 41 ♖xc4 ♙b7 42 ♖g5 ♖f6 43 ♖b3 ♙c6

Or 43...♗c8 44 ♖g8+ ♖d8 45 ♖xg6 and wins.

44 c4 ♖g7 45 c5



45...♗d7

45...♖f5 allows the combination 46 ♖b8+ ♗d7 47 ♖xd6+! cxd6 48 ♖a7+ picking up the queen.

46 ♖d3 ♖f7 47 cxd6 ♖xd6 48 ♖xg6! ♙b5 49 ♖dxd6+ cxd6 50 ♖xd6+ 1-0

Comments based on the very exhaustive annotations to a no less well-conducted game by Ilincic.

Game 22

O.Rause-M.S.Hansen

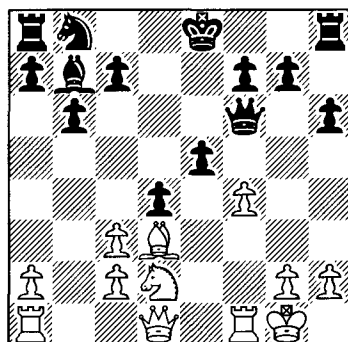
Correspondence 2002

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♘f3 ♙b4

5 ♙d3 ♘f6 6 ♙g5 h6 7 ♙xf6 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♖xf6 9 0-0 d6 10 ♘d2 e5 11 f4 exd4?!

Practice has shown this to be too risky. The stronger 11...♖e7! is seen in the next game.

12 e5 dxe5



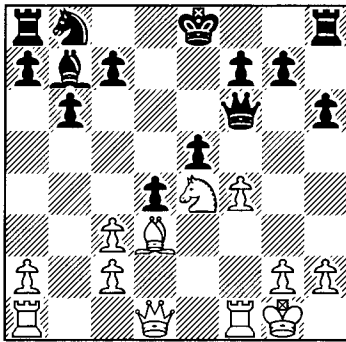
13 fxe5!

The best move. White has also tried:

a) 13 ♖h5?! (far less convincing) 13...g6! 14 ♖e2?! (better was 14 ♖h3 exf4 15 ♖ae1+ ♗f8 16 ♘e4 ♖e5 17 ♘f2 when, rather than trying to hang onto his extra pawns, Black should probably acquiesce to a repetition by 17...♖c5 18 ♘e4 etc.) 14...♘c6 (the safe approach, and indeed few players would have dared to continue 14...dxc3!? 15 fxe5 ♖e7 – the machine, though, shows no sign of panic and is very confident about Black's game here) 15 fxe5 ♖c7 16 e6!?! (after 16 cxd4 ♘xd4 17 ♖g4 the queen swap 17...♖g5 is the easiest way to avoid complications) 16...f5! (the strongest; whereas 16...♖xe6? 17 ♖xc6+ fxe6 18 ♙xg6+ ♗d8 would allow White more compensation than he deserves) 17 ♘b3 0-0-0 (17...dxc3!) 18 cxd4 ♘xd4 19 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 20 ♖e5 ♖hd8 (trading queens, even at the cost of a damaged pawn structure, represented a good pragmatic decision, i.e. 20...♖c5! 21 ♖xc5 bxc5 and with an extra pawn and e6 weak, Black has a clear advantage in the endgame; note that 21 ♖xh8+? ♖d8+ wins for Black) 21 ♖ae1 ♖a4?!

(very suspicious pawn fishing; Black's priority should have been to deal with the e-pawn, his opponent's only trump; so 21...♙4d6! followed by 22...♙d5 would have served this purpose adequately and retained a marked edge) 22 ♖b5! ♙xa2?! (now after 22...♙e4 23 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♙d7+ ♖b7 Black may not win, but at least he is running no risk of defeat) 23 ♙d1! ♙xc2? (the last mistake; instead 23...♙g8! 24 ♙f2 ♖e4 was still double-edged, and not 24 ♙d7? because of 24...♙xc2!) 24 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 25 ♙d7+ ♖b8 26 ♙d1 ♙g8? (the last, small chance consisted of 26...♙xg2+ 27 ♖f1 ♙g4 28 e7 ♙f4+ 29 ♖g1 ♙g4+ 30 ♖f2 ♙f4+ 31 ♙xf4 ♙xe7 32 ♙xh6 when White should gradually capitalise on his superiority) 27 ♖b5! (no hurry; 27 e7?? ♙xg2+ 28 ♖f1 ♙c4+ would suddenly see White getting mated!) 27...a6 28 e7 ♙xg2+ 29 ♖f1 ♙b3 30 e8 ♙+ ♖a7 31 ♖e2 ♙h3 32 ♖e1 ♙h4+ 33 ♖d2 ♙g5+ 34 ♖c3 1-0 C.Ionescu-V.Smyslov, Sochi 1986.

b) 13 ♙e4!? and now



13...♙e7 14 fxe5 ♙xe5 (14...dxc3? 15 ♙g4 is bad for Black) 15 ♙f3 (after 15 ♙f5?! ♙e6 16 cxd4 ♙d7 White still has to show that he has enough compensation for the pawn) 15...0-0 16 ♙f6+ gxf6 17 ♙xb7 ♙d7 18 ♙ae1 ♙c5 19 ♙f3 (as the rest of the game demonstrates, Black was on the good side of a draw after this move, though I believe White was never in serious danger either. Instead, 19

♙xe5 was an attempt to play for the full point, but after something like 19...♙xb7 20 ♙e4 ♙fd8 21 cxd4 ♙d6 or 21 ♙g4+ ♖f8 22 ♙xf6 dxc3 Black's extra pawn compensates his opponent's activity and the balance is not altered. The rest of the game doesn't need any particular comment and its outcome is perfectly logical) 19...♙g5 20 cxd4 ♙xd3 21 ♙xd3 ♙fe8 22 ♙f3 ♖g7 23 ♙e4 ♙xe4 24 ♙xe4 ♙d8 25 c4 ♙g6 26 ♙e3 ♙g5 27 ♙e4 ♙d6 28 d5 b5 29 cxb5 ♙xd5 30 a4 ♙d2 31 ♖h1 h5 32 h3 ♙a2 33 ♙e1 ♙g3 34 ♙g1 ♙b3 35 ♙f5 ♙xa4 36 ♙f1 ♙e6 37 ♙xh5 ♙b4 38 ♙c5 ♙d6 39 ♙xd6 cxd6 40 ♙d1 ♙xb5 41 ♙xd6 ♙b6 42 ♙d7 a6 43 ♖h2 f5 44 ♖g3 ♖g6 45 ♖f4 ♙b4+ 46 ♖f3 a5 47 ♙a7 a4 48 g3 ♙b3+ 49 ♖f4 ♙b4+ 50 ♖f3 ♙b3+ 51 ♖f4 ♙a3 52 h4 ♙a1 53 ♙a6+ f6 54 ♙a5 a3 55 ♖f3 ♙a2 56 ♖f4 ♙a1 57 ♖f3 ♖h6 58 ♖g2 a2 59 ♖h2 ♖g7 60 ♙a7+ ♖g6 61 ♙a5 f4 62 gxf4 f5 63 ♖g2 ½-½ D.Feletar-S.Lputian, Neum 2002.

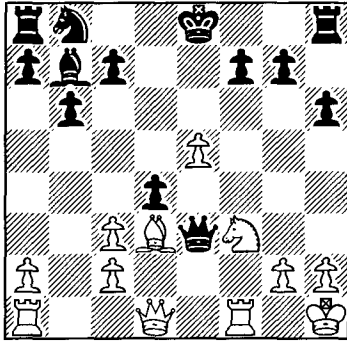
Lputian's 13...♙e7 should be good enough for a draw, but as the game continuation is rather forced, Black can hardly play for more. Instead, Black had two valid alternatives in 13...♙h4!? and above all 13...♙c6, when the following lines are possible: 13...♙c6! 14 ♙g4 (14 fxe5 dxc3 is likely to transpose) 14...♙d7 (14...0-0? is suicidal: 15 fxe5 dxc3 – otherwise White can at least play 16 cxd4 – 16 ♙f6+ ♖h8 17 ♖e4 ♙c5+ 18 ♖h1 and Black is in trouble) 15 fxe5 dxc3 or 15 ♙xg7 0-0-0 in both cases with sharp play where Black's chances seem by no means worse.

13...♙g5 14 ♙f3 ♙e3+

If 14...♙xf3 15 ♙xf3! (definitely more to the point than 15 ♙xf3?, which allowed Black to reach an equal ending in N.Berry-J.Plaskett, British League 2002: 15...♙e3+ 16 ♙xe3 dxe3 17 ♖c4 ♙d7 18 ♖xf7+ ♖e7 19 ♙ae1 ♙hf8 20 e6 ♙c5 21 ♙xe3 ♙ad8 and so on; Black is a pawn down, but the silly bishop and vulnerable white pawns counterbalance this small deficit) 15...♙xe5 16 ♙e1! f6 17 cxd4 ♙xe1+

18 ♖xe1+ ♔d8 19 ♖fe3 ♘d7 was O.Sepp-J.Vetemaa, Bruges 1995, and now 20 ♖e7! (instead of 20 ♔g6?) would have yielded White a decisive advantage according to Khalifman, an opinion that I share.

15 ♖h1



15...0-0

Black's best bet. Instead 15...dxc3, 15...♙xf3 and 15...♘c6 all lead to simplifications where White's edge takes a concrete shape:

a) 15...dxc3 16 e6! f5 (16...0-0? is immediately over: 17 exf7+ ♖xf7 18 ♔c4 or 17...♖h8 18 ♘h4) 17 ♔xf5 (if 17 ♔b5+? c6 18 ♖d6 ♖c5 and Black defends) 17...0-0 18 ♖e1 ♖c5 19 e7 ♖xf5 20 exf8♖+ ♖xf8 21 ♖e3 or 21 ♘e5 White is better, as c3 is condemned, leaving Black with only one pawn for the exchange.

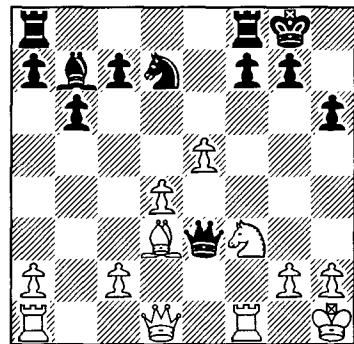
b) 15...♙xf3? is similar to Sepp-Vetemaa above. The inclusion of 14...♖e3+ and 15 ♖h1 doesn't change anything and White is close to winning again.

c) 15...♘c6 16 cxd4 0-0-0 17 c3 and White's central phalanx ensures him of the better prospects.

16 cxd4 ♘d7

16...c5? was R.Dautov-F.Kengis, Daugavpils 1989, continuing 17 ♖e1! ♙xf3 (removing the queen from the attack didn't help, e.g. 17...♖f2? 18 ♔e4 ♙xe4 19 ♖xe4 and 20 ♖e2 traps the adventurous queen, or 17...♖f4 18 d5! with the idea of 18...♙xd5 19

18 d5! with the idea of 18...♙xd5 19 ♔h7+ ♖xh7 20 ♖xd5 ♘a6 21 ♖d3+ and White grabs a piece) 18 gxf3 ♖xd4 19 ♔e4 ♘a6 (19...♖xd1 is even worse 20 ♖axd1 ♘a6 21 ♔xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♖d7) 20 ♖xd4 cxd4 21 ♔xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♖ad1 ♖c8 (22...♘b4 was a trifle better, though after 23 ♖e2 ♘c6 24 f4 White has a large advantage anyway) 23 ♖xd4 ♘c5 24 f4?! (more accurate was 24 ♖c4! ♖d8 25 a4 with the idea a5xb6 and ♖b1, undermining the knight's support) 24...♘e6 25 ♖a4 g6 (given the respective pawn structures, the rest of the game is not just 'a matter of technique', but White still has a considerable advantage; and Dautov's ability to transform the present endgame into a win was quite sufficient) 26 ♖e2 ♖c7 27 ♖d2 ♖f8 28 ♖g2 a5 29 ♖e4 ♖c3 30 ♖f2 ♘c5? 31 ♖ed4 ♘e6 32 ♖d6 b5 33 ♖6d5 ♘c5 34 ♖e2 ♖e7 35 ♖d1 b4 36 ♖2d4 ♘e6 37 ♖d7+ ♖f8 38 ♖4d6? ♖f3 39 ♖a7 ♖xf4 40 ♖xa5 ♖f1+ 41 ♖e2 ♖h1 42 ♖a8+ ♖g7 43 ♖a7 ♖xh2+ 44 ♖f1 ♖g8 45 ♖a8+ ♖g7 46 ♖a7 ♖g8 47 ♖dd7 ♖xc2 48 ♖e7! (threatening 49 ♖e8+ ♖g7 50 ♖xe6) 48...♘g5 (if 48...♖c6 49 ♖xf7 ♖c1+ 50 ♖g2 ♖c2+ 51 ♖f2 wins) 49 e6 ♖g7 50 exf7 (not 50 ♖e8? ♖c1+ 51 ♖e2 ♖c6 52 e7 ♖e6+ followed by ...♖f6) 50...♖c4 51 ♖e2! ♖f4+ 52 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 53 ♖xf2 h5 54 ♖b7 ♘e4+ 55 ♖f3 ♘c3 56 ♖f4 h4 57 ♖e5 h3 58 ♖e6 1-0.



17 ♘h4!?

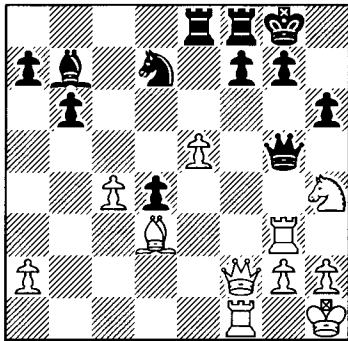
This worked well enough for White, but I

think her opponent's play can be improved. Stronger was 17 c3! (intending ♖c2 and ♜ae1) 17...♙e4!? (other moves are possible, but in my opinion Black has no satisfactory way to solve his opening problems) 18 ♙c4 (now e5-e6 is coming) 18...♜xc3 19 ♜c1 ♖e3 20 e6 ♗f6 21 exf7+ ♗h8 22 ♖d2!? ♖xd2 23 ♗xd2 ♙g6 24 ♗f3 and eliminating the dangerous f-pawn costs Black an exchange, though after 24...♙xf7 25 ♙xf7 ♜xf7 26 ♗e5 ♜af8 he may dream of installing his horse at d5 with some chances of drawing.

17...♖g5 18 ♖e1 ♜ae8 19 ♖f2 ♙d5 20 c4 ♙b7 21 ♜ae1

Improving on 21 ♙f5 ♙c8 22 ♜ae1 c5 23 ♙xd7 ½-½ V.Tkachiev-A.Minasian, Cannes 1995.

21...c5 22 ♜e3 cxd4 23 ♙g3



23...♗xe5?

Sacrificing the queen left Black struggling to find enough counterplay. Instead he should have tried 23...♖xe5! 24 ♗f5 ♜e6 with obscure consequences after the two tempting captures on g7, for instance:

a) 25 ♙xg7+ ♗h8 26 ♙g4 ♗c5 or 26 ♖h4 ♗c5 27 ♙g5 ♗xd3 28 ♗xh6 ♗f2+ 29 ♗g1 ♗h3+! (the saving resource!) 30 ♖xh3 ♖e3+ 31 ♖xe3 dxe3 32 ♜h5 e2 33 ♗xf7+ ♙g7 34 ♙g5+ ♗h7 35 ♜h5+ with perpetual check.

b) 25 ♗xg7 ♙g6!! 26 ♗f5 (not 26 ♙xg6? fxc6 27 ♗f5 ♗h7 and Black wins the pinned knight) 26...♙xg3 27 hxg3 ♗c5 28 ♗xh6+

♗g7 29 ♗f5+, and now Black must keep his distance from the natural 29...♗h8 30 ♖d2 ♗xd3 31 ♖h6+! ♗g8 32 ♖g5+ ♗h8 33 ♜f4!! when he loses, and opt instead for the cold-blooded (and computer-proof!) 29...♗g6!

24 ♙xg5 hxg5 25 ♗f5 ♗xd3 26 ♖xd4 ♗e5 27 ♗d6 ♗c6

Or 27...♙a6 28 ♗xe8 ♜xe8 29 ♜e1 f6 30 c5 with a big advantage for White.

28 ♖d5 ♜e5 29 ♖f3 g4 30 ♖xg4 ♗d8 31 h4 g6 32 ♗h2 ♙c6 33 ♜f2 ♗e6 34 ♖g3 1-0

Game 23

I.Glek-T.Polak

Saint Vincent 2002

1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♙b7 3 ♗c3 e6 4 ♗f3 ♙b4 5 ♙d3 ♗f6 6 ♙g5 h6 7 ♙xf6 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♖xf6 9 0-0 d6 10 ♗d2 e5 11 f4 ♖e7!

Stronger than 11...exd4?!, as in the previous game.

12 fxe5

12 ♖g4 was I.Jakic-B.Filipovic, Zadar 2001, and now Black went wrong with 12...g6? (instead of the natural and good 12...0-0) 13 f5?! (13 fxe5! was a killer: 13...dxe5 14 ♙c4 ♜f8 15 ♙xf7 ♜xf7 16 ♖xg6 and Black is powerless against the imminent ♜f1, e.g. 16...b5 17 ♙b3 ♗c6 18 ♜f1 ♗d8 19 ♜f5 and wins or if 16...♖f6 17 ♖h5) 13...g5 (13...♖f6?! 14 fxc6 ♖xg6 15 ♖xg6 fxc6 16 ♜f6 is pretty grim) 14 f6 ♖f8?! (14...♖d7 15 ♜f5 ♗c6 was much better, conserving reasonable chances to survive) 15 a4 a5 16 ♙b5+ c6 17 ♙d3 ♗d7 18 ♜ab1 and White had an overwhelming edge, which he eventually converted on move 58.

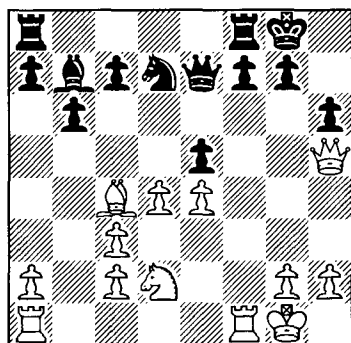
12...dxe5 13 ♙c4

In E.Maljutin-V.Kramnik, Sochi 1990, White cleverly closed the black bishop's diagonal first by means of 13 ♙b5+ c6 14 ♙c4, but Black kept a resilient position nevertheless: 14...0-0 15 ♜f5 ♗d7 16 ♖h5 b5 17 ♙b3

c5 18 dxc5 ♖f6 19 ♖f3 ♙c8 20 ♖xf6 ♗xf6
 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 22 ♙d5 ♖b8 23 ♖f1 ♙g7 24
 ♗b3 ♙e6 25 c6 ♖bd8 26 ♖d1 f5 27 ♖d3 fxe4
 28 ♖g3+ ♖f6 29 ♙xe4 ♙d5 30 c7 ♙xe4 31
 cxd8 ♗+ ♖xd8 32 ♖h3 ♙xc2 33 ♖xh6+ ♙g6
 34 ♖h3 ♖d6 35 ♖e3 ♙b1 36 ♖e2 ♖c6 37
 ♖b2 ♙g6 38 ♗a5 ♖xc3 39 ♖xb5 ♖c1+ 40
 ♖f2 ♖c2+ 41 ♖f3 ♖xa2 42 ♗c6 e4+ 43 ♙g3
 ♖a3+ 44 ♖f4 e3 45 ♖b2 ♙d3 46 ♗e5 ♙f5 47
 ♗g4+ ♙xg4 48 ♖xg4 ♖e5 49 ♖f3 ♙d4 50
 ♖b7 f5 51 g3 a5 52 ♖d7+ ♖c5 53 ♖c7 ♙d4
 54 ♖d7+ ♖e5 55 ♖e7+ ♙d4 1/2-1/2.

The immediate 13 ♖f5 ♗d7 is likely to transpose, either to the next note (after 14 ♙c4 0-0 15 ♖h5) or into Maljutin-Kramnik (after 14 ♙b5 c6 15 ♙c4 0-0), and is therefore a bit better for White, though very playable for the second player.

13...0-0 14 ♖h5 ♗d7



15 ♖ae1

On the direct 15 ♖f5!?, preparing to double rooks while increasing the pressure on e5, Glek analyses the complications to a drawish endgame: 15...exd4 16 ♖af1 dxc3 (the mistake 16...♖h7? would drive Black to the verge of defeat: 17 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♖xf7 ♗e5 19 ♖g4 dxc3 20 ♗f3 etc.) 17 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♖xf7 ♗c5+ 19 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 20 ♗b3 ♗xb3 21 ♖xc7+ ♖h7 22 ♖xb7 ♗a5 23 ♖c7 ♗xc4 24 ♖xc4 ♖e8 25 ♖f2 b5! 26 ♖d4 ♖c6 27 ♖e3 ♖a6 28 e5 ♖g8.

He also suggests an early path for Black to deviate, namely 15...b5!? 16 ♙xb5 exd4 17 cxd4 g6 (or 17...♖d6!? with the idea 18 c3 g6) 18 ♖g4 (on 18 ♖xh6 a draw by perpetual check seems a fair conclusion: 18...gxf5 19 ♙xd7 ♗xd7 20 ♖g5+ etc.) 18...♗f6 and now White can choose between 19 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 20 c3 with compensation, and 19 ♖g3 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 when Black wins either c2 or d4, but his king might be a bit weak.

15...♖ae8 16 ♖e3 ♗f6 17 ♖e2

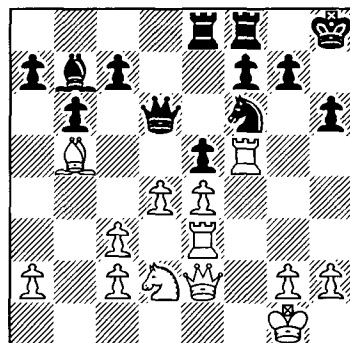
17 ♖g6 wasn't any more convincing; i.e. 17...♖h8 18 ♖g3 exd4 19 cxd4 c5 and Black has very decent central counterplay.

17...♖h8 18 ♖f5?!

This seemingly active move causes White more problems than anything else. Better was the shy 18 h3! ♖d8 19 ♖d3 when White holds his exposed centre together and keeps the game unclear.

18...♖d6 19 ♙b5?

Stronger was 19 ♖d3! ♙c8 with only a slight edge to Black, owing to his healthier pawn structure; now White falls apart.



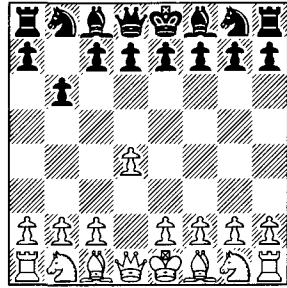
19...exd4! 20 cxd4

20 e5 doesn't change much: after 20...♗e6 21 ♖xf6 gxf6 22 cxd4 ♖g8 Black is simply an exchange up and has a big advantage.

20...c6 21 ♙c4 ♗xd4 22 c3 ♖d8 23 e5 ♗d5 24 ♖ef3 f6 25 ♖e4 ♙c8 26 ♙d3 ♗xc3 27 ♖g4 ♖xe5 28 ♖g3 ♖g8 0-1

CHAPTER TWO

1 d4 b6



1 d4 b6: Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss 1 d4 b6 variations where White doesn't follow up with 2 e4. The first section is dedicated to systems in which White plays without an early c2-c4 as well. As a general remark I would like to stress that such set-ups, though solid, are often a bit innocuous. If White only puts one pawn in the centre, his influence there will be reduced. In consequence, his chances of gaining an opening advantage are diminished and Black won't be much bothered.

In the second section, we will look at White's most promising system, in which he plays 2 c4 coupled with a quick a2-a3. This small move participates quite effectively in the fight for the centre, as it denies Black the possibility of ...b4 pinning the white c3. Instead, Black can develop his king's bishop at g7 (as in Games 36-37), or by the less academic ...d6 and ...e5 (Games 32-33). In the latter case, having ...c5xc3 at his disposal, is often quite useful.

The concluding sections cover lines arising from the alternative move order 1...e6, 2...b6 (or vice versa). This allows Black to answer 3 c3 with 3...b4 (as in Games 38-41), rather than 3...b7. But White more options too: in

particular, he can play 3 e4 at once. Then after 3...b7 4 d3 is the critical test (Game 44), when Black has to decide between a solid, but rather passive position (4...c6 or 4...b4+), or to go for tactics with 4...f5. In the latter case 5 exf5 b4+ 6 f1 f6 seems a bit shaky for Black at the time of writing. On the other hand, the mysteries of 5 exf5 xg2 aren't totally solved yet. I would therefore recommend the second option, when play is quite sharp and offers chances for both sides.

Secondary lines starting from White's other 4th moves (including 4 c3 b4), shouldn't bother Black too much, provided that he reacts energetically. His natural counterplay is connected with the moves ...b4, ...f7-f5 (before ...f6) and sometimes the ...h4 sortie.

Game 24

E.Prie-C.Bauer

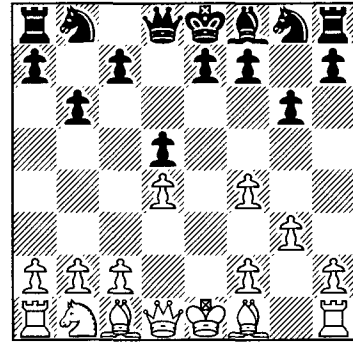
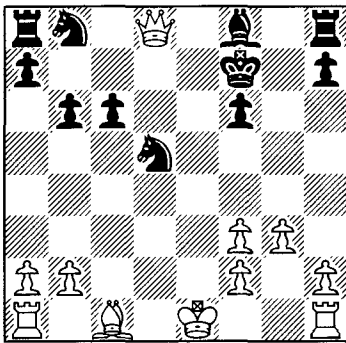
French Championship, Meribel 1998

1 d4 b6 2 f3 b7 3 g3 xf3

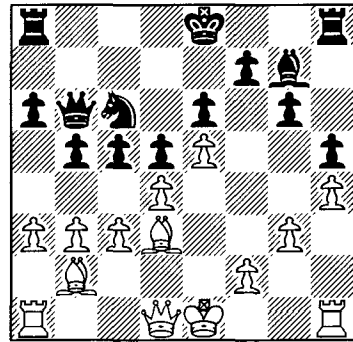
Other moves are likely to transpose to 1 f3 b6 lines in Chapter 4. For example, 3...g6 4 g2 g7 5 0-0 f6 (Games 78-79) or 5...f5 6 c4 f6 7 c3 (Games 69-70).

4 exf3 d5 5 f4

After 5 c4 e6 6 $\text{d}c3$ dxc4?! 7 $\text{xc}4$ c6 8 d5! (without this powerful shot White would be left with an isolani, partly justifying his opponent's previous decision) 8...exd5 9 $\text{d}x5$ $\text{d}e7$? (setting up a nice trick, which White fails to foresee) 10 $\text{d}f6$? (instead after 10 $\text{d}xe7$! White is on top in all lines, e.g. 10... $\text{xd}1+$ 11 $\text{xd}1$ $\text{xe}7$ 12 $\text{c}e1$; 10... $\text{xe}7+$ 11 $\text{cf}1$ $\text{wf}6$ 12 h4 or 12 $\text{xc}3$, or 10... $\text{xe}7$ 11 $\text{xd}8+$ $\text{xd}8$ 12 $\text{xf}4$ b5 13 0-0-0! and in each case White's qualitatively and quantitatively better development confers him a big edge) 10...gxf6 11 $\text{xf}7+$ $\text{xf}7$ 12 $\text{xd}8$ $\text{d}d5$



6 $\text{d}d2$ $\text{cg}7$ 7 $\text{df}3$ e6 8 h4 h5 9 b3 $\text{d}e7$
10 $\text{ca}3$ $\text{d}d7$ 11 $\text{de}5$ a6 12 $\text{dd}3$ $\text{dxe}5$ 13
fxe5 c5 14 c3 $\text{dc}6$ 15 $\text{db}2$ b5 16 a3 $\text{wb}6$



and a draw was agreed in I.Bilek-H.Schüssler, Helsinki 1978, as White can do nothing to avoid the repetition ... $\text{cg}7$ -f8. On the other hand, Black cannot win the trapped queen. A curious repetition of moves!

All the same, 6...dxc4?! is erroneous from a strategical point of view: Black opens the position for the enemy bishops, while at the same time speeding up his opponent's development. The much more logical 6...c6 was called for, when White has to work hard in order to use his bishops at their full strength.

5...g6

5...e6 is seen in the next game. 5...g6 has the advantage of not allowing f4-f5, unless White is willing to sacrifice a pawn. On the other hand, Black's kingside pawn structure was rather cramped later on.

Nothing was really forced so far, though both sides' moves seem rather sensible to me. Now, instead of the text move, 16...c4 was an interesting alternative: 17 bxc4 bxc4 18 $\text{cc}2$ $\text{wa}5$ or 18... $\text{tb}8$ with a roughly equal game. It is normally desirable for Black to keep the position as closed as possible, to diminish the bishops' activity; on the other hand, Black will find it more difficult to attack the base of White's pawn chain here.

17 $\text{cc}2$ $\text{cc}8$ 18 0-0 $\text{cf}8$

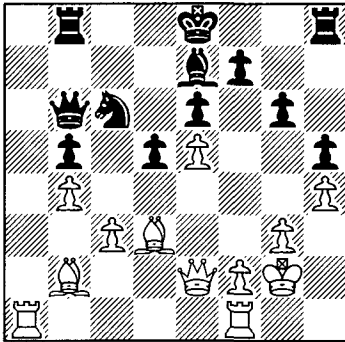
Now that White can't launch a direct assault (by g3-g4 ...h5xg4, h4-h5 etc.), 18...0-0 was quite possible as well.

19 $\text{cg}2$ a5 20 $\text{we}2$ $\text{de}7$

20...b4?! runs into 21 axb4 axb4 22 c4!

when the centre explodes and Black's monarch suddenly becomes vulnerable. A more solid continuation was 20...cxd4! 21 cxd4 b4, when after 22 a4, even 22...♘xd4 23 ♙xd4 ♜xd4 24 ♜b5+ ♖d8 25 ♜xa5+ ♗e7 looks in order for Black.

21 dxc5 ♙xc5 22 b4 axb4 23 axb4 ♙e7 24 ♙d3 ♜b8



25 ♗h3?!

25 ♖a2! was a better try to extract something from the position, e.g. if 25...♗f8?! 26 ♖fa1 ♗g7 27 ♖a6 ♜b7 28 ♙c1, Black is deprived of active possibilities while White will improve his position bit by bit. But after 25...d4!, neither 26 ♜e4 0-0 27 ♖fa1 dxc3 28 ♙xc3 ♖fd8 (with the idea 29 ♖a6 ♜b7 30 ♖xc6 ♖xd3), nor 26 ♖fa1 0-0 (or even the risky-looking 26...dxc3 27 ♙xc3 ♘xb4 28 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 29 ♖b1 ♜d4 30 ♙xb5+ ♗f8) 27 ♖a6 ♜c7 seem to achieve much for White.

25...♗f8

Black is now quite safe.

26 ♖a2 ♗g7 27 ♖fa1 ♖hc8 28 ♖a6 ♜b7 29 ♜e3 ♜c7 30 f4 ♜d8 31 ♜e2 d4 32 ♙xb5 dxc3 33 ♙xc3 ♘xb4 34 ♙xb4 ♙xb4 35 ♖d1 ♜c7 36 ♖c6 ½-½

Game 25

B. Kurajica-E. Maljutin

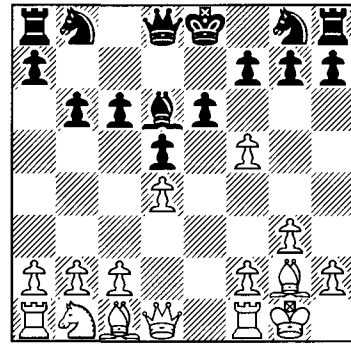
Moscow 1992

1 d4 b6 2 ♘f3 ♙b7 3 g3 ♙xf3 4 exf3 d5

5 f4 e6 6 ♙g2 c6 7 0-0 ♙d6

7...♘h6 was safer, in order to avoid what follows, but Black is still far from lost after the text.

8 f5!?



Very consistent. The e-pawn supports his colleague on d5, and thus needs to be distracted.

8...exf5 9 c4 dxc4

The alternative 9...♘e7!? led to a drawish endgame: 10 cxd5! (after 10 ♘c3?! dxc4 11 d5 0-0 White would get a worse version of the game and no real compensation for the sacrificed material) 10...♘xd5 11 ♙xd5 cxd5 12 ♖e1+ ♙e7 13 ♘c3 ♘c6 (if 13...0-0?! 14 ♖e5 and the d5 pawn falls, though the rook might feel uncomfortable later on) 14 ♜b3 0-0 15 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♙b4! is equal, as White will be forced to exchange on b4, when Black's own knight will find a splendid blockading square at d5.

10 d5! ♘e7

Instead 10...c5?! 11 ♘a3 would be shaky for Black.

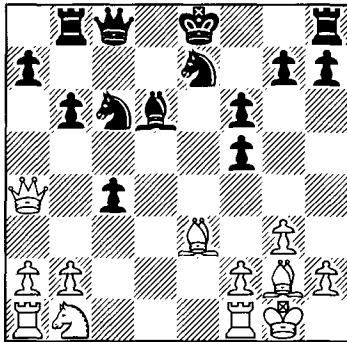
11 dxc6 ♘bxc6 12 ♜a4 ♜c8

12...♜d7!? was also possible.

13 ♙g5 f6 14 ♙e3 ♜b8

Black had other options at his disposal, of which 14...0-0! 15 ♜xc4+ ♗h8 16 ♖c1 ♘e5 with unclear play was probably the best; e.g. 17 ♜b3 ♙c5 18 ♙xa8 ♜xa8 19 ♘d2?! ♖d8 and Black has the initiative. Instead,

14...♙e5?! seems dubious: 15 ♘a3 c3 (not 15...♙xb2? 16 ♘xc4 and White wins, thanks to the fork on d6) 16 bxc3 0-0 17 f4 and Black is placed under severe pressure.



15 ♘c3 a6

If 15...0-0?! 16 ♘b5 ♙e5 17 ♖xc4 ♗h8 18 ♜ad1, White has excellent compensation for the pawn.

16 ♖xc4 ♘e5?

16...b5! 17 ♖b3 ♘a5 18 ♖d1 ♖d7 was to be preferred, retaining a defensible position.

17 ♖b3 ♖c4 18 ♜fd1 ♙b4

Nothing could really save Black at this point, as the following sample lines show:

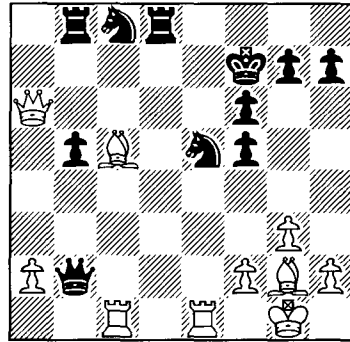
a) 18...♙c5 19 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 20 ♙xc5 bxc5 21 ♘a4 when b2 is taboo because of the pin along the b-file. As a consequence 22 b3 will follow and Black's queenside pawns will be plucked.

b) 18...♙c7 19 ♖a3! (keeping the black king in the centre) 19...♜d8 20 ♜xd8+ ♙xd8 21 ♜c1 with 22 ♘d5 or 22 ♘e4 to follow and a nice edge for White.

c) 18...♖xb3 19 axb3 ♙c5 20 ♙xc5 bxc5 21 ♜xa6 ♗f7 22 f4 ♘5g6 23 ♙f1 and as Black's cavalry is poorly placed, White has a clear plus here too.

19 ♖a4+ b5 20 ♖xa6 ♙xc3 21 ♜ac1?!

After the precise 21 ♖a7!, White's advantage would have been much more significant. 21...♗f7 22 ♜xc3 ♖e2 23 ♜cc1 ♜hd8 24 ♜e1 ♖xb2 25 ♙c5 ♘c8



26 f4??

26 ♙a7! was still very favourable for White, whereas 26 f4 is simply a blunder.

26...♜d2??

And Black returns the compliment. Instead, 26...♘d3! 27 ♖e6+ ♗g6 may look dangerous at first sight, but White can't exploit the black king's precarious situation: 28 ♙h3 (28 g4 ♖xg2+ may have been what Kurajica missed, when after 29 ♗xg2 ♘xf4+ Black is two pawns up for virtually nothing) 28...♘xc1 29 ♖xf5+ (on 29 g4 ♖c2 defends and retains the extra material) 29...♗h6 30 g4 g6 31 g5+ ♗g7 and White's fire is extinguished.

27 ♙h1 ♘g4?

It seems 27...♜c2! would have drawn: 28 ♜b1 ♖c3 29 ♜xe5 ♜c1+ (29...fxe5!?) may be a draw anyway) 30 ♜xc1 ♖xc1+ 31 ♗f2 ♖c2+ 32 ♗f1 ♖c1+ and so on.

28 ♖e6+ ♗g6 29 h3 ♘f2

If 29...♘h6 30 ♙d5 ♘e7 31 ♙f3! wins.

30 ♙xf2 ♜xf2 31 ♖e8+ ♗h6 32 g4!

Now the rest is trivial.

32...fxg4 33 hxg4 ♜h2 34 g5+ fxg5 35 fxg5+ ♗xg5 36 ♜c5+ ♗h6 37 ♜e6+ g6 38 ♖f8+ 1-0

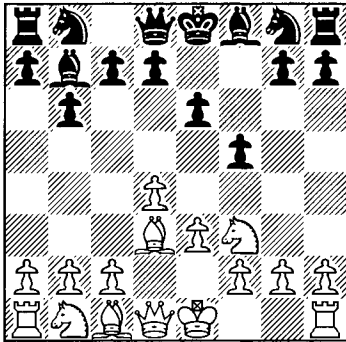
Game 26
Andreev-A. Alekhine
Moscow 1909

1 d4 e6 2 e3 b6 3 ♙d3 ♙b7 4 ♘f3

The set-up White uses in this game looks quite interesting to me. White develops in a solid way, his kingside first, and aims at a quick e3-e4. As Black cannot prevent his opponent's formation, he must be ready to counter it.

4...f5

'Our' move order would be 1 d4 b6 2 ♖f3 ♙b7 3 e3 e6 4 ♙d3 f5, which makes no difference.



5 0-0

Others:

a) 5 h3 ♖f6 6 ♖g1, intending g2-g4, looks somewhat artificial but might suit players with creative or aggressive inclinations. Funnily, in the game A.Payen-P.Blatny, Calcutta 2000, where it was first (and last) tested, White waited until move 21 to accomplish the above-mentioned push! ... 6...g6 7 ♖e2 (7 g4 is of course more consistent, but it's not clear White has achieved after 7...♖e7) 7...♙g7 8 ♖c3 ♖c6 9 a3 0-0 10 b3 ♖e7 11 ♙b2 d5 12 ♖a4 ♖d7 13 ♙a6 ♖d8 14 ♙c3 c5 15 ♙b5 ♙c6 16 ♙b2 a6 17 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 18 0-0-0 ♖fc8 19 dxc5 ♖xc5 20 ♖xc5 bxc5 21 g4 (seeking rather late for counterplay; White's strange handling of the opening had already landed him in a very critical position) 21...c4 22 ♖b1 ♖ab8 23 gxf5 ♙xb2 24 ♖xb2 c3+ 25 ♖a2 ♖b5 26 ♖g4 ♖a5 27 a4 exf5 28 ♖f4 ♖b4+ 29 ♖b1 ♖b8 30 ♙dd4 ♖xa4 31 ♖xd5 ♖a3 32 ♖e5 ♖d6 33 ♖c4+ ♖g7 0-1.

b) 5 ♖bd2 (more natural) 5...♖f6 6 ♖e2 ♖e4 (Black's usual reply to the e3-e4 threat) 7 ♙xe4 fxe4 8 ♖e5 ♖h4 (8...♖g5 is acceptable too; one should note that the viability of Black's position here depends on the queen sortie: if Black did not have these two queen moves at his disposal, his position would be suspicious in view of the threats ♖h5+ and f2-f3) 9 ♖g4 (otherwise 9...d6 is annoying) 9...♖xg4 10 ♖xg4 ♙e7 and Black was fine in R.Klipper-C.Dewitte, French League 2004.

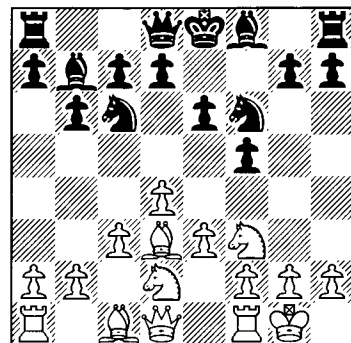
5...♖f6 6 ♖bd2

After 6 c4 Black experimented with 6...♙d6!? in G.Danner-N.Miezis, Bled 2002, and following 8 ♖e5? ♙xe5 9 dxe5 ♖g4 10 ♙e2 (if 10 f4?? ♖h4 11 h3 ♖g3 wins) 10...♖xe5 he was a healthy pawn up. White should have preferred the principled 8 ♖e2, which Black probably intended to answer with 8...♖e4, and if 9 ♙xe4 fxe4 10 ♖d2 the e4 pawn is immune because of ...♙xh2+ and ...♖h4+. Unfortunately, this is only half true, as Black has no constructive move after 10 ♖d2, whereas his opponent can prepare grabbing the pawn by means of h2-h3 and/or ♖g4. Therefore 6...♙e7 should be better.

6...♖c6

Alekhine's next manoeuvre is very imaginative, perhaps too much so. I'm not surprised that nobody has followed in the world champion's footsteps.

7 c3



7...♘e7?!

Rather than this, 7...♙e7! looks OK for Black, with the idea 8 e4 ♘b4! 9 cxb4 fxe4 or if 8 ♖e2 d5!?

8 ♖c2

Or 8 ♖e2!?

8...♘ed5 9 g3?!

This weakens the long diagonal, just to prevent the phantom threat of ...♘f4. The straightforward 9 e4 was better, leading to a clear edge for White: then if 9...♘f4? 10 exf5 ♘xd3 11 ♖xd3 Black's compensation for the pawn is obviously insufficient, while after 9...fxe4 10 ♘xe4, intending 11 ♘eg5, White stands clearly on top.

9...c5

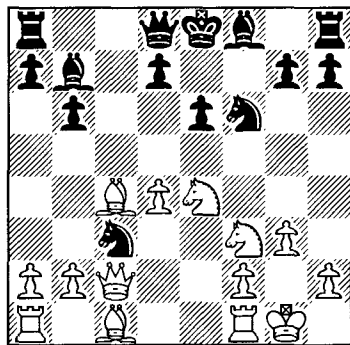
9...♙e7, and only if 10 a3 c5, was more natural, but 9...c5 is interesting as well.

10 e4 fxe4 11 ♘xe4 c4?!

11...♖c7 or 11...cxd4 were called for. The text leads to problems for Black.

12 ♙xc4 ♘xc3?!

12...♘b4 was a tad better, though 13 cxb4 ♙xe4 14 ♖b3 leaves White in the driver's seat.



13 bxc3?

13 ♘xf6+! ♖xf6 14 ♘e5 would have refuted Black's 'unconventional' combination. Once the ♘c3 has withdrawn (to e4 or d5), White continues 15 ♙b5 and has a huge advantage.

13...♙xe4 14 ♖e2 ♖c7

Black continues to postpone castling. 14...♙e7 looked more natural, but would not have solved all the problems either after 15 ♘e5 0-0 16 ♙b5!, threatening to take on d7 (but not 16 ♙g5?! ♙d5 which is OK for Black).

15 ♘g5 ♙b7?

15...♙f5 16 ♙f4 and 16...♙d6 17 ♘xe6 dxe6 18 ♙xe6 ♙e4 19 ♙d5! is bad for Black too, but maybe 16...♖b7 17 ♙a6 ♖d5 holds somehow.

16 ♙f4?

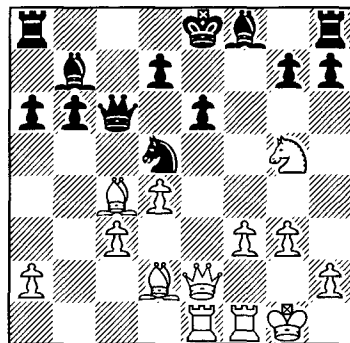
After 16 ♙b5! there is no satisfactory way to parry White's brutal 17 ♘xe6, so Black's position is close to resignable.

16...♖c6 17 f3 ♘d5?!

The knight was required to cover h7, as will become apparent later. Therefore, 17...a6 was the correct move, followed by 18...♙e7, or only in reply to 18 ♖ad1 then 18...♘d5.

18 ♙d2 a6 19 ♖ae1?

19 ♙d3! was much stronger, and still yielded White a nasty initiative after either 19...♘xc3 20 ♖e5! or 19...♙e7 20 ♘xh7. After White's faulty 19th move the World Champion takes hold of the wheel and conducts the rest of the game quite effectively.



19...♙e7 20 ♘e4 0-0 21 ♙b3 b5 22 ♖d3 ♖f5 23 ♙c2 ♖c8 24 g4 ♘f4 25 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 26 ♘g3 g6 27 ♖e3 b4 28 h3 ♖d6 29 ♘e2 ♖xc3 30 ♘xc3 0-1

And here, the database gives the continua-

tion as 30...♙e4?? (and then 31 ♘d1?? ♙g3+ 32 ♖h1 ♙xh3+ 33 ♖g1 ♙g3+ 34 ♖h1 ♙xg4 0-1), which is clearly nonsense. Instead 30...♙xd4 31 ♙e2 ♙d2 was winning easily...

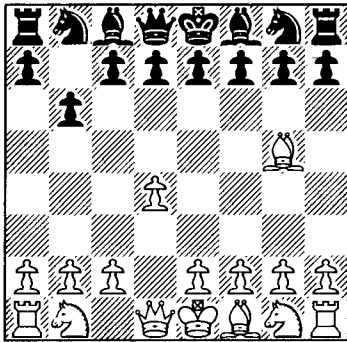
Game 27

P. Vandevort-M. Jadoul

Belgian League 2002

Although this game is very short, it seems quite interesting to me, because it illustrates a safe way for Black to react to 1 d4 b6 2 ♙g5.

1 d4 b6 2 ♙g5



This pseudo-Trompowsky is based on a solid approach. White wants to place his central pawns on dark squares, but without the bishop locked inside the pawn chain. White is, as with most Trompowsky players, ready to exchange his bishop for the g8 knight, as soon as it appears on f6.

2...♙b7 3 e3

3 c4 is interesting, as it prevents Black's setup with 3...g6 (see Game 29).

3...g6

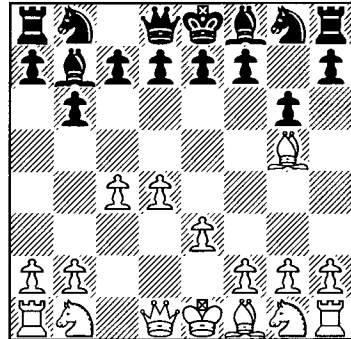
The sane way to play.

a) 3...♘f6?! 4 ♙xf6 is dubious (see the next game).

b) 3...f6 is an interesting idea with reversed colours and an extra tempo (i.e. 1 b3 d5 2 ♙b2 ♙g4 3 f3), but it seems less appropriate here; e.g. 4 ♙h4 ♘h6 (4...e5? 5 dxe5 ♙e7 needs further investigations, although the

possibility of ♙h5+ in some variations makes it look suspicious) 5 ♘f3 and now if 5...♘f5?! 6 ♙d3 ♘xh4 7 ♘xh4 with a clear advantage for White as the threat of 8 ♙h5+ is already alarming! But 5...e6 should be playable. Black intends to continue with ...♙e7 and, depending on White does, ...f6-f5, ...♘f5 or ...♘f7. For those allergic to a double fianchetto, it might be a valid alternative to 3...g6.

4 c4

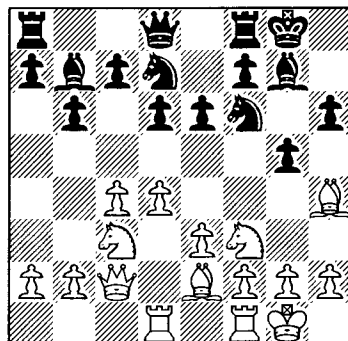


Better than a passive continuation with c2-c3, but Black is not experiencing much trouble here either.

4...♙g7 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♘f3 d6 7 ♙e2 ♘bd7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♙c2 h6 10 ♙h4 e6 11 ♙ad1?!

11 h3 or 11 ♘d2 would have kept the bishop at least.

11...g5 ½-½



The players prematurely agreed a draw, just when the position was looking a little bit better for Black. After taking the bishop (...d

h5

g3) he can follow up with ...f7-f5 and get good prospects of a kingside attack.

To illustrate this statement I'd like to present to the reader the following game. The move order is completely different and White's position isn't quite the same (with a pawn on b4 and the a1 rook still on its initial square), but this doesn't alter the preceding assessment. 1 d4 d6 2 d

f3

 g6 3 c4 d

g7

 4 d

c3

 d

f6

 5 d

g5

 0-0 6 e3 d

bd7

 7 d

e2

 b6 8.0-0 d

b7

 9 c

c2

 h6 10 d

h4

 e6 11 b4 g5 and now 12 d

g3

 d

h5

 13 d

d2

 d

xg3

 14 h

xg3

 f5 15 d

f3

 d

xf3

 16 d

xf3

 g4 17 d

h2

 h5 18 f

fd1

 h4 19. g

xh4

 c

xh4

 20. g3 c

h6

 21 c

e2

 d

f7

 22 c

f1

 f

h8

 23 c

g2

 d

f6

 24. a4 d

h7

 25 e5 d

g5

 26 e

xf5

 c

xh2

 27 c

xh2

 d

f3

+ 28 d

h1

 f

xh2

 0-1 J.Daloz-S.Belkodja, Condom 2002.

Game 28
D.Zagorskis-M.Sadler
Elista Olympiad 1998

1 d4 b6 2 d

g5

 d

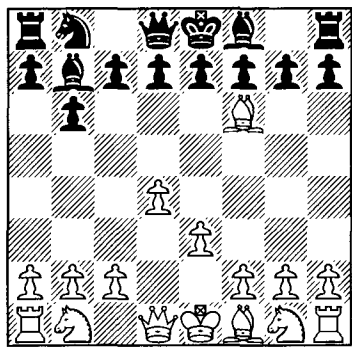
b7

 3 e3 d

f6

?! 4 d

xf6



White already has the better position. He will finish his mobilisation by means of d

f3

, d

e2

 (or g2-g3, d

g2

), c2-c4, d

c3

, etc., whereas all of Black's schemes of development will have their drawbacks.

4...exf6

The Lithuanian IM Darius Zagorskis provides us with instructive examples after both of Black's recaptures (via the move order 1 c4 b6 2 d4 d

b7

 3 d

g5

 d

f6

 4 d

xf6

). D.Zagorskis-V.Chernyshov, Frydek-Mistek 1994, saw 4...g

xf6

 5 c4 e6 6 d

c3

 f5 7 d

f3

 c5 8 d5 d

g7

 9 c

d2

 a6 10 d

d1

 0-0 11 a4 c

f6

 12 d

e2

 e5 13 g3 d6 14 0-0 e8 15 d

h4

 d

c8

 16 c

c2

 a7 17 f4 e4 18 a1 d

d7

 19 d

g2

 d

f8

 20 a5 b7 21 a**x**b6 b**x**b6 22 a2 d

d7

 23 d

h1

 e8 24 g1 c

h6

 25 b1 d

f6

 26 b3 c

g7

 27 d

d1

 a8 28 d

f2

 when White was clearly better, going on to win in 64 moves.

Four years later Black's pair of bishops took revenge and Zagorskis was the victim of a brilliancy prize...

5 c4

It may be clever to delay c2-c4, in order to deprive Black of the possibility of ...d

b4

. Of course Zagorskis did not have this option, having started with 1 c4.

**5...f5 6 d

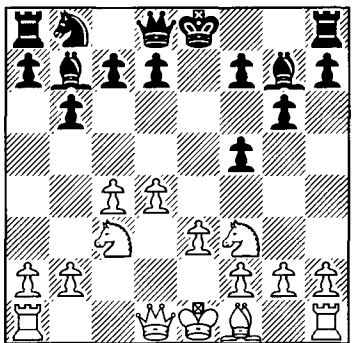
f3

 g6 7 d

c3

 d

g7**



**8 d

e2**

8 g3 and 9 d

g2

 was more to the point, intending to neutralise Black's powerful bishop on b7. In that case, the position would be similar to the following line of the Trompowsky: 1 d4 d

f6

 2 d

g5

 g6 3 d

xf6

 e

xf6

 4 c4 d

g7

 5 e3 f5 6 d

e2

 0-0 7 g3 d6 8 d

g2

 etc., when Black's usual plan consists of ...d

d7

-f6, ...e8, ...c

e7

, ...c7-c6 and an action on the kingside (...h5-h4), while his opponent will

concentrate on the other wing, with such moves as b4-b5, d5, etc. In this respect, having already committed himself with ...b7-b6, Black has clearly a worse version of the Trompowsky, as ...b7-b6 weakens his queenside and helps White open files there. All in all, White has the better prospects.

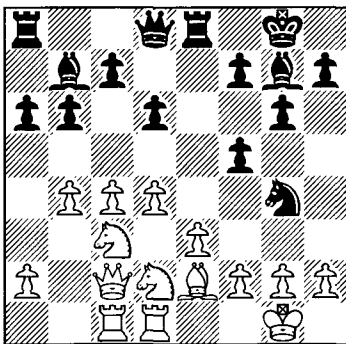
8...d6 9 0-0 d7 10 c2 0-0 11 fd1

11 b4, starting operations on the queenside, has been tested too. Then Black has a pleasant choice between 11...d6, and the more dynamic ...c7-c5, trying to open the position for the bishops. The game M.Pribyl-V.Babula, Pardubice 1991, went 11...c5 12 b5 cxd4 13 dxd4 c8 14 fd1 c5 15 ac1 f4 16 exf4 xd4 17 xd4 de6 18 dd1 dxf4 19 f1 g5 20 g3 g4 21 d2 f3 22 d5 xc4 23 de7+ g7 24 c6 xc1 25 xc1 de6 26 xd6 f6 27 g2 a6 28 a4 axb5 29 axb5 b2 30 e5+ xe5 31 dxe5 xg2 32 xg2 d8 33 c6 d5 34 c4 xb5 1/2-1/2.

11...e8 12 ac1 a6 13 b4 d6 14 d2?!

In his annotations of the present game for *ChessBase*, Luke McShane suggests 14 d1 as an improvement, assessing the position after 14...de4 15 dxe4 xe4 as equal. Indeed, 14 d1 is a better move, as it also aims at exchanging the light-squared bishops, while in comparison to the game, the white queen keeps an eye on the sensitive spot f2.

14...g4



15 h3?!

Criminal. Black was anyway contemplating sacrifices like the one that follows.

Instead 15 f3?! h4! underlines the comment in the previous note. If the knight were on e1, the simple 16 h3 would parry Black's threat of taking on h2. Now, however, White's game becomes very bad after both 16 xg4 fxg4 with a mighty pair of bishops, and 16 xb7 xh2+ 17 f1 xc3 18 fxe3 (forced) 18...dxe3+ 19 e2 dxc2 20 xa8 dxd4+ and Black keeps a strong initiative.

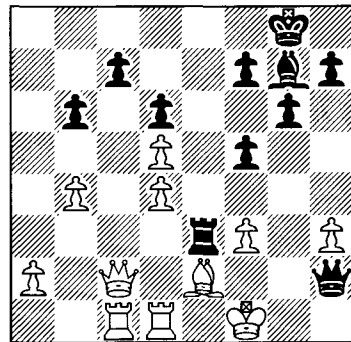
Again GM McShane indicates the right way to defend, i.e. 15 d5, which blocks the dangerous diagonal and leads to an unclear or slightly favourable position for Black after 15...c6 16 d4 h4 17 xg4 fxg4.

15...dxf2 16 xxf2 h4+ 17 f1?

17 g3 was the lesser evil, though 17...xh3 18 d1 and here 18...g2+ 19 e1 c5 should prove uncomfortable for White's weak king.

After the text move Sadler conducts the rest of the game in great style and wins by force.

17...xe3 18 d3 f4 19 d5 xd5 20 cxd5 ae8 21 xa6 xf3+! 22 gxf3 e3 23 e2 h2



Threatening ...f6-h4 and ...f2 mate.

24 d2 h6 25 e1 h1+ 26 f2 h2+ 27 f1 xh3+ 28 g1 e4! 29 c3

If 29 fxe4 e3+ 30 f2 g3+ wins.

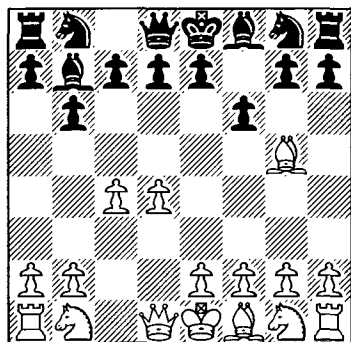
29...♖h4 30 f4 ♖h1+ 31 ♕f2 ♖h2+ 32 ♕e3 ♖e4+ 0-1

Game 29
J.Smejkal-A.Miles
Vienna 1980

1 d4 b6 2 ♖g5 ♗b7 3 c4

This prevents Black's set-up with ...g7-g6. Indeed, if Black continues 3...g6, his opponent will manage to push e2-e4 (i.e. 4 ♖c3 ♖g7 5 e4) and gain an opening advantage. However, as opposed to the note in Game 27, here Black has time to implement the 3...f6 idea.

3...f6



4 ♗d2

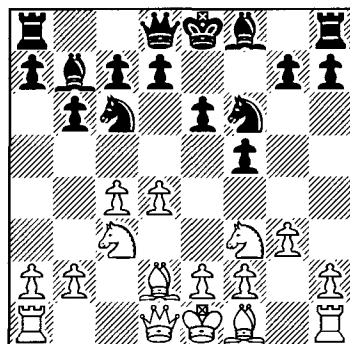
The bishop can also retreat to:

a) 4 ♗h4 e5!? is an improved version of 3 e3 f6 4 ♗h4 e5 for Black. 4...♖h6 is not bad either, leading to an unusual position after the best 5 ♖d3, which prevents ...♖f5 and threatens e4. Instead 5 f3! ♖f5 6 ♗f2 e5 is quite good for Black.

b) 4 ♗f4 (here the bishop is more actively placed than on d2 and prevents ...♖h6; on the other hand, it is exposed to a later ...e7-e5 as the following game shows) 4...e6 5 ♖f3 ♗b4+ (5...f5 is also well playable) 6 ♖fd2 e5! 7 dxe5 ♖c6 8 e4 (8 exf6? ♖xf6 would leave White in trouble) 8...fxe5 (Black has quickly obtained a quite satisfactory game, and objectively stands slightly better here, in my opinion; but he

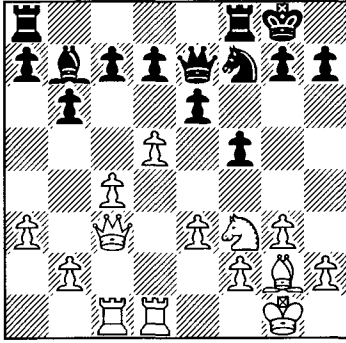
went wrong somewhere later on) 9 ♗e3 ♖f6 10 ♗d3 d6 11 0-0 0-0 (the immediate 11...♗c5 deserved attention, so as not to let the opponent steal the bishop pair) 12 ♖b3 ♗c8 13 h3 a5?! (enticing White to play 14 a3, which was his intention anyway, is probably not the most clever idea; I would prefer 13...♖b8!? or 13...♖e8 with reciprocal chances) 14 a3 ♗c5 15 ♖xc5 bxc5 16 ♖c3 ♖d4 17 f4 exf4 18 ♗xf4 ♖e8 19 ♖e1 ♖b8 20 ♖b5 ♖g6 21 ♖e3 ♖xb5? (21...♗b7! was much better and would have kept the balance) 22 cxb5? (missing a golden opportunity in 22 e5! ♖f7 23 exf6 ♖d4 24 fxg7 ♖e8 25 ♖f2 with a marked edge for White; 22...♖e8? is worse due to 23 cxb5 ♖d5 24 ♖e4! followed by the crushing 25 ♖xh7+, but not 23 exf6? ♖xe3+ 24 ♗xe3 ♖d4 when Black is alright) 22...♖f7 (again 22...♗b7! was the right way to proceed) 23 a4 ♖b3 24 e5 with a nice edge for White, owing to his mighty pair of bishops, E.Martinovsky-C.Ward, Wrexham 1998.

4...e6 5 ♖c3 f5 6 ♖f3 ♖f6 7 g3 ♖c6



Intending 7...♖xd4 and Black has already more or less equalised. Later on his play could have been improved, perhaps by choosing a light-squared strategy based on ...♗xc3 and ...♖e7, followed by kingside action with ...♖e8-h5 if possible.

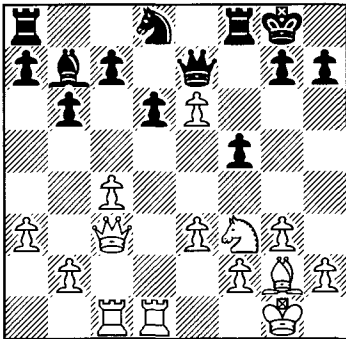
8 e3 ♗b4 9 ♖g2 ♖e4 10 ♖c1 ♖e7 11 0-0 ♖xd2 12 ♖xd2 0-0 13 a3 ♗xc3 14 ♖xc3 ♖d8 15 ♖fd1 ♖f7 16 d5

**16...d6**

If Black releases the tension on d5 by 16...e5?, then 17 c5! allows White a free hand on the queen's wing and a nice edge. The position would resemble a Bogo-Indian (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♙b4+ 4 ♙d2 ♚e7 etc.) with something having gone wrong for Black

17 dxe6 ♘d8

17...♚xe6? 18 ♘d4 ♚c8 19 ♘xf5 picks up a pawn.



18 ♘d4 ♙xg2 19 ♙xg2 ♘xe6 20 ♘xe6 ♚xe6 21 ♚d4 ♙h8?! 22 ♚d5 ♚e7

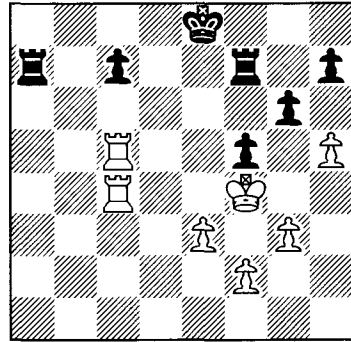
After 22...♚xd5+?! 23 cxd5, the c-pawn becomes a target and White is clearly better, while if 22...♙ae8 23 ♚xe6 ♙xe6 24 b4 and again White enjoys some initiative.

23 ♙d4 a5 24 b3 g6 25 ♙c2 ♚f6 26 ♚c6 ♚f7 27 h4 ♙a7?!

27...♙ae8 28 b4 axb4 29 axb4 ♙e7 30 c5

bxc5 31 bxc5 dxc5 32 ♙xc5 ♙fe8 would have been only slightly in White's favour.

28 b4 axb4 29 axb4 ♚f6 30 c5 dxc5 31 ♚xf6+ ♙xf6 32 bxc5 bxc5 33 ♙xc5 ♙g7 34 ♙dc4 ♙f7 35 ♙f3 ♙f8 36 ♙f4 ♙e8 37 h5!

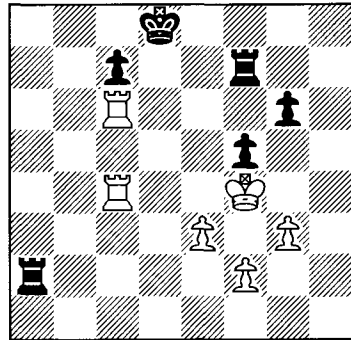


Creating a second weakness on g6 and thus intensifying White's advantage.

37...♙d8 38 hxg6 hxg6 39 ♙c6?!

39 ♙g5! ♙a2 40 ♙xg6 was immediately decisive, whereas now Black is close to making a draw.

39...♙a2



40 ♙g5?!

40 f3! ♙g7 41 ♙g5 was a better winning attempt, e.g. 41...♙f2 (not 41...♙a3? 42 ♙c3 intending ♙f6 and wins) 42 ♙f4 ♙e7 (not 42...♙g2? 43 ♙h6, collecting both kingside pawns) 43 ♙xg6 ♙xe3 44 ♙xf5 ♙xf3 45 g4

and Black may suffer a bit before he earns half a point.

40...♖g7?

The decisive error; instead 40...♖xf2 41 ♖xg6 ♜e7 would have led to peace.

41 ♖f4 ♖d7 42 ♖xg6 ♖xg6+ 43 ♖xg6 c5

44 ♖xf5 ♖c6 45 g4 ♖b5 46 g5 c4 47 g6

c3 48 g7 ♖a8 49 ♖g4 c2 50 ♖g1 ♖c4 51

g8♖+ 1-0

1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♖b7 3 ♖c3 e6

4 a3 f5

Game 30

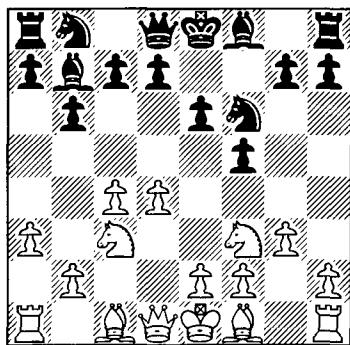
A.Chernushevich-C.Bauer

French Cup, Clichy 2003

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♖f3 ♖b7 4 a3 f5

4...♖f6 5 ♖c3 would transpose into a Queen's Indian, which is obviously beyond the scope of this book.

5 ♖c3 ♖f6 6 g3



6...♖e7

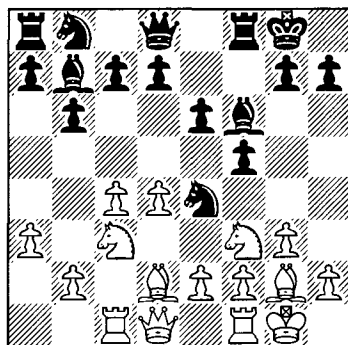
The hasty 6...♖e4?! has been known to bring Black troubles ever since A.Adorjan-A.Miles, Gjovik 1983, which continued 7 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 (because of White's next move some players have tried to improve Black's play by recapturing with the f-pawn, but I doubt Black can equalise here) 8 ♖h3! (in this type of configuration White has usually devel-

oped his bishop at g2 already, and then in order to fight for an edge, he generally spends a tempo moving his bishop to h3 or f1, planning to chase the black bishop with ♖d2 or to cut off its retreat by d4-d5. In the present case White can place his bishop off the long diagonal directly, and thus has fairly good prospects) 8...♖e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 d5 ♖xf3 (sadly forced, as 11 ♖d2 and 12 f3 couldn't be allowed) 11 exf3 ♖f6 12 ♖b1 ♖a6 (maybe 12...a5 was a trifle better, but Black's position is grim anyway) 13 ♖e1 ♖c5 14 b4 ♖b7 with a clear advantage for White, which the Hungarian GM converted on move 61: 15 dxe6 dxe6 16 ♖b3 ♖e8 17 c5 ♖d5 18 ♖xd5 exd5 19 ♖f4 bxc5 20 ♖xf5 cxb4 21 axb4 ♖d6 22 ♖e6+ ♖f8 23 ♖xd5 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♖b8 25 ♖c1 ♖b5 26 ♖c4 ♖e7 27 ♖g2 ♖d8 28 ♖e3 ♖d6 29 ♖f4 a5 30 bxa5 ♖b5 31 ♖g8 ♖xa5 32 ♖xh7 c5 33 ♖g8 ♖e7 34 h4 ♖e5 35 ♖g4 ♖f5 36 ♖g5+ ♖d6 37 ♖h7 ♖e7 38 h5 ♖a2 39 ♖e4 ♖d5 40 ♖g8 ♖d4 41 ♖e6+ ♖d7 42 h6 gxh6 43 ♖xh6 ♖xf2+ 44 ♖h3 ♖e3 45 ♖e6+ ♖c6 46 ♖c4+ ♖c7 47 ♖f4+ ♖c8 48 ♖b5 ♖xf3 49 ♖d6 ♖xf4 50 gxh4 ♖c7 51 ♖c6+ ♖b7 52 ♖e6 ♖c7 53 ♖g3 ♖d5 54 f5 ♖f6 55 ♖f4 ♖d8 56 ♖g5 ♖h7+ 57 ♖h6 ♖f6 58 ♖g6 ♖g4 59 ♖g5 ♖e5 60 f6 1-0.

7 ♖g2

7 d5 doesn't need to be feared, as after 7...♖a6 8 ♖g2 ♖c5 Black has a decent game.

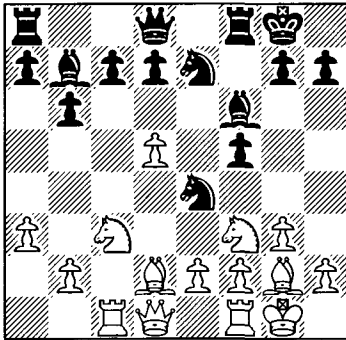
7...♖e4 8 ♖d2 ♖f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖c1



The position is identical to a variation of the Queen's Indian, namely 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♜f3 b6 4 g3 ♙b7 5 ♙g2 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 7 ♜c3 ♜e4 8 ♙d2 f5 etc., but with White having played the useless move a2-a3. We can thus conclude that Black has obtained comfortable equality.

10...♜c6 11 ♙e1

More solid than 11 d5!?, which in fact doesn't simply blunder a pawn, as it looks at first sight: 11...exd5 (the safer 11...♜e7!? would let White recover after 12 dxe6 dxe6 13 ♜xe4 and now both 13...♙xe4 14 ♙c3 and 13...fxe4 14 ♜g5 are roughly equal; however, as variation 'c' below is quite difficult, letting d5 live may be Black's best option) 12 cxd5 ♜e7 and now:



a) 13 ♜e1? (accepting the fate without a fight) 13...♙xc3 14 bxc3 ♜xd5 (Black is now clearly better and the rest doesn't require any comments) 15 c4 ♜df6 16 ♙e3 ♙e7 17 ♙b3 c5 18 ♙d1 ♙ad8 19 ♜d3 d5 20 cxd5 ♙xd5 21 ♙c2 ♙f7 22 ♙b1 ♙fe8 23 a4 ♜d6 24 ♙g5 ♙xg2 25 ♙xg2 ♜de4 26 ♙c1 ♜d5 27 ♙b2 ♙h5 28 ♜e5 ♙d6 29 ♙bd1 ♜xf2 30 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 31 ♙c4 ♙xe5 32 ♙xe5 ♙f7 33 ♙c3 ♜g4 34 ♙f4 ♙e7 35 ♙g1 ♙e3+ 36 ♙xe3 ♜xe3 37 ♙f3 ♜c4 38 ♙f4 ♜d6 39 h4 ♜e4 0-1 J.Karr-C.Bauer, French Cup 1997.

b) 13 ♙b3? ♜xc3 was no improvement either.

c) 13 ♜xe4! fxe4 14 ♜g5 was necessary; in

that case play becomes quite tactical and both sides can easily lose the plot, e.g. 14...♜xd5 15 ♜xe4 ♙xb2 16 ♙b1 with very good compensation (if 16...♙xa3? 17 ♙b3 followed by 18 ♜c3 and 19 e4 wins the pinned knight; 14...♜f5 15 ♜xe4 ♙xb2 16 ♙g5 when Black has to play 16...♙c8 or 16...♙b8 which don't inspire much confidence; 14...♙xb2 15 ♙b1 (15 d6?! ♙xc1 16 dxe7 ♙xe7 followed by 17...d5 is fine for Black) 15...♙xa3 16 ♙xe4 or 14...♙xd5 15 ♙c2. In all these lines White has fair attacking chances against the black king.

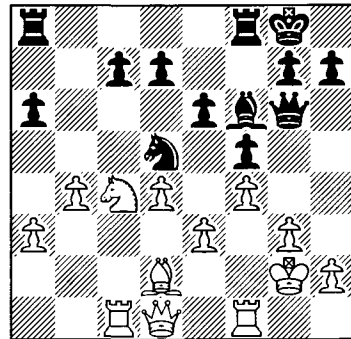
11...♜e7 12 b4 a6 13 ♜xe4 ♙xe4 14 ♙c3 b5

Conquering the d5-square, but this might have been achieved more favourably by 14...♙c8! and if 15 ♜d2 (15 ♜e1!) 15...♙xg2 16 ♙xg2 ♙b7+ 17 ♙g1 b5.

15 ♜d2 ♙xg2 16 ♙xg2 ♙e8

16...♜c8!?, planning 17...♜b6, was interesting, trying to lure White's pawn to c5.

17 e3 ♙g6 18 f4 bxc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜d5 20 ♙d2



Having tried (and failed) to find an advantage for Black somewhere, I was now running short of time. This explains my rather poor play over the next dozen or so moves. At the end I felt a bit humiliated, defending with a 'good' knight versus a 'bad' bishop!

20...♙e8 21 ♙e2 ♙d8 22 g4 c6 23 g5 ♙c7 24 ♙f3 ♙b8 25 ♙h3 ♙f7 26 ♜e5

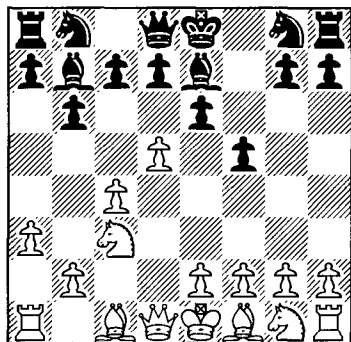
♙xe5 27 dxe5 ♖b5 28 ♜f2 g6 29 ♖g3
 ♗xe2+ 30 ♜xe2 ♜ff8 31 ♖gg1 ♜fb8 32
 h4 ♜f7 33 ♜h1 h5 34 gxh6 ♜h8 35 h5
 ♜xh6 36 hxg6+ ♜xg6 37 ♜h7+ ♖g7 38
 ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 39 ♜d3 ♜f7 40 ♜h1 ♖g8
 41 ♜h7+ ♜e8 42 ♜h3 ♜d8 43 ♙c3 ♖g2
 44 ♜h8+ ♜c7 45 ♜a8 ♜b7 46 ♜d8 ♜c7
 47 ♜a8 ♜b7 ½-½

Game 31
D.Rogozenko-D.Bunzmann
German Bundesliga 2000

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♙b7 4 ♜c3 f5

If now 4...♜f6, rather than transposing into a Queen's Indian with 5 ♜f3, White would again probably seize the opportunity to increase his spatial advantage in the centre, by means of 5 d5.

5 d5 ♙e7!?



At the time this was a pet line of the German grandmaster. After the current game, however, he switched to the normal move 5...♜f6, which is examined in the remainder of this section.

6 g3!

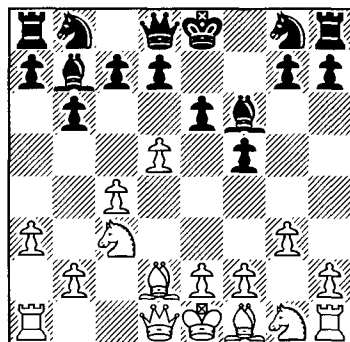
More flexible than the imprecise 6 ♜f3?! ♜f6 (or 6...♜a6 7 g3 ♜c5 8 ♙g2 ♙f6 with a very decent game for Black in A.Kharlov-A.Czebe, Cappelle la Grande 2004, while on 7 ♜d4! the pawn sacrifice 7...♙f6 8 dxe6 ♜c5 is quite interesting) 7 g3 (7 ♜d4 now gets

nowhere on account of 7...c5!) 7...0-0 8 ♙g2 ♜e4 9 ♜xe4 (or 9 ♙d2 ♙f6 10 ♜c1 c6 and Black has sufficient counterplay) 9...fxe4 10 ♜d2 exd5 11 cxd5 ♙xd5 12 ♜xe4 ♙c6 with equality in M.Quinn-M.Cebalo, Bratto 1999.

6...♙f6

This sophisticated manoeuvre is also practically forced. If now 6...♜f6?! 7 ♙g2 0-0 then 8 ♜h3! shows the point of delaying the knight's development: 9.0-0 will follow, when both d5-d6 and e2-e4 are in the air. As a consequence White can be very satisfied with his opening.

7 ♙d2!

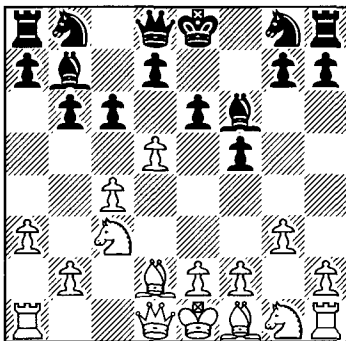


This seemingly mild move could well put a cloud on Black's set-up. Instead 7 ♗c2! also aims at avoiding doubled c-pawns but has fewer adherents, while 7 ♙g2?! simply allows Black a comfortable game after 7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♜f6 9 ♜h3 0-0 10 0-0 ♜a6 with fine play in V.Milov-D.Bunzmann, Polanica Zdroj 1999. Later on White was outplayed but managed to save the game by a very tenacious defence (and some luck!): 11 a4 ♜c5 12 a5 ♜fe4 13 ♙a3 ♜e8 14 f3 ♜f6 15 ♙xc5 bxc5 16 e4 exd5 17 exd5 (if 17 a6!? ♙c8 18 cxd5 fxe4 19 fxe4 d6 is equal, but not 19...♜xe4?? 20 d6! intending 20...c6 21 ♗b3+ ♜h8 22 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 23 ♜g5 and wins) 17...♙a6 18 ♗d3 ♗e7 19 ♗xf5 ♙xc4 20 ♜fd1 ♗e3+ 21 ♜h1 ♜e5 22 ♗c2 ♙xd5 23 ♜d3 ♗e2 24 ♜d2 ♗c4 25 ♜f4 ♜ae8 26 h4 ♙c6 27 ♜d3 ♜d5

28 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 29 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 30 ♜d1 ♙c6
 31 ♜d3 ♜e1+ 32 ♗h2 ♜e6 33 ♜b2 ♜e2 34
 ♜b8+ ♗f7 35 ♜b1 ♗a2 36 ♜g1 ♜c2 37 ♜c3
 d6 38 g4 ♜d2 39 ♜xe2 ♜xe2 40 ♜c1 ♜e5+
 41 ♗h3 h5 42 ♜d2 c4 43 a6 ♙d7 44 ♙f1
 ♙e6 45 ♙e2 ♗e7 46 ♗g2 hgx4 47 fxg4 ♙c8
 48 ♙f3 ♙xa6 49 ♗a2 ♜b5 50 ♜e2+ ♜e5 51
 ♜a2 ♜b5 52 ♜e2+ ♗d8 53 ♜e6 ♜e8 54
 ♜d5 ♙b5 55 ♜a8+ ♗d7 56 ♜xa7 ♜e5 57
 ♜a5 ♜c5 58 ♜a8 ♙c6 59 ♜g8 ♙xf3+ 60
 ♗xf3 ♜e5 61 ♜xc4 ♜f6+ 62 ♗g3 ♜e5+ 63
 ♗g2 d5 64 ♜d4 ♗d6 65 ♜b4+ ♗e6 1/2-1/2.

7...c6

The knight tour 7...♗e7!? 8 ♙g2 ♖c8 looks cumbersome, but Black easily split the point in S.Shipov-K.Chernyshov, Russian Championship, Elista 2001: 9 ♖h3 (maybe 9 e4 is more challenging) 9...♖d6 10 b3 ♗a6 11 ♜c1 ♖c5 12 b4 ♗ce4 13 0-0 exd5 14 cxd5 ♖xd2 15 ♜xd2 0-0 and a draw was agreed in this level position.



8 ♙g2

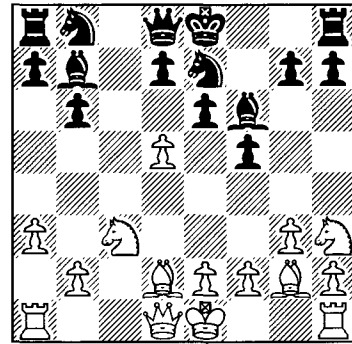
In earlier games Black had faced other moves:

a) 8 dxe6?!, immediately releasing the tension, proved innocuous in C.Gabriel-D.Bunzmann, Germany Bundesliga 1998: 8...dxe6 9 ♙g2 ♖d7 10 ♖h3 ♗e5 11 b3 ♜d7 12 0-0 0-0-0 and Black had no problems.

b) 8 e4?! cxd5 9 exd5 ♗a6 10 ♖h3 ♖c5 11 ♖f4 ♜e7 12 ♙g2?! (12 ♙e2) 12...exd5+ 13 ♗f1 dxc4 was better for Black but remained

messy in V.Mikhalevski-D.Bunzmann, Zürich 1999.

8...cxd5 9 cxd5 ♗e7 10 ♖h3



10...e5?

Instead:

a) 10...0-0 11 ♖f4 ♗g6 would transpose into the game I.Novikov-S.Kalinitschew, Bad Wiessee 1999, which continued 12 dxe6 (perhaps 12 ♖xg6!? hxg6 13 0-0) 12...♙xg2 13 ♜b3 ♗h8 14 ♖xg2 ♖c6 15 exd7 ♖d4 16 ♜d1 ♜xd7 17 ♙e3 ♜ad8 18 0-0 f4? (Black should probably have tried 18...♜e8 19 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 20 ♜c2 f4 when things are far less clear) 19 ♙xf4 ♜b7 20 e4 ♖b5 21 ♜c2 ♖d4 22 ♜h5 and Black didn't have enough compensation for his two pawns (though he later managed to draw).

b) 10...♖xd5!? was also an improvement over the game continuation, when it is not clear how bad the ugly position after 11 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 12 ♙xd5 exd5 is for Black.

11 0-0 d6 12 e4 0-0 13 f4 ♗a6 14 exf5 ♖xf5 15 fxe5 ♙xe5 16 ♗g5 ♖d4

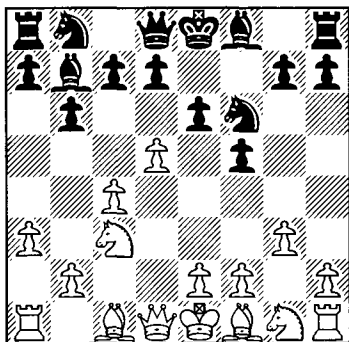
On 16...♖c7, covering the sensitive e6-square, there would follow the devastating 17 ♖xh7! ♗xh7 18 ♜h5+ ♖h6 19 ♙e4+ ♗g8 20 ♙xh6 and wins.

17 ♜h5 h6 18 ♙e4 ♙f6 19 ♜g6 hxg5 20 ♜h7+ ♗f7 21 ♙g6+ ♗e7 22 ♜xf6 ♗d7 23 ♙f5+ 1-0

A convincing demonstration of the problems Black can face after ...♙e7-f6.

Game 32
S. Atalik-S. Mamedyarov
Cahvia Olympiad 2004

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♖b7 4 ♘c3 f5 5 d5
 ♘f6 6 g3



Involving the light-squared bishop in the central battle is the most promising try for an opening edge.

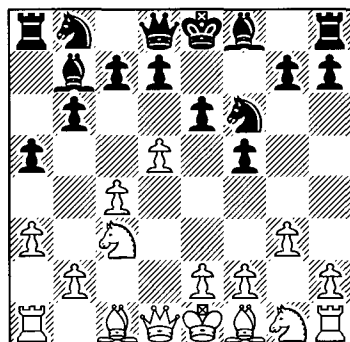
Instead, 6 ♘f3 ♘a6 7 ♖g5, from I. Morovic Fernandez-C. Bauer, European Championship 2000, didn't worry Black too much. I even managed to seize a slight initiative before entering a dead drawn rook ending: 7...♖e7 8 e3 ♘c5 (8...♘d5? 9 cxd5 ♖xg5 10 dxe6, intending 10...dxe6?? 11 ♗a4+, was less adequate) 9 ♘d4 a5 10 ♖e2 (10 ♘db5!?) 10...0-0 (or 10...♘xd5!?) 11 cxd5 ♖xg5 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 14 ♗xa1 ♘e4 15 ♘xe4 fxe4 16 dxe6 0-0 17 exd7 ♗xd7 11 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 12 0-0 a4 13 ♖f3 ♗c8 14 ♗c2 c6 15 ♖ad1 g6 16 ♘de2 ♖a5 (better 16...cxd5! 17 cxd5 e5 18 e4 d6 with a small, but enduring edge for Black) 17 ♘c1 cxd5 18 cxd5 ♖a6 19 ♖e2 ♘e4 20 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 21 ♘1e2 ♖a5 22 dxe6 dxe6 23 ♖c1 ♖xc3 24 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 25 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 26 ♖xc3 ♖b5 27 ♖b1 ♖d8 28 g3 ♖d2 29 ♖c4 ♖bxb2 30 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 31 ♖xa4 ♖a2 32 ♖g2 ♖f7 33 ♖b4 1/2-1/2.

6...♘a6

The first of three main continuations in this position. The other two, 6...b5 and 6...g6, are covered in Games 34-35 and 36-37 respectively. Black has also tried:

a) 6...a5?! has almost completely vanished from practice nowadays. While its aims is perfectly laudable – Black intends to stabilise a knight at c5 by preventing the advance b2-b4 – experience has shown that pushing the a-pawn is not a priority. Indeed, if White plays b2-b4 with the enemy knight still on a6, then Black can generate counterplay with the c-pawn; while if White waits for the knight's appearance at c5, then ...♘ce4 is generally quite satisfactory for Black.

Returning to 6...a5, in D. Rogozenko-P. Blatny, Istanbul Olympiad 2000, Black managed to draw eventually, but his opening can hardly be called a success:

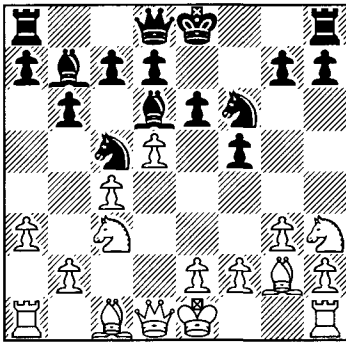


7 ♖g2 ♘a6 8 ♘h3 ♗c8 9 0-0 ♖e7 10 e4 fxe4 11 ♘xe4 0-0 12 ♘c3 ♖d8 13 ♖e1 exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘c5 15 ♘hf4 a4 16 ♖e3 ♘e6 17 ♗c2 ♘xf4 18 ♖xf4 d6 19 ♖ad1 ♖a5 20 ♖d2 ♖a7 21 ♖c3 ♘xd5 22 cxd5 ♗f5 23 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 24 ♖h3 ♖f8 25 ♖e6+ ♖h8 26 ♖e4 c5 27 dxc6 ♖xc6 28 ♖d5 ♖d7 29 ♖b4 ♖f6 30 ♖xd6 ♖c8 31 ♖b4 b5 32 ♖e1 ♖d8 33 ♖c5 ♖a6 34 ♖b7 ♖e6 35 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 36 ♖xb5 ♖b3 37 ♖a5 ♖xb2 38 ♖a8 ♖xa8 39 ♖xa8 ♖g8 40 ♖f1 ♖f7 41 ♖e2 ♖e6 42 ♖c6 g6 43 ♖d3 ♖f6 44 ♖e4 ♖g7 45 f4 ♖b2 46 h4 ♖d5 47 g4 ♖xe4+ 48 ♖xe4 h5 49 ♖f3 hxg4+ 50

♖xg4 ♙f6 51 ♙b4 ♙d8 52 ♙c3 ♙e7 53 ♙b2 ♙d8 1/2-1/2.

b) 6...c6!? is very rare and may be an underestimated option. Then 7 d6 c5!? 8 ♖f3 ♙xf3 9 exf3 ♖c6 or 7 dxe6 dxe6 8 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 wouldn't disturb Black, so standard development should be the critical test: 7 ♙g2 cxd5 8 cxd5 ♙d6 (preferable to 8...♖a6?! 9 ♖h3 when Black's usual moves fail to achieve the desired effect, e.g. 9...♖c7 10 ♖f4 e5 11 d6 ♗c8 12 dxc7 exf4 13 ♖d5! or 9...♙d6 10 0-0 0-0 11 dxe6 ♙xg2 12 ♗xd6! in both cases with a great plus for White) 9 e4 (9 ♖b5?! ♙e7 10 ♙f4 ♖a6 forced White to go back with 11 ♖c3 in V.Babula-D.Bunzmann, German Bundesliga 1999, when Black was at least equal) 9...♙e5 10 ♖ge2 fxe4 11 ♖xe4 and now M.Marin-I.Botvinnik, Tel Aviv 2000, continued 11...♙xd5 (Black could probably have tried 11...♖xd5, when White has to justify his pawn sacrifice) 12 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♙xd5 exd5 14 ♗xd5 ♖c6 15.0-0 0-0-0 16 ♖b1 ♖he8 17 b4 ♗e6 18 ♖d1 ♗xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♙f6 20 ♙e3 ♖e5 21 ♖bd1 ♖xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♖e8 23 ♖f4 ♖e4 24 ♖f1 ♖c4 25 ♖e2 1/2-1/2.

7 ♙g2 ♖c5 8 ♖h3 ♙d6



9 0-0

On 9 ♙f4 Black can equalise by 9...♙xf4 10 ♖xf4 e5, or opt for complications with 9...e5 10 ♙e3 a5 with reciprocal chances in C.Wagner-H.Hamdouchi, Cannes 1997.

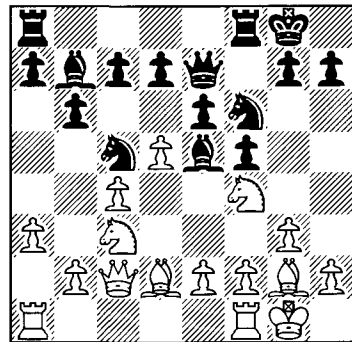
9 ♖b5 is more interesting. Black usually re-

acts by moving his bishop to e5, provoking the advance f2-f4 which would create a hole at e4. Another possibility, as yet untested to my knowledge, is 9...♖ce4!?. The critical response is 10 f3 (as after 10 ♖xd6+ ♖xd6 Black hits c4, and can continue 11...exd5 12 cxd5 ♖de4, trying to surround the white d-pawn) 10...c6 11 ♖d4 ♖xg3 12 hxg3 ♙xg3+ 13 ♖f1 cxd5 and Black has three pawns for the piece in an unclear position. If instead 11 dxc6?! dxc6 12 ♖d4 ♖xg3! (12...♖c5? 13 b4 ♙e5 14 e3 forces Black to remove his knight, when White stands better) 13 hxg3 ♙xg3+ 14 ♖f2 e5, and Black seems on top of the tactical skirmish after both 15 ♖e6 ♗xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♙xf2 17 ♖xg7+ ♖f7 18 ♖xf5 ♖ad8+ and 15 ♖xf5 ♗xd1+ 16 ♖xd1 ♙xf2 17 ♖d6+ (or 17 e3 ♖d8+ 18 ♖e2 g6) 17...♖d7 18 ♖xb7 ♖c7 19 e3 h5!, preventing 20 ♖e2 ♙g3 21 ♖h3. Funny stuff, isn't it?

9...♙e5 10 ♗c2 0-0 11 ♙d2

The critical line 11 ♖d1 ♗e7 12 ♙e3! is seen in the next game.

White's other option is 11 ♖f4 ♗e7 12 ♙d2 (12 ♙e3 is less precise as after a subsequent swap of knight on e4, White is deprived of the opportunity ♙d2-b4) and now:



a) 12...c6?! 13 dxe6 dxe6 14 ♖ad1 with a more pleasant position for White in I.Sokolov-Z.Rahman, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

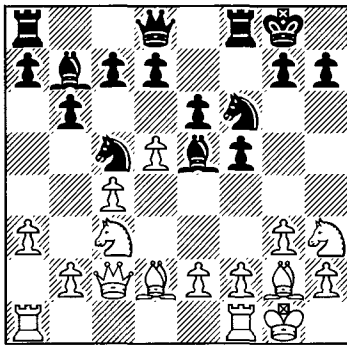
b) 12...♖fe4?! is too hasty after 13 ♙xe4

♖xe4 (even worse is 13...fxe4 14 b4) 14 ♖xe4 fxe4 15 ♗b4 ♗d6 16 ♗xd6 ♜xd6 17 dxe6 dxe6 18 ♖ad1 and White has the better of it.

c) 12...♜f7, increasing the pressure on d5, proved effective in Z.Franco Ocampos-A.Romero Holmes, Spanish Team Championship 2002: 13 ♖ad1 ♖ce4 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♗c1 ♖ae8 16 dxe6 dxe6 and a draw was agreed.

d) 12...a5 was Ivan Sokolov's suggestion after his game vs. Rahman above. He continues 13 ♖ad1 ♖ce4 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♗c1 and judges the situation to be slightly in White's favour, though I see nothing to complain about after ...♖ae8.

Also, 11...♜e8!? might be a finesse over 11...♜e7. In some lines a general trade of pieces occurs on e4, and Black would be then happy to continue ...♗xf4 and ...e4xd5, to which end he needs to have his queen protected. The game G.Milos-D.Lima, Sao Paulo (rapid) 2001, went 12 ♗d2 ♖ce4 13 ♖ad1 ♖xd2 14 ♖xd2 ♗xc3 15 ♜xc3 e5 16 ♖d3 d6 17 f4, when instead of 17...e4 18 ♖b4 (as played), 17...♖e4 18 ♗xe4 fxe4, followed by ...e5xf4 was interesting.



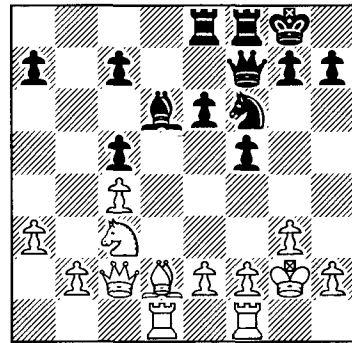
11...♜e7 12 ♖ad1 ♖ae8 13 ♖f4

13 b4 gets nowhere, as 13...♖ce4 14 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15 dxe6 is harmless, while 15 ♗xe4?! would even leave White in trouble after 15...fxe4 16 ♜xe4 exd5 17 cxd5 ♜f7 18 ♗f4 ♜h5.

13...♜f7 14 dxe6 dxe6 15 ♖d3

15 ♗xb7 ♖xb7 16 ♖d3 ♗d6 is equal.

15...♗d6 16 ♖xc5 ♗xg2 17 ♗xg2 bxc5!?



Not bad, even if there was nothing wrong with the more natural 17...♗xc5 18 b4 ♗d6 19 ♖b5 a6 20 ♖xd6 cxd6, when c4 is as vulnerable as d6. Mamedyarov's move is more combative, and will bring him realistic winning chances

18 f3 ♜h5 19 ♗e3 e5 20 ♖b5 f4 21 ♖xd6 cxd6 22 gxf4 exf4 23 ♗g1?

After this the initiative definitely passes to Black. Instead, the more daring 23 ♗xf4! would have kept the balance, as Flear suggests 23...♖g4 24 ♖d5 ♜h4 (but not 24...♜xf4? 25 ♖xh5 ♖e3+ 26 ♗g3 ♖xc2 27 ♗xf4) 25 ♖f5! ♖xf5 26 ♜xf5 ♗xc2+ 27 ♗g1 ♖f6 28 b4 with approximate equality.

23...♖e6 24 ♜d2 ♖d7 25 ♜d5!?

A responsible decision. White sacrifices a pawn in order to end his opponent's bellicose intentions. The ensuing double rook endgame turns out to be surprisingly difficult to win.

25...♜xd5 26 ♖xd5 ♖b6 27 ♖d2 ♖xc4 28 ♖c2 ♖e3+ 29 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 30 b4! ♖f5 31 bxc5 ♖xc5 32 ♖a2 ♖e6?!

Bringing the king into play with 32...♗f7 was presumably a better try, though after 33 ♖b1 a5 34 ♖b7+ ♗f6 35 ♖b6 ♖e6 Black would still have hard work converting his extra pawn.

33 ♗f2 ♖h6 34 ♖h1 ♖a5 35 a4 ♗f7 36

h4 a6 37 ♖b2!

A necessary measure to generate counterplay.

37...♙xa4 38 ♖b7+ ♕f6 39 ♖d7 ♖d4 40 ♖a7 g6

Black could have tried 40...♙a4!? 41 ♖d7 ♖h5 42 ♙xd6+ ♕e7, but after 43 ♖b6 a draw is still the most likely outcome.

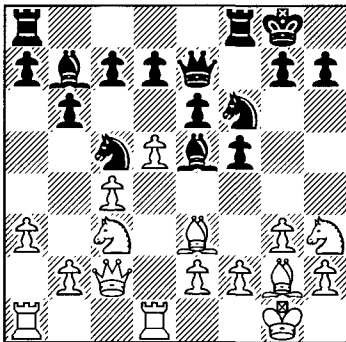
41 ♙xa6 ♖h5 42 ♖a7 h6 43 ♖h7 ♖d2 44 ♖h8 ♕g7 45 ♖e8 g5 46 ♕g2 ♕f7 47 ♖e4 d5 48 ♖e5 d4 49 hxg5 ♖xg5+ 50 ♖xg5 hxg5 51 ♖h7+ ♕e6

Or 51...♕g6 52 ♖e7 d3 53 ♕f2 ♕f6 54 ♕e1 ♖xe2+ 55 ♖xe2 dxe2 56 ♕xe2 with a draw as well.

52 ♕f1 d3 53 exd3 ♖xd3 54 ♕e2 ♖e3+ 55 ♕f2 ♖a3 56 ♖g7 ♕f6 57 ♖g8 ♖a5 58 ♕g2 ♖e5 59 ♕f2 ½-½

*Game 33***B.Gelfand-H.Hamdouchi***Cap d'Agde 1994*

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♖b7 4 ♗c3 f5 5 d5 ♗f6 6 g3 ♗a6 7 ♖g2 ♗c5 8 ♗h3 ♖d6 9 0-0 ♖e5 10 ♖c2 0-0 11 ♖d1 ♖e7 12 ♖e3!

**12...♗ce4**

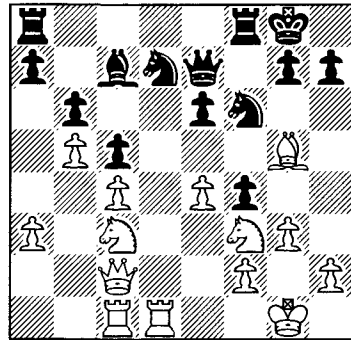
Black is now at an important juncture. Apart from Hamdouchi's move, Black can contemplate four seemingly sensible continuations, 12...d6, 12...♖xc3, 12...c6 and finally

12...♖ab8. Let's examine all these possibilities:

a) 12...d6? is rightly dismissed by Gurevich on account of 13 ♖xc5 bxc5 14 ♗g5 ♖xc3 15 bxc3!, when White can successfully exploit the weak e6-square and enjoys a clear advantage.

b) 12...♖xc3?! is slightly preferable, but White keeps a nice plus after 13 ♖xc3 d6 14 ♖xc5 bxc5 15 ♗f4.

c) 12...c6 13 dxe6 (13 ♗f4!? cxd5 14 cxd5 ♗ce4 was Y.Shulman-J.Kraai, Kansas 2002) 13...dxe6 14 ♖ac1 ♗a6!? (Black could also play 14...♖ad8 15 b4 ♖xc3 16 ♖xc3 ♗ce4, but 17 ♖b3 would give White a small, but lasting edge) 15 b4 c5 16 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 17 b5 ♗b8 18 ♗g5 ♖e7 19 ♗f3 ♗bd7 20 ♖g5 ♖c7 (perhaps 20...♖xc3!? 21 ♖xc3 a6) 21 e4 f4 (21...♗e5 22 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 23 exf5 ♖xc3 24 ♖xc3 exf5 was safer) and then:



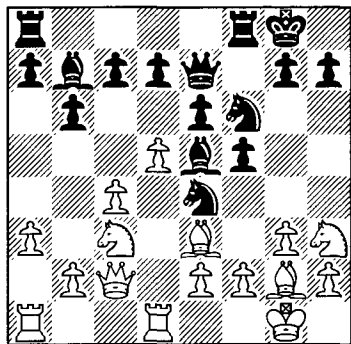
c1) 22 gxf4?! (a poor move compared with the more promising alternatives) 22...h6 23 e5 hxg5 24 ♗xg5 ♗xe5 25 fxe5 ♖xe5 26 ♖e1! (this counter-attack will leave White on the verge of defeat, but it is in fact the best option) 26...♖xh2+ 27 ♕f1 ♖b7 28 ♖xe6 ♖f4 29 ♗d5 ♖xg5 (on 29...♖xc1? the cool 30 ♖g6!! gives even White the upper hand after 30...♖xg5 31 ♖e7 ♖xe7 32 ♗xe7+ ♕h8 33 ♖xg5, whereas 30 ♗e7+? ♖xe7 31 ♖xe7 ♖xg5 or 30 ♖e7? ♖xd5 31 cxd5 ♖xg5 would conversely favour Black) 30 ♗e7+ ♕h8 31 ♗g6+ ♕g8 32 ♗e7+ ♕h8 and a draw was

agreed in M.Gurevich-C.Bauer, Clichy 2000. In time-trouble I didn't want to gamble on 32...♖f7 33 ♖g6+ ♗xe6 34 ♜e1+ which, as the post-mortem confirmed, was at least OK for White.

c2) 22 ♜xd7!? ♖xd7 23 e5 ♘h5! (23...♘e8?! 24 ♙xf4 h6 25 h4 would leave White with nice compensation for his tiny material deficit) 24 g4 h6 with a mess.

c3) 22 ♖e2! ♘e5 (22...fxg3?! is bad in view of 23 e5 gxh2+ 24 ♗g2!, but not 24 ♗h1?? which loses to 24...♘xe5 25 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 26 ♖xe5 ♖b7+) 23 ♘xe5 (if 23 ♙xf4!? ♘xf3+ 24 ♖xf3 ♘d7 25 ♘e2 e5 26 ♖d3 exf4 27 ♖xd7 ♖xe4 28 ♖xc7 ♖xe2 29 ♘d7 ♖b2 30 ♜cd1 fxg3 31 ♖xg3 a6 is equal) 23...♙xe5 24 gxf4 ♙xc3 25 ♜xc3 h6 26 ♙h4 ♖f7 with some compensation for the pawn.

d) 12...♜ab8!? was Morozevich's solution to the potential threat of d5-d6, and brought him roughly parity in G.Kasparov-A.Morozevich, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000: 13 ♜ac1 ♘ce4 14 ♘xe4 ♘e4 15 ♘f4 c5 16 dxc6 ♙xc6 17 ♘d3 ♙f6 18 f3 ♘c5 19 b4 ♘xd3 20 ♜xd3 d5 21 f4 dxc4 22 ♖xc4 ♙xg2 23 ♗xg2 ♜f7 24 b5 ♜e8 25 ♜cd1 e5 26 ♘d7 ♖e6 27 ♖xe6 ♜xe6 28 ♗f3 exf4 29 gxf4 ♜xd7 30 ♜xd7 ♜e7 31 ♜xe7 ♙xe7 32 a4 ♗f7 33 ♙d4 ♙d6 34 e4 g6 35 h3 ♗e6 36 ♙c3 ♙c7 37 ♙b4 ♙d8 38 e5 1/2-1/2.

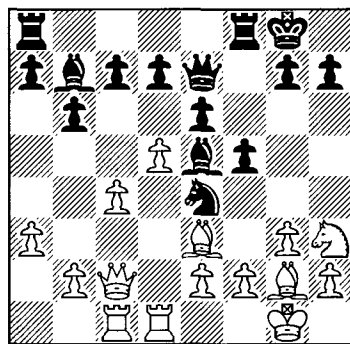


13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4

13...fxe4!? is a valid alternative to the text

move. M.Hoffmann-J.Kraai, Budapest 2003, continued 14 ♘g5 (if 14 dxe6 ♖xe6 15 ♘g5 ♖c6 is unclear) 14...exd5 15 cxd5 ♙xd5 16 ♜xd5 ♘xd5 17 ♙xe4, and now instead of the fatal blunder 17...♘xe3?? 18 ♙d5+ 1-0, Black should have gone for 17...♘f6, when he is perfectly alright, e.g. 18 ♖b3+ (or 18 ♙xa8 ♜xa8) 18...d5 19 ♙xd5+ ♘xd5 20 ♖xd5+ ♗h8 21 ♖e4 g6 22 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 23 ♖xe5+ ♖g7 24 ♙d4 ♖xe5 25 ♙xe5+ ♗g8 26 ♙xc7 ♜fe8!.

14 ♜ac1!



The best way to keep pressing. 14 ♙xe4!? allowed Black easy equality after 14...fxe4 15 ♘g5 h6 16 ♘xe4 exd5 17 cxd5 ♙xb2 18 ♖xb2 ♖xe4 19 ♖d4 1/2-1/2 D.Sharavdorj-J.Kraai, Burbank 2003.

14...exd5

If instead 14...♜ac8 15 ♘f4 with a small edge for White, or 14...♖f6?! 15 f3 ♘d6 16 ♙g5 ♖g6 17 f4 ♙f6 18 c5 with the initiative on the queenside. But 14...c5!? 15 dxc6 ♙xc6 16 f3! ♘f6 looks at least playable for Black.

15 cxd5 ♙d6 16 ♙xe4 fxe4?

16...♖xe4! offered greater chances to resist. After 17 ♙f4 (this seems stronger than Mikhail Gurevich's suggestion 17 ♖xe4?! fxe4 18 ♙f4!, as here both 18...♙xf4 19 ♘xf4 c5 and 18...♜f5 19 ♙xd6 cxd6 20 ♘d4 ♜xd5 21 ♜xe4 ♜e5 seem OK for Black)) 17...♙xd5 18 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 19 ♙xd6 cxd6 20 f3 ♙c6 21 ♜xd6 White has a sizeable advantage in the

ending, but at least the game continues.

17 ♖g5 ♜f5

17...♞ae8 18 ♞d4 didn't help.

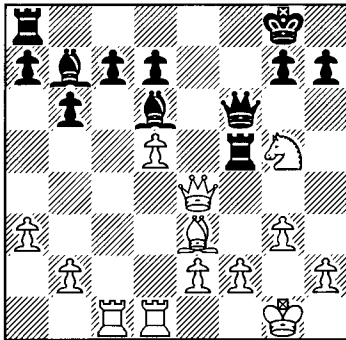
18 ♞xe4

Cleaner than 18 ♖xe4?! ♞xd5 19 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 20 ♖xd6 cxd6, when converting White's edge would not be trivial.

18...♞f6?

18...♞xg5 19 ♞xe7 ♞xe7 20 ♞xc7 was no improvement, as after 20...♞c8 21 ♞dc1 ♞a6 22 ♞xg5 ♞xg5 23 e3 or 20...♞xd5 21 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 22 ♞xd7 White has a big advantage.

18...♞xe4!, on the other hand, was rather more stubborn. After 19 ♖xe4 ♞xd5 20 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 21 ♖xd6 cxd6 22 ♞f4 ♞c6 23 ♞xd6, White has won a healthy pawn, but given the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, he still has considerable technical difficulties to overcome.



19 h4?!

19 ♖h7! would have shortened the fight: 19...♞g6 (or 19...♞e5 20 ♞xe5 ♞xe5 21 ♖g5 ♞xd5 22 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 23 ♞f4 and White is clearly better) 20 g4 ♞xh2+ 21 ♖h1 ♞xh7 22 ♞xf5 g6 (on 22...♞h3 23 ♞h5 is curtains) 23 ♞e4, when the smoke has cleared and with no dangerous discover check at his disposal, Black is simply the exchange and a pawn down.

19...g6?

19...h6! was the last hope to complicate matters, e.g. 20 g4 ♞e5 (not 20...♞e5?? 21

gxf5 and wins) 21 ♞h7+ ♖f8 22 ♖f3 (22 ♖e4?! ♞xh4) 22...♞xd5 23 ♞d4 ♞f7.

20 ♞d4 ♞f8 21 ♞c2!

Now e2-e4 is coming and White already has a decisive advantage.

21...♞xd5

21...♞xd5 would be answered by the lethal pin 22 ♞b3.

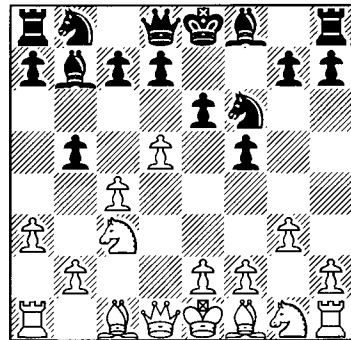
22 e4 ♞xg5 23 hxg5 ♞e6 24 ♞f6 a5 25 ♖g2 ♞f7 26 ♞c3 ♞f8 27 e5 ♞c5 28 b4 axb4 29 axb4 ♞e7 30 ♞xc7 ♞d5+ 31 ♖g1 ♞xf6 32 gxf6 ♞e6 33 ♞d3 ♞a8 34 ♞cd1 ♞c6 35 ♞xd7 ♞xd7 36 ♞xd7 1-0

Game 34

S.Savchenko-N.Miezis

Porto San Giorgio 2000

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♞b7 4 ♖c3 f5 5 d5 ♖f6 6 g3 b5!?



This speciality of Latvian grandmaster Miezis is an attempt to seize the initiative and usually sharpens the play over the next few moves. It may be less correct than the approved 6...♖a6, but I'm convinced it is sound enough not to call for a direct refutation.

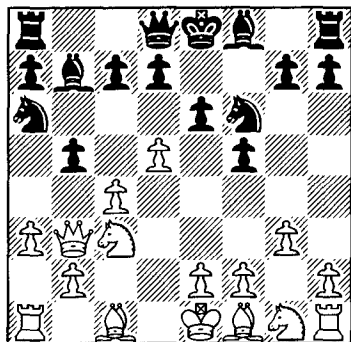
7 ♖xb5

7 ♞g2 is seen in the next game. In reply to Black's ambitious last move, White has a wide range of other possibilities which we will examine in turn, starting with the worst ones:

a) 7 cxb5? ♖xd5 plays into Black's hands

and already gives the second player a much better game.

b) 7 ♖b3?! was White's reply to her opponent's novelty in the stem game Strutinskaya-Grabuzova. This attempt to exploit the unprotected ♗b7 fell short after Black's adequate 7...♘a6! and then:



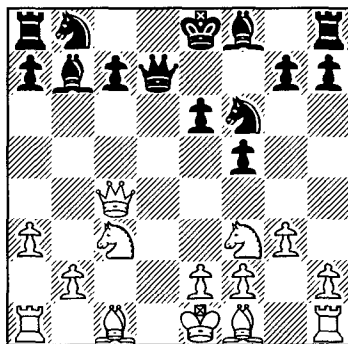
b1) 8 ♖xb5? loses material to 8...♘c5!

b2) 8 ♗g2?! ♘c5 9 ♖a2, when instead of 9...exd5 10 ♘d5 ♘ce4 11 ♗f4 ♘xd5 12 cxd5 ♖f6 which gave mutual chances in S.Kristjansson-D.Bunzmann, Athens 2001, I prefer 9...bxc4 10 ♖xc4 ♗b8 or 10...♗fe4 and Black has succeeded in obtaining some initiative.

b3) 8 ♗e3?! ♘g4 (instead 8...♗b8!?, with the idea 9 ♗a7 bxc4 10 ♖xc4 ♗a8 and 11...♘xd5, would have given Black an edge) 9 ♘b5 ♘c5 (and here 9...c6! was stronger: the ♗b7 then becomes more active, while a subsequent ...♖a5+ can be nasty for White) 10 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 11 e3 f4! 12 gxf4 ♖h4 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 ♘h3 (if 14 ♗d2 exd5 15 cxd5 ♘xf2 16 ♘f3 ♖e7 17 ♗xf2 ♖xe3+ 18 ♖xe3 ♗xe3+ 19 ♗d2 ♗xd5 is fine for Black) 14...♘xf2 15 ♘xf2 ♖xf2 16 ♘d4 exd5 17 ♗d2 ♖e1+ 18 ♗d1 ♖f2 19 ♗d2 ♖e1+ 1/2-1/2 G.Strutinskaya-T.Grabuzova, Russia 1994.

b4) 8 ♘b5! (perhaps the only way to maintain approximate equality) 8...exd5 9 ♗g2 ♘c5 10 ♖c3+ ♘e6 or 9...dxc4!? 10 ♘d6+ cxd6 11 ♖xb7 ♘c7 12 ♖f3.

c) 7 ♘f3 bxc4 8 dxe6 dxe6 9 ♖a4+ (exchanging queens is dubious, as it is unclear whether White can regain the c4-pawn: after 9 ♖xd8+?! ♗xd8 10 ♗g2 ♘bd7, followed by ...♗d6 and ...♗e7, Black is better) 9...♖d7 10 ♖xc4 and then:



c1) 10...♘c6!? 11 ♗g2 ♗d6 (in return for his somewhat inferior pawn structure Black has gained a considerable grip on the centre) 12 b4 (the automatic 12 0-0 would be met by 12...♘a5, but White may still keep some pressure after 13 ♖a2 ♘e4 14 ♗d1 ♘xc3 15 bxc3) 12...♘e7 13 0-0 ♘ed5 14 ♗b2 0-0 15 ♘d4 ♖f7 16 ♗ac1 f4 17 ♘c6 a6 18 ♘e4 ♘xe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗ae8 20 ♖d3 ♖h5 21 ♖d4 ♘f6 1/2-1/2 S.Mohr-K.Bischoff, German Bundesliga 1995.

c2) 10...♖c6 11 ♖a2 ♗c5 (perhaps he should have preferred 11...♘d5 12 ♗d2 ♖b6 13 ♗g2 ♗e7 14 0-0 0-0 when White is only marginally better) 12 ♗g2 0-0 13 0-0 ♗h8 14 ♗f4 ♘bd7 15 ♗ac1 e5 16 ♗d2 ♖d6 17 b4 ♗b6 18 ♘b5 ♖e7 and now:

c21) 19 ♘xc7?! ♗ac8 20 ♘b5 (rather than 20 ♖e6?! ♖d8 21 ♘b5 ♗d5 22 ♗xc8 ♖xc8, when 23 ♖xf5 ♘e4 24 ♖h3 ♖c6 25 a4 a6 or the very 'computeresque' 23 ♖e7 ♖c2!! 24 ♗c1 ♖b2 provide Black with powerful counterplay) 20...♗d5 21 ♖b2 ♗c4 22 ♘c3 e4 23 ♘h4 ♖e6 and White is a pawn up, but Black is now much more active.

c22) 19 ♘g5! ♗xg2 20 ♗xg2 ♘e4?! (this

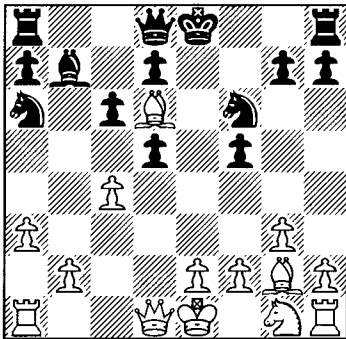
leads to a clear plus for White, but on 20...c5 21 ♖e6 was unpleasant) 21 ♘xe4 fxe4 22 ♗xc7 ♜ac8 23 ♖e6 ♜d8 24 ♘d5 ♙d4 25 ♙e3 ♜xc1 26 ♜xc1 ♘f6 27 ♙xd4 ♜e8 28 ♖f7 ♘xd5 29 ♙c5 ♘f6 30 ♙e3 a6 31 ♜c7 ♜g8 32 ♙g5 1-0 S.Ovsejevitsch-D.Bunzmann, Darmstadt 2001.

Instead of 7...dxc4, as 7 ♘f3 masks the future fianchettoed bishop (on g2) and can't cover the sensitive d5 spot, so 7...b4!? deserves attention. Play may continue 8 ♖b3 ♘a6 (8...a5!?) 9 axb4 and here both 9...exd5 10 c5 ♜b8 (intending ...d5-d4) and 9...♙xb4 10 dxe6 0-0 11 exd7 (maybe 11 ♙g2 dxe6 12 0-0 is safer) 11...♖e7! (intending 12 ♙g2 ♘c5!) are acceptable for Black.

7...exd5 8 cxd5

8 ♙g2?! c6 9 ♘d4 dxc4 is good for Black (if 10 ♘xf5?? ♖a5+ picks up the knight).

However, 8 ♙f4!? is a very reasonable alternative, and after 8...♘a6 9 ♙g2 c6! 10 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 11 ♙xd6, Black's choice lies between the solid 11...dxc4 and the more complex 11...♖b6!?:



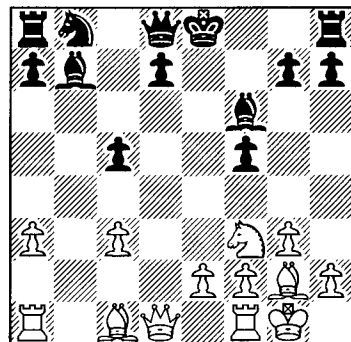
a) 11...dxc4 12 ♖a4 ♘d5 (going for the b2 pawn with 12...♖b6?! 13 ♖xc4 ♖xb2 would be asking for trouble: after 14 ♜d1 White has more than enough compensation) 13 ♘f3 ♖f6 14 ♙e5 ♖e7 15 ♖xc4 ♘c5 (perhaps 15...d6 16 ♙d4 ♘ac7, when Black has a beautiful horse and ideas like ...c6-c5 and ...♙a6 to compensate for his inferior pawn structure

and White's pair of bishops) 16 b4 ♘e4 17 0-0 0-0 with a slightly preferable game for White in V.Kunin-E.Kengis, Bad Wörishofen 2003.

b) 11...♖b6!? 12 cxd5 ♘e4 13 ♙xe4 fxe4 14 ♘h3 (the computer claims that 14 dxc6!? is a safe extra pawn for White, but after 14...♙xc6 or 14...dxc6 15 ♖c2 c5 or 15...0-0-0!?, I doubt too many players would be willing to conduct the white side) 14...c5 15 ♙e5 0-0 16 ♘f4 ♜f5 17 ♙c3 ♘c7 18 ♖a4 was seen in L.Van Wely-S.Lputian, FIDE World Championship, Moscow 2001. Now the Armenian GM continued 18...e3 19 fxe3 ♘xd5 20 ♖xd7 ♘xc3? 21 ♖xf5 ♙xh1 22 bxc3 and had to capitulate soon afterwards: 22...♜e8 23 ♜d1 ♙c6 24 ♜d6 c4 25 ♘e6 ♙e4 26 ♖g4 ♖b1+ 27 ♜d1 ♖b7 28 ♘c5 ♖a8 29 ♜d7 ♙g6 30 ♖xc4+ 1-0. Instead, I believe the correct defensive idea consisted of 20...♜f7 21 ♘xd5 ♜xd7 22 ♘xb6 axb6, entering an endgame a pawn down, but with opposite-coloured bishops.

8...♙xd5

Or 8...♘d5!? 9 ♘f3 (not 9 ♙g2? due to the obvious 9...♘e3!) 9...c5 (9...c6!? looks like a decent alternative, e.g. 10 ♘bd4 g6 11 ♙g2 ♙g7 12 0-0 0-0 and White should only be a bit better) 10 ♘c3 (if 10 ♙g2?! ♖a5+) 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♙e7 12 ♙g2 ♙f6 13 0-0! and then:

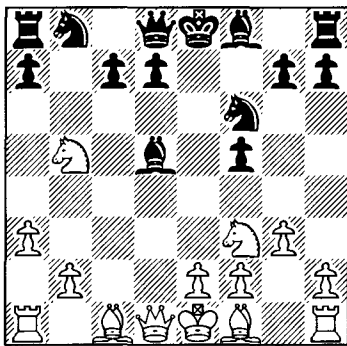


a) 13...♙xc3?! was not advisable due to 14

♖b1! ♕e4 15 ♗g5! ♕xg2 (not 15...♕xb1?! 16 ♕xa8 and Black's bishops are in danger) 16 ♗xg2 ♜f6 (forced, in order to answer ♜d5 with ...♜c6) 17 ♕f4 ♗c6 18 ♜d5 h6 19 ♗f3 with a marked advantage to White, because of the enemy king's precarious situation. Instead, 14 ♜b3?! wouldn't be as bad as Serper indicated in *Informator* 69, but after 14...♕xa1 15 ♗g5 (not 15 ♜xb7? ♗c6 16 ♕g5 ♕f6 when White doesn't have much for the exchange) 15...♜b6!, White would have to content himself with 16 ♜e3+ ♗f8 17 ♕xb7 ♜xb7 18 ♜xc5+ ♗e8 19 ♜e3+ and a draw by repetition. On the other hand, Black can hardly deviate, as 18...d6? 19 ♜xd6+ ♜e7 20 ♜d5 or 19...♗e8 20 ♜e6+ ♜e7 21 ♜c8+ ♜d8 22 ♜xf5 would leave him hopeless.

b) 13...♕e4! (Black needs to prevent ♖b1) 14 ♕e3 ♜c7 15 ♕f4 ♜c6 16 ♕d6 ♗a6 17 ♜d2 ♗c7 18 ♖fd1, and now rather than 18...♗d5? 19 ♗e5! which brought White victory in G.Serper-A.Shabalov, Chicago 1997, perhaps 18...♗d8 was still about OK for Black.

9 ♗f3



9...♕c6!

From all Black's options here, this is the one I trust most.

a) 9...♕c5?! runs into 10 ♕g5!, when the multiple threats to d5 and c7 force Black to consent to his pawn structure being damaged. I.Zaja-B.Filipovic, Pula 2002, continued

10...c6 11 ♕xf6 gxf6 12 b4 0-0 13 ♗c3?! (stronger was 13 e3! ♕b6 14 ♗d6 emphasising White's superiority; in the game White was still doing very well, until he took some unfortunate decisions during the last ten moves) 13...♕xf3 14 exf3 ♜e7+ 15 ♕e2 ♕b6 16 f4 a5 17 ♜b3+ ♗h8 18 0-0 axb4 19 axb4 ♖xa1 20 ♖xa1 d5 21 ♕d3 ♗d7 22 ♕xf5 ♖b8 23 ♜a4 ♜d6 24 ♖d1 ♗f8 25 h4 ♕d8 26 b5 ♜c5 27 ♜d4 ♜xd4 28 ♖xd4 cxb5 29 ♗xd5 ♗g7 30 h5 ♕a5 31 ♗b4 ♖d8 32 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 33 ♕d3 ♗h6 34 g4 ♗e6 35 ♗d5 b4 36 ♗xb4 ♗xf4 37 ♕f5 ♗g5 38 ♕xh7 ♗xg4 39 h6 ♗g5 1/2-1/2.

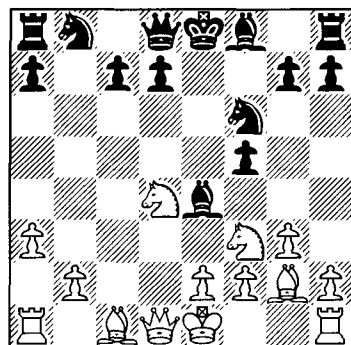
b) 9...c5?! again allows 10 ♕g5! (as in Y.Gozzoli-N.Miezis, Bogny sur Meuse 2003) with similar problems for Black.

c) 9...c6 10 ♗bd4?! (10 ♗c3 seems the appropriate reply) 10...♜b6 (10...g6!?) 11 ♕g2 ♕e4 12 0-0 c5 and Black already had a comfortable position owing to his central control. S.Guedon-G.Evans, correspondence 2001, concluded 13 ♗c2 ♗c6 14 ♗e3 ♜b7 15 ♗h4 ♕xg2 16 ♗hxg2 g6 17 ♗d5 ♕g7 18 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 19 ♜d5 ♖c8 20 ♖d1 ♗d8 21 ♜a2 ♗e6 22 ♗e3 ♕d4 23 b4 c4 24 ♖b1 ♜e4 25 ♗g2 c3 26 ♖b3 0-0 27 b5 d5 28 ♖b4 c2 0-1.

10 ♗bd4 ♕e4

Now the bishop is settled and Black can think about including his c- and d-pawns in the fight.

11 ♕g2



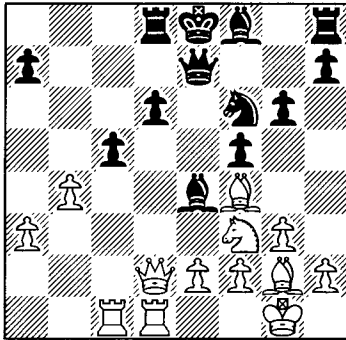
11...♗c6?!

More to the point was 11...c5! 12 ♖b5 ♗b6 13 ♗c3 ♙e7, since if White takes the bishop then ...d7-d5 is coming.

12 0-0 g6 13 ♙f4 ♗xd4?!

In the event of 13...♙g7 14 ♗xc6 ♙xc6 15 ♖c1 0-0 White is still better, but at least Black doesn't have to deal with immediate pressure on his c- and d-pawns.

14 ♗xd4 d6 15 ♖ac1 c5 16 ♗d2 ♗e7 17 ♖fd1 ♖d8 18 b4!



As Black can't complete his development, the game is practically decided.

18...♖d7 19 bxc5 dxc5 20 ♗a5 ♙g7 21 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 22 ♖d1 c4 23 ♙g5 ♙f6 24 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 25 ♗b5+ ♗f8 26 ♗xc4

The rest is a neat conversion of a healthy extra pawn.

26...♗g7 27 ♗g5 ♖e8 28 ♗xe4 fxe4 29 a4 ♖b8 30 a5 h5 31 ♙h3 ♖b4 32 ♗c3 ♖b7 33 ♖c1 ♗h6 34 ♙c8 ♖b5 35 a6 ♗d5 36 ♗h8+ ♗h7 37 ♗e8 ♖a5 38 ♗xe4 ♗g7 39 ♙b7 ♗f7 40 ♗d4 ♖b5 41 ♗h8+ ♗h7 42 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 43 ♙xd5 1-0

*Game 35***A.Kveinys-N.Miezis***Mezgers 2000*

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♙b7 4 ♗c3 f5 5 d5 ♗f6 6 g3 b5!? 7 ♙g2 bxc4

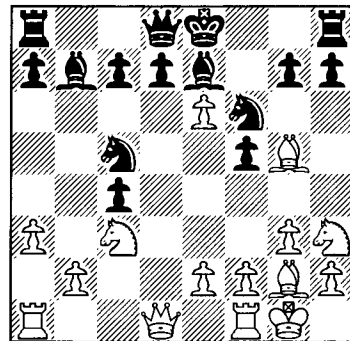
Here 7...b4?! is dubious, as Black is unable

to challenge the c4 and d5 pawn duo effectively. After 8 axb4 ♙xb4 9 ♗h3 0-0 10 0-0 White had the upper hand in G.Prakash-N.Miezis, Dhaka 2001, though the game ended peacefully on move 32.

8 ♗h3 exd5

This move can't be blamed for the Miezis' poor results in the following games.

Nevertheless, his compatriot has preferred 8...♗a6 9 0-0 ♗c5 10 ♙g5 (10 dxe6 ♙xg2 11 exd7+ ♗xd7 12 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 13 ♗xg2 ♗b3 14 ♖b1 ♙d6 also proved adequate for Black in L.Ftacnik-E.Kengis, European Team Championship, Leon 2001) 10...♙e7 11 dxe6 with two examples:

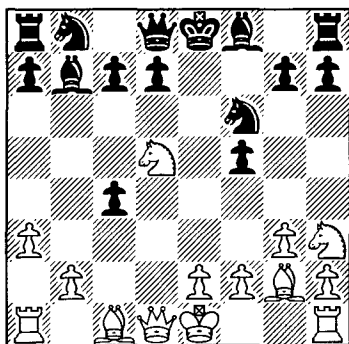


a) 11...♙xg2 12 exd7+ ♗xd7 13 ♗xd7+ ♗xd7 14 ♗xg2 ♖ab8 15 ♖ab1 ♗fe4 16 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 17 ♗d5+ ♗f7 18 ♖bc1 ♖xb2 19 ♖xc4 ♗e6 20 ♖fc1 ♙xe2? (20...c5! is fine for Black) 21 ♖xc7+ ♗xc7 22 ♖xc7+ ♗e6 23 ♗hf4+ ♗d6 24 ♗xe2 g5 25 ♗d4 ♗xd5 26 ♗xf5 a6 27 ♗e3+ ♗d6 28 ♖a7 ♗c5 29 ♖g7 ♗e6 30 ♖f7 h5 31 h4 gxh4 32 ♗f5+ ♗c5 33 ♗xh4 ♗b5 34 ♖f6 ♗d4 35 ♗f5 ♗c2 36 ♗d6+ ♗c5 37 ♗b7+ ♗b5 38 a4+ ♗xa4 39 ♖xa6+ ♗b5 40 ♖f6 ♗d4 41 ♗d6+ ♗c5 42 ♗f5 ♗c6 43 f4 ♗b4 44 ♗h3 ♗d5 45 ♖e6 ♗c7 46 ♖e5+ ♗c4 47 ♗h4 ♗d3 48 ♗g7 1-0 Kir.Georgiev-Kengis, Bled Olympiad 2002.

b) 11...dxe6 (this might be even stronger) 12 ♙xb7 ♗xd1 13 ♗xd1 (if 13 ♖fxd1 ♗xb7 14 ♗b5 ♗f7 15 ♗xc7 ♖ac8 16 ♗b5 ♙c5 and

Black is very active) 13...♖xb7 14 ♜c1 ♘a5 15 ♘e3 ♖b3 16 ♜cd1? (16 ♜c2 ♘d4 17 ♜d2 was better, but Black is OK anyway) 16...c3 17 bxc3 ♙xa3 and Black was a sound pawn up in Z.Izoria-S.Sale, Dubai 2003, though the game was eventually drawn.

9 ♘xd5



9...c6

Or 9...♘xd5 10 ♙xd5 c6 11 ♙xc4 d5 12 ♙a2 ♙d6 (Black is just fine here; the bishop at a2 is simply biting on granite) 13 ♙f4 0-0 14 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 15 0-0 ♘d7 16 ♘f4 ♜ae8 17 b4 g5 18 ♘d3 f4 19 ♜c1 ♘f6 20 gxf4 gxf4 21 ♖h1 ♖h8 22 ♜g1 ♘e4 23 ♜c2 d4 24 f3 ♘c3 25 ♜f1 ♜f6 26 ♙c4 ♙c8 27 ♜g2 ♙f5 28 ♜d2 ♙g6 (better 28...♘e4!) 29 ♘c5 ♜e3? (a blunder; 29...♜e7 30 ♜g5 was a bit unpleasant since d4 becomes weak once the queens are off; in that case, however, Black may still escape, whereas after 29...♜e3? it is immediately over) 30 ♘d7 ♜e7 31 ♘xf8 ♜xf8 32 ♜xd4 ♜f6 33 ♜d7 ♜e8 34 ♜g5 ♜f8 35 ♙f7 ♘e4 36 fxe4 ♙xe4+ 37 ♜g2 ♙xg2+ 38 ♖xg2 f3+ 39 exf3 1-0 Kir.Georgiev-N.Miezis, Auber-villiers (rapid) 2001.

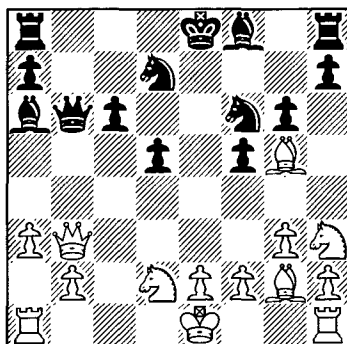
10 ♘e3 g6

10...d5!? 11 ♘xf5 is unclear and would require further investigation.

11 ♘xc4 d5 12 ♙g5 ♖bd7

12...h6?! is well met by 13 ♜b3!, attacking the ♙b7 and threatening to shift the queen to e3.

13 ♜b3 ♙a6 14 ♘d2 ♜b6



Here, too, Black has nothing to complain about after the opening stage.

15 ♜c1 ♜c8 16 0-0 ♙g7 17 ♙e3 ♜xb3 18 ♘b3 ♘e4 19 ♜c2 ♙c4

19...c5!? was quite possible.

20 ♘a5 ♙b5 21 ♜d1 0-0 22 ♙d4 ♜fe8 23 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 24 b3 ♘ef6 25 e3 ♘e5 26 a4 ♙d3 27 ♜b2 ♙e4 28 ♘g5 h6 29 ♘xe4 fxe4 30 ♜c2 c5?

But this is now a mistake. 30...♜c7 or 30...g5 was better.

31 ♘b7! ♜c6 32 ♜xc5 ♜b6 33 ♜c7+ ♖f8 34 ♘c5 ♜e7 35 ♜c8+ ♜e8 36 ♜xe8+ ♖xe8 37 ♙f1 ♖e7 38 ♙b5 ♖d6 39 ♘a6 ♘d3 40 h3 ♘d7 41 f4 ♘7c5 42 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 43 ♙xd3 ♜xb3 44 ♙e2 ♜xe3 45 ♖f2 ♜c3 46 ♜b1 d4 47 ♜b8 ♜a3 48 ♜c8+ ♖d6 49 ♜e8 d3 50 ♙d1 ♜a1 51 ♖e1 ♖d5 52 ♖d2 ♜b1 53 ♜d8+ ♖c5 54 ♙g4 h5 55 ♙e6 ♜b2+ 56 ♖c3 ♜c2+ 57 ♖b3 ♜g2 58 ♜d5+ ♖c6 59 ♖c3 ♜c2+ 60 ♖d4 ♜e2 61 ♙d7+ ♖c7 62 ♙b5 ♜e1 63 ♖e5 ♜e3 64 g4 hxg4 65 hxg4 ♜e1 66 g5 ♖b6 67 a5+ ♖c7 68 ♜d7+ ♖c8 69 ♜d4 ♖b7 70 ♙e8 1-0

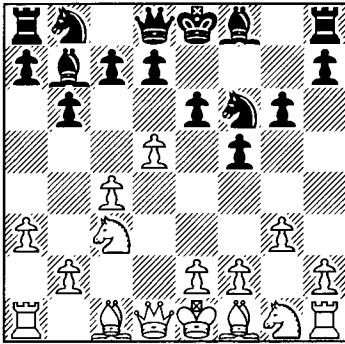
Game 36

J.Lautier-V.Topalov

Linares 1994

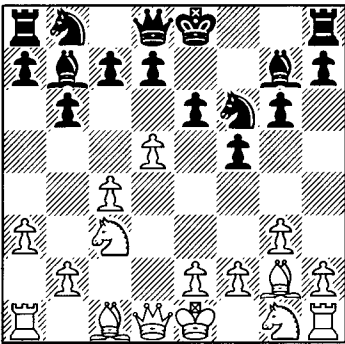
1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♘c3 ♙b7 4 a3 f5 5 d5

♟f6 6 g3 g6



This treatment has been superseded entirely by 6...♟a6 over the last few years. It presents similarities with the knight move, where Black also puts his dark-squared bishop on the long diagonal (by ...♞d6-e5), and in some variations when White comes with ♟f3-d4, having f5 protected proves quite useful. The major drawback of 6...g6 seems to be that Black would prefer to have the bishop's diagonal open, and more precisely to have ...♞xc3 at his disposal, as in the 6...♟a6 line. Indeed, swapping the bishop for the enemy knight greatly emphasises the pressure on d5 and the control over e4.

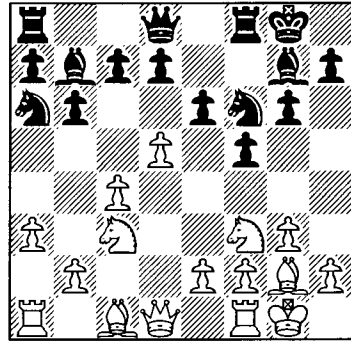
7 ♟g2 ♟g7



8 e3

Although successful in the current encounter, this way of developing the knight has, to

my knowledge, never been repeated. Instead, 8 ♟h3 is the main line (see the next game); whereas 8 ♟f3 is less critical: 8...0-0 (8...♟a6 before castling is interesting, though not as essential as after 8 ♟h3) 9 0-0 ♟a6 and then:



a) 10 ♞b1!? ♟c5 proved OK for Black in B.Tabernig-A.Czebe, Montecatini Terme 1997; the game was drawn on move 89 following many exciting adventures!

b) 10 ♟e3 ♟c5 (10...♟g4!? 11 ♟g5 ♞e8) 11 ♞c1 ♟ce4 12 ♟d4 c5 13 dxc6 dxc6 was nothing special for White in Y.Pelletier-C.Philippe, Nancy 2004.

c) 10 b4? is in the present case (and again in contrast to the 8 ♟a3 line) totally ineffective in view of either 10...exd5 or 10...♟e4 when Black is already much better.

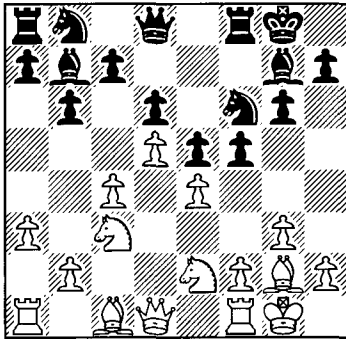
d) 10 ♟f4 exd5 (10...♟c5!?) 11 cxd5 ♟c5 12 ♞c1 (in the event of 12 d6!? c6 the bishop on b7 is rendered temporarily inactive, but the knight finds a nice placement at e6) 12...♟fe4 13 ♟e5 ♟h6 14 e3 d6 15 ♟d4 ♟a6 16 b4!? (an enterprising exchange sacrifice as opposed to the cowardly 16 ♟e2) 16...♟xf1 17 ♟xf1 ♟xc3 18 ♟xc3 ♟e4 19 ♟a1 ♞e7 20 ♞c2 (preventing any ideas of ...♟xf2; White has decent compensation but probably no more than that) 20...♞f7 21 ♟d4 ♟g7 22 ♟b5 ♟xa1 23 ♞xa1 a5 (23...a6!) 24 ♞xc7 ♞xc7? (24...♞e5 was better) 25 ♟xc7 ♞xc7 26 bxa5 ♞xa5 27 ♞b2 ♞ac5 28 ♟d3 ♟g5 29 ♟g2 b5 30 h4 ♟f7 31 ♟xb5 ♞c2 32 ♞f6 ♟e5 33

♙c6 ♖f7 34 ♗xd6 ♜g4 35 ♗f4 ♜d2 36 d6 ♜f6 37 e4 ♜fxd6 38 ♙d5+ 1-0 A.Kharitonov-A.Morozevich, Moscow (rapid) 1994.

8...0-0 9 ♜ge2 e5?!

In his annotations for *Informator* 60 Lautier pointed out that 9...c6! 10 0-0 (10 d6!?) 10...cxd5 11 cxd5 ♜a6 would have equalised. This may be the reason why 8 e3 was abandoned afterwards.

10 0-0 d6 11 e4



White is now slightly better.

11...fxe4 12 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13 ♙xe4 ♜d7 14 ♜c3?!

14 b4 a5 15 ♙e3 was a better option, keeping a small plus, as 15...♜f6 can be answered by 16 ♙g5 and White maintains his grip on the important e4-square.

14...♙c8 15 ♙g2 ♜f6 16 h3 ♖f7! 17 ♙e3 ♗f8 18 ♜d2 a5 19 b4 ♙a6 20 ♜b5 ♜h8!

With the plan of ...♜g8 and ...♙h6 in mind.

21 ♖fc1

On 21 ♖fb1, intending 22 bxa5 ♙xb5 23 ♖xb5, Black keeps the equilibrium with 21...♙xb5 22 cxb5 ♜g8.

21...♜g8 22 ♜a2 ♙h6 23 ♜ac2 ♙xe3 24 ♗xe3 axb4 25 axb4 ♙xb5 26 cxb5 ♜a7 27 ♗c3!

Threatening f2-f4.

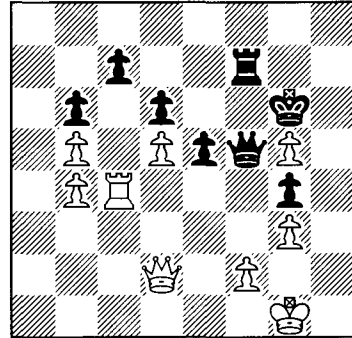
27...♗g7 28 ♜a1 ♖xa1+ 29 ♗xa1 h5 30 ♗c1 ♗f6 31 h4

With the idea of ♙h3.

31...♗f5 32 ♜h2 ♜f6 33 ♙h3 ♜g4+ 34 ♙xg4 hxg4

34...♗xg4 was simpler, as long as Black is satisfied with a draw after 35 ♗h6+ ♜g8 36 ♜a2 ♜f8.

35 ♜g1 ♜g7 36 ♜d2 g5!? 37 hxg5 ♜g6 38 ♜c4



38...♜h7?!

38...♗b1+! was much stronger, when it is even Black who enjoys a small pull, e.g. 39 ♜g2 (on 39 ♜c1 there is 39...♗e4 intending ...♜h7) 39...♜h7 40 ♗c2+ ♗xc2 41 ♜xc2 ♜xg5 42 ♜f1 ♜f5 43 ♜c4 ♜h1+ 44 ♜e2 ♜b1 45 ♜xc7 ♜xb4 46 ♜c6 ♜e4 47 ♜xd6 ♜b2+ 48 ♜f1 ♜xb5 and Black is more active, though I believe it should be drawn.

39 ♜d1! ♜xg5 40 ♗c1+ ♜g6 41 ♜xc7 ♜xc7??

41...♗e4! was correct, when halving the point is the logical outcome: 42 ♜xh7 ♜xh7 43 ♗c7+ ♜g8! 44 ♗xb6 (or 44 ♗xd6 ♗b1+ 45 ♜g2 ♗e4+ with perpetual check) 44...♗b1+ 45 ♜g2 ♗e4+ and so on.

42 ♗xc7 ♗b1+ 43 ♜h2 ♗xb4 44 ♗xb6 ♜f5 45 ♗a7!

45 ♗c6? ♜d4! 46 ♗c2+ ♜g5 would have complicated White's task a lot.

45...♗xb5 46 ♗h7+ ♜f6

46...♜g5 doesn't change anything after 47 ♗c7+ ♜f5 48 ♗xd6 etc.

47 ♗h6+ ♜f5 48 ♗xd6 ♗e2

48...♔e4 offered better chances of salvation, e.g. 49 ♖g6+ (or 49 ♜e6? ♜e2 50 ♜f7 ♜c4!, but not 49...♜xd5? 50 ♜xg4+ ♔d3 51 ♜d1+) 49...♔xd5 50 ♜xg4 with the idea ♜f5, g3-g4, etc.

**49 ♜f8+ ♔g5 50 d6 ♜d2 51 ♜g7+ ♔f5
52 ♜f7+ ♔g5 53 d7 ♜d4 54 ♜g7+ ♔h5**

Or 54...♔f5 55 ♜f8+ and 56 d8♜.

55 ♜h7+ ♔g5 1-0

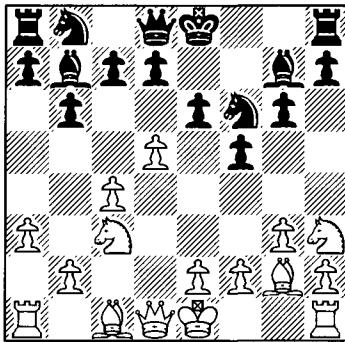
And Black simultaneously resigned in view of 56 d8♜+! ♜xd8 57 ♜h4+, winning his queen.

Game 37

I.Umanskaya-T.Grabuzova

Russia 1994

**1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♖c3 ♗b7 4 a3 f5 5 d5
♗f6 6 g3 g6 7 ♗g2 ♗g7 8 ♖h3**



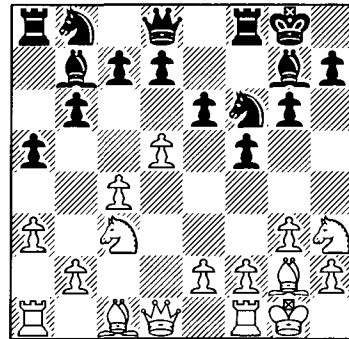
8...0-0?!

In the light of Black's sad experience with 8...0-0, I believe he already has to pay attention to his move order. In fact, castling at once is probably inaccurate and should therefore be replaced by the knight's immediate deployment to c5, i.e. 8...♗a6 9 0-0 (9 b4 is not to be feared now: 9...♗xd5 10 ♗xd5 exd5 11 ♜b1 c6 12 cxd5 ♗c7 with a level game, while on 11 ♗g5 Black has the disturbing 11...♗c3+ at his disposal) 9...♗c5 10 ♗e3 0-0 (only now that the knight transfer to c5 has been accomplished; White may still claim a

slight plus here, but in comparison with what he achieves after 8...0-0?! it is quite bearable for Black) 11 ♗d4 ♗ce4 (not 11...♜e7? 12 d6! and Black loses material) 12 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 14 ♗f4 (14 ♗xe4 fxe4 15 dxe6 dxe6 may be a tiny bit better for White but no more than that, since the knight has no stable square) 14...e5 15 ♗d3 ♜f6 16 ♜c2 d6 17 b4 a5 18 e3 ♜f7? (this leads to trouble; 18...♗g5! was to be preferred, and if 19 f4 then 19...exf4) 19 f4 ♗f6 20 fxe5 dxe5 21 ♗xe5 ♜e7 22 ♜c3 ♜fe8 23 ♗f3 ♜xe3+ 24 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 25 ♗d4 ♔f7 26 ♗e6 ♜c8 27 ♜fe1 ♜xe1+ 28 ♜e1 axb4 29 axb4 b5 30 ♗g5+ ♔g8 31 ♜c6 ♜f8 32 cxb5 h6 33 ♗h3 ♔f7 34 ♗f4 g5 35 ♗d3 ♗xd5 36 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 37 ♜xh6 ♗f6 38 ♗e5+ ♔e6 39 ♗c6 g4 40 ♜g6 ♜a8 41 ♜g7 ♗d5 42 ♜g6+ ♗f6 43 ♜g7 ♗d5 44 ♜g6+ ½-½ Xu Jun-Yu Shaoteng, HeiBei 2001.

9 0-0 ♗a6

a) 9...a5?! is worse:

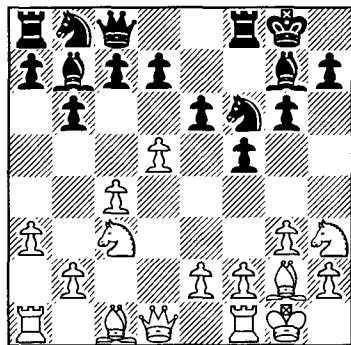


a1) 10 c5! (this straightforward approach is probably the best way to exploit the weakening aspects of Black's last move) 10...♔h8 11 cxb6 (11 c6? is a mistake, allowing Black to gain the advantage after 11...dxc6 12 ♗g5 exd5 13 ♗e6 ♜e7 14 ♗xf8 ♜xf8 or 12 dxe6 ♜e7 13 ♗f4 ♗a6, or immediately 13...g5, when e6 is bound to fall) 11...cxb6 12 ♗f4 (12 ♗g5, trying to provoke ...h7-h6, was possibly an improvement) 12...♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗xd5

14 ♙xd5 exd5 15 ♚xd5 ♜c6 16 ♚ad1! ? (16 ♚ab1! would have kept an edge due to Black's isolani, for instance 16... ♚e8 17 e3 ♚e6 18 ♚fd1 ♚xd5 19 ♚xd5 ♚a7 20 b3) 16... ♙xb2 17 ♚d3 ♙f6 18 ♚fd1 ♚e8 19 ♚e3 ♚f7 20 ♚b5 ♚fe8 21 ♚xb6 ♚xe3 22 ♙xe3 ♚d8 23 ♚c5 ♚e7 24 ♚d5 ♚b8 25 ♜f4 ♚b5 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ P.Cramling-B.Gulko, Oropesa del Mar 1996.

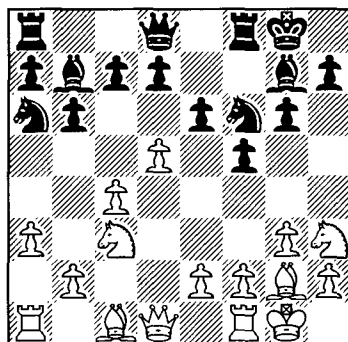
a2) 10 ♚b1 ♜a6 11 b4 (if 11 $\text{♚c2!?$ ♜c5 12 ♚d1 ♚e8 or 12... $\text{♚c8!?$ seems satisfactory for Black) 11... axb4 12 axb4 led to a complex game in D.Tyomkin-A.Shabalov, Hamburg 1999. I'm inclined to assess White's prospects as slightly better, but it's probably a matter of taste: 12... ♚c8! (12... ♚e8!) 13 ♚b3 c6 14 dxe6 dxe6 15 ♙e3 ♚c7 16 ♜f4 ♚fe8 17 ♜a4 (17 c5 , with the idea 17... ♜d5 18 ♜cxd5 cxd5 19 c6 , was strong according to Tyomkin) 17... e5 18 ♙xb6 ♚f7 19 ♜d3 e4 20 ♜dc5 ♙c8 21 ♜xa6 ♙xa6 22 ♚fc1 ♜g4 23 f3 ♜e5 24 b5 ♙c8 25 f4? cxb5 26 ♚xb5 ♙d7 27 ♚d5 ♙e6 28 ♚b5 ♜xc4 29 ♙c5 ♜d2 0-1.

b) 9... ♚c8! , from V.Babula-J.Speelman, Bundesliga 2001, didn't enable Black to solve all his opening problems either:



10 ♙d2 (10 e4 fxe4 11 ♜g5 was interesting) 10... ♜a6 11 b4 c5 12 ♚b3 d6 13 ♚ab1 (if 13 ♜f4 ♜c7) 13... ♙h8 14 ♜b5 ♜e8 15 ♜f4 ♜ac7 16 dxe6 ♙xg2 17 ♙xg2 ♜xe6 18 ♚f3 ♜d4 19 ♜xd4 cxd4 20 e3 (20 ♜e6! is good for White) 20... ♜f6 21 ♚bc1 g5 22 ♜d5 g4 23 ♚f4 ♚b7 24 ♚xd4 ♜d7 25 ♚d3 ♜e5 26

♚e2 ♚ac8 27 e4 ♚fe8 28 ♙c3 ♜f3 29 ♚b2 ♚xe4 30 ♙xg7+ ♚xg7 31 ♚xg7+ ♙xg7 32 ♜e3 ♙f6 33 ♚fd1 ♙e6 34 h3 ♜e5 35 hxg4 ♜xg4 36 ♜xg4 fxg4 37 ♚h1 ♚cxc4 38 ♚h6+ ♙d5 39 ♚h5+ ♚e5 40 ♚d1+ ♚d4 41 ♚xd4+ ♙xd4 42 ♚xh7 d5 43 ♚xa7 ♙d3 44 a4 d4 45 a5 bxa5 46 bxa5 ♙e2 47 a6 d3 48 ♚b7 d2 49 a7 ♚a5 50 ♚e7+ ♙d3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$.



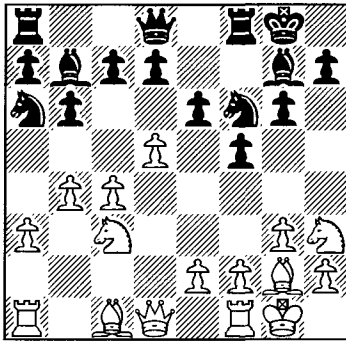
10 b4!

White has also played:

a) 10 ♚c2 , when 10... ♜c5 11 ♙e3 ♚e7 12 ♚ad1 ♜ce4 looks like a sensible reply to me. The direct 11... ♜fe4 also deserves attention: 12 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 13 dxe6 dxe6 14 ♜g5 $\text{♜xg5?!$ (14... ♚f6! is probably better, e.g. 15 ♜xe4 fxe4 16 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 17 ♚xe4 ♚xb2 18 ♚xe6+ ♙h8 when Black has a very good compensation for the sacrificed pawn – in fact White can hardly hang on to it) 15 ♙xb7 f4 and here in place of 16 ♚ad1 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ M.Drasko-B.Filipovic, Niksic 1997, White could have secured an edge with the principled 16 gxf4! ♜h3+ 17 ♙g2 ♜xf4+ 18 ♙xf4 ♚xf4 19 ♙xa8 ♚xa8+ 20 f3 .

b) 10 $\text{♚b1!?$ ♜c5 11 b4 ♜ce4 12 ♙b2 exd5 13 cxd5 ♜d6 (or 13... ♚e7 14 ♚c1 ♜d6 15 ♚b3 ♜g4 16 ♜a4 ♚ac8 17 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 18 ♜c5 ♙a8 19 ♜d3 ♜f6 20 ♚fe1 ♜de4 21 ♜df4 ♚e5 22 ♚e3 ♜g4 23 ♚b3 ♜g6 24 ♚e3 ♜g4 25 ♚b3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ G.Buecken-W.Draeger, correspondence 2000. In the current encounter, too, Black had a rock-solid

position, but not much chance of winning...) 14 ♖b3 ♕h8 15 ♜bc1 ♞c8 (15...♞e7 was more logical) 16 ♜f1 ♔g4 17 a4 a6 18 e3 (White has a persistent edge, and Black has to be extremely careful in order to stay afloat) 18...♞c8 19 ♔f4 ♕e5 20 ♔ce2 ♕e4 21 ♔d3 ♞e7? (21...♔f7) 22 ♔xe5 ♕xe5 23 ♕xe4 fxe4 24 ♞xc7! ♞xc7 25 d6 ♞g7 26 ♕xe5 ♞xe5 27 dxc7 ♞xc7 28 ♞f7 ♞d8 29 ♔f4 (intending 20 ♕e6! or if 29...♞c6 30 b5!) 1-0 J.Hjartarson-H.Gretarsson, Reykjavik 1995.



10...♔xd5

Black has tried several moves here but none of them was quite good enough:

a) 10...♔e4?! 11 ♔xe4 fxe4 (if 11...♕xa1 12 ♕g5 ♞e8 13 ♞xa1 fxe4 14 ♕h6 ♞f7 15 dxe6! dxe6 16 ♔g5 ♞e7 17 ♕xe4 with a large advantage to White) 12 ♞b1 exd5 13 cxd5 ♞e7 14 ♔g5 ♕h8 15 ♔xe4 ♞ac8 16 ♕b2 ♞f5 17 d6 ♞f8 18 ♔f6 ♕xg2 19 ♔xe8 ♕xb2 20 ♕xg2 1-0 J.Piket-J.Plaskett, Mondariz 2000.

b) 10...exd5 11 cxd5 (or 11 ♔xd5!?) ♔e4 12 ♞a2, planning to meet 12...c6 with 13 ♕xe4 fxe4 14 ♕g5 ♞e8 15 ♔e7+ ♕h8 16 ♞d6) 11...♔e4 12 ♔xe4 ♕xa1 13 ♕g5 ♞e8 14 ♞xa1 fxe4 15 ♕h6 ♞f7 16 ♔g5 ♕xd5 17 ♞d4! and with the two bishops, a weak enemy king and a terrible knight at a6, White is clearly better.

c) 10...♔h5!?! 11 ♖b3 ♕h8, as in I.Farago-A.Kharlov, Ljubljana 2002, was more complicated and perhaps best. But Black still suf-

fered for most of the game, so despite his eventual draw, I doubt he will repeat it.

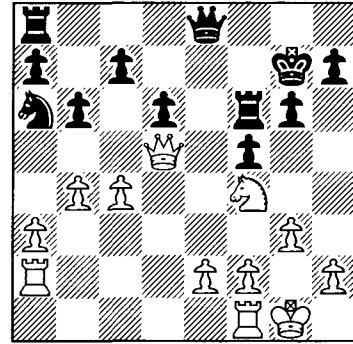
11 ♔xd5! ♕xd5 12 ♕xd5

12 cxd5! ♕xa1 13 dxe6 is even stronger.

12...exd5 13 ♞xd5+ ♕h8 14 ♞a2 ♞e8

Not 14...♞e7? 15 ♖b7! and wins.

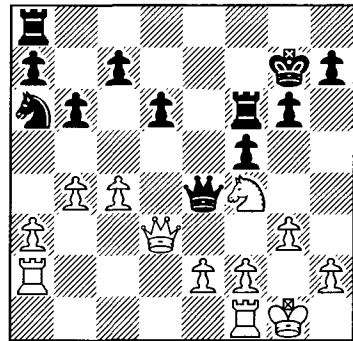
15 ♕b2 d6 16 ♕xg7+ ♕xg7 17 ♔f4 ♞f6



18 ♞d3

18 ♖b7! ♞c8 19 ♞f3 was better, with the ideas 20 e4 and 20 ♔d5 and a marked edge for White.

18...♞e4



19 ♔d5! ♞f7

Or 19...♞xd3?! 20 exd3 ♞f7 (not 20...♞e6? 21 b5) 21 ♞e2.

20 ♞d2 ♞e8 21 ♞c3+ ♞e5 22 ♞xe5+ ♞xe5 23 e3

Black is completely passive; all she can do is wait for White to open the position.

23...♖b8 24 b5! a5? 25 ♔g2 ♜e8 26 ♜e1
 ♜c8 27 e4! fxe4 28 ♜xe4 ♘d7 29 ♜de2
 ♘f6 30 ♜e7 ♘xd5 31 cxd5 ♜d8 32 f4
 ♜d7 33 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 34 g4 ♔f7 35 ♔f3
 ♜d8 36 ♜e6 ♜a8 37 a4 ♜d8 38 ♔e4 ♜c8
 39 h4 ♜d8 40 f5 ♜d7 41 fxg6+ hxg6 42
 ♔f4 1-0

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♘c3

Game 38
J.L.Chabanon-J.Ehlvest
French League 1993

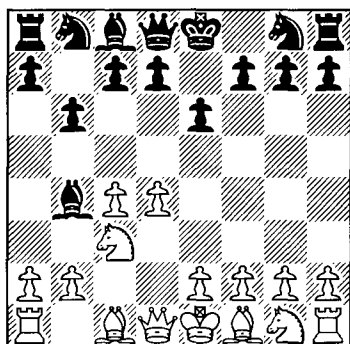
1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 e6

2...♗b7 looks more natural, but there is a finesse behind this 2...e6 move order. Black can now choose to avoid the line 1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 ♗b7 4 ♘c3 treated in Games 31-37 above. After 3 d4 he can reply instead 3...♗b4 (see below), or if 3 a3 then 3...c5 (Game 61) is a satisfactory alternative to 3...♗b7.

3 d4

The specifically English continuations, such as 3 ♘f3 or 3 a3, are examined in Chapter 3.

3...♗b4



3...♗b7 4 e4 is covered in the next section (Games 48-50), with White's fourth move alternatives in Games 42 and 43 below.

4 ♖c2

4 e3 (Games 40-41) is the most popular move here, together with 4 e4 ♗b7 of course (see the next section again). This implies that White isn't afraid of doubled c-pawns, which are not everyone's cup of tea. Other moves, such as 4 ♖c2, 4 ♖b3 and 4 ♗d2, are seen far less frequently, although they promise a complex battle too, while not conceding a permanent structural weakness.

4...c5

The normal 4...♗b7 was played in the next game. 4...c5 is an interesting alternative, but in the arising semi-open game White's pair of bishops should have its say.

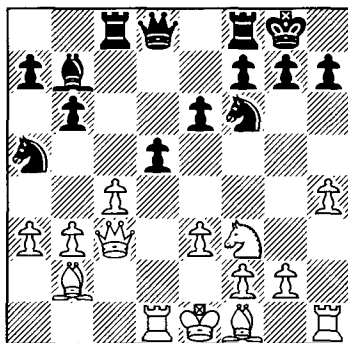
5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 ♖xc3 cxd4 7 ♖xd4 ♘f6 8 ♘f3 ♘c6 9 ♖c3

Maybe 9 ♖h4!?

9...♗b7 10 b3

10 e4 0-0 11 e5 was another possibility.

10...♜c8 11 ♗b2 d5 12 ♜d1 ♘a5 13 e3 0-0 14 h4



A typically Chabanonesque plan, aiming at animating the game. This action is moreover justified by the need for White to seek counterplay, as Black's pressure against c4 is becoming unpleasant.

14...♜e8?!

I think 14...♖e7 was more precise. Black then threatens to take on c4 and can choose where to put his f8 rook.

15 h5 h6 16 ♜h4

The logical follow-up. White's rook joins

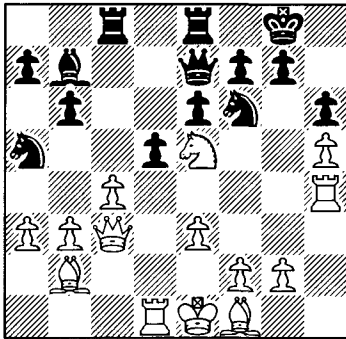
the attack on the black king, while at the same time covering the sensitive c4 spot once more.

16...♖e7 17 ♖e5

White could have tried 17 ♖b4 as well, and then:

a) 17...♙c5! (introducing a dynamic exchange sacrifice) 18 ♖d4 ♖c6 19 ♖xc5 bxc5 20 ♖c3 (maybe 20 ♖d2, although after 20...♗e4 Black has good compensation too) 20...e5! 21 cxd5 ♖d4 (Black threatens ...♗xd5, ...♗xf3+ and ...♖xh4; if the white rook stood on a more conventional square – h1, for instance! – the whole line starting with 17...♙c5 would be unsound) 22 ♖c4 (or 22 ♖h3 ♖c8 23 ♖h1 ♖g4) 22...♗xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♖h3 ♖e6 with adequate compensation for the exchange.

b) 17...♖xb4+?, on the other hand, would be incorrect: 18 axb4 ♖xb3 (or 18...♗c6 19 ♖xf6 gxf6 20 cxd5 exd5 21 b5 with a clear plus to White) 19 ♖xf6 gxf6 20 ♖b1 dxc4 21 ♖xc4 ♖c1 (the lesser evil, but after...) 22 b5! ♖xc4 23 ♖xc4 ♖d3+ 24 ♖e2 and White will gradually win.



17...♗c6

The other possibility 17...dxc4!? would not have altered the dynamic equilibrium: 18 bxc4 (18 ♗xc4?! is less appropriate after 18...♗c4 19 bxc4 e5 or 19 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 20 bxc4 ♗xh5 in both cases with a better position for Black) and then:

a) 18...♗e4? (this leaves g7 under fire of

the dangerous ♖b2 + ♖c3 battery) 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♖d7 and now Black loses material after either 20...♖h4 21 ♗xf7 e5 22 ♗d6 or 20...♖c5 21 ♖xf7 ♖e7 22 ♗d7 ♖g5 23 ♗f6+ gxf6 24 ♖xe7, or if 23...♗xf7 24 ♗xe4 ♖g4 25 f3 ♖h4+ 26 g3 and 27 ♖xg7+ will be lethal.

b) 18...♖ed8 19 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 looks about equal to me, provided that White refrains from playing 20 ♗g4?! ♗e8 21 ♗xh6+? ♗h7, when he loses a piece. Instead 20 ♖e2 or ♖f4 are correct.

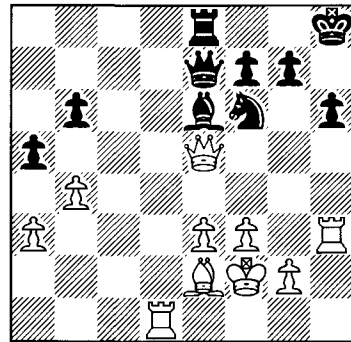
18 cxd5?!

18 ♖f4! ♗xe5 19 ♖xe5 dxc4 20 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 21 bxc4 seemed best, with approximate equality as White's has two bishops to compensate for his three pawn islands.

18...♗xe5 19 ♖xe5 ♖xd5 20 ♖g4 ♖h8 21 b4 ♖c2 22 ♖g3 ♖xb2?!

Unnecessary. White can't break through on the kingside, so something like 22...♖b3 was to be preferred. In that case 23...♖xb2 becomes a threat and with his pieces on more coherent squares, Black must be a bit better.

23 ♖xb2 ♗xh5 24 ♖h3 ♗f6 25 f3 e5 26 ♖e2 a5 27 ♖f2 ♖e6 28 ♖xe5

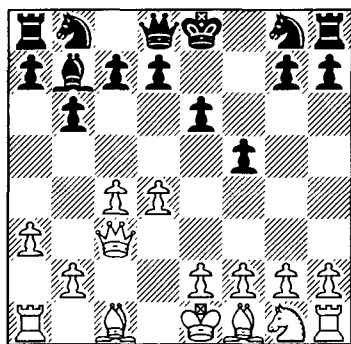


A practical choice. In the arising ending White will keep a slight edge (his bishop is stronger than the knight and his king closer to the centre) without any risk of losing. Objectively 28 ♖hh1 was better, but converting the advantage wasn't an easy job in any case.

28...axb4 29 axb4 ♖xh3 30 ♜xe7 ♜xe7
 31 gxh3 g5 32 e4 ♜g7 33 ♚e3 ♜e6 34
 ♙b5 h5 35 ♙d7 ♜xd7 36 ♜xd7 ♜c6 37
 ♜d5 f6 38 h4 ♜c3+ 39 ♚d2 ♜xf3 40
 hxg5 h4 41 ♚e2 ♜b3 42 gxh6+ ½-½

Game 39
J.Lautier-M.Adams
Amsterdam 1994

1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 d4 ♙b4 4 ♜c2 ♙b7
 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 ♜xc3 f5



6...♘f6 would transpose to a 4 ♜c2 Nimzo-Indian. Kengis has tried 6...♘e7!? several times with reasonable results. Nevertheless, and despite the Latvian grandmaster's acute feeling for these positions, I firmly believe that the horse belongs on f6 here.

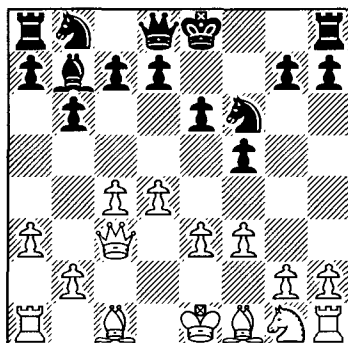
7 e3

7 ♘f3?! can't trouble Black whose play seems then easier to me than White's. In some lines of the Nimzo- or Queen's Indian, Black even spends a couple of tempi playing ...♘f6-e4, ...f7-f5, then puts his knight back on f6, and reaches a satisfactory game anyway. After 7...♘f6 8 g3 0-0 9 ♙g2 a5 10 b3 (White didn't want his queenside fixed by ...a5-a4; given the pawn structure, however, he must still pay attention to the interesting idea ...a5-a4, and if b3-b4 then ...b6-b5 would conquer the d5-square, even at the cost of a pawn) 10...d6 11 0-0 ♜e8 12 ♙b2 ♘bd7 13 b4 ♙e4

14 ♜fe1 (White would like to continue ♙f1 and ♘d2, expelling the ♙e4 from its excellent post, but he doesn't have time for this) 14...♜h5 15 c5 (I don't really like this move, but as I said before, things are simpler from Black's point of view) 15...f4! 16 ♜ac1 ♘d5 17 ♜c4 axb4 18 axb4 ♘7f6 19 ♜b3 fxb3 20 hxg3 ♘g4 21 ♜a1 ♜ad8 and Black held the initiative and went on to win on move 54 in P.Olsen-I.Andersen, Copenhagen 1993. As a parenthesis I would like to add that 21...♜xa1 was possible too, and after 22 ♙xa1 (forced, since 22 ♜xa1?? ♙xf3 23 exf3 ♜h2+ 24 ♚f1 ♘de3+ 25 fxe3 ♜xf3+ wins) 22...b5 White is completely tied down.

7...♘f6 8 f3

Depriving Black of the e4-square while restricting the ♙b7 is White's best bet to fight for an advantage. He will fall behind in development at this stage, but that isn't too important given the closed character of the game.

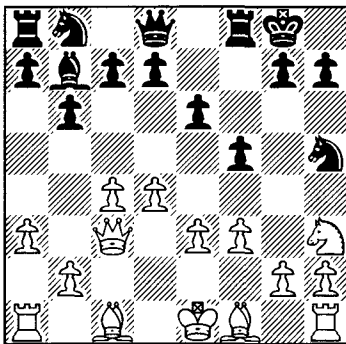


8...♘h5

After 8...0-0, in I.Stohl-E.Prie, European Team Championship, Haifa 1989, White experimented with another arrangement of his minor pieces: 9 ♜c2 c5 10 ♙d3 ♘c6 (10...cxd4!? 11 exd4 d5 was worth attention; as a counterpart to his backward e-pawn Black will give his opponent an isolani on the d-file, unless White goes for the double-edged 12 c5) 11 ♘e2 ♘h5 12 0-0 ♜f6 13 b3 d6 (perhaps the ugly 13...cxd4!? wasn't so bad: 14

♙b2 e5 15 exd4 ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 exd4 and the extra pawn will of course fall, but if Black manages to swap his knight for White's d3 bishop he should be rather safe; e.g. 17 ♖d2 ♗d6 18 ♜fd1 ♘f4 19 ♙f1 d3!, insisting on the above-mentioned plan, and as g2-g3 would weaken his kingside, I don't see how White can recover the pawn without allowing his light-squared bishop to be exchanged) 14 ♙b2 ♗g5 15 ♙c1 ♖f6 16 ♙b2 ♗g5 17 ♜f2! (avoiding the draw by repetition is the right decision here; indeed, it is difficult for Black to strengthen the kingside offensive he has begun, whereas White's pair of bishops may play an important role in the long run) 17...♞ae8 (not 17...♞xe3?? 18 ♙c1 and wins) 18 ♞d1 ♖h8 19 ♗d2 ♘e7 20 ♘f4 and White stood slightly better, again because of his two bishops. Here is the rest of this instructive game: 20...♘xf4 21 exf4 ♗g6 22 dxc5 dxc5 23 ♙c2 ♘c6 24 ♖e3 ♞d8 25 ♞dd2 ♞xd2 26 ♞xd2 ♞d8 27 ♞xd8+ ♘xd8 28 b4 cxb4 29 axb4 h5 30 ♖f2 ♗f7 31 c5 ♖e7 32 cxb6 ♗xb4 33 ♖e5 ♖e7 34 bxa7 ♘c6 35 ♖e3 ♙a8 36 ♙b3 ♗b7 37 ♗xe6 ♖xa7+ 38 ♖g3 1-0.

9 ♘h3 0-0



10 ♙e2 ♖h4+

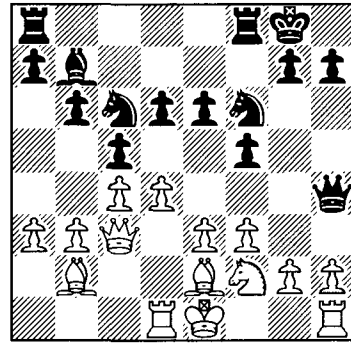
Black could do without this check, but posting the queen actively can't do any harm.

11 ♘f2 d6 12 b3

12 0-0 would lead to an unclear game after

12...♘d7 13 ♘d3, preventing ...e6-e5 while threatening c4-c5, hence 13...c5 when Black has a better version of Stohl-Prie and mutual chances.

12...c5 13 ♙b2 ♘f6 14 ♞d1 ♘c6



15 dxc5

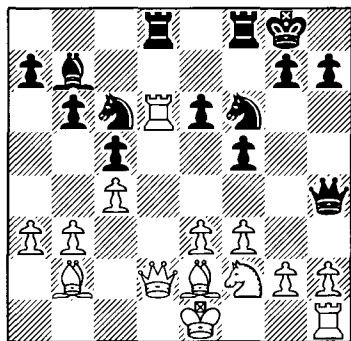
The other safe option was 15 0-0, when Stohl indicates 15...e5 16 dxe5 dxe5 17 ♞d6 ♞ae8 with the idea of ...f5-f4, in order to gain the d4-square for Black's knight. I agree that the position is about level then.

15 d5?! is rightly dismissed by the Slovakian grandmaster as being risky for White. Indeed, after 15...exd5 16 ♞xd5 ♗g5 17 ♞xd6 ♖xg2, if the material balance is restored, White may get concerned about his unsafe king. Nevertheless, 16 cxd5 isn't that bad for White (thanks to the tactical point on move 19 after 17...♘xd5), though Black has many ways at his disposal to reach a fine game; e.g. 16...♘e5 (or 16...♘e7!?) 17 0-0 ♜f7 (if 17...♘xd5?! 18 ♞xd5 ♙xd5 19 f4! is surely not worse for White) 18 f4 ♘eg4 19 ♘xg4 ♘xg4 is either equal or perhaps even a bit better for Black.

15...dxc5 16 ♞d6 ♞ad8! 17 ♗d2

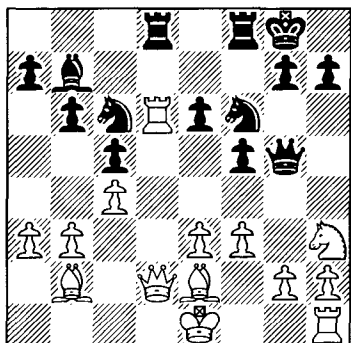
17 ♞xe6?! would lose the exchange for insufficient compensation: 17...♖f7! 18 ♞xc6 (if 18 ♞xf6+ ♖xf6 19 ♗xf6+ gx6 Black is slightly better and, without queens on the board, has few chances of going wrong) 18...♙xc6 19 ♖e5 and now, rather than Stohl's suggestion of 19...♞fe8?! 20 ♖c7+

♔d7, when White should be OK after 21 0-0 (he is indeed quite active, has a pawn for the exchange, and Black's pieces are not totally free in their movement), it seems stronger to play first 19...♖g5!, to be followed by 20...♗fe8 and White is in trouble. The materialistic 20 ♖c7+? now fails to 20...♔g8! 21 ♖xc6 ♖xe3 when Black will at least pick up a piece and remain a healthy exchange up, while 20 h4 ♖h6 doesn't change anything.



17...♖g5 18 ♔h3

18 0-0? would be nice if only e3 wasn't hanging, i.e. 18...♗xd6 19 ♖xd6 ♖xe3 with a clear edge to Black.



18...♖h4+

There was another, more violent, path to a draw in 18...♖xg2 19 ♔g1 ♗xd6! (not 19...♖xh3? 20 ♔xf6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xg7+ ♔h8 22 ♗f7+ ♔g8 23 ♗xf8+ ♔xf8 24 ♖xd6+ ♔f7 25

♔g5 followed by 26 ♖d7+ and Black can resign, or if 20...♗xf6 21 ♗xd8+ ♔xd8 22 ♖xd8+ ♗f8 23 ♖c7 ♗f7 24 ♖b8+ and White wins a piece) 20 ♖xd6 ♖xh3 21 ♖xe6+ ♔h8 22 ♔xf6 gxh6 23 ♗g8+! ♗xg8 24 ♖xf6+ ♗g7 25 ♖f8+ etc. A nice way to share the point!

19 ♔f2 ♖g5 20 ♔h3 ♖h4+ 21 ♔f2 ½-½

As either side would only get a worse position by avoiding the repetition, peace was agreed.

Game 40

J.Lautier-E.Bricard

French League 1992

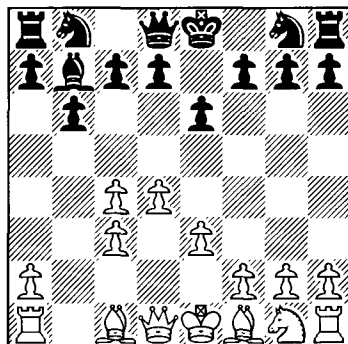
1 c4 b6 2 ♔c3 e6 3 d4 ♔b4 4 e3

The most popular move here.

4...♔xc3+

4...♔f6 would transpose into a Nimzo-Indian again, while any other move would allow 5 ♔ge2 followed by 6 a3. In that case White could count on a slight edge, based either on the pair of bishops or a spatial advantage; as for example after 4...♔b7 5 ♔ge2 in the first note to Game 43.

5 bxc3 ♔b7



Black seems to have good prospects from this position, as the French IM Emmanuel Bricard has demonstrated in two of his games.

6 ♔f3

6 f3 is the next game.

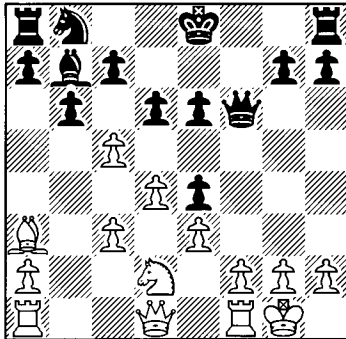
6...f5 7 ♔d3 ♔f6 8 ♔a3 ♔e4 9 0-0

As the guardian of h5 has left its post, 9 ♖e5?! might be tempting, when White intends both 10 ♖h5+ and 10.0-0 followed by f2-f3; unfortunately Black strikes first and gains a slight edge after 9...♗g5!

9...♗f6 10 ♖d2 d6 11 ♙xe4

If 11 f3 ♖xd2 12 ♗xd2 Black should succeed in keeping the position closed by 12...♖d7 13 e4 f4 with a balanced game.

11...fxe4 12 c5



White's chances are connected with the opening of the other flank, and I'm not sure whether this otherwise thematic sacrifice really serves that purpose. Instead, 12 f3! would probably have better met the demands of the position; e.g. 12...♗h6 (12...exf3 13 e4 ♖d7 14 ♗xf3 ♗h6 is similar and equal) 13 fxe4 ♗xe3+ 14 ♖h1 ♖d7 (14...♗xc3? is far too risky: after the energetic reply 15 ♗h5+ g6 16 ♗g4 ♙c8 17 ♖b3 ♗xc4 18 ♗ac1 ♗a6 19 e5! the deserted black monarch is bound to succumb to the white assault) 15 ♗f3 ♗g5 16 ♗g3 ♗h6 and a draw by 17 ♗h3 ♗g5 18 ♗g3 seems a fair conclusion to me.

12...dxc5 13 dxc5?!

It wasn't too late for 13 f3! exf3 14 ♖xf3 ♗g6 15 dxc5 ♖c6 (15...♖d7!?) and now 16 ♗f2 seems clever. Black is prevented from castling either side, the ♖f3 is now free to move (as there is no more potential mate on g2), so White has enough compensation for his shattered pawn structure. Whereas Joel's

more ambitious move doesn't seem quite good enough.

13...♗xc3! 14 ♖b3 ♖c6 15 ♗g4 ♗e5

White can't keep the enemy king on his starting square, so Black's extra pawn is worth more than his temporary discomfort.

16 ♗fd1 ♖e7 17 ♗ac1

17 cxb6? axb6 18 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 would be playing into Black's hands, but this is exactly what White's does on the next move.

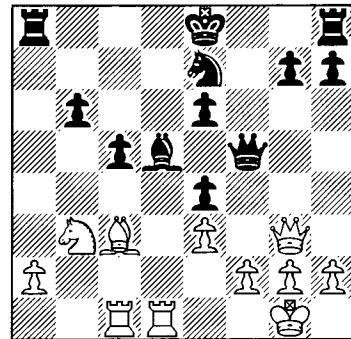
17...♙d5 18 cxb6?

As the ♖e7 is hanging, Black wasn't ready to castle yet. Therefore it would have been better for White to pass, especially as he didn't have many useful moves.

Now Black's edge is taking on serious proportions.

18...axb6 19 ♙b4 c5 20 ♙c3 ♗f5 21 ♗g3

21 ♗xg7? would accelerate White's end after 21...♗g8 22 ♗h6 ♗xa2 23 ♖d2 b5 and the passed pawns are rolling.



21...♗xa2?

This seemingly natural move could in fact have compromised Black's winning chances. The neat 21...♗f7!, followed by ...0-0, would have brought the second player a close-to-decisive advantage.

22 ♗a1?

22 ♖d2! was required, when the threat of ♗b8+ (or ♗c7) renders Black's task difficult, e.g. 22...e5!?

square) 23 ♖xe5 ♜g6 24 ♖c7 ♜xg3 25 hxg3, when combined threats of 26 ♖xb6 and 26 ♜xe4 ♖xe4 27 ♜d8+ regain the pawn and White isn't worse.

22...♞xa1 23 ♞xa1 ♜f8?

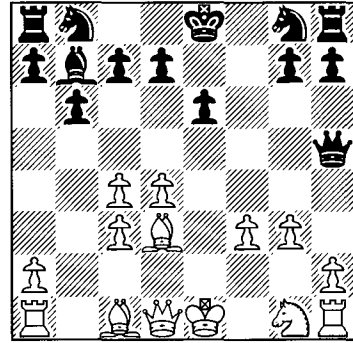
Now 23...e5! would have concluded the game, for instance 24 ♖xe5 ♖xb3 25 ♞a8+ ♜c8 26 ♜xg7 ♞f8 and the extra piece will tell once White's activity has been extinguished.

24 ♞a7?!

Too active. Again 24 ♜d2 was more stubborn, e.g. 24...e5 25 ♖xe5 ♜g6 (Black is happy to get rid of the queens, even at the cost of another pawn; indeed, his two passers provide him with a clear, if not quite decisive advantage) 26 ♜xg6+ ♜xg6 27 ♖xg7 ♞f7 28 ♖b2 and White retains some hope of salvation. His main defensive resource consists of somehow giving up a piece for the queenside duo, and then trying to eliminate Black's remaining little soldiers on the kingside.

The rest of the game, however, needs no comment.

24...e5 25 ♜d2 ♞f6 26 ♖xe5 ♜g6 27 ♜f4 ♜xf4 28 ♖xf4 b5 29 ♞a5 c4 30 ♖e5 b4 31 ♞b5 c3 32 ♜f1 c2 33 ♖b2 ♞c6 34 ♖c1 b3 35 ♜g3 ♞a6 0-1

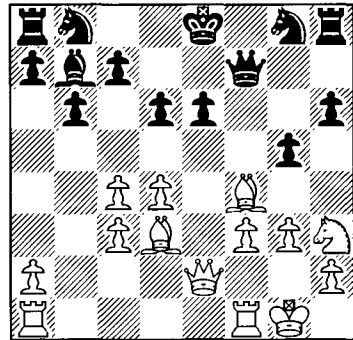


11 ♖f4 d6 12 ♜e2 ♜f7

And if Black was ready to give up his castling rights (he later moves his king to d7), then either 12...♜f7 or 12...♜d7 was more logical.

13 ♜h3 h6 14 0-0 g5

This provocative move proves dangerous, but ♞ae1 was coming, leaving Black in bad shape anyway.



15 ♖xg5!

At first I thought 15 ♖d2 was simpler. Black can't allow the kingside to be opened by f3-f4, so the following line is rather forced: 15...♜f6 16 ♞ae1 ♜d7 (not the happiest choice, but otherwise Black loses e6) 17 f4 g4 18 ♜f2 ♖f3 19 ♜e3 ♜c6, but things are not so clear here, and Black may well be alright.

15...hxg5 16 ♜xg5 ♜f6 17 ♜xe6 ♜d7 18 ♞ae1 ♜c6

Game 41

E. Neiman-E. Bricard

French Championship, Narbonne 1997

1 c4 b6 2 ♜c3 e6 3 d4 ♖b4 4 e3 ♖xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♖b7 6 f3 ♜h4+ 7 g3 ♜h5 8 e4 f5 9 exf5 ♜xf5?!

The gambit 9...♜e7! 10 fxe6 (otherwise 10...♜xf5) 10...0-0 yields Black a huge lead in development and a powerful initiative for the pawn(s). It was therefore a more promising continuation than the game, where White's activity fully compensates for his weaknesses.

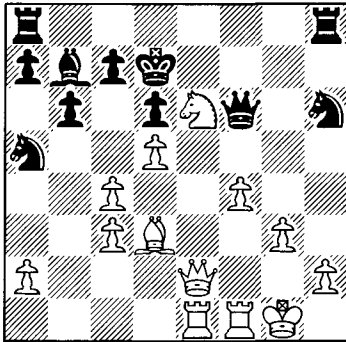
10 ♖d3 ♜h5?!

As Black soon moves his queen again, it follows that the immediate 10...♜f7 would have been better.

18...♠h6 19 g4 was no improvement.

19 f4 ♖h6 20 d5 ♠a5?!

Bringing the knight back to defend was wiser. After 20...♗d8 21 g4 ♗xe6 22 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 23 ♖xe6 ♖af8 White is surely better, but maybe not enough to win.



21 ♖h5?

21 g4! ♖ag8 22 g5, with the idea of ♖g4 once the knight has withdrawn, would have been tough to meet. After the move chosen by Neiman, however, the rest of the game as well as the peaceful outcome, seems logical.

21...♖ag8 22 ♗d4

On 22 ♗g5 Black has the following path to a draw: 22...♗c8 23 ♗h7 ♖f8 24 ♖e6 ♖xc3 25 ♖xh6 ♖d4+ 26 ♖f2 ♖a1+ 27 ♖f1 ♖d4+ with a repetition of moves, which White is best advised not to avoid because of ...♗xc4 and ...♗xd5.

22...♗c8 23 ♖e6 ♖g7 24 ♖fe1

The more direct 24 ♖g6!? is tricky but may lead to a double-edged ending after 24...♖h7 (24...♖f8? would be a fatal mistake, as 25 ♖h3+ ♗b8 26 ♗e6 ♗c8 27 f5 is winning for White) 25 ♗f5+ ♗b8 26 ♖g4 ♖f7 27 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 28 ♖xg8+ ♖xg8 29 ♗e6 ♖f8 30 g4 ♗xc4 with an unclear situation. White's pawns look impressive, but the c4 knight may come back into play and then anything can happen.

24...♗a6 25 ♖g6

25 ♖e7 was probably White's last chance to

deviate, but Black escapes again by means of a timely counter-attack: 25...♖f6 26 ♖1e6 ♖xf4 27 ♖c8+ ♗b7 28 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 (or 28...♖c1+ 29 ♗g2 ♖xg8 30 ♖xh6 ♖xc3 and c4 is going to fall with a messy game) 29 ♖xh6 ♖xg3+ 30 hxg3 ♖xg3+ 31 ♗h1 ♖xd3, when White is the exchange up but his four remaining pawns are weak. If anyone can win it is certainly Black.

25...♖h7 26 ♖xg8+ ♖xg8 27 ♖e7 ♗xc4 28 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 29 ♗e6 ♗b8 30 ♖e2 b5 31 ♗xc7 ♖g6 32 ♗a6+ ♗a8 33 ♗c7+ ♗b8 34 ♗a6+ ♗a8 35 ♗c7+ ♗b8 36 ♗a6+ ½-½

Game 42

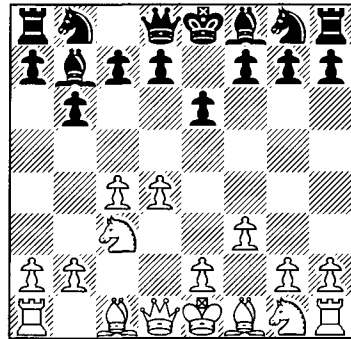
A.Aleksandrov-A.Beliavsky

Cahvia Olympiad 2004

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♗c3 ♗b7

The most popular move, which Black may have already played in any case (e.g. 1 c4 b6 2 ♗c3 ♗b7 3 d4 e6).

4 f3!?



This preparatory move looks a little strange, seeing as White could have played 4 e4 without any preamble (for which see Games 48-50). Although 4 f3!? can't be taken seriously from a 'theoretical' standpoint, it is worthy of attention for a practical game. Indeed, a strategically complex struggle is to be expected, in which White hasn't revealed his

cards and therefore remains quite flexible.

The main alternative, 4 e3, is seen in the next game.

4...d5

Beliavsky's reaction is (of course!) sensible: Black takes space in the centre while hindering e2-e4. Nevertheless, I would personally have preferred 4...f5, as in E.Ibanez-H.Hamdouchi, Sitges 1994, which continued 5 e3 g6 6 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d3}$ $\text{\textcircled{g}}\text{7}$ 7 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{ge2}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{4+}$ 8 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g3}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{6}$ 9 0-0 0-0 10 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{ge2}$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{7}$ 11 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{2}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{8}$ 12 a3 d5!? with a middlegame rich in possibilities for both sides.

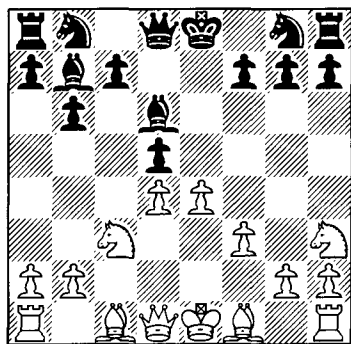
5 cxd5 exd5 6 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{3}$

On 6 e3, trying to complete development with $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d3}$, $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{ge2}$, 0-0 etc., Black can play the disturbing 6... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d6!}$, threatening ... $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{4+}$.

6... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d6?}$

But here I totally agree with Flear's statement that Black's troubles began with this move. Instead 6... $\text{\textcircled{f}}\text{6!}$ 7 $\text{\textcircled{g}}\text{5}$ $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{7}$ was a simple path to equality.

7 e4!



7...dxe4 8 fxe4 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{6}$

Indirectly hitting d4, as after 9... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xd4}$ 10 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{xd4}$ $\text{\textcircled{g}}\text{3+}$ would win her majesty.

9 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{3}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{6!?}$

9... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{ge7}$ was certainly more flexible. Black can then continue ... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g6}$ or ...f7-f6 (should the advance e4-e5 one day become a real threat), while castling short is not totally excluded.

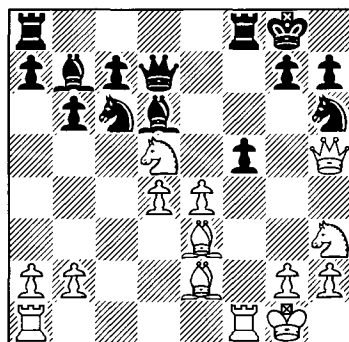
10 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{5}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{7}$ 11 $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{2}$

In case White had taken the knight, Black was relying on potential counterplay on the dark squares. The following line illustrates his idea: 11 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{hx6}$ gxf6 12 0-0-0 0-0-0 13 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{hx6}$ (perhaps 13 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{c4}$, which looks like a pleasant plus for White) 13... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{f8}$ 14 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h5}$ and now, instead of 14... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xd4?}$! 15 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g5!}$ which favours White, 14... $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{d6!?}$ seems reasonable. Black has the possibility of a big check on h6, while if his opponent has to play 15 d5, then 15... $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{e5}$ (or 15... $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h6+}$ first) should give the second player realistic compensation for the pawn.

11...0-0 12 0-0

12 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{hx6!?}$ gxf6 13 0-0-0 also promised White the better prospects.

12...f6 13 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{5}$ f5



14 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{ad1?}$

14 e5! was more clear-cut (and above all stronger!), as tactics work for White here: 14... $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{xe5}$ (14... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xd4}$ is also refuted by 15 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{c4!}$) 15 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{c4!}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h8}$ 16 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{hx6}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{a5}$ (or 16... $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xd4}$ 17 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{f4}$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{xd5}$ 18 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{g5}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{e2+!}$? 19 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{xe2}$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d4+}$ 20 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h1}$ g6 21 $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{h3}$ $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{xb2}$ 22 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{ad1}$ when Black does not really have three pawns for the knight: his king is fatally weak and material losses are to be expected soon) 17 dxe5 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{xc4}$ 18 $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{f6!}$ and Black is struggling after both 18...gxf6 19 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{xf8}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{xf8}$ 20 exf6 or 18... $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{f7}$ 19 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{g5}$ $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{hx5}$ 20 $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{dx5}$ $\text{\textcircled{d}}\text{xe5}$ and then the precise 21 $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{d2!}$, when converting the extra piece is very easy.

14...♗g4! 15 ♖xg4

According to Flear, this move definitely let the advantage slip. He suggests instead 15 ♖f4!?, assuming that White is still on top after 15...♗xd4 (15...g6 16 ♖h4) 16 ♖c4 ♖h8 17 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 18 ♗g5. But in that case, too, proving an edge is tough: 18...♖h6 19 ♖xh6 gxh6 20 ♗xc7 (on 20...♗xd4 c5 seems OK for Black) 20...hxg5 and now both 21 ♗xd4 and 21 ♗xa8 ♗c2 22 ♗c7 ♖xe4 are still quite messy, in my opinion.

15...fxg4 16 ♗g5?

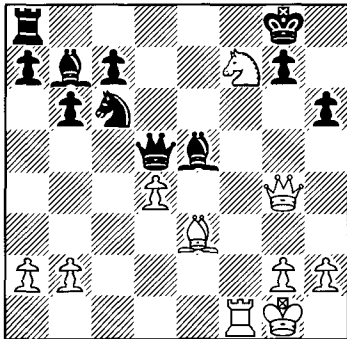
After this further inaccuracy it is even Black's position which becomes superior. 16 ♗hf4! was correct, with roughly even chances.

16...h6 17 e5 ♗xf1+! 18 ♗xf1

Not 18 ♖xf1? ♗f8+ 19 ♖g1 (or 19 ♗f6+ ♗xf6+ 20 exf6 hxg5 and Black should win) 19...♖e7 20 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 and the knight on g5 is embarrassed.

18...♖xe5! 19 ♗f7 ♖xd5 20 ♖xg4

20 dxe5?? goes down to 20...♗xe5, due to the threat of mate on g2.

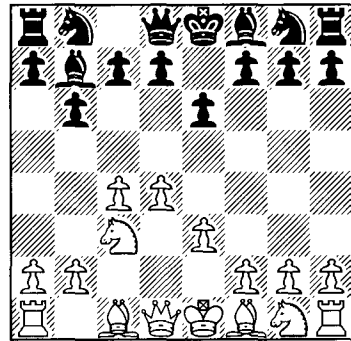
**20...♖xd4?**

This natural capture will only be rewarded by a draw. Instead, 20...♗xd4! seems to bring the full point home: 21 ♗xe5 (or 21 ♗xh6+ ♖h7 22 ♗f7 ♖f6 and the extra piece should soon tell) 21...h5 22 ♗g6 (if 22 ♖g5 ♗e6 23 ♖g3 h4 and the queen is overloaded) 22...hxg4 23 ♗e7+ ♖h7 24 ♗xd5 ♗e2+! 25

♖f2 ♖xd5 26 ♖xe2 ♖c4+ and wins.

21 ♗xh6+ ♖h7 22 ♗f5 ♖xe3+

Attempting to avoid the repetition that follows, by means of 22...♖e5, would have run into another peaceful end: 23 ♖f4 ♖c4 24 ♖h5+ ♖g8 25 ♖xe5 ♖c5+ 26 ♖h1 ♗xe5 27 ♖g5 g6 28 ♗e7+ etc., or if 26...♖xe5 27 ♗e7+ ♖xe7 28 ♖d5+ with a draw.

23 ♗xe3 ♖e5 24 ♗f5 ♗f8 25 ♖h3+ ♖g8 26 ♖b3+ ½-½*Game 43***F.Handke-C.Bauer***Metz 2000***1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 ♗c3 ♖b7 4 e3****4...f5**

4...♖b4 was still an interesting alternative, but as White can now avoid doubled c-pawns I have more faith in 4...f5. After 4...♖b4 5 ♗ge2 f5 (5...♗f6 6 a3 ♖xc3+ 7 ♗xc3 would transpose into a Nimzo-Indian, with White's prospects being better due to the two bishops) 6 a3 ♖d6 (again if 6...♖xc3+ 7 ♗xc3 and Black has little to compensate for the loss of the bishop pair) 7 d5 (7 b4!? is good too) 7...♗f6 8 g3, we reach the type of position which usually arises in the 1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 a3 line, so that Black seems just to have wasted a tempo with 4...♖b4. We can therefore conclude that White must be slightly better here.

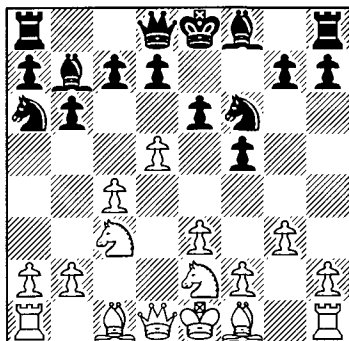
5 ♖ge2?!

Perhaps 5 f3!?, intending to develop with ♖h3-f2 and ♙e2, was more to the point. The game continuation wasn't very troublesome for Black.

5...♖f6 6 d5 ♖a6

Black keeps open the possibility of a double fianchetto formation.

7 g3



One may notice the similarity between the present position and that arising after 4 a3 f5 5 d5 ♖f6 6 g3 ♖a6 in Games 32-33 above. If White has saved the tempo a2-a3, the position of his knight at e2, rather than f3, provides Black with other resources.

7 ♖d4, instead of the text move, could have been answered either by 7...♖c5 or the more promising 7...♙b4 8 dxe6 dxe6 (or 8...♖e4! 9 ♖xf5 dxe6) 9 ♖xe6 ♖e7 which gives Black the initiative and a dangerous lead in development for a mere pawn.

7...c6 8 ♙g2

If 8 dxe6? c5! illustrates the difference in the knight's placement, mentioned in the previous note. Now after the principled response 9 exd7+ ♖xd7 10 ♖xd7+ ♙xd7 11 ♙g1 ♖b4 Black has nice compensation for the pawn, in the form of active pieces. Alternatively, 8...dxe6 9 ♖xd8+ ♙xd8 10 ♙g2 e5 also favours Black, owing to his spatial advantage.

8...cxd5 9 cxd5 ♖b4!

And here again we see the drawback of not

having the knight on f3. White can't take on e6 and is thus forced into intricate manoeuvres so as not to lose the d-pawn.

10 ♖f4 e5 11 ♖d3?

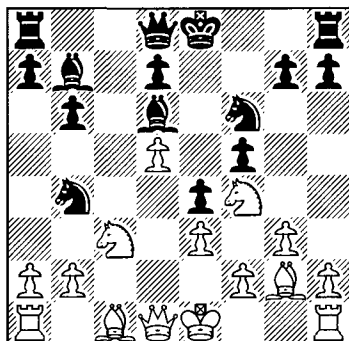
Accepting an inferior position. 11 ♖h5? e4 or 11...♙a6 would not have helped either, but the more combative 11 a3! would have kept White afloat: 11...exf4 (on 11...♖a6?! both 12 ♖h5 and 12 ♖fe2 are very acceptable for White) 12 axb4 fxg3! (better than 12...fxe3 which frees the c1 bishop: 13 ♙xc3 ♙xb4 14 0-0 and now 14...0-0 15 ♖b3 or 14...♙xc3 15 bxc3 0-0 16 ♖d3 seems to give White fairly decent compensation for the pawn) 13 hxg3 ♙xb4 14 ♖d4 and despite the loss of a pawn, White is much more lively than in the game.

11...e4 12 ♖f4

Or 12 ♖xb4 ♙xb4 13 ♙d2 ♖e7 and the d5 pawn is condemned.

12...♙d6

12...g5 13 a3 was possible as well, but I didn't think I needed to weaken my kingside.



13 0-0

Perhaps 13 a3 ♙xf4 14 axb4 ♙e5 was a tad better, though White's position is pretty disgusting here too.

13...♙a6

Instead 13...♙xf4?! 14 exf4 ♖bxd5 15 ♖b5! or 15 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 16 b3 would have given White some glimmers of hope.

14 ♖fe2 0-0 15 b3

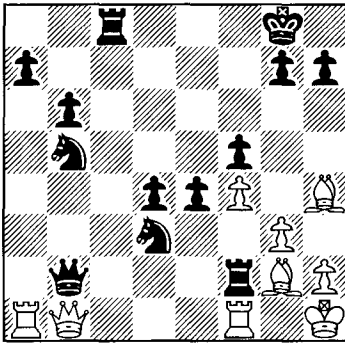
It was probably the last moment for White

to undertake something with 15 f3!?, though, objectively, I doubt it could have really disturbed Black.

15...♠d3 16 ♖d2 ♜c8 17 a4 ♗e7 18 ♜b5 ♜xb5 19 axb5 ♜c7 20 ♜f4 ♜xf4 21 exf4 ♜fc8

This already looks frightening from White's point of view, but wait for the final position!

22 ♜a3 ♗f7 23 ♗e3 ♜xd5 24 ♗d4 ♜c3 25 ♜h1 ♗xb3 26 ♜e7 ♜xb5 27 ♗e3 d5 28 ♜h4 d4 29 ♗e2 ♜c2 30 ♗d1 ♗b2 31 ♗b1 ♜xf2 0-1



To my opponent's credit I should say that, before this round, he had quite a good tournament. His previous wins probably cost him too much energy...

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4 ♜b7

Game 44

R. Burnett-J. Kraai

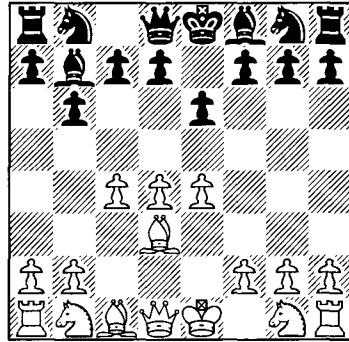
US Championship, San Diego 2004

1 d4 e6

This move order is designed to avoid the d2-d4, e2-e4 lines from the first chapter. Black agrees to play against a white pawn on e4, but only if another has already appeared on c4. Otherwise, if White continues 2 e4, Black may prefer to play a French Defence with 2...d5. What one is ready to allow and avoid is a mat-

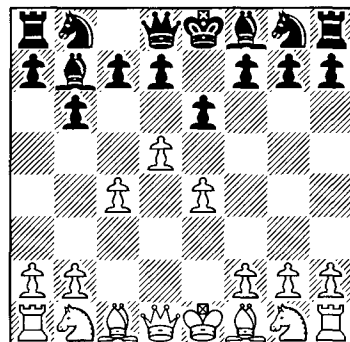
ter of taste.

2 c4 b6 3 e4 ♜b7 4 ♜d3



This line is reputedly difficult to handle with Black. Although it doesn't actually belong, frankly speaking, to positions arising after 1...b6 (how does White achieve it after 1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♜b7 - ?), I will say a few words about it and White's fourth move alternatives. Apart from the text, White can also play 4 ♗c2 and 4 f3, which are seen in the next few games, while 4 ♜c3 ♜b4 (a true 1...b6 variation, arising after 1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♜b7 3 ♜c3 e6 4 e4 ♜b4) is examined in Games 48-50.

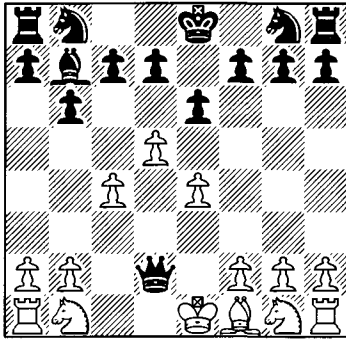
White's final option is 4 d5, with which he increases his spatial advantage.



On the other hand, 4 d5 does not help White's development and gives away the c5- and e5-squares. To these obvious drawbacks, one can add that in certain lines Black has a

supplementary means of counterplay: the undermining ...c7-c6. All in all, I believe 4 d5 has more cons than pros. More concretely, Black has a safe choice here, between 4...♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♚e7 and the more complicated 4...♗f6 5 ♙d3 b5 6 cxb5 exd5 7 e5 ♗e4. In both cases he reaches a roughly equal game:

a) 4...♙b4+ 5 ♙d2 ♚e7 6 ♙xb4 ♚xb4+ 7 ♚d2 ♚xd2+ and then:



a1) 8 ♗xd2 was played in the stem game J.Timman-B.Spassky, Tilburg 1983, which continued 8...♗f6 9 ♗c3 d6 10 ♙d3 0-0 11 ♗f3 c6 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗b7 15 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 16 f3 ♙ad8 1/2-1/2. In the final position a possible continuation is 17 ♗c2 ♗e5 18 ♙e2 c5, followed by ...♗c6-d4, when Black's activity more than compensates for the isolated e-pawn.

a2) 8 ♗xd2 with two examples:

a21) 8...c6 9 dxe6 dxe6 10 e5 c5 11 f4 ♗e7 12 ♗gf3 0-0 13 ♙d3 ♗bc6 14 ♙e4 ♙ad8 15 0-0-0 ♙a6 16 a3 ♗a5 17 b3 b5 18 cxb5 ♙xb5 19 ♗b2 ♙b8 20 ♙c1 ♙a4 21 ♙c3 ♗xb3 22 ♗xb3 c4 23 ♗fd2 cxb3 24 ♗xb3 ♙fd8 25 ♙hc1 ♙d4 26 ♙e1 ♗d5 27 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 28 ♙ec3 ♙db5 29 ♗a2 h5 30 ♙h3 g6 31 ♙hd3 h4 32 g4 g5 33 fxg5 ♗g7 34 ♗d2 ♙xe5 35 ♙d4 ♙e2 36 ♙h3 ♙c6 37 a4 ♙d5+ and White resigned in P.Sjodahl-E.Kengis, Vienna 1996.

a22) 8...f5 9 exf5 exd5 10 ♗gf3 ♗e7 11 g4 h5 12 ♙g1 dxc4 13 ♙xc4 hxg4 14 ♙xg4

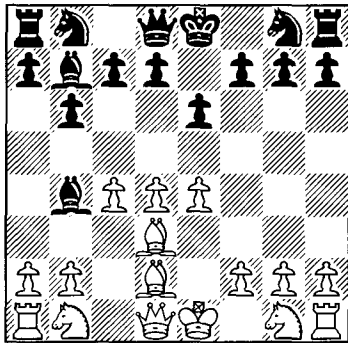
♗bc6 15 ♙d3 0-0-0 16 b4 ♙d8 17 b5 ♗d8 18 ♗h4 ♗f7 19 f4 ♗d6 20 0-0-0 ♗dxf5 21 ♙xf5 ♗xf5 22 ♗g6 ♗e3 23 ♙d3 ♗d1 ♗xg4 24 ♙xg4 ♗d8 25 ♗c4 ♙d5 26 ♗ce5 ♙e6 27 ♙g3 ♙hg8 28 ♙a3 d6 29 ♗c6+ ♗d7 30 ♗xf8+ ♙xf8 31 ♙xa7 ♙xf4 32 ♗b8+ ♗c8 33 ♗c6 ♙f1+ 34 ♗b2 ♙f2+ 35 ♗b1 ♙f5+ 36 ♗c1 g6 37 a4 ♙xh2 38 ♙a8+ ♗d7 39 ♙d8+ ♗e6 40 ♙e8+ ♗f6 41 ♙f8+ ♗g7 42 ♙e8 ♙c2+ 43 ♗d1 ♙c4 44 ♙e7+ ♗f6 45 ♙xc7 ♙c2+ 46 ♗d2 ♙xa4 47 ♙d7 ♗e6 48 ♙e7+ ♗f5 49 ♗d3 ♙c5 50 ♗d4+ ♗g5 51 ♙b7 ♙xb5+ 52 ♗d2 ♙d5 53 ♗e3 ♗g4 54 ♙xb6 ♙c4 55 ♙c6 ♙f1 56 ♙c1 ♙e5+ 57 ♗f2 ♙e4 58 ♙d1 ♙c4 59 ♙d2 d5 60 ♗c2 ♗f4 61 ♗e1 d4 62 ♗g2+ ♗g4 63 ♗e1 ♙f4+ 64 ♗g2 ♙f1+ 65 ♗g1 ♗g3 66 ♗g2 ♙xg2 67 ♙xg2+ ♗f3 68 ♗f1 ♗e4+ 69 ♗e2 ♗f5 70 ♙g1 g5 71 ♙a1 g4 72 ♙a5+ ♗e4 73 ♙a3 ♙f3 74 ♙a4 ♗f4 75 ♙xd4+ ♗g3 76 ♙a4 ♗h3 77 ♙e4 ♙f8 78 ♗e1 g3 79 ♙e7 g2 and 0-1 in Z.Rahman-J.Spelman, Calcutta 1998. A perfect illustration of a white centre falling apart!

b) 4...♗f6 5 ♙d3 b5 6 cxb5 exd5 7 e5 (7 exd5!?) 7...♗e4 8 ♗f3 a6 9 0-0 axb5 10 ♙xb5 ♙c5 11 ♗c3 0-0 12 ♙f4 f6 13 exf6 ♙xf6 14 ♙xc7 d6 15 ♗xd5 ♙xb2 16 ♙c4 ♗xf2 17 ♙b1 ♙xb1 18 ♙axb1 ♙a6 19 ♙xa6 ♗e4+ 20 ♗h1 ♗xa6 21 ♙b6 ♙xb6 22 ♗xb6 ♙a7 23 ♗d4 ♙e8 24 ♙b2 ♗ac5 25 ♗d5 h6 26 ♗c6 ♙f7 27 ♙xf7 ♗xf7 28 g3 ♙c8 29 ♗d4 ♙a8 30 ♗b6 ♙a3 31 ♗b5 ♙d3 32 ♗g2 ♙d1 33 ♗f3 d5 34 ♗e2 ♙h1 35 ♗e3 ♙e1+ 36 ♗d4 ♙d1+ 37 ♗e3 d4+ 38 ♗e2 ♙h1 39 ♗c4 ♙xh2+ 40 ♗f3 ♗g5+ 41 ♗g4 ♙xb2 42 ♗xb2 d3 43 ♗f4 d2 44 ♗c3 ♗e6 1/2-1/2 G.Serper-J.Hodgson, Groningen 1993.

Returning to the main line 4 ♙d3, it should be noted that Black must react quickly before White has played ♗f3 and 0-0, when his space advantage would be very unpleasant. Therefore only three moves make sense: 4...♙b4+, 4...♗c6 and the critical 4...f5. Among these moves my preference would be for 4...f5, but let's examine the pros and cons

of each option:

a) 4...♖b4+ aims at trading a pair of pieces and thus easing Black's position (exchanging pieces is a known recipe when one lacks space). The drawback of this move is that it does not challenge the white centre. Now, although White can of course block the check with 5 ♖c3 (transposing to Game 50), the most usual move is 5 ♗d2 and then:



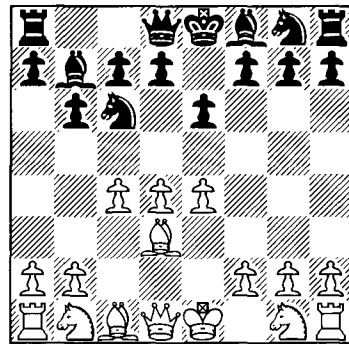
a1) 5...♗xd2+ 6 ♖xd2 ♖h6 (leaving both the f-pawn and the d8-h4 diagonal free) 7 ♖gf3 with a slight edge for White. Instead 7 ♗h5!? ♗f6 8 e5 ♗f4 9 ♖e2 ♗g4 was unclear in G.Flear-P.Wauthier, San Bernardino 1992, and showed the merit of 6...♖h6 as opposed to 6...♖e7.

a2) 5...♖c6 is less explored but does not solve all of Black's opening problems either; e.g. 6 ♖f3 ♗f6 7 d5 ♗xd2+ 8 ♗xd2 with a slight advantage to White in R.Dautov-J.Speelman, Lippstadt 2000.

a3) 5...♗e7 6 ♖f3 ♖f6 7 a3 ♗xd2+ 8 ♖bxd2 and White had the more pleasant game in V.Malisauskas-V.Litus, Katowice 1991. The final position resembles a Bogotian (1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 ♗b4+ 4 ♗d2 ♗e7 5 g3 etc.) where Black's fianchettoed bishop is not too well placed, whereas his counterpart may be more active than on g2.

b) 4...♖c6 can be compared to 4...♗b4+ in that it also leaves White with a considerable space advantage. On the other hand, Black

can usually seize the bishop pair by ...♖b4xd3, and thus further unbalance the game. From this point of view, and although White probably retains slightly the better chances, I believe this line is more combative than 4...♗b4+.



b1) 5 ♖f3 is inaccurate, as pointed out by GM King in his book *English Defence*. The reason is quite simple: White needs a mobile f-pawn in order to increase his space advantage and maintain the initiative. After 5...♖b4 6 0-0 (6 ♖c3 grants Black the extra option of 6...♖xd3+ 7 ♗xd3 ♗b4, if he wants) 6...♖xd3 7 ♗xd3 ♖e7 8 ♖c3 ♖g6, followed by ...♗e7 and ...0-0, when White should only be symbolically better.

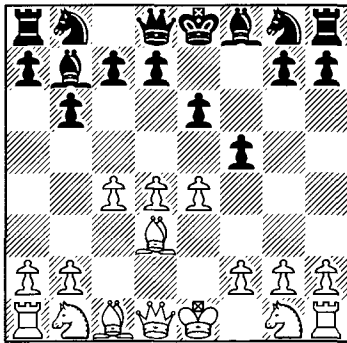
b2) 5 ♖e2! ♖b4 (some people have tried 5...g6 here, but there are few doubts that after 6 ♖bc3 ♗g7 7 ♗e3 White's prospects are better) and now:

b21) 6 0-0 ♖xd3 7 ♗xd3 ♖e7 8 ♖bc3 d6 9 d5! ♗d7 10 f4 g6 was B.Gelfand-N.Short, Novgorod 1997, and now instead of 11 ♖d4?! 0-0-0 with complications, 11 ♗e3 ♗g7 12 ♗d4 would have secured for White a lasting advantage.

b22) 6 ♖bc3 ♖xd3+ 7 ♗xd3 d6 8 0-0 ♖f6 9 f4 (showing the difference between 5 ♖f3 and 5 ♖e2) 9...♗e7 10 e5 ♖d7 11 f5 exf5 12 ♗xf5 0-0 13 exd6 cxd6 14 ♗f4 when White is slightly, but undoubtedly better. Sooner or later he will close the long diagonal with d4-d5, and his passive ♖e2 will jump to d4, while

his rival's active options are quite reduced. Here is a fresh example of the torture that awaits Black when his position is too cramped: 14...a6 15 a4 ♖c7 16 b3 ♜ac8 17 ♜d3 f5 18 ♙d2 g6 19 ♜f4 ♙g5 20 ♜ae1 ♙xf4 21 ♙xf4 ♜f6 22 d5 ♜g4 23 ♜d4 ♙c8 24 h3 ♜e5 25 ♜e2 ♜f7 26 ♜fe1 ♜fe7 27 ♜h1 ♜c5 28 ♜d1 ♙d7 29 ♙g5 ♜f7 30 ♙e3 ♜c7 31 ♙d4 h6 32 a5 bxa5 33 c5 ♜fe7 34 c6 ♙c8 35 ♜d2 g5 36 ♜a4 f4 37 ♙xe5 ♜xe5 38 ♜xe5 dxe5 39 ♜c5 ♙f5 40 ♜e4 ♙xe4 41 ♜xe4 ♜d6 42 ♜d3 ♜g7 43 ♜c4 ♜c8 44 ♜e4 ♜c7 45 ♜a4 h5 46 ♜xa5 g4 47 ♜xa6 g3 48 ♜a1 ♜f6 49 b4 ♜c8 50 b5 ♜c5 51 ♜e1 ♜e8 52 ♜b1 ♜b8 53 ♜d3 ♜e7 54 ♜h7+ ♜f6 55 ♜h6+ ♜f5 56 ♜e6+ ♜e4 57 ♜e1+ ♜e3 58 ♜g6+ ♜d4 59 ♜xe3 fxe3 60 c7 ♜f8 61 ♜xg3 e2 62 ♜h2 ♜xd5 63 ♜d3+ 1-0 J.Lautier-V.Ivanchuk, Dubai (rapid) 2002.

4...f5



As already mentioned, this is the real test of White's set-up. From a strategic point of view, 4...f5 is well motivated: Black's strategy initiated by ...♙b7 consists of putting pressure on White's centre and the e4 pawn in particular. Black's last move increases this pressure in the most efficient way, and now that the black f-pawn has been thrown into the fray, White cannot keep his centre stable, as the following variation illustrates: 5 f3? fxe4 6 fxe4 ♙xe4! 7 ♜h5+ (if 7 ♙xe4 ♜h4+ simply wins a pawn for nothing) 7...g6 8 ♜e5 ♙xd3 9 ♜xh8

♜h4+ 10 ♜d2 ♙xc4 and White's position is collapsing. Although the game is still quite complicated, the prominent factor here is White's running king, who will have to face the whole opposing army after ...♜c6, ...0-0-0 etc.

That said, 4...f5 also represents a significant concession for Black, as it weakens its own king.

5 exf5

Otherwise Black is at least equal.

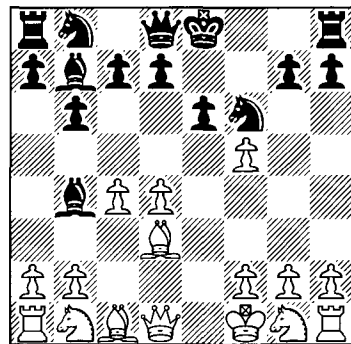
5...♙xg2

This is obviously risky, but the 'official' refutation is not totally convincing.

The alternative, 5...♙b4+, clears the f8-square for the black monarch, thus forcing White to protect g2 by 6 ♜f1 and then:

a) 6...exf5?! 7 c5 bxc5 8 a3 c4 (this typical counter-sacrifice avoids the entombment of the ♙b7 that results from 8...♙a5?! 9 dxc5 c6 when White is clearly on top) 9 ♙xc4 ♙d6 10 ♜b3 ♙a6 11 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 12 ♜d3 ♜b8 13 ♜xf5 ♜c6 14 ♜f3 isn't adequate for Black. However, it is even more promising for White simply to develop, as after 10 ♜c3 ♜f6 11 ♜f3 or 11 ♜h3 and so on, Black finds himself in trouble with no counterplay at all.

b) 6...♜f6 g gives White three options:



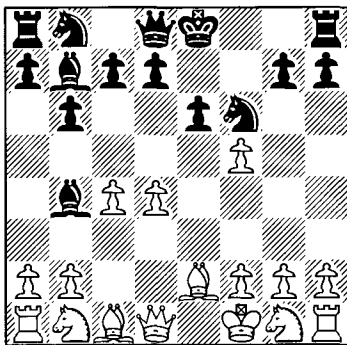
b1) 7 c5 is messy: 7...bxc5 8 a3 c4! 9 ♙xc4 ♙a5 10 fxe6 (in *Informator* 72 Dautov claims that 10 ♜f3 0-0 11 ♜c3 d5 12 ♙d3 is much better for White; but even if 10 ♜f3 is an

improvement over 10 fxe6, I believe this assessment is exaggerated. After both 12...♙xc3 13 bxc3 exf5 14 ♙xf5 ♚e4 and 14...♙c8 15 ♙d3 ♙g4 or 15...♙a6!?, Black has decent compensation for his pawn, mostly because of the misplaced white king) 10...dxe6 and then:

b11) 11 ♙xe6?! was tested once in F.Sideif Sade-I.Lempert, Naberezhnye Chelny 1993, but never repeated again. Black replied with the strong 11...♗e7! when, in place of the blunder 12 d5? ♚xd5 13 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 (the bishop is taboo because of 14...♗e1 mate, so Black stood much better), White should have gone for 12 ♙c4 ♚c6 13 ♚f3 0-0-0. Even so Black has great compensation, as the pawns White has grabbed have also opened lines towards his own king.

b12) 11 ♗a4+ ♚c6 12 ♚f3 (on 12 ♙b5?! the temporary piece sacrifice 12...♗d5 13 ♗xa5 0-0 yields Black the initiative; for example, the greedy 14 ♗a4? runs into 14...♚xd4 hitting both b5 and g2 and causing serious damage, while after 14 ♚c3 ♚xa5 15 ♚xd5 ♙xd5 for a single pawn the whole black army is super-active, and moves such as ...♞ab8, ...♚b3 and ...♚e4 are coming) 12...0-0 and here, too, Black's lead in development and the unsafe opposing king are fully worth the pawn(s). If you don't like this, you should definitely not be playing 4...f5!

b2) 7 ♙e2



was introduced by 'chess-wrestler' Alexander Beliavsky in his World Championship mini-match vs. Short at Las Vegas 1997. With this paradoxical move (the bishop is White's only developed piece, and now he retreats it again) White threatens simultaneously c4-c5 and ♙h5+, so that the following moves are virtually forced: 7...0-0 8 c5 bxc5 (8...♚c6?! is another way to sac the piece, but a dubious one: after 9 a3 ♚xd4 10 axb4 ♚xe2 11 ♚xe2 ♚g4 12 ♚g3 ♗h4 13 ♗d2 exf5 14 ♗f4 White was clearly on top in A.Vaisser-N.Sulava, Bastia 2000) 9 a3 ♙a5 10 dxc5 when White's crystal-clear idea is 11 b4, trapping the bishop. As the ugly 10...c6? doesn't please the other bishop too much, the choice here lies between 10...♚d5 (as Short played) or the more frequent and probably adequate 10...♚e4, when play can continue 11 b4 ♗f6 12 ♞a2 ♙d5 13 ♞b2 ♚c6 14 ♚f3 (instead White didn't last long after the obvious 14 bxa5? ♞ab8 15 ♞xb8 ♞xb8 16 ♙d3 ♗a1 17 ♚e2 ♙b3 18 ♗e1 ♚xc5 19 ♗d2 ♚xd3 20 ♗xd3 ♚e5 21 ♗c3 ♗xb1 22 ♗xe5 ♙c4 23 ♗c3 ♗a2 24 ♗d2 ♗xd2 25 ♙xd2 ♞b1+ 26 ♙e1 ♞b2 27 fxe6 ♙xe2+ 28 ♙g1 ♞b1 0-1 D.Ippolito-A.Shabalov, Linares 2000; but 14 ♚d2 has been employed successfully, e.g. 14...♞ab8 15 ♚xe4 ♙xe4 16 ♚f3 ♚xb4 17 axb4 ♙xb4 18 ♙d3 with the better prospects in G.Van der Stricht-D.Bunzmann, Bethune 2003) 14...♞ab8 with the following possibilities:

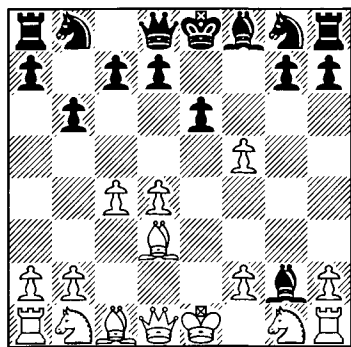
b21) 15 fxe6?! dxe6 16 h4 ♚xc5 17 ♗c2 ♚e4 18 bxa5 ♚d4 19 ♗d3 ♚b3 20 ♞c2 ♚bc5 21 ♞xc5 ♚xc5 22 ♗c2 ♙e4 23 ♗xc5 ♞xb1 and White resigned in I.Khenkin-A.Shabalov, Koszalin 1999, as 24 ♗e3 ♗a1 and 24 ♙g1 ♗f4! are equally hopeless.

b22) 15 ♗c2?! ♙xb4 16 axb4 ♚xb4 17 ♗a4 ♚a2 with unclear complications in L.Johannessen-S.Halkias, Linares 2002.

b23) 15 h4! and now 15...♚e5? 16 ♚bd2! proved bad for Black in S.Siebrecht-D.Bunzmann, Bad Wiessee 2004. Black had

to try 15...♗b4 16 axb4 ♖xb4, or else 15...♗xc5 with a probably slightly worse version of Khenkin-Shabalov, since without the exchange on e6 the position is less open. In either case Black hasn't sacrificed that much material, while White's pieces are severely uncoordinated, so I trust Black's chances here.

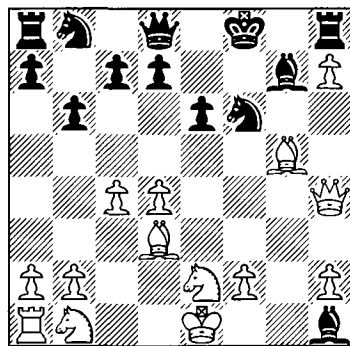
b3) 7 ♖f3 is the latest fashion in this very unorthodox variation. Once Black found out he could give up his dark-squared bishop and obtain reasonable compensation in the 7 ♖e2 line, adepts of White's formation focused their attention on the 'cleaner' 7 ♖f3. After 7...0-0 8 a3 ♖d6 9 ♗c3, I suppose Black isn't really lost yet, but with a 10/13 score against him, the ball is clearly in his court. Here is a recent illustration of this frustrating (for Black) statement: 9...♗c6 10 ♖g5 ♖e8 11 fxe6 dxe6 12 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 13 ♖c4 ♗d8 14 ♖a4 ♖a8 15 ♖e1 ♗a5 16 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 17 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 18 ♗e4 ♖g6 19 c5 ♖e7 20 ♗e5 ♖h6 21 b4 ♗b3 22 ♗c6 ♖f6 23 ♖b1 1-0 in R.Dautov-B.Filipovic, Switzerland 2004, as Black loses a piece. Frankly, I have no clue where Black could have improved his play after 9 ♗c3.



6 ♖h5+ g6 7 fxg6 ♖g7 8 gxh7+ ♖f8 9 hxg8 ♖+?!

Consensus has it that 9 ♗e2 (or 9 ♖g5 ♗f6 10 ♖h4 ♖xh1 11 ♗e2 transposing) 9...♗f6 10 ♖h4 ♖xh1 11 ♖g5 is the most

critical test.



The threats of ♗f4 and ♗g6+ or ♗h5 make Black's life difficult, but perhaps he can survive. Let's look at a sample of Black's defensive tries:

a) 11...♗c6 (!) has been the most frequent response but, as practice has shown, is probably not the best: 12 ♗d2 (12 ♗f4!?) 12...e5 (12...b5, as in G.Flear-J.Plaskett, British Championship, Torquay 1982, gave Glenn the opportunity to produce a brilliancy: 13 cxb5! ♗b4 14 ♖g6 ♖b7 15 ♗f4 ♖e7 16 ♗h5 ♖f8 17 d5!! ♗bxd5 18 ♗e4, when the point of White's last move becomes clear – after castling long White plans the devastating ♖xd5 and for that reason needed to open the d-file. White has a decisive advantage) and now:

a1) 13 0-0-0! e4 14 ♖xe4 (14 ♖b1 was successful in I.Jelen-S.Jeric, Slovenian Team Championship 1999, but only because Black went wrong with 14...♖e7? 15 ♖xh1 ♖f7 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 ♖xe4 ♖e8 18 ♖d3 and White had a clear advantage; instead Black could have retained good prospects by 14...♖xh7! and if 15 ♖xh7 ♗xh7 16 ♖xd8 then 16...♖f3! is fine for him) 14...♖xe4 15 ♗xe4 ♖xh7 16 ♖f4 ♖f7 and now both 17 ♗2c3 and 17 ♖g1 led to quick victories for White in E.Magerramov-L.Psakhis, Riga 1980, and D.Cramling-E.Gausel, Gausdal 1982, respectively.

a2) 13 ♗g3?! is less clear: 13...e4 14 ♖xe4

♙xe4 15 ♘gxe4 ♚hx7 16 ♜f4 ♘xd4 (good enough, though Nunn's suggestion of 16...♜e7! would have been stronger) 17 ♙xf6? (17 ♘xf6 was a better try to stay in the game: 17...♜e7+ 18 ♘de4 ♙xf6 19 ♙xf6 ♜b4+ 20 ♘d2 ♚e8+ 21 ♙e5+ ♘f5 22 0-0-0 ♜f7 with mutual chances, but not 22 ♜xf5+? ♜f7 followed by 23...♚xe5+ 24 ♜xe5 ♚e7 and wins) 17...♙xf6 18 ♘xf6 ♜e7+ 19 ♘de4 ♚h4 with a much better game for Black in R.Akesson-N.Short, World Junior Championship, Dortmund 1980.

b) 11...♙f3?! was tried by a pioneer of 1...b6 systems, the great Tony Miles. His game vs. Yermolinsky (C not A!) ended in a draw. Unfortunately, after 12 ♘f4 ♘c6 13 ♘d2 ♙g4, White's play has since been improved:

b1) 14 ♘g6+ ♙f7 15 ♘e5+ (if 15 ♘xh8+!? ♙xh8 16 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 17 ♜xg4 ♜xd4 is also rather unclear) 15...♘xe5 16 dxe5 ♙f5 17 ♙xf5 exf5 18 exf6 ♙xf6 19 ♜h5+ ♙g7 20 ♜h6+ ♙f7 21 ♜h5+ ♙g7 22 ♜h6+ 1/2-1/2 C.Yermolinsky-A.Miles, Philadelphia 1999.

b2) 14 ♙xf6! is stronger, when 14...♜xf6 15 ♜xg4 ♜xd4 16 ♘f3 ♜xb2 17 ♚d1 was all forced, and indeed played in S.Lower-D.Marshall, correspondence 1999. Black resigned after just ten more moves: 17...♘e5 18 ♘xe5 ♜xe5+ 19 ♙f1 ♙f6 20 ♙e4 ♚d8 21 ♘h5 ♜h6 (no better is 21...♜e5 22 ♜h4 ♙f7 23 ♚d3 d5 24 ♚f3+ ♙e8 25 ♙g6+ ♙d7 26 ♘xg7 and wins) 22 ♙g6 ♚hx7 23 ♙xh7 ♜xh7 24 ♜g5 ♚c8 25 ♚xd7 ♜b1+ 26 ♙e2 1-0. I have tried to find a way for Black to escape, but without success; for instance 17...♘e7 fails to 18 ♙g6!! ♜c3+ 19 ♙f1 ♜xc4+ 20 ♙g2 and Black is powerless against ♚xd7.

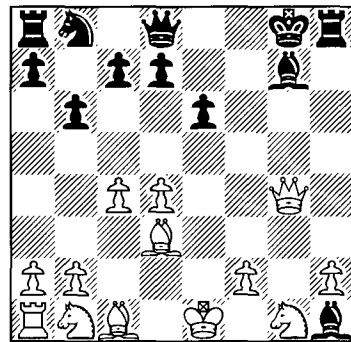
c) 11...♜e7 seems to hold, as far as I can tell: 12 ♘f4 (the most straightforward and logical move, as Black will play ...♜f7 next anyway) 12...♜f7 13 ♘g6+ (13 ♙g6 is well met by 13...♚hx7 14 ♙xh7 ♘xh7 15 ♜xh7 ♙xd4) 13...♙e8 14 ♘e5 and then:

c1) 14...♜e7? leads to immediate disaster:

15 ♘g4 ♜b4+ (or 15...♙d8 16 ♘xf6 ♙c8 17 ♘h5 ♜b4+ 18 ♘c3 ♜xb2 19 ♚c1 and White won in J.Percze-G.Fivans, correspondence 2001) 16 ♘d2 ♘xg4 17 ♜xg4 ♜d6 18 ♙g6+ ♙f8 19 ♘e4, when both 19...♙xe4 20 ♜xe4 and 19...♜b4+ 20 ♙d2, with the lethal 21 ♜f4 to follow, are curtains.

c2) 14...♜f8 when White still has decent compensation for his sacrificed rook, but it looks like ...♘d7-d6, ...♘bd7 will hold. For instance, play might continue 15 ♘c3 d6 16 ♙g6+ ♙e7 17 ♘f7 ♘bd7 18 0-0-0 ♙b7 19 ♘d5+ ♙xd5 20 cxd5 ♜xf7 (otherwise it is getting too dangerous) 21 ♙xf7 ♙xf7 22 dxe6+ ♙xe6 with a complex position.

9...♙xg8 10 ♜g4 ♙xh1



This seems more than playable for Black, even from a theoretical standpoint! And the current game well illustrates this assessment.

11 ♙g5 ♜f8 12 h4 ♘c6 13 h5

Defending the d-pawn is slow. White prefers to create strong threats with his h-pawn.

13...♘xd4 14 h6 ♘f3+!?

A novelty over R.Jedynak-I.Rausis, Cappelle la Grande 2003, which continued 14...♘f5 15 hxg7 ♜xg7 16 f3 ♚h2 17 ♙f4 ♚g2 and eventually led to a draw. Once the queens are off, an endgame arises in which Black hasn't much to fear. Indeed, he is the more active and has a compact pawn structure, for what is, after all, a very small material deficit.

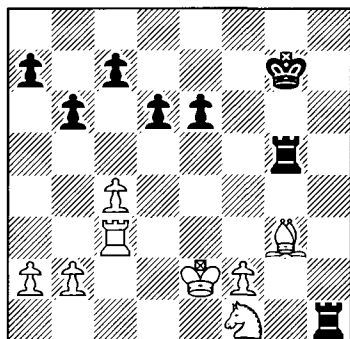
15 ♖xf3 ♜xf3 16 ♜xf3 ♙xf3 17 hxg7 ♜h1+

Hindering a more natural White development.

18 ♙f1 ♙g2 19 ♖d2 ♗xg7 20 ♙f4 d6 21 ♗e2 ♜ah8 22 ♙g3 ♜h5

Here Glenn Flear recommends 22...a5, in order to avoid plans based on b2-b4 and ♜c1-c3-a3. He then, rightly in my opinion, judges the position as equal.

23 ♜c1 ♙g5 24 ♜c3 ♙xf1+ 25 ♖xf1



25...♙g4?!

Again 25...a5 was better and equal.

26 b4!?

The best try for more than half a point. Otherwise White should have waited or chosen the more restrained and solid 26 b3.

26...♗f7 27 ♖d2 ♜h5 28 ♜a3

If 28 b5 then 28...a5!, when 29 bxa6?! can become a bit tricky for White to hold after 29...♜a5.

28...a5 29 bxa5 ♜xa5 30 ♜xa5 bxa5 31 ♗d3 ♗e7 32 ♖b3?!

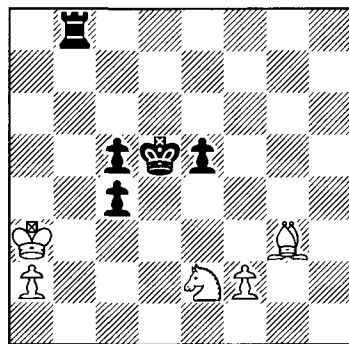
32 a4! was obviously better, fixing the black a-pawn on a dark square. White can then attack it twice, by placing his knight on b3 and bishop on d2. In that case Black would face an unpleasant defensive task.

32...a4 33 ♖d4 c5 34 ♖e2 d5! 35 ♖f4 ♗d7 36 ♗c3 dxc4 37 ♗b2 e5 38 ♖e2 ♗e6 39 ♗a3?

39 ♖c3 e4 40 ♖xa4 e3 41 ♖c3 would have

saved the game, as indicated by Flear in his annotations for *ChessPublishing*.

39...♗d5 40 ♗xa4 ♙g8! 41 ♗a3 ♜b8!



Cutting the white king off from the action! White now is irremediably lost, which is no wonder when one considers that his two minor pieces are fighting Black's five stones.

42 f4

If 42 f3 ♜f8 43 f4 ♗e4 44 fxe5 ♗f3 winning a piece, while 42 ♙h4 ♗e4 43 ♙f6 ♜b7 is a good example of domination.

42...♗e4 43 f5?

A premature surrender. Instead 43 fxe5! would have given Burnett good practical chances to save the game. Indeed, after the logical 43...♗f3 44 e6 Black already has to make up his mind between 44...♜a8+ and 44...♜e8. Let us examine these two branches:

a) 44...♜a8+? (this obvious move lets the win slip) 45 ♗b2 ♗xc2 (or 45...♜c8 46 ♙d6 ♗xe2 47 ♗c3! with a draw) 46 ♗c3!! (but not 46 e7?? because of 46...♗d3), and the basic endgame following the sequence 46...♜a3+ 47 ♗xc4 ♙xg3 48 ♗xc5 is a draw.

b) 44...♜e8! 45 ♖c3 ♗xg3 46 ♗a4 ♜b8!! (an amazing subtlety, saving a tempo on 46...♜xe6? 47 ♗b5 ♜e5 48 a4 ♗f4 49 a5 and Black won't reach more than rook vs. knight) 47 e7 ♗f4 and if 48 ♖d5+ ♗e5 49 ♖c7 c3 50 ♖a6 ♜e8 51 ♖xc5 ♗d4 etc., or 48 e8 ♜xe8 49 ♗b5 ♗e5 50 ♗xc4 ♗d6 and Black is in time to protect his last boy.

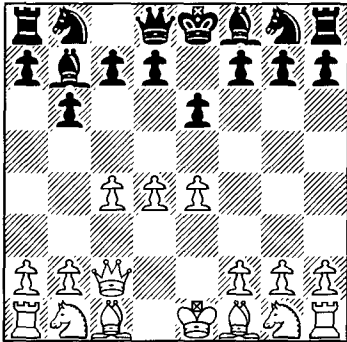
43...♖d3 44 f6 ♜xe2 45 ♙xe5 ♜a8+ 46
♜b2 ♖d3 0-1

Game 45

A. Webster-M. Adams

Prestwich 1990

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4 ♙b7 4 ♖c2



A strange way to support the e-pawn. Moving one's queen too early is not generally recommended, but 4 ♖c2 does have its points: White hinders the ...f7-f5 push and avoids the thematic pin after 4 ♖c3 ♙b4.

4...♗h4

Best by test! After his own queen sortie Black not only increases the direct pressure on e4, but also prevents f2-f3. The next few moves are quite logical.

5 ♖d2 ♙b4 6 ♙d3 f5

The main continuation, forcing events, whereas 6...♗g4!? 7 ♖f1 f5 allows White several divergences, such as:

a) 8 f3 ♗h4 9 exf5 ♗xd4 10 ♖e2 ♗h4 with a messy position in J.Levitt-J.Ehlvest, New York 1994.

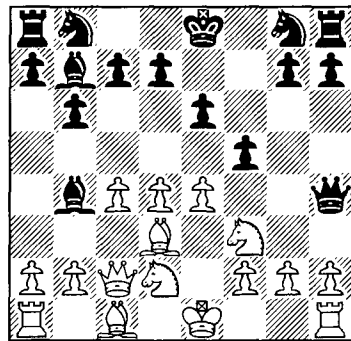
b) 8 h3 ♗g6 9 ♖gf3 ♙xd2?! 10 ♖e5 ♗f6 11 ♙xd2 and White stood slightly better in J.Parker-M.Sher, Copenhagen 1996. Sher repeated the line three years later, this time with White, a clear sign that he wasn't so happy with the outcome of the opening. However, in M.Sher-R.Burnett, New York 1999, his

opponent deviated with the likely improvement 9...♖e7 and gained a rather easy equality.

c) 8 ♖gf3 ♙xd2 9 ♖e5 ♗h4 10 ♖f3 ♗h5 11 ♙xd2 ♖f6, from M.Quinn-J.Speelman, Dublin 1993, transposes to the line 6...f5 7 ♖gf3 ♙xd2+ 8 ♖f1 ♗h5 9 ♙xd2 ♖f6 (see the game Polugaevsky-Korchnoi in the notes below).

The interesting 6...♙xd2+ was experienced once, in V.Mikhalevski-J.Kraai, Burbank 2003. It looks anti-dogmatic to exchange the bishop at once, but Black does it without being asked in the main line too. After 7 ♙xd2 f5 8 d5 (I suppose 8 g3!? ♗h5 9 f3 is critical and may give White a small edge; whereas 8 ♖f3 just transposes to the 6...f5 main line) 8...fxe4 9 ♙xe4, and now instead of 9...exd5?! 10 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 11 cxd5 ♖f6, stronger was first 9...♖f6 10 ♙f3 and then 10...exd5, when Black seems fine (if 11 g3 then 11...♗d4).

7 ♖gf3



7...♙xd2+

7...♗h5!? is also viable, although after the principled reply 8 0-0, Black should refrain from 8...♖f6?! 9 exf5 ♙xd2 10 ♖xd2 ♗g4 11 d5! exd5 12 ♜e1+ and the opening clearly has backfired for him. Instead, 8...♖e7 9 exf5! ♙xd2 10 ♖xd2 ♖xf5 seems about level to me.

8 ♙xd2

Alternatively:

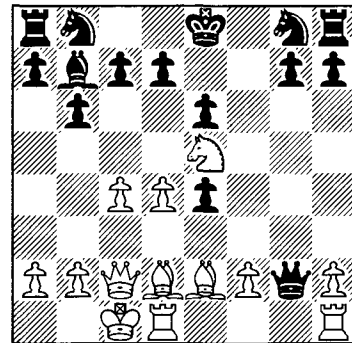
a) 8 ♖xd2 is quite sound, but promises Black an easy life after 8...♟f6 9 g3 ♖h3 10 ♟f1 ♖h5 11 ♟g2 0-0 12 0-0 ♟c6 with equality, P.Kiriakov-M.Tratar, Pardubice 1995.

b) 8 ♟f1?! is not convincing. The position resulting from 8...♖h5 9 ♟xd2 ♟f6 is actually very similar to that after 4 ♟c3 ♟b4 5 ♖c2 ♖h4 6 ♟d3 f5 7 ♟f3 ♟xc3+ 8 ♟f1 ♖h5 9 bxc3 ♟f6 (see the notes to Game 48), but in spite of having his bishop at d2 rather than doubled c-pawns, White does not necessarily have an improved version here as d4 is hanging in many variations. The game L.Polugaevsky-V.Korchnoi, candidates semi-final, Fvian 1977, continued 10 exf5?! (10 e5 was safer, but Black is fine anyway after 10...♟e4 11 ♟e3 0-0) 10...♟xf3 11 gxf3 ♟c6 12 ♟c3 0-0 13 ♖c1 ♖h3+ 14 ♟e2 ♖ae8 15 ♟d1 e5! (a nice shot, using the fact that the ♖h1 is unprotected to keep the initiative) 16 dxe5 ♟xe5 17 ♟e2 ♟xf3 18 ♖d3 ♖xe2 19 ♖xe2 ♖g2 20 ♖he1 ♟xc1 21 ♟xe1 ♖xh2 (Black is clearly better now, though he probably allowed his opponent good chances to escape later on...) 22 ♖e7 ♖g1+ 23 ♟e2 ♖g4+ 24 ♟e1 h5 25 ♖g3 ♖xg3 26 fxg3 ♖f7 27 ♟xf6 gxf6 28 ♖e8+ ♟h7 29 ♟f2 ♟h6 30 b4 ♟g5 31 ♖a8 ♟xf5 32 ♖xa7 d6 33 a4 ♟e6 34 a5 bxa5 35 ♖xa5 f5 36 c5 ♖h7 37 cxd6 cxd6 38 b5 h4 39 gxh4 ♖xh4 40 ♖a8 ♖b4 41 ♖b8 ♟d5 42 ♟f3 ♖b3+ 43 ♟f4 ♟c5 44 ♖c8+ ♟xb5 45 ♟xf5 ♖c3 46 ♟f4 ♖e1 47 ♖d8 ♟c5 48 ♖c8+ ♟d4 49 ♟f3 d5 50 ♟f2 ♖e5 51 ♖a8 ♟c3 52 ♖a3+ ♟b4 53 ♖a1 d4 54 ♖c1 d3 55 ♖c8 d2 56 ♖b8+ ♟c3 57 ♖c8+ ♟d3 58 ♖d8+ ♟c2 59 ♖c8+ ♟d1 60 ♖c7 ♖f5+ 61 ♟g2 ♟e2 62 ♖e7+ ♟d3 63 ♖d7+ ♟e3 64 ♖e7+ ♟d4 65 ♖d7+ ♖d5 0-1.

8...♖g4 9 ♟e5 ♖xg2 10 0-0-0 fxe4

10...♟xe4? loses on the spot to 11 ♖hg1 ♟xd3 (otherwise 12 ♟xe4 is very strong) 12 ♖xd3 ♖e4 (or 12...♖xf2 13 ♟f3! trapping the queen) 13 ♖g3 g6 14 ♟xg6 with a decisive advantage in B.Vujacic-S.Le Blancq, London 1991.

11 ♟e2



The previous sequence of moves was compulsory, and now Black finds himself at a crossroads. He can choose between the two knight jumps, 11...♟f6 and 11...♟c6, but I can't tell you which one is the safest!

Here is a sample from these two branches, annotated to a large extent with Daniel King's pertinent analysis from his book, *English Defence*.

11...♟f6

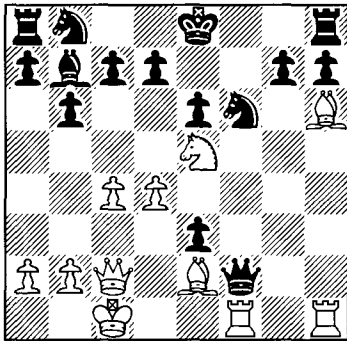
Perhaps more solid than 11...♟c6 12 ♟xc6 (12 ♖hg1!?) 12...♟xc6 13 d5 ♟b7? (13...exd5! 14 cxd5 ♟xd5 had to be tried, when Black's position looks suspicious and I wouldn't be surprised if he is lost, but a way of finishing the job for White is not immediately evident; after the tempting 15 ♟h5+ g6 16 ♖c3, for instance, Black replies 16...gxh5 17 ♖xh8 0-0-0 and even has the better prospects) 14 ♟h5+ g6 (14...♟d8, trying to run away, is strongly met by 15 h4! ♟f6 16 ♟g5 and the black queen is in serious trouble) 15 ♟c3? (missing 15 ♖c3! ♟f6 16 ♖xf6 ♖f8 17 ♖e5 gxh5 18 ♖xc7 or 16 ♖hg1 ♖xf2 17 ♖df1 and Black has insurmountable problems) 15...♖g5+ 16 ♟b1 e5 17 f4 (or 17 ♖xe4 d6 18 f4 ♟f6!) 17...♖xf4 18 ♖df1 ♖g5 19 ♖xe4 d6 20 ♟d1 0-0-0 with a decisive edge for Black in L.Remlinger-I.Rogers, Philadelphia 1986.

12 ♟e3?!

As a thorough analysis shows, the white pawns are difficult to digest, and therefore 12 ♖e3 represents an unnecessary precaution. Instead, after 12 ♖hg1! Black has three options:

a) 12...♙xf2? 13 ♖h6! (the check at h5 is the cause of all Black's headaches) 13...♙xh2 14 ♖xg7 ♖g8 15 ♖xf6 ♖xg1 16 ♖h5+! ♙xh5 17 ♖xg1 ♙h6+ 18 ♖g5 and Black can throw in the towel, a pretty conclusion being 18...♙h3 19 ♙f2 ♙f5 20 ♖f6!.

b) 12...♙xh2? 13 ♖h1 ♙xf2 14 ♖h6! e3 (giving up the queen is worse: 14...♙f5?! 15 ♖df1 gxf6 16 ♖xf5 exf5 17 ♖xh6 ♖f8 18 ♙d2 and after the imminent ♙g5 the game is lost, as Black lacks the crucial tempo to evacuate his king) 15 ♖df1 and here again the choice is wide:



b1) 15...♖xh1 16 ♖xf2 exf2 17 ♖xg7 ♖g8 (or 17...♖e4 18 ♙d2 ♖g8 19 ♙h6 with a decisive attack) 18 ♖xf6 ♖g1+ 19 ♖d2 f1♙ 20 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 21 ♙xh7 ♖xf6 22 ♙xh1 c6 23 ♙h5+ ♖e7 24 ♙g5 and White wins.

b2) 15...♙g3 16 ♖hg1 ♙xg1 (or 16...♙h2 17 ♖xg7 ♖g8 18 ♙d1 and ♖h5+ will bring the game to an end) 17 ♖xg1 gxf6 18 ♙c3 ♖f8 19 ♙xe3 ♖c6 20 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 21 d5 ♖xd5 22 cxd5 ♖xd5 and here Black would have fair chances of building a fortress, if only he had already castled. Unfortunately 23 ♖a6! prevents this plan.

b3) 15...♖e4!? (the most resilient but quite

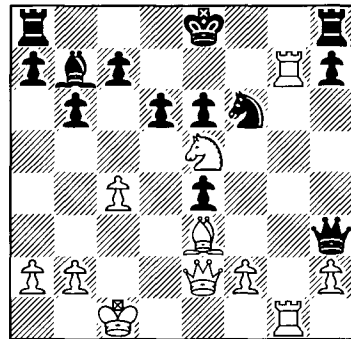
unappealing too) 16 ♙d1 gxf6 17 ♖xf2 exf2 18 ♖f3 ♖g8 19 ♖f1 ♖c6 20 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 21 ♙h5+ ♖d8 22 ♙f3 with a big advantage (but not 22 ♙f7?! ♖e7).

c) 12...♙h3 is the only way not to lose by force. Further investigations are needed to discover whether Black can really afford to play this position, but after something like 13 ♖xg7 (or 13 ♖g3 ♙xh2) 13...♖c6 14 ♖g5 0-0-0 15 ♖f7 (not 15 ♖xf6? ♙h6+) 15...♖xe5 16 dxe5 ♖g4 17 ♖xg4 (if 17 ♖xd8?! ♖xe5 18 ♖f6 ♖xf7 19 ♖xh8 ♖xb8 is unclear) 17...♙xg4 18 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 19 ♙d2 ♖c6 it seems that he can hold.

12...♙h3 13 ♖dg1 ♖c6 14 ♖g3 ♙f5 15 ♖g5

White could (and should) have made a draw by perpetually harassing the enemy queen here; i.e. 15 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 16 ♖g5 ♙h3 17 ♖g3 ♙f5 18 ♖g5 etc.

15...♖xd4 16 ♙d1 ♖xe2+ 17 ♙xe2 ♙h3 18 ♖hg1 d6 19 ♖xg7



19...0-0-0

Stronger was 19...♙xh2! 20 ♖lg2 ♙xe5 21 ♖7g5 ♖g8 22 ♖xe5 ♖xg2 23 ♖g5 ♖h2 or 23 ♖xe6+ ♖f7 with a clear plus for Black in both cases.

20 ♖f7 ♙xh2 21 ♙d1 ♙h3 22 ♖xd8?!

22 ♖g5! was better.

22...♖xd8 23 ♖f7 ♖d7 24 ♖gg7

Here White could secure a big edge with 24 ♖h1! ♙g2 25 ♖hxh7 ♖c6 (otherwise 26 ♖fg7

♖f3 27 ♔g5 would be annoying) 26 b4 a6 27 a4!

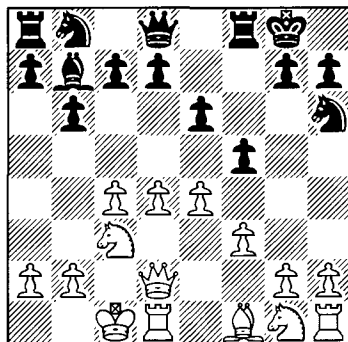
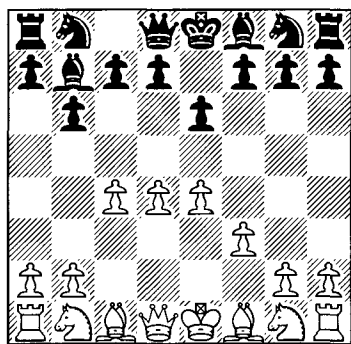
24...h6 25 ♖h7 ♔c6 26 ♗xh6 ♖g2 27 ♗xe6 ♕e5 28 ♗h7 ♖g8 29 ♗ee7 ♗xc4+ 30 ♗c2 ♖f1+ 31 ♗d1 ♗c4+ 32 ♗c2 ♖f1+ ½-½

sure whether it has ever been repeated. Instead, 4...f5 is seen in the next game, so let's look now at Black's other main options:

a) 4...♔b4+ (solid but a bit insipid) 5 ♔d2 ♔xd2+ 6 ♗xd2 ♕h6 7 ♕c3 0-0 8 0-0-0 f5

Game 46
K. Pytel-L. Piasetski
Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4 ♔b7 4 f3



From a strategic point of view, moving the f-pawn aims at closing the b7 bishop's diagonal and building a solid pawn centre. On the downside, White has weakened his kingside a little, which a later ...♗h4+ might emphasise, and still hasn't developed any piece.

Six years after Daniel King's excellent *English Defence*, almost nothing has changed in this variation. Therefore, so as not to be accused of being a copycat, I will take a risk and try to disagree, albeit not too much, with some of King's statements. As already indicated by the English grandmaster, one may note an interesting nuance between the variations 4 ♕c3 ♔b4 5 f3 and 4 f3. Here Black isn't forced to go in for 4...♔b4+, but has instead three other sensible continuations at his disposal: 4...f5, 4...d5 and 4...e5!?

4...e5!?

A very original treatment, though I am not

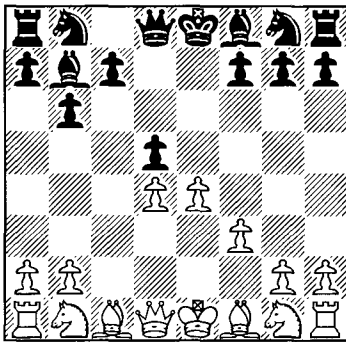
when I will give two examples:

a1) 9 ♕h3 ♕c6 (9...fxe4!? 10 fxe4 ♕f7) 10 d5 ♕e5 11 f4 ♕eg4 was V.Korchnoi-J.Speelman, New York (rapid) 1995. White has accepted the challenge (what else would one expect from Victor?) and expanded as much as he could. He certainly has got some edge here, but Black isn't deprived of counterplay either: 12 ♔e2?! (I would have preferred 12 e5! ♕f7 13 ♔e2, as now Black reaches approximate equality) 12...fxe4 13 ♕xe4 exd5 14 cxd5 ♕f6 15 ♕c3 a6 16 ♔f3 ♕f5 17 ♗f2 ♖e7 18 d6 ♕xd6 19 ♗xd6 ♔xf3 20 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 21 ♗xf3 c6 22 g3 d5 23 ♗d3 h6 24 ♕f2 ♖e6 25 ♗d4 ♗ad8 26 ♕d3 c5 27 ♖e5 ♗f7 28 ♖e2 d4 29 ♕e5 ♖e6 30 ♕e4 d3 31 ♕xd3 ♖c4+ 32 ♕d2 ♗fe8 33 ♗e1 ♖xa2 34 ♕c3 c4 35 ♕c1 ♖a5+ 36 ♕c2 ♗d5 37 ♕a2 b5 38 ♕ac3 ♖f7 39 ♕c1 b4 40 ♕d1 a5 41 ♕df2 a4 42 ♕g4 c3 43 bxc3 bxc3 44 ♕ef6+ gxf6 45 ♕hx6+ ♖f8 46 ♕xf7 ♗xc2 47 ♗xe2 ♖xf7 48 ♕c2 ♗c8 49 ♗e4 ♗a8 50 ♖xc3 a3 51 ♗e1 ♖g6 52 ♗a1 ♖f5 53 ♖b3 ♖g4 54 ♗xa3 ♖b8+ 55 ♖c3 ♖h3 56 ♗a2 f5 57 ♖d4 ♗e8 58 ♖d5 ♗e1 59 ♗a6 ♖xh2 60 ♗g6 ♖g2 61 ♗g5 ♖f3 ½-½. A well-fought draw!

a2) 9 ♙d3 ♜c6 10 ♜g2 fxe4 11 ♙xe4 ♜a5 12 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 13 ♜b1 ♜d6 14 c5 ♜df5 15 ♜e4 d6 16 cxd6 ♜xd6 17 ♞d3 ♜hf5 18 ♞c1 ♞e7 19 ♞hd1 ♞ad8 20 ♞d2 c5 21 ♞dd1 c4 22 ♞c3 b5 23 ♜c5 a5 24 ♞xa5 ♜e3 25 ♞g1 ♞a8 26 ♞d2 ♜d5 27 ♜c3 b4 0-1 M.Dlugy-E.Kengis, Liepaja (rapid) 2001. White probably overstepped the time limit, because after 28 ♜xd5 exd5 29 ♞xb4 ♞a7 30 a4 ♜f5 , planning 31... ♞fxc8 and 32... ♜xd4 , Black has sufficient compensation for the material invested, but no more than that.

Well, all in all we can probably conclude that this 4... ♙b4+ variation is only good enough for rapid chess!

b) 4... d5 5 cxd5 exd5 with the following possibilities:



b1) 6 exd5 , which I doubt can seriously annoy Black; in that case 6... ♜f6 or 6... ♙xd5 should equalise at once.

b2) 6 e5 c5 and then, unfortunately, Daniel King's suggestion of 7 f4 still remains untested, to my knowledge. It is true that after 7... cxd4? 8 ♜f3 Black's position is clearly unappealing, but Black's seventh move is anything but forced. Instead, if he keeps the tension with 7... ♜h6 , hindering 8 f5 , the outcome of the central battle still looks unclear to me. Black may then simply continue ... ♙e7 and ...0-0, and can meet a subsequent ♙d3 (persisting on implementing the f4-f5 push) with ... ♞d7 . In fact I consider Black's game

by no means worse, so 4... d5 should be perfectly fine.

That said, 7 f4 still seems White's best; far better than 7 ♙d3 from A.Potapov-A.Cherniaev, Russian Team Championship 1992, which continued 7... ♞h4+ 8 g3 ♞xd4 9 ♜e2 ♞xe5 10.0-0 ♞c7 11 ♜bc3 a6 (White's lead in development is absolutely insufficient for the pawns here) 12 ♞e1 ♙e7 13 ♙f4 ♞d8 14 g4 ♜f6 15 ♜g3 0-0 16 g5 ♜e8 17 ♞xe7 ♞xe7 18 ♜f5 ♞d7 19 ♞f1 c4 20 ♙c2 d4 21 ♞h3 d3 22 ♙xb8 ♙c8! (the threat was 23 ♜h6+ winning the queen) 23 ♜d5 ♞xb8 24 ♞g3 ♞b7 and owing to his huge material deficit, White resigned.

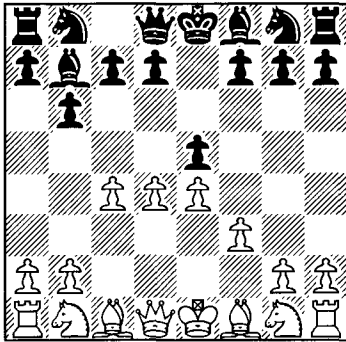
b3) 6 ♜c3 is interesting too: 6... dxe4 7 fxe4 ♜f6 8 ♙d3 c5 (as 8... ♙b4? was bad on account of 9 ♞a4+ , this move fulfils the demands of the position; White can hardly avoid the ensuing (temporary) blockade of his central phalanx, and thus loses flexibility) 9 d5 a6 (Black probably disliked the look of 9... ♙d6 10 ♜b5 , though after 10...0-0 he is probably alright anyway; White has to watch out for ideas such as 10... ♜xe4 11 ♙xe4 ♞e8 , and Black's lead in development compensates fully for the loss of the two bishops) and then:

b31) 10 a4?! (now Black gets the better play) 10... ♙d6 11 ♜f3 ♜bd7 12 0-0 ♜g4 13 ♙g5 f6 14 ♙d2 ♞c7 15 h3 ♜ge5 16 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 17 ♙e2 0-0 18 ♙g4 ♜xg4 19 ♞xg4 ♞ae8 20 ♙f4 ♙c8 21 ♙xd6 ♞xd6 22 ♞f4 ♞e5 was I.L.Rosanov-V.Karasev, Moscow 1996. White did OK for the last dozen moves or so, but is still a bit worse. He eventually collapsed on move 51 after interminable manoeuvres.

b32) 10 e5?! was also faulty, as the following line shows: 10... ♜xd5 11 ♙e4 ♜xc3 (but not 11... ♞h4+? 12 g3 ♜xc3 13 ♙xb7! ♞e7 14 ♞f3 ♞a7 15 ♙c6+! and White wins a piece, or 13... ♜xd1 14 gxh4 ♞a7 15 ♙e4 ♞d7 16 ♜f3 , followed by 17 ♜e2 , and the ♜d1 is trapped) 12 ♞xd8+ exd8 13 ♙xb7 ♞a7 and Black is better after either 14 ♙xa6 ♜xa6 15 bxc3 or

14 ♖f3 ♘b5.

I think White had to try keeping his central pawns mobile by means of 10 ♘f3 or 10 ♖f4. Then Black may well play ...b6-b5, but everybody has his trump card and the game would be unclear.



5 d5!

King called 5 dxe5 the real test of 4...e5, but then demonstrated that Black gets dangerous counterplay after 5...♘c6, followed by ...f7-f6 if White hangs on to the pawn. I can only agree with his analysis, but in my opinion 5 d5, entombing the ♖b7, is critical. Then Black obtains a splendid c5-g1 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop, but unfortunately not for long.

5...♙c5 6 ♘c3 a5

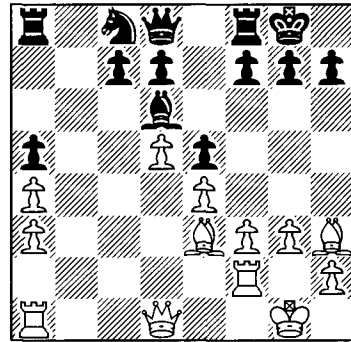
Taking a pawn by 6...♙xg1 7 ♖xg1 ♜h4+ 8 g3 ♜xh2 cannot be recommended. After 9 ♖g2 ♜h5 10 ♘b5 ♘a6 11 ♙e3 White has more than enough compensation.

7 ♘ge2?!

7 ♘a4! looks better, and after 7...♙b4+ (7...♙xg1 is even worse than on the previous move: 8 ♖xg1 ♜h4+ 9 g3 ♜xh2 10 ♖g2 ♜h5 11 c5 is no joy at all for Black) 8 ♙d2 White's spatial edge ensures him of a lasting plus. Black's only reasonable manner of obtaining counterplay is based on ...f7-f5, but if White takes on f5 he obtains an excellent platform for his pieces at e4.

7...♘a6 8 g3 ♘e7 9 ♙h3 0-0 10 ♘a4

♙b4+ 11 ♘ec3 ♘c8 12 a3 ♙e7 13 0-0 ♘c5 14 ♙e3 ♙a6 15 b3 ♘xa4 16 ♘xa4 b5 17 cxb5 ♙xb5 18 ♖f2 ♙xa4 19 bxa4 ♙d6



The last dozen or so moves weren't forced; on the other hand, neither White nor Black did anything terrible. White now looks to be on top, but finding the right plan isn't obvious.

20 f4!?

This very committal move also has its drawbacks. For instance, after a subsequent ...♜e7 the threat of ...e5xf4 places the white e-pawn indirectly under fire.

20...♘b6 21 fxe5?!

After this exchange the d6 bishop suddenly becomes very active. More to the point was 21 ♜c2! ♜e7 22 f5 f6 23 ♙f1, when both 23...♙xa3 24 ♜xc7 and 23...♖fc8! 24 ♙b5 favour White. In the latter case the white a-pawn is now immune, due to 24...♜xa3? 25 ♖xa3 ♜xa3 26 ♙c5 ♜a1+ 27 ♖f1 and her majesty is trapped.

21...♙xe5 22 ♖c1 d6

22...♜e7!? was an alternative.

23 ♜b3

Or 23 ♜c2! ♖a7 24 ♜c6 ♜e7 and, despite the unfortunate placement of his rook, Black has nothing to worry about.

23...♙b8 24 ♜b5 ♙f6 25 ♖fc2

Maybe White should have played 25 ♜xa5 ♖a8 26 ♜b5 ♘xa4 27 ♖c6 and tried to inten-

sify the pressure against c7.

25...♙g5 26 ♙f4?

A serious mistake, whereas 26 ♙xg5! ♗xg5 27 ♗xa5 ♗e3+ 28 ♖h1 ♗xe4+ 29 ♙g2 was still OK for White.

26...♙xf4 27 gxf4 ♗f6

Now White's whole position becomes loose, beginning with his exposed king.

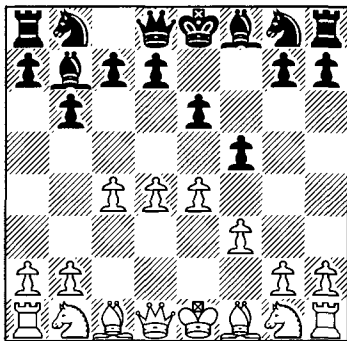
28 ♖f2 ♗d4 29 ♗xa5 ♖xa4 30 ♗d2 ♗xe4 31 ♖xc7 ♖c5 32 ♙g2 ♖b1+ 33 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 34 ♖xf1 ♗b1+ 35 ♖f2 ♖e4+ 36 ♙xe4 ♗b6+ 37 ♗e3 ♗xc7 38 ♗h3 g6 39 f5 ♗e7 40 ♗f3 ♗h4+ 41 ♖g2 ♖b8 42 ♙c2 ♗g5+ 43 ♖h3 ♖e8 44 ♙e4 h5 45 fxg6 fxg6 46 a4 ♗g4+ 0-1

Game 47

N.Babu-A.Miles

Sakthi 1996

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6 3 e4 ♙b7 4 f3 f5



The sharpest continuation.

5 exf5

And this is the critical response. Instead, 5 ♖c3 ♙b4 transposes to the 4 ♖c3 ♙b4 5 f3 f5 variation, examined in the next two games; while 5 ♙d3? is the same as 4 ♙d3 f5 5 f3? (see the notes to Game 44).

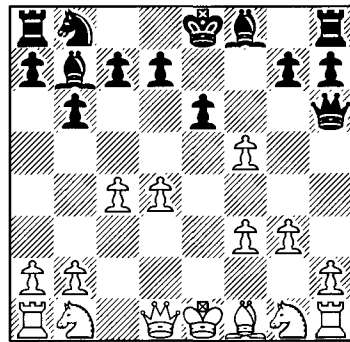
5...♖h6

5...exf5 is playable too, though less dynamic: 6 ♖h3 ♙b4+ (or maybe 6...♖c6, threatening to grab the d-pawn with ...♗h4+,

or if 7 ♖f4 ♙b4+ 8 ♖c3 ♖f6) 7 ♖c3 ♗h4+ (weakening the f3 spot) 8 g3 ♗e7+ (8...♗h5!? was the alternative) 9 ♖f2 ♙xc3 10 bxc3 ♖c6 11 ♙f4 0-0-0 12 d5 ♖e5 13 ♗d4 ♖e8 14 ♙g2 ♗c5 (if 14...♖f6 then 15 ♖he1 d6 16 ♖g5 and the knight at e6 will be irritating for Black) 15 ♗xc5 bxc5 16 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 17 ♖g5 ♖e7 18 ♖he1 ♖xe1 19 ♖xe1 ♖f6 20 ♖e7 ½-½ G.Sosonko-R.Keene, Bad Lauterberg 1977. 20...♖g8 and 21...♗d8 would expel the undesirable rook, with approximate equality.

6 fxe6

White has to go for this risky move if he wants to test Black's enterprising opening. Instead, 6 ♙xh6?! is safer, but also worse after 6...♗h4+ 7 g3 ♗xh6 and then:

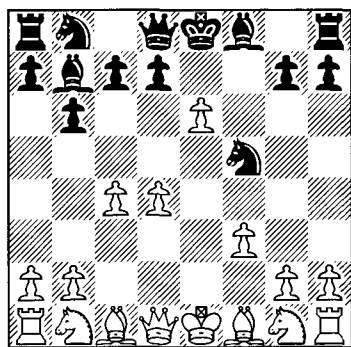


a) 8 ♗d2 ♖c6 9 ♖e2 (if 9 ♗xh6!? gxh6 and 10...♙g7) 9...♙b4 10 ♖bc3 ♗xd2+ 11 ♖xd2 ♖a5 12 ♖f4 ♙xf3 13 ♖g1 exf5 14 ♖e1+ and now, instead of 14...♙e4? 15 ♖fd5 as in S.Semkov-F.Bricard, Sofia 1990, Black could have retained his extra pawn with the simple 14...♖f7.

b) 8 fxe6?! led to murder in M.Berni-G.Poli, correspondence 1983. White's play can, however, be improved: 8...♙b4+ 9 ♖f2 0-0 10 ♙g2 dxc6 11 f4 ♖c6 12 ♖e2 ♖ad8 13 ♖bc3 ♖xd4? (this seems too much; Black had two adequate alternatives in 13...♙c5 14 ♗a4 ♖xd4 15 ♙xb7 ♖c2+ 16 ♖g2 ♖e3+ 17 ♖f2 ♖c2+ with perpetual check, or else 14...♖xd4!? 15 ♖e1 e5 with good attacking

prospects, and 13...e5!, when the white king may soon feel uncomfortable) 14 ♖xd4? (14 ♙xb7! was correct, and after 14...♙c5 15 ♖f1 ♖f5 16 ♗b3 ♖e3+ 17 ♖e1 White is lacking coordination for the time being, but a piece is a piece!; whereas the text move allows Black to play a double rook sacrifice) 14...♙c5 15 ♖ce2 ♗xd4! 16 ♖xd4 ♗xf4+ 17 gxf4 ♗xf4+ 18 ♖e2?! (18 ♖e1! was called for, though Black still has the upper hand after 18...♙xg2 19 ♗e2 ♗h4+ 20 ♖d2 ♗xd4+ 21 ♖c2 ♙e4+ 22 ♖b3 b5 23 ♗hc1 ♙d6! 24 a3 bxc4+ 25 ♗xc4 ♙d5 26 ♗ac1 ♙xh2! 27 ♖a2, but not 27 ♗xh2? ♗d3+ 28 ♖b4 ♙xc4 29 ♗xc4 a5+ loses for White, or earlier 25 ♖a2? ♗d3! forcing the trade of queens, when the d- and e-pawns will be running) 18...♙xg2 19 ♗d3 ♙xd4 20 ♗hf1 ♙xf1+ 21 ♗xf1 ♗xh2+ 22 ♖d1 ♗d6 (with three pawns for the exchange the rest is just a matter of technique) 23 ♖c2 ♙f6 24 ♗e4 ♗e5 25 ♗xe5 ♙xe5 26 ♗e1 ♙d6 27 ♗xe6 ♖f7 28 ♗e1 g5 29 ♖d3 g4 30 ♖e3 h5 31 ♖f2 ♖f6 32 ♗e8 h4 33 ♗h8 h3 34 ♖g1 ♖f5 35 ♗h4 ♖f4 36 ♗h7 ♖f3 37 b3 g3 38 ♗xh3 ♙c5+ 39 ♖f1 a5 0-1.

6...♖f5



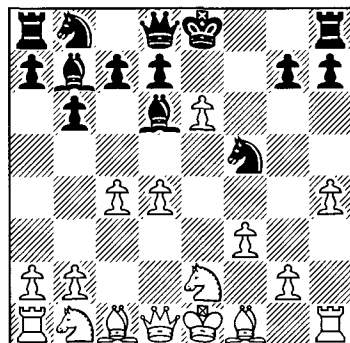
7 ♙f4

Instead:

a) 7 ♙d3? led to immediate disaster in D.Pergericht-J.Boudre, Val Maubuee 1988: 7...♗h4+ 8 ♖f1 ♖xd4 9 ♙e4?! ♙xe4 10 ♗xd4 ♙c5 11 exd7+ ♖f7 12 ♗d2 ♙d3+ and

it's mate next move.

b) 7 ♖e2 ♙d6 8 h4



8...0-0 (here, or on the next move, Black should have calmed down and regained a pawn with ...d7xe6; in that event, the weaknesses in the white kingside would have provided him with enough compensation for the other missing pawn) 9 ♖bc3 ♗f6?! 10 c5 ♙e7 11 exd7 ♗f7 12 ♗b3 (after the queen swap it becomes obvious that Black has been overoptimistic; luckily for him, the position remains messy with pieces dancing everywhere) 12...♗xb3 13 axb3 ♖xd7 14 b4 ♙xh4+ 15 ♖d1 ♗fd8 16 ♖c2 ♙f6 17 ♖b5 ♖f8 18 ♖xc7 ♗ac8 19 ♖b5? (probably stronger was 19 ♙f4 with a large advantage to White; now Black was able to limit the damage and even stood slightly better later on, but that's another story...) 19...a6 20 ♖a7 ♗a8 21 c6 ♗xa7 22 cxb7 ♗xb7 23 ♗xa6 ♖e6 24 ♖b1 h6 25 g4 ♖fxd4 26 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 27 ♗a8+ ♖f7 28 ♗c8 b5 29 ♗h5 ♙g5 30 ♗h2 ♙xc1 31 ♗xc1 ♗xb4 32 ♙d3 ♗d4 33 ♙e4 ♗e7 34 ♙c2 ♖f6 35 ♙b3 ♗d3 36 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 37 ♖f2 b4 38 ♖c2 ♗ee3 39 f4 b3+ 40 ♖b1 ♗d6 41 ♗ff1 ♗g3 42 ♗c3 ♗xc3 43 bxc3 ♗d2 44 c4 ♗g2 45 g5+ hxg5 46 fxg5+ ♖xg5 47 ♗c1 ♖f6 48 ♗c3 b2 49 ♗e3 g5 50 c5 ♗h2 51 c6 g4 52 ♗c3 ♗h8 53 ♖xb2 ♖e6 54 ♖c2 ♗g8 55 c7 ♗c8 1/2-1/2 H.Ree-A.Miles, Wijk aan Zee 1979.

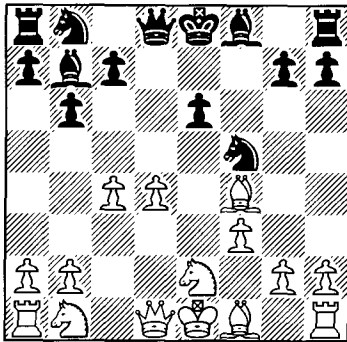
c) 7 exd7+! (nobody has dared try this) 7...♖xd7 (after 7...♗xd7?! 8 ♖e2 Black's ini-

tative may evaporate; Black's threat of ...♖h4+ seems of greater importance than his pressure against d4) 8 ♔f4 (or 8 ♗e2 ♔d6 with sufficient play) 8...♔b4+ (or 8...♔d6, intending to exploit the 'hole' at e3) 9 ♗c3 0-0, and while Black's compensation for his material deficit might prove insufficient against a cybernetic opponent, playing this as White seems foolish for a poor human being!

7...dxe6

Here 7...♔b4+!? 8 ♗c3 transposes to the 4 ♗c3 ♔b4 5 f3 main line in the next two games. By the current move order D.Covic-B.Filipovic, Jahorina 2003, continued 8...dxe6 9 ♖a4+ ♗c6 10 0-0-0 ♗xd4 when 11 ♗ge2 ♗xe2+ 12 ♔xe2 ♖f6 was nice for Black. Instead, White should probably have gone for the tactical skirmish after 11 ♗b5 (see Game 49).

8 ♗e2



8...c5?!

I believe this leads to an unpleasant ending for Black. He should probably have tried either 8...♔d6, or else 8...♗c6 when a possible continuation is 9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 ♗b4 11 ♗bc3 ♔c5 and Black has nothing to complain about.

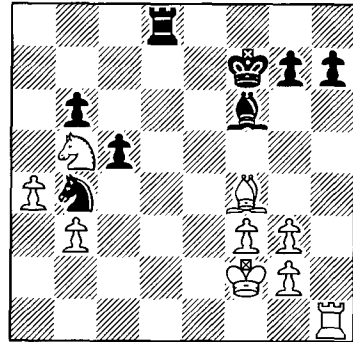
9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 ♖xd5 11 ♖xd5 ♔xd5 12 ♗bc3 ♔b7

Maybe 12...♔e6 13 ♖d1 ♗c6 14 ♗b5 ♖d8 15 ♗c7+ ♖f7 16 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 was a bit better, though here too White retains the edge thanks to his pair of bishops.

13 ♗b5 ♗a6 14 ♗g3

14 ♖d1! ♖d8 15 ♗ec3 followed by 16 ♔c4 would have been more embarrassing for Black.

14...♗xg3 15 hxg3 ♖d8 16 ♖f2 ♔e7 17 ♖e1 ♖f8 18 ♔c4 ♔d5 19 ♔xd5 ♖xd5 20 ♖d1 ♗b4 21 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 22 ♗xa7 ♔f6 23 ♗b5 ♖f7 24 b3 ♗b4 25 a4 ♖d8



Black has finally managed to get his pieces out and quickly makes a draw; though with the colours reversed Miles would doubtless have played on!

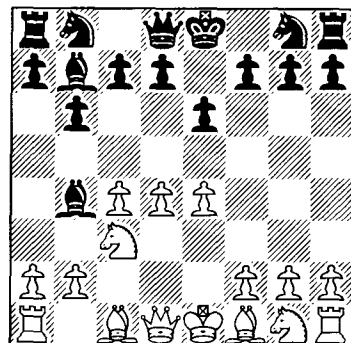
26 ♖b1 g5 27 ♔d6 ♗c2 ½-½

Game 48

A.Czebe-C.Bauer

Bastia (rapid) 2004

1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♔b7 3 ♗c3 e6 4 e4 ♔b4



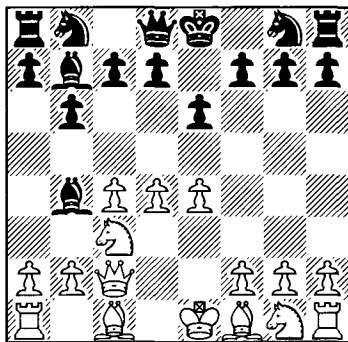
5 f3

Apart from the text move, White has various other ways of covering e4:

a) 5 ♖d3 is examined in Game 50.

b) 5 d5 ♖e7 threatening to take on d5, looks appropriate; alternatively 5...♗f6 should be OK too. White has many options to cope with Black's plans, but after each of them the second player can undermine the white centre with ...f7-f5 and/or ...c7-c6, gaining at least sufficient counterplay. For instance, 6 f3 exd5 7 cxd5 f5 or 6 ♗ge2 ♗f6 7 f3 exd5 8 cxd5 c6.

c) 5 ♖c2



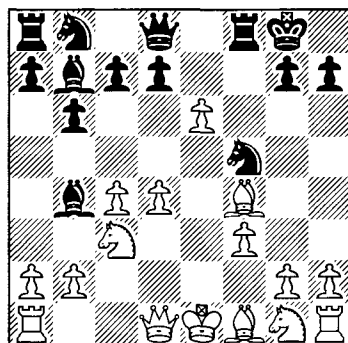
prevents the immediate ...f7-f5, while after 5...♖h4 6 ♖d3 f5 White can develop with tempo by 7 ♗f3 (7 g3 ♖h5 is just fine for Black) 7...♙xc3+! (it is crucial to take the knight at this precise moment; after 7...♖g4? 8 0-0 ♙xc3 White would have the naughty intermezzi 9 h3 or 9 ♗e5 when he is on top) 8 ♗f1! (if 8 ♖xc3? ♖g4 9.0-0 fxe4 10 ♗e5 ♖h4 or 10...♖f5 and Black can retain his extra pawn, albeit at the cost of development; still worse is 8 bxc3? ♖g4 when Black has a clear edge) 8...♖h5 (8...♖g4? only helps White: 9 h3 ♖g6 10 ♗e5) 9 bxc3 and here, since 9...fxe4 10 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♗c6 12 ♙g5! (planning quick d4-d5) 12...♗f6 13 ♙xf6 gxf6 14 d5 f5 15 ♖e3 ♗d8 16 ♖e5 is good for White, Black must make up his mind between 9...♗e7 and 9...♗f6. The positions after either knight move are critical for the

assessment of 5 ♖c2, and in my opinion Black is doing well.

5...f5 6 exf5 ♗h6 7 fxe6

7 ♙e3 looks like a decent alternative, even if it doesn't challenge Black's idea; and then 7...♗xf5 8 ♙f2 0-0 9 ♖d2 followed by 10.0-0-0 with mutual chances.

7...♗f5 8 ♙f4 0-0



An interesting alternative to the main move 8...dxe6 (for which see the next game).

9 ♙d3?!

Better 9 ♖d2 dxe6 10.0-0-0 with a double-edged game.

9...♗h4 10 ♙g3 ♗xg2+

10...♙xc3+?! 11 bxc3 is not suitable, since having d4 en prise is quite important for Black in some lines. Now 11...♗xg2+ 12 ♗f2 ♗h4? (12...♗f4 is better, with roughly equal chances after 13 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 14 ♖e2) 13 ♖e2 ♗xf3 14 e7 ♗xd4+ 15 ♗f3! wins a piece for only two pawns, or if 14...♗e5+ 15 exf8♖+ ♖xf8+ 16 ♗e3 ♗xd3 17 ♗f3 or 17 d5 and White has a clear advantage.

11 ♗f2 ♗h4?!

11...♗f4! was again correct, with a slight plus for Black.

12 ♙e4

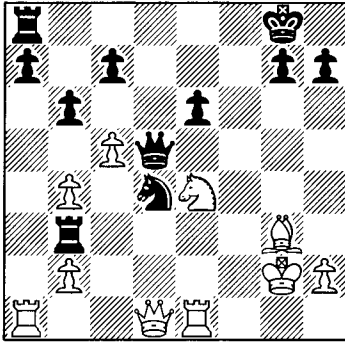
Here 12 ♖e2? ♗xf3 13 e7 ♗xd4+ 14 ♗f3 of course loses to 14...♙xe7 or 14...♖xe7.

12...♙xe4 13 ♗xe4 dxe6 14 c5! ♗c6!

If 14...♖d5 15 ♙xh4 ♖xe4 16 ♙g3 bxc5 17 a3 ♙a5 18 dxc5, and now both 18...♗c6

19 ♖g2 and 18...c6 19 b4 ♗d8 are playable for Black, but not much fun.

15 a3 ♖xd4 16 axb4 ♖hxf3 17 ♖xf3 ♗xf3+ 18 ♖g2 ♗d5 19 ♗e1 ♗b3



Black has very decent compensation here, with two pawns and the initiative for the piece. My opponent now made an interesting practical decision and gave back an exchange in order to relieve the pressure.

20 ♗d2!? ♖f3 21 ♗xd5 exd5

21...♖xe1+ 22 ♗xe1 exd5 23 ♖f2 transposes, and was perhaps more accurate.

22 ♖f2

22 ♗e2 dxe4 23 ♗xc7 was possible too, when his strong passer provides White with some compensation for the pawn minus.

22...♖xe1+ 23 ♗xe1 ♗xb4

The choice between this capture and 23...♗xb2!? wasn't easy to make in time-trouble. With hindsight there is probably not a big difference.

24 ♗e7 ♗f8 25 ♗xc7

25 ♗e5 would be analogous to the game continuation, though under more favourable circumstances for White.

25...bxc5 26 ♗e5?

26 ♖d3! offered reasonable chances to hold.

26...♗f5!

Now it's all over.

27 ♗c3 ♗bf4 28 ♗xg7+ ♖f8 29 ♖d3 d4 30 ♖xf4 ♖xg7 31 ♗d2 ♖f6 32 b3 ♗e5

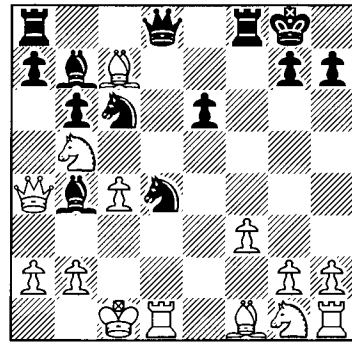
33 ♖d3+ ♗e4 34 ♖b2 ♗f8 35 ♖c4 ♖d3 36 ♗h6 ♗f6 37 ♗g5 ♗f5 38 ♗h6 ♖c2 39 ♖g3 ♖xb3 40 ♖d2+ ♖c2 41 ♖g4 ♗f2 42 ♖e4 ♗g2+ 43 ♖f3 ♗xh2 44 ♗f4 ♗h5 45 ♗d6 c4 0-1

Game 49

M.Sadler-E.Kengis

Koge 1997

1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♗b7 3 ♖c3 e6 4 e4 ♗b4 5 f3 f5 6 exf5 ♖h6 7 fxe6 ♖f5 8 ♗f4 dxe6 9 ♗a4+ ♖c6 10 0-0-0 ♖fxd4 11 ♖b5 0-0 12 ♗xc7



12...♗e7?

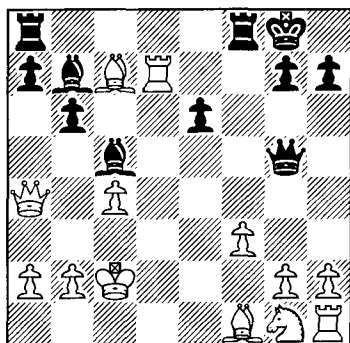
Missing the gorgeous 12...♗g5+! 13 f4 ♗h6! (but not 13...♗xf4?? 14 ♖h3 and Black can resign) 14 ♖xd4 ♗xf4!! 15 ♗xf4 (otherwise Black regains the piece with advantage) 15...♗xf4+ 16 ♖b1 ♖xd4 with great compensation for the exchange. Indeed, apart from the temporarily passive rook, all Black's pieces are well coordinated and can concentrate on an assault against the exposed white king. At the moment the ♗b4 is immune on account of 17 ♗xb4?? ♗e4+ 18 ♖a1 ♖c2+, so the most reasonable try for White seems to be 17 ♖f3 ♖xf3 and then 18 ♗xb4 ♗e4+ 19 ♖a1 (or 19 ♗d3 ♗xd3+ 20 ♗xd3 ♗e4 21 ♗d6 ♖e1 22 ♗xe1 ♗xe1+) 19...♖d4 20 ♗d2 ♖c2+ 21 ♖b1 ♖e3+ 22 ♖a1, and as White is threatening to consolidate his extra exchange

with 23 ♖c1, I don't see a better option for Black than repeating moves.

13 ♖xd4 ♖xd4

The best practical chance, as it keeps the game more complicated than 13...♙xc7?! 14 ♖xc6 (or 14 ♖xe6!?) 14...♙c5 15 ♖b4 when White has an extra piece for nothing.

14 ♖xd4 ♙c5 15 ♖d7 ♙g5+ 16 ♙c2



16...♙ac8?!

16...♙e4! was objectively a better way to try and muddy the waters. Whether he goes for 17 ♖d1 ♙xg1 (with the idea 18 ♖xg1 ♙c5, threatening both 19...♙xg1 and 19...♙c6) or 17 ♖xe4 ♖xf1 18 ♖d2 ♙g6 19 ♙c6 ♖c8, White will find it hard to 'clear the smoke'.

17 ♖h3 ♙g6+ 18 ♖d2

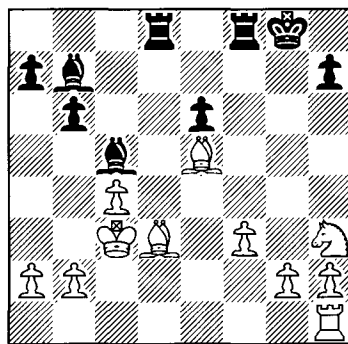
18 ♖b3 was probably stronger, but one needs iron nerves to embark on that route: 18...♙xf3 19 ♖f4 ♙g4 (or 19...♖xf4 20 ♙xf4 ♙c6 21 ♙xa7 Black has no concrete threats, and after something like 21...♙f6 22 ♙e2 ♖a8 23 ♖xg7+ he is two pawns down for nothing) 20 ♙d3 ♙d1+ (again 20...♖xf4 doesn't help: 21 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 22 ♙c6, which prevents 22...♖xc7 or 22...♙e4 and leaves Black struggling to find compensation) 21 ♖xd1 ♙xd1+ 22 ♙c2 when White has given some material back in order to consolidate, and now remains with two minor pieces for a rook, a safe king, and the more active pieces. All in all, White is close to winning.

18...♙e8 19 ♖xg7+

The greedy 19 b3?!, protecting the queen and directed against 19...♖f7 (White would simply take it), is well met by 19...♖f5 with ...b6-b5 in mind. In that case White's position becomes very suspicious. Instead, as Daniel King states in his book, Sadler's choice of 19 ♖xg7 is a perfectly good practical decision: White gets rid of the queens and, with two pawns for the exchange, can press for the win without risking anything.

19...♙xg7 20 ♙e5+ ♙g8 21 ♙xe8 ♖xe8 22 ♙d3 ♖d8 23 ♙c3

23 ♙c2 ♙xf3 24 ♖xf3 ♖xd3 was no better, but 23 ♖d1 ♖f5 24 ♙g3 was worth considering.



For the rest of this endgame Kengis performs a remarkable defensive job, and finally saves his skin, though I believe White was probably winning somewhere.

23...♙xf3 24 ♙xh7+ ♙xh7 25 ♖g5+ ♙h6 26 ♖xf3 ♖g8 27 ♖g3 ♖df8 28 ♙f4+ ♙h5 29 ♖e5 ♙d6 30 ♖e1 ♖f5 31 ♖d3 ♙xf4 32 ♖xf4+ ♙g4 33 ♙xe6 ♖h8 34 ♖e2 b5 35 b3 bxc4 36 ♙xc4 ♖c8+ 37 ♙b4 ♙f3 38 ♖d2 a5+ 39 ♙a4 ♙e3 40 ♖e2+ ♙f3 41 ♖d2 ♙e3 42 ♖e2+ ♙f3 43 ♖b2 ♙e3 44 a3 ♖d4 45 ♖d2+ ♙c3 46 ♖d7 ♙c2 47 ♖d5

Perhaps 47 ♖d5 ♖xd5 48 ♖xd5 offered better winning chances.

47...♖f3 48 b4 axb4 49 axb4 ♖a8+ 50

♖b5 ♖b8+ 51 ♖c6 ♜f2 52 b5 ♜xh2 53
b6 ♜h6+ 54 ♖c7 ♜bxb6 55 ♖xb6 ♜g6
56 ♖d5 ♜xg3 ½-½

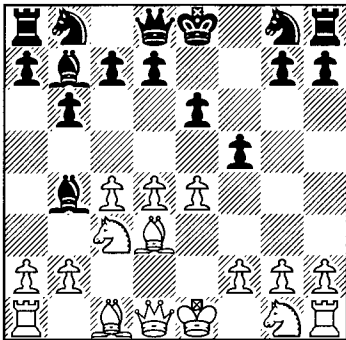
A.Miles, Sao Paulo 1977.
6...g6 7 ♖e2 ♖f6 8 f3?!
Stronger is 8 ♖g5

Game 50
K.Burger-J.Ehlvest
St. Martin 1993

1 d4 b6 2 c4 ♖b7 3 ♖c3 e6 4 e4 ♖b4 5
♖d3

This line is very similar to 1 b3 e5 2 ♖b2
♖c6 3 e3 d5 4 ♖b5 ♖d6 with reversed col-
ours. The extra tempo c2-c4 for White isn't
relevant in the majority of variations, so that
the whole line can be assessed as satisfactory
for Black.

5...f5

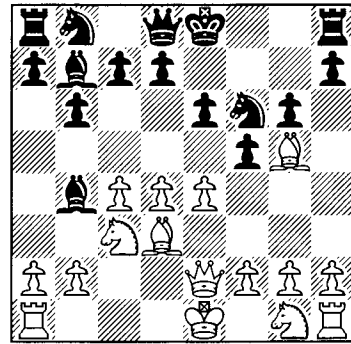


The most effective, if not the only correct
way to play for Black. Now things take a
rather forced turn.

6 ♖h5+

As already pointed out by GM King in
English Defence, the direct 6 ♖e2 makes little
difference, though on general grounds it can't
harm to weaken Black's kingside. I'll try to
point it out when one move is clearly better
than the other in a particular variation.

Instead 6 d5 (trying to utilise his extra c2-
c4) 6...fxe4 7 ♖xe4 ♖h4! gives Black good
play, e.g. 8 ♖e2 ♖f6 9 ♖f3 0-0 10 dxe6 ♖c6
11 ♖e3 ♖e4 12 0-0-0 ♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♖a3+ 14
♖b1 dxe6 and Black was better in J.Kaplan-



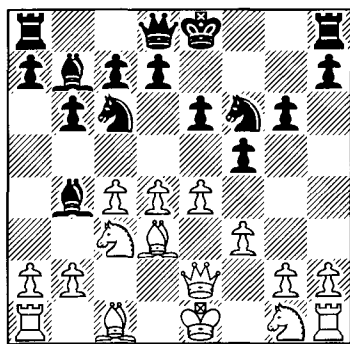
8...fxe4 (or 8...h6!? 9 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 10 ♖f3
♖c6 11 e5 ♖g7 with reciprocal chances, is
indicated by Daniel King as a way of avoiding
the mass of exchanges and the ensuing equal
endgame; one can notice that the insertion of
6 ♖h5+ g6 helped Black here, as he doesn't
have to mind the capture e4xf5) 9 ♖xe4 (9
♖xf6? allows the nasty intermezzo 9...exd3!
10 ♖e5 ♖c6 11 ♖g5 ♖e7 12 ♖xe7 ♖xe7
and Black stands much better) and now, ac-
cording to his taste, Black can choose:

a) 9...♖xe4 10 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 11 ♖xe4 ♖c6
12 ♖f3 ♖xc3+ 13 bxc3 0-0 14 0-0 ♖f4 is
equal or perhaps even a tiny bit better for
Black, owing to his superior pawn structure.

b) 9...♖xe4!? shows a drawback of having
the pawn at c4 rather than c2: after 10 ♖xd8
♖xc3 White would be happy to answer a later
discovered check with c2-c3; this being im-
possible, he has to settle for 11 bxc3 (11 ♖e5
0-0 12 ♖f1? proved too greedy in J.Van der
Veen-A.Mol, correspondence 1986: 12...♖e4
13 f3 ♖d6 0-1, as the queen is trapped and
White will thus be a piece down) 11...♖xc3+
12 ♖f1 ♖xa1 13 ♖xc7 (or 13 ♖e5!? 0-0 14
♖e7) 13...♖xd4 when Black obviously had
enough for the sacrificed queen in
Y.Grünfeld-E.Prie, Paris 1990. The rest of
this game features a captivating battle of

queen vs. rook and bishop (and then it's agony vs. two rooks): 14 ♖f3 ♙c5 15 ♜e5 0-0 16 ♙xb8 ♜axb8 17 h4 ♜bc8 18 h5 ♜f5 19 ♜c3 ♙xf3 20 gxf3 g5 21 ♜d3 ♜c7 22 ♜g1 ♙e7 23 ♜g4 ♖f7 24 ♜d4 ♙e8 25 ♜g4 h6 26 ♖g2 ♙f6 27 ♜e4 ♖e7 28 ♖g3 ♙e5+ 29 ♖g2 d6 30 ♜e2 ♖f7 31 ♜e4 ♖g7 32 ♜e3 ♜c7 33 ♜e4 g4 34 f4 ♙xf4 35 ♜xc6 ♙xe3 36 fxe3 ♜xh5 37 ♜xd6 ♜g5 38 e4 g3 39 e5 ♜f2+ 40 ♖g1 g2 0-1, as White cannot stop the pawn being promoted soon.

8...♗c6!



A very strong reply. Now that e4 is safely guarded (to say the least!), Black reminds his opponent of the d-pawn's vulnerability.

Instead, 8...fxe4?! leads to wild and unpredictable complications. This position exists with reversed colours and a black pawn at c7 instead of c5; and it should be noted that in the arising tactical skirmish the white c4-pawn will play an important role. After 9 fxe4 ♙xc3+ (9...♗xc4?? loses outright due to the little finesse 10 ♙xe4 ♜h4+ 11 ♖d1!, keeping the extra piece) 10 bxc3 ♗xe4 11 ♗f3 ♗xc3 (if 11...♗f6?! 12 ♙h6 or 12 ♙g5 gives White tremendous compensation on the dark squares) 12 ♜e5 0-0 13 ♙h6 (thanks to his c4 pawn White has the extra possibility 13 d5?!, but after 13...♗a4 he can't mate so easily on the long diagonal, whereas he has conceded a beautiful square for the knight at c5) 13...♜f7 14 ♗g5 ♗c6 (14...♜f6? 15 ♗xh7 ♖xh7 16

♙g5 is out of question for Black, since the pawn at c4 denies Black the important defensive resource ...♗d5) 15 ♜h8+ (15 ♜g3!? ♜f6 16 ♗xh7 ♖xh7 17 ♙g5 ♗b4 is unclear; whereas 15 ♗xf7?! leads to a less favourable version of the same ending: 15...♗xe5 16 ♗xd8 ♗xd3+ 17 ♖d2 ♗e4+ 18 ♖xd3 ♜xd8) 15...♖xh8 16 ♗xf7+ ♖g8 17 ♗xd8 ♗xd8 and White is a slightly better, though I believe Black can hold; (but not 17...♜d8? 18 ♖d2 ♗a4 19 ♙c2 and since 19...♗b2 20 ♖c3 doesn't save the horse, White has a clear plus).

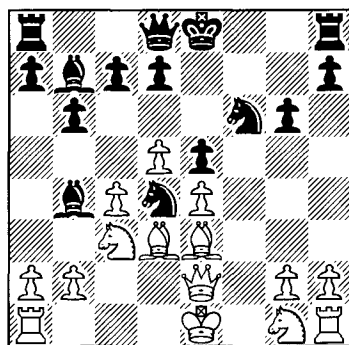
9 ♙e3

9 e5? ♗xd4 10 ♜f2 ♗h5! 11 ♜xd4? ♙c5, trapping the queen, was the famous game A.Adorjan-B.Spasky, Toluca Interzonal 1982.

9...fxe4!

9...f4 is also interesting, but not as good. White's best reaction consists of 10 ♙f2 e5 11 a3, when the position is level.

10 fxe4 e5 11 d5 ♗d4



12 ♜d1?

Better is 12 ♜d2 and White is not lost yet.

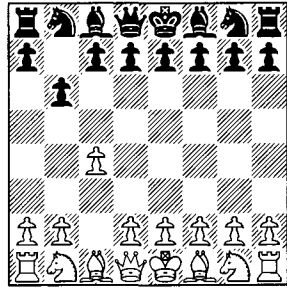
12...♗xe4 13 ♙xe4 ♜h4+ 14 ♖f1 ♙xc3 15 bxc3 ♜xe4 16 ♙xd4 exd4 17 ♜xd4 0-0+ 18 ♗f3 ♙ae8

White's terminally weak pawns mean that all endgames are trivial for Black.

19 ♖f2 ♜e2+ 20 ♖g3 ♜e4 21 ♜he1 ♜xd4 22 ♜xe2 ♜xc4 23 ♜e7 ♙xd5 24 ♜xd7 ♙xf3 25 gxf3 ♜xc3 26 ♜f1 ♜f7 27 ♜d8+ ♖g7 28 ♜f2 a5 0-1

CHAPTER THREE

1 c4 b6



1 c4 b6: Introduction

The main line of this chapter, 1 c4 b6 2 ♖c3 ♗b7 3 e4 e6 4 ♘f3 ♗b4 5 ♗d3 ♘e7 (Games 63-68), is still relatively unexplored and leads to an original position with probably about equal chances. Both White and Black have earlier alternatives, such as the more simple and quite sound 5...♗xc3 (see the notes to Game 63), so Black doesn't need to get fed up of winning all his games the same way! Black can also opt for an Hedgehog formation after 4...c5, when the best set-up probably is ...♘c6, ...♗b8 etc. In that case, however, I believe White can find a way to achieve a small advantage.

Earlier divergences are of course possible as well. On move 4, White can vary with either 4 ♘ge2 or 4 g3, though in my opinion Black then gets rather easy counterplay. The line 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♘f3 ♗xf3 4 exf3 c5 5 d4 also deserves attention. With careful play from both sides the chances are about even, but there might be some surprises in rather harmful variations (as for example in Game 59).

Finally, there are a few interesting sidelines, such as 3...e5!? (Game 52) and 2 b3 (Game 51). The most significant of these is 2 ♘c3 e6 3 a3 c5 (Game 61), by which Black avoids

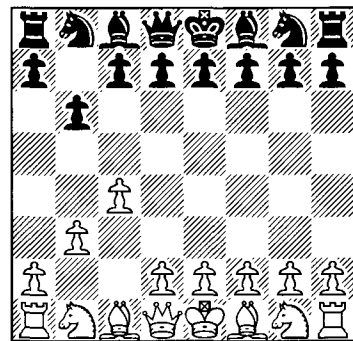
transposition to the a2-a3 lines in Chapter 2.

Game 51

B. Gulko-C. Bauer

Cannes 2001

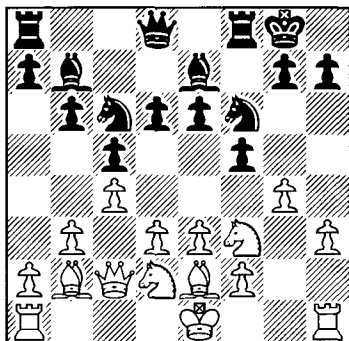
1 c4 b6 2 b3



This copycat move looks like the more interesting of White's sidelines, and not only because I'm keen on queenside fianchettoes! White keeps a flexible position, avoids 'theoretical debates' and, last but not least, is a tempo up in a potentially symmetrical game. In reply to 2 b3, I'm inclined to believe that Black's most promising set-up includes an early ...f7-f5, which creates some imbalance.

2...♙b7 3 ♙b2 e6 4 ♘f3

Preparing the fianchetto of the king's bishop. Alternatively, White can develop it on e2 after 4 e3 f5 5 ♘f3 (on 5 f4! Black can continue 5...♞h4+ 6 g3 ♞e7 7 ♘f3 ♘f6 and play for ...e6-e5, after the preparatory ...d7-d6, ...♘bd7) 5...♘f6 6 ♙e2 ♙e7 7 d3 0-0 8 ♘bd2 d6 9 ♞c2 c5 10 h3 ♘c6 11 g4! and now:

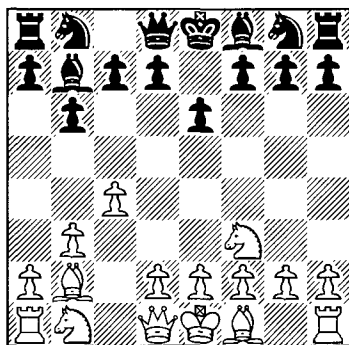


a) 11...fxg4! is of course risky, but also very tricky and White might easily go astray; e.g. 12 hxg4 ♘xg4 13 d4 (13 ♙g1? ♘f6 gets White nowhere) when Black should probably go for 13...♘h6 14 ♞e4 ♘xd4 15 ♞xb7 ♘c2+ 16 ♖d1 ♘xa1 17 ♙xa1 ♙f6 with an unclear position. Instead, 14...♞d7 runs into 15 ♙xh6! gxh6 16 ♞g4+ ♖f7 17 d5 ♘d8 18 ♞h5+ ♖g8 19 ♞xh6 e5 20 0-0-0 ♙f6 (if 20...♙f6? 21 ♙g1+ ♙g7 22 ♙d3 wins) 21 ♙g1+ ♙g2 22 ♙xg6+ hxg6 23 ♙xg6+ ♖f8 24 ♘e4 ♘f7 25 ♘h2!, threatening both f2-f4 and ♙g4 with a decisive attack. Or if earlier 13...♘f6! 14 dxc5 bxc5 (14...e5 15 ♘e4! is bad too) 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 the powerful knight jump to g5 gives White a marked edge: 16 ♘g5! g6 17 ♘xh7 (17 ♙xh7! ♞e8 18 ♙xb7 ♙xa1 is messy) 17...♘e7 18 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 19 ♞c3 with a clear advantage; the material is even, but Black's king is certainly not as safe as White's.

b) Black could also consider keeping the king's flank closed with 11...f4!, when 12 0-0-0 ♘d7 looks unclear to me. Weaker is 12

exf4?! ♘d7 13 f5 exf5 14 gxf5 ♙f6 or 14...♘b4 15 ♞b1 ♘e5 and Black will recapture on f5 with the better pieces and pawn structure.

c) 11...♞d7 was played in V.Gashimov-J.Arizmendi Martinez, European Team Championship, Leon 2001, continuing 12 ♙g1 d5 13 gxf5 exf5 14 cxd5 ♘b4 15 ♞c1 ♞xd5 (15...♘bxd5) 16 ♘e5 ♙a6 17 ♘dc4 ♞e6 18 a3 ♘c6 19 e4 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5 ♘e8 21 exf5 ♞xf5?! (21...♙xf5!) 22 ♞e3 ♙h4 23 ♙f3 ♙d8 (23...♙b7!) 24 ♙g4 ♙f6 25 ♙e2? (better 25 ♙e4! and if 25...♞e6?? 26 ♞h6 or 25...♞h5 26 0-0-0) 25...♞e6 26 0-0-0 ♞xb3 27 ♙dg1 c4? (27...♙c8!) 28 ♙d1 ♞b5 (not 28...♞a2? 29 dxc4 ♙xc4 30 ♘xc4 ♙xb2+ 31 ♘xb2 ♙c8+ 32 ♙c2 ♞a1+ 33 ♖d2 ♞xb2 34 ♞e6+ ♖h8 35 ♞xc8 ♙xf2+ 36 ♖e1 and wins) 29 dxc4 ♞c5 30 ♞e4 ♙xd1+? (30...♙xe5? also loses after 31 ♙xe5! ♙f7 32 ♙c2 g6 33 ♙xg6+! hxg6 34 ♞xg6+ ♖f8 35 ♞h6+ ♖e7 36 ♙e1 ♖d7 37 ♙d1+ ♖e7 38 ♞g5+ ♘f6 39 ♙e1 ♖d7 40 ♞f5+ ♖c6 41 ♞e6+; but 30...♙b7!? 31 ♞xb7 h5 would have kept Black in the game, e.g. 32 ♘d3!? ♙xd3 33 ♙xg7+ ♘g7 34 ♙xg7+ ♖h8 35 ♙h7+ ♖g8 with a draw) 31 ♙xd1 ♞xf2 32 ♙g2 ♞c5 33 ♘d7 ♙xb2+ 34 ♙xb2 ♙f2+ 35 ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 36 ♙d2 ♞c8 37 ♞e6+ ♖h8 38 ♞e7 ♘f6 39 ♘xf6 1-0. Quite an entertaining game, despite the inaccuracies generated by Gashimov's original treatment of the opening.

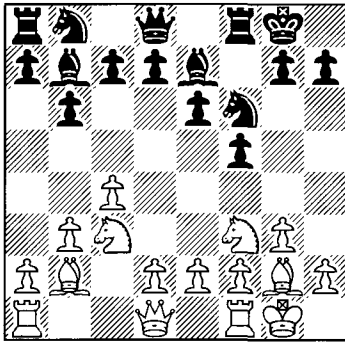


4...f5

Here or on the next move 4...♙xf3 is a viable option; obviously it's a matter of taste.

5 g3 ♖f6 6 ♙g2 ♙e7

After 6...g6 the game is very likely to reach positions discussed in Chapter 4; for instance, K.Spraggett-J.Spelman, Spanish Team Championship 1996, continued 7 0-0 ♙g7 8 ♖c3 0-0 9 d4 transposing directly to Game 70.

7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖c3**8...c5**

8...a5 was Moro's choice against the same opponent six months earlier. This produced a quiet and balanced game all the way through: 9 d4 ♖e4 10 d5 ♖a6 11 ♖d4 (11 ♖xe4!? fxe4 12 ♖d2 exd5 13 cxd5 ♙xd5 14 ♖xe4 c6 also looks about level to me) 11...♖xc3 12 ♙xc3 ♙f6 13 ♗d2 ♖c5 14 ♗ad1 ♗e7 15 ♖b5 d6 16 dxe6 ♙xg2 17 ♗xg2 ♗ae8 18 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗d5 f4 20 ♖d4 ♗h8 21 e3 fxe3 22 fxe3 ♖xe6 23 ♗xf6 gxf6 24 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 25 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 26 ♗f3 ♗g7 27 ♗f4 ♗e8 28 a3 ♗f7 29 ♗d5 ♗g6 30 g4 ♗f7 31 ♗h5 ♗g6 32 ♗d5 ♗f7 33 h3 ♗g6 34 h4 ♗f7 35 ♗d4 ♗e5 36 ♗e4 a4 37 b4 c5 38 bxc5 1/2-1/2 B.Gulko-A.Morozevich, Shenyang 2000.

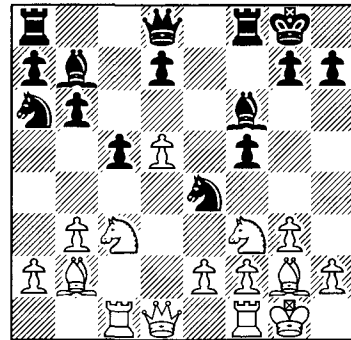
9 d4 ♖e4 10 d5 ♙f6!

As analysis tends to show, Black can't afford to play this way. Better was 10...♖a6! 11 ♖xe4 fxe4 12 ♖d2 (12 ♖e5 is double-edged, e.g. 12...exd5 13 cxd5 ♙f6 with an unclear

position, since the e4 pawn is taboo: 14 ♙xe4? ♙xe5 15 ♙xe5 ♗e8 16 f4 d6 with a clear advantage for Black) 12...exd5 13 cxd5 ♙xd5 14 ♖xe4 ♙c6 when White may have a slight edge here, but no more than that.

11 ♗c1?!

Returning the favour. The line I feared during the game was 11 ♖xe4! fxe4 (after 11...♙xb2 12 ♖d6 ♙xa1 13 ♖xb7 ♗c7 14 ♗xa1 Black has no satisfactory way to consume the trapped knight: if 14...♗xb7 15 ♖e5 or 14...d6 15 dxe6 ♖c6 16 ♗d1 ♗xb7 17 ♗xd6 and in each case White gets a large plus) 12 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 (the unorthodox 12...gxf6 doesn't help either: 13 ♖h4 f5 14 f3! exd5 15 fxe4 fxe4 16 ♗d2! and Black's position will collapse) 13 ♖d2 exd5 14 cxd5, and as Black can't take on d5 (if 14...♙xd5? 15 ♖xe4) he simply loses the e4 pawn for nothing.

11...exd5 12 cxd5 ♖a6

Now everything is alright in Black's camp, and as d5 is loose, he even has a slight initiative.

13 ♖xe4 fxe4 14 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♖d2 e3 16 fxe3 ♗g5 17 ♗f4 ♖b4 18 ♖f3?!

After this Black's edge becomes bigger. White should have tried to complicate matters by 18 ♙e4 ♖xa2 19 ♗c4 ♖b4 20 ♖f3 with obscure consequences.

18...♗e7 19 ♗d2 ♖xd5 20 ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 21 ♖h4 ♗e5 22 ♙f3!

I was hoping for the incautious 22 ♗d1??

♖xe3+ 23 ♖xe3 ♜xe3 24 ♜xd7 ♙xg2 25 ♜xg2 ♜f1 mate.

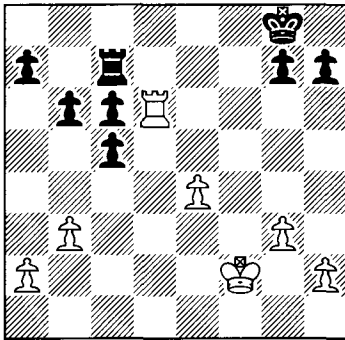
22...♙c6 23 ♜g2 ♜e8?!

The start of a bad plan. Black will grab the e3 pawn, but only to land in a drawish rook ending.

24 ♜d1 ♜xe3?

Better was 24...♜c3! 25 ♙xc6 dxc6 26 ♜f1 ♜d5 and Black still has serious winning chances.

25 ♙xc6 dxc6 26 ♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 27 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 28 ♜f2 ♜e7 29 ♜d6 ♜c7 30 e4



White's activity fully compensates for the pawn minus and a draw should have been the normal result. However, it was not my day...

30...♜f7 31 ♜e3 a5 32 h4 ♜e7 33 e5 a4 34 bxa4 ♜a7 35 ♜xc6 ♜xa4 36 ♜xb6 ♜xa2 37 ♜e4 ♜d2 38 h5 ♜d4+ 39 ♜f5 c4 40 ♜c6 ♜d7 41 ♜c5 ♜e7 42 ♜c7+ ♜d8 43 ♜c6 ♜d7 44 ♜c5 ♜e7 45 g4 g6+ 46 hxg6 hxg6+ 47 ♜g5 ♜e6 1-0

...as I lost on time in this dead-drawn rook endgame! (The time-control was 25 minutes for 50 moves, then 10 seconds per move.)

Game 52

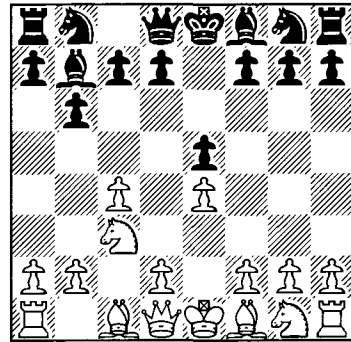
A.Delchev-P.Blatny

Budapest 2000

1 c4 b6 2 ♜c3 ♙b7 3 e4 e5!?

3...e6 is the main continuation (see the next games), but the bold-looking 3...e5!? also de-

serves attention. Black mortgages his ...f7-f5 and ...d7-d5 advances in order to gain a firmer grip in the centre. This may be quite playable as an occasional weapon, even though in my opinion 3...e6 is without doubt Black's best move.



4 ♜f3

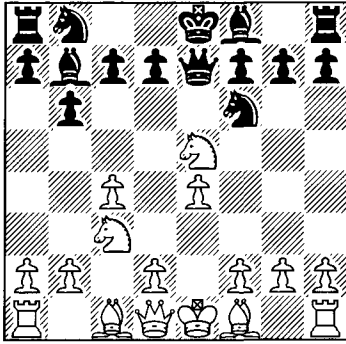
White's most popular reply, which virtually forces 4...♜c6. The light-squared bishop's diagonal is then closed, at least until White plays d2-d4, when it comes back to life.

The heavyweight clash, V.Korchnoi-N.Short, FIDE World Championship, Groningen 1997, featured the more restrained 4 d3, and ended peacefully some 22 moves later: 4...♜c6 5 g3 ♙c5 6 ♙g2 ♜ge7 7 ♜f3 0-0 8 0-0 a5 9 ♙e3 d6 10 d4 exd4 11 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♜c6 13 ♙xc5 bxc5 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♜a4 ♖d6 16 ♖d5 ♜d8 17 ♖xc5 ♙xg2 18 ♖xd6 cxd6 19 ♙xg2 ♜e6 20 ♜ad1 ♜d4 21 b3 f6 22 ♜d2 ♜ab8 23 ♜c3 ♜fc8 24 h4 h5 25 ♜fd1 ♜c6 26 ♜b5 1/2-1/2.

Apart from that, I regard 4 g3 and even the wild 4 f4!?, introducing a King's Gambit revisited, as valid alternatives as well.

4...♜c6

4...♜f6!? is rare, but as yet White has never found the right path to an opening advantage: 5 ♜xe5! (a principled answer, in contrast to the harmless 5 d3) 5...♖e7 (5...♜xe4 6 ♜xe4 ♖e7 would likely transpose to 6 d4 ♜xe4 etc.) and now:

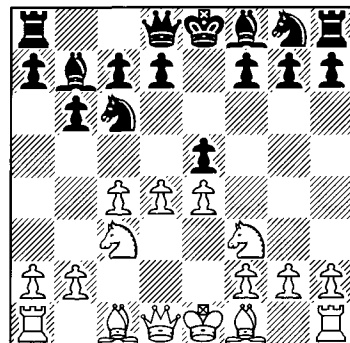


a) 6 d4! is correct, and after 6...d4 7 dxe4 dxe4 8 e2 e2 9 b7 9 e3 d6 10 dxc6 dxc6 (or 10...dxc6 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 12 c5!?) 11 d5 e2 12 0-0-0 0-0-0 13 f3 White has more space and the better bishops, though one might find the position a bit boring.

b) 6 d4?! dxe4 7 e3 e4 8 e2 (8 f3 is interesting, but shouldn't disturb Black too much, e.g. 8...e5 9 g3 f6 10 g2 f3 11 e3 d6 12 e7 d7 13 d5 e8 14 d4 e4+ 15 e2 d2 16 e2 d2 a6 and Black should gradually neutralise his opponent's slight plus; compared with the line after 6 d4!, I believe that the black knights can stand their present discomfort more easily than the bishops) 8...e5 9 g3 dxc3 10 dxc3 e7 11 d5 e2+ 12 e2 d6 13 e4! (I don't like this move which spoils the pawn structure, even if White's activity compensates for the time being; instead there was nothing wrong with the more academic 13 e3, when chances are level) 13...e4 14 g4 e4! (14...e8 15 g1 g6 16 f5 d6 was perhaps a better way to deal with the attack on c7) 15 g1 c6 (or 15...e8? 16 f5 f6) 16 e3 g6 17 f5 0-0-0 18 0-0-0 e8 19 e3 when White was a little better as the enemy pieces are not optimally placed; he can think of such ideas as h4-h5, or try to bring a rook to h4, pressurising the black kingside. P.Blatny-A.Stefanova, Krynica 1998, continued 19...e7 20 h4 (perhaps 20 e6!?) 20...g8 21 g4 e8 22

ge1 e7 23 d6 (the knight had more interesting squares than h6, so 23 e7! was stronger and after 23...d6 24 d6 e8 Black is very passive, though may be able to hold) 23...e8 24 e7 d6 25 f6 e8 26 e1 (burning the bridges with the more energetic 26 b4! wasn't good enough to break the balance: after 26...e7 27 fe7 e8 28 c5 bxc5 29 bxc5 e5! or 29...d8 30 e7 e7 31 d6 e6 White must take care about his c5 pawn and is thus by no means better) 26...e7 27 e7 (27 fe7 e8 was also probably level, though a bit more tricky: after a subsequent ...d8, for instance, White may try d6-g8) 27...e8 28 e7 e7 29 e7 d6 30 e2 d6 31 e3 c8 32 d6! (not the most fortunate square for the horse; I believe Blatny was trying to win, and therefore planned something like e4-g5) 32...e6 33 b3 d5! (this enables White to re-equalise; possibly 33...a5 34 e4 a4 was a better try) 34 cxd5 cxd5 35 e4 e6 36 b4 e8 37 g4 e7 38 e6 e5+ 39 e3 e5+ 40 e2 d4 41 cxd4 (41 c4? e3 42 e2 e1+ is unpleasant for White) 41...e4 42 e1 h5 43 e3 e6 44 b5 e7 45 e4 d3 46 a4 e5 47 g5 e4 48 e4 e5 49 g5 e4 50 g8 e6 51 e6 e1 0-1. As the final position is still roughly equal, the current women's World Champion presumably won on time.

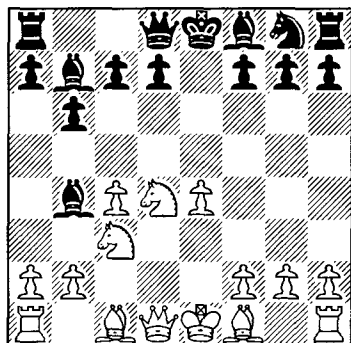
5 d4?!



In my opinion this straightforward move just promises Black easy development. This was confirmed in both the current game and Rasmussen-Conquest (see the notes below).

Stronger is 5 a3! ♖f6 6 g3 (6 ♕d3?! ♕d6 from A.Da Rocha-M.Dos Santos, correspondence 2002, is a bit peculiar to my taste; while 6 b4?! simply concedes too many squares after 6...a5 7 b5 ♖d4 8 d3 ♖xf3+ 9 ♖xf3 ♕c5 and Black had an excellent game in Z.Varga-D.Breder, Budapest 2001: 10 ♖e2 h6 11 g4 h5 12 h3 hxg4 13 hxg4 ♖xh1 14 ♖xh1 ♖e7 15 ♖h8+ ♖f8 16 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 17 f3 ♗e7 and Black won) 6...a5 7 ♕g2 ♕c5 8 ♖xe5 (this isn't so clever, but White probably doesn't have much after 8 0-0 0-0 9 d3 h6, preventing ♕g5) 8...♖xe5 9 d4 ♕d6?! (9...♖xc4! looks playable too and was likely best, as after 10 dxc5 bxc5 and it's not clear how White will justify his pawn sacrifice) 10 dxe5 ♕xe5 11 0-0 (Fritz's suggestion of 11 ♖b5! is a powerful shot: the e4 pawn is immune because of the pin by ♖e2, while 12 f4 is coming) 11...♕xc3 12 bxc3 d6 13 c5 (in the event of 13 ♖e1 0-0 14 e5 ♕xg2 15 exf6 ♕c6 Black is by no means worse) 13...0-0 14 cxb6 ♕xe4 and a draw was agreed in A.Webster-M.Simons, British Championship, Millfield 2000.

5...exd4 6 ♖xd4 ♕b4

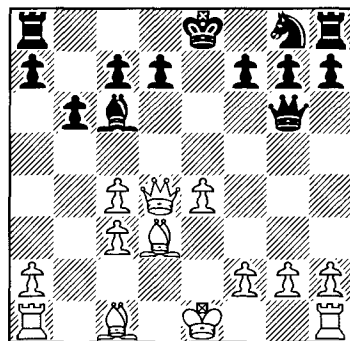


7 ♖xc6

After 7 ♕e2?! ♖f6 8 0-0 ♕xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 Black was fine in K.Rasmussen-S.Conquest,

Saint Vincent 2000. On 'normal' play from White, he can indeed find a natural counter-play against the doubled c-pawns. However, in the game things went even more favourably: 10 ♕g5? (10 f3) 10...h6 11 ♕h4 g5 12 ♕g3 ♖xe4 13 ♖f5 ♖f6! 14 ♖xd7 ♖c5 15 ♖d5 ♖ad8 16 ♖f3 ♖d4 17 ♖xd4 ♕xf3 18 ♕xf3 ♖d3 with a decisive advantage.

7...♕xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♕xc6 9 ♖d4 ♖f6 10 ♕d3 ♖g6



11 0-0

Here White missed the opportunity to play more actively, namely with 11 ♕f4!?, in which case Black can't avoid a certain degree of risk, whether he takes on g2 or not, e.g. 11...♖xg2 12 0-0-0 or 11...d6 12 e5 ♖xg2 13 0-0-0 with the initiative to White. Maybe 11...0-0, covering the c7 pawn, is possible, though I'm not sure if the black king would be too happy.

11...♖e7 12 ♕a3 d6 13 f3 ♖g5!

Directed against the annoying e4-e5, e.g. 13...0-0 14 e5 dxe5! 15 ♕xg6 exd4 16 ♕c2! (16 ♕xe7?! ♖fe8 is equal) 16...♖fe8 17 cxd4 and owing to his pair of bishops, White is slightly better.

14 f4 ♖a5

Luring the bishop to b4 has some point: it can't then return to the c1-h6 diagonal in one move, and by retreating his own bishop Black would create the threat of ...c7-c5.

15 ♕b4 ♖h5 16 ♖f3

16 ♖xg7?? is suicidal: 16...♖g8 17 ♖d4

♖h3 18 ♜f2 ♗f5! and Black wins.

16...♗d7?!

This loses a pawn, whereas the superior 16...f6 would still secure Black good prospects; e.g. 17 ♖h3 ♖g4 18 ♜g3 ♖xf4 19 ♜xg7 ♖h6 20 ♜g3 0-0-0 and I prefer Black.

17 ♜g3 ♜g8 18 ♖e3

With the correct 18 ♜xg7! White would just have grabbed a pawn and stood better, though after 18...0-0-0 (worse is 18...c5 19 ♜xg8+ ♗xg8 20 ♖g7 with a white edge) 19 ♜xg8 ♜xg8 20 ♖f2 c5 21 ♗a3 f5 the fight is not over just yet.

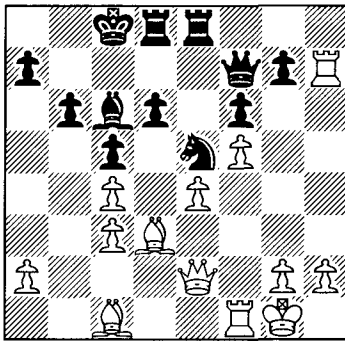
18...c5 19 ♗a3 0-0-0 20 f5 f6 21 ♖h3 ♖f7

Better was 21...♖c8! with the idea 22 ♜xh7?! ♗xf5.

22 ♜xh7 ♗c6 23 ♜f1 ♗e5 24 ♗c1 ♗c6 25 ♖e2?!

25 ♖g3 would have prevented Black's next, while planning to eliminate the knight with ♗f4xe5.

25...♜ge8



Black has lost (or sacrificed?) a pawn, but his superb knight at e5 is a guarantee that he still very much alive.

26 ♜f4 ♜e7 27 ♖h3 ♗b7 28 ♜fh4 ♗a6 29 ♖h8 ♗xc4 30 ♜xd8+ ♗xd8 31 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 32 ♖d1 ♗c7 33 ♖d5 ♖e2 34 ♗d2??

34 ♜e3 ♖c2 35 ♗d2 was no fun for White, but no immediate disaster either.

34...♗c4 0-1

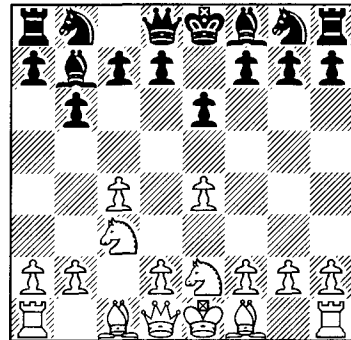
On 35 ♜d3 Black's most elegant way to finish the job is 35...♗xd2!! 36 ♖xd6+ ♗b7 37 ♖xe7+ ♗a6 and the rook is lost.

Game 53

D.Poldauf-G.Hertneck

German Bundesliga 2003

1 c4 b6 2 ♗c3 ♗b7 3 e4 e6 4 ♗ge2



Apart from 4 g3 (see the next games) and of course 4 ♗f3 (for which see the next section), 4 ♗ge2 is seen most frequently. Its main merit is to prevent ...♗b4 (White would simply reply a2-a3), though it does so in a somewhat artificial way, and I consider it to be harmless for Black, provided he reacts correctly.

4...♗f6!

4...f5 has been tried too, but personally I don't like having to recapture on f5 with a pawn, i.e. 5 exf5 exf5 when both 6 d4 ♗f6 7 ♖d3 and 6 ♗f4 ♗f6 7 ♗c2 should be a trifle better for White.

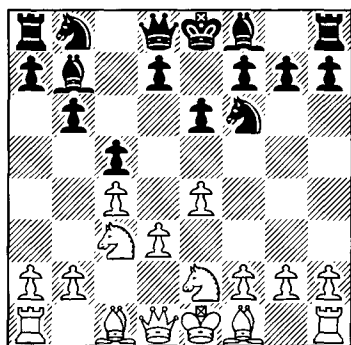
5 d3

The committal 5 e5 has only been played once, as far as I know, and thus would require further investigations. In the encounter J.Plachetka-E.Kengis, Faroe 1997, Black offered an early draw when he already stood better: 5...♗g4 6 d4 ♖h4 7 ♗g3 ♗b4 8 h3 ♗h6 9 a3 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♗f5?! (I prefer

10...0-0 11 ♔d3 f5! when Black can find counterplay by ...♟c6-a5, ...♙a6, or ...d7-d6 and even sometimes ...f5-f4; but not 11...f6?! because of the demonic 12 ♟e4!! ♙xe4 13 g3 or 12...fxe5 13 ♙g5 trapping the queen!) 11 ♟h5?! (instead 11 ♟xf5! exf5 and now either 12 d5 or 12 ♟d2!? intending ♟f4 is fine for White) 11...♟xh5 12 ♟xh5 0-0 13 a4?! (better was 13 ♙d3, with the idea 13...♟h4 14 ♟g1 and 15 ♙g5, or if 13...♙xg2? 14 ♟g1 ♟h4 15 ♙g5! ♟f3+ 16 ♟e2 ♟xg1+ 17 ♟xg1 and Black is in very bad shape) 13...d6 14 exd6 cxd6 15 a5 ♟c8 16 f3?! (16 axb6! axb6 17 ♟xa8 ♙xa8 should be tenable for White) 16...bxa5 17 ♟xa5 ♟d7 18 ♟f2 ♟b6 1/2-1/2.

5...d5!?

The wildest continuation, when a straight tactical battle takes place. White retains some chances of an opening edge, but as often in sharp lines, Black has his word to say too. Nevertheless, the critical move is 5...c5, and then:



a) 6 f4?! is too weakening and doesn't help much White developing; furthermore, e4-e5 is still no threat: 6...♟c6 7 g3?! (7 ♟g3) 7...d5 8 e5 dxc4! 9 ♙g2 cxd3 10 exf6 dxe2 11 ♟xe2 ♟xf6 with a huge plus for Black in N.Miezis-C.Bauer, Echternach (rapid) 2000, as White has absolutely nothing for the two pawns. I'm ashamed to tell it, but that game ended in a draw!!

b) 6 g3 d5 7 exd5 exd5 8 ♙g2 ♟d7 and:

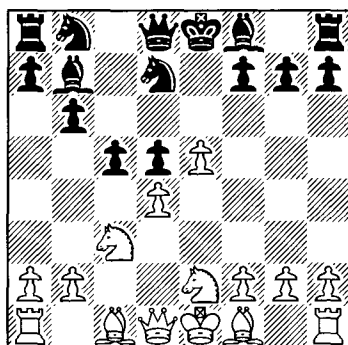
b1) 9 cxd5? ♟xd5 when White has already

gone astray. By pure coincidence I was lucky enough to win two games in the same rapid-play tournament from this position: A.Delchev-C.Bauer, Vitrolles 2001, continued 10 0-0 ♟xc3 11 ♟xc3 ♙xg2 12 ♟xg2 ♟c6 13 ♟f3 ♙e7 14 ♟d5 0-0 15 ♟e1 ♟ad8 16 ♟xe7+ ♟xe7 17 ♙g5 f6! 18 ♙f4 ♟c6, while M.Voiska-C.Bauer saw instead 10 ♟xd5 ♙xd5 11 ♙xd5 ♟xd5 12 0-0 ♟c6 13 ♟c3 ♟d7 14 ♙g5 ♙e7 15 ♙xe7 ♟xe7. In each case Black had a clear advantage, due to the weakness on d3 and the strongpoint for the knight on d4.

b2) 9 0-0! d4 10 ♟e4 (Cvitan uncorked 10 ♟a4!? against me in a blitz game in Zurich 2002; the knight stands badly on a4, but the question is whether White can generate some play by preparing b2-b4) 10...♟xe4 11 dxe4 ♙d6 (11...♙e7 would allow 12 ♟f4, whereas now I would shoot the knight) 12 ♙f4 ♙e7 13 ♙d2 with unclear play in N.Miezis-C.Bauer, Echallens (rapid) 2003. White will continue ♟f4-d5, eventually followed by f2-f4 and/or ♟h5, when his activity compensates for Black's protected passed pawn.

That's the end of my personal saga with the 4 ♟ge2 line. I hope it didn't bore you too much!

6 cxd5 exd5 7 e5 ♟fd7 8 d4 c5!



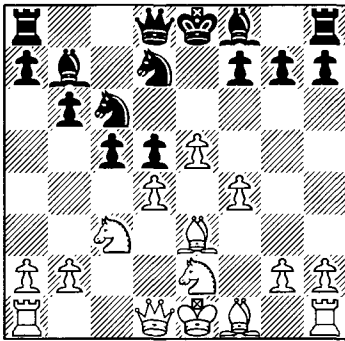
Black has scored an impressive 4/4 from this position, while I think he is objectively worse! 8...♙e7? is certainly too shy. In

A.Delchev-B.Taddei, Cannes 2000, Black was smashed in just 22 moves: 9 $\text{c}4$ $\text{f}8$ 10 $\text{d}3$ $\text{g}6$ 11 0-0 $\text{c}6$ 12 $\text{f}e2$ $\text{d}7$ 13 $\text{f}4$ $\text{a}6$ 14 $\text{f}5$ $\text{c}d3$ 15 $\text{c}d3$ $\text{g}x5$ 16 $\text{g}3$ $\text{e}6$ 17 $\text{c}x5$ $\text{f}8$ 18 $\text{h}6$ $\text{c}x6$ 19 $\text{d}6+$ $\text{c}d8$ 20 $\text{c}x7$ $\text{f}8$ 21 $\text{a}f1$ $\text{c}f4$ 22 $\text{c}1x4$ 1-0.

9 f4

Worse is 9 $\text{c}4$?! $\text{c}d4$ 10 $\text{c}d5$ $\text{c}e5$ 11 $\text{b}5+$ $\text{c}bc6$ 12 $\text{h}5$?! (here 12 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{d}6$ should be about level, though it is already White who must be careful) 12... $\text{d}6$ 13 $\text{d}2$ 0-0-0 (13... $\text{a}6!$ was even stronger) 14 0-0 $\text{g}6$ 15 $\text{h}3+$ $\text{c}b8$ and White's compensation for the pawn slowly disappeared in M.Voiska-S.Matveeva, Warsaw 2001: 16 $\text{g}3$ $\text{g}7$ 17 $\text{a}c1$ $\text{h}g8$ 18 $\text{c}xc6$ $\text{c}xc6$ 19 $\text{f}e1$ $\text{g}e8$ 20 $\text{h}4$ $\text{e}5$ 21 $\text{c}b4$ $\text{c}e1+$ 22 $\text{c}xe1$ $\text{c}e7$ 23 $\text{c}bd3$ $\text{c}f5$ 24 $\text{c}h2$ $\text{c}c8$ 25 $\text{d}1$ $\text{a}5$ 26 $\text{b}4$ $\text{a}4$ 27 $\text{b}5$ $\text{c}a7$ 28 $\text{c}b4$ $\text{d}7$ 29 $\text{c}b1$ $\text{c}xb5$ 30 $\text{c}e1$ $\text{h}5$ 31 $\text{a}3$ $\text{c}f6$ 32 $\text{c}h3$ $\text{c}xh4$ 33 $\text{c}e5$ $\text{d}7$ 34 $\text{c}xf5$ $\text{c}xf5$ 35 $\text{c}xh4$ $\text{g}5$ 36 $\text{c}xh5$ $\text{c}e4$ 37 $\text{g}4$ $\text{c}h7$ 38 $\text{c}e1$ $\text{g}xf4$ 0-1.

9... $\text{c}6$ 10 $\text{e}3$



This looks a bit like a French Defence (the 1 $\text{e}4$ $\text{e}6$ 2 $\text{d}4$ $\text{d}5$ 3 $\text{c}3$ $\text{c}f6$ 4 $\text{e}5$ $\text{c}fd7$ 5 $\text{f}4$ $\text{c}5$ 6 $\text{c}f3$ line) where the $\text{c}2$ and $\text{e}6$ pawns have vanished. As a consequence, $\text{d}5$ is hanging and Black needs to act quite energetically. He has plenty of choice here, and apart from the already tested moves below, Black might consider 10... $\text{c}c8$, or even 10... $\text{c}e7$, with the idea 11 $\text{c}d5$ $\text{c}h4+$ followed by 12... $\text{c}d4$.

10... $\text{c}a5$

10... $\text{c}d4$ is a sort of capitulation: Black admits that he is worse, albeit not too much, and decides for a solid approach. After 11 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}d4$ 12 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}c5$ 13 $\text{c}e2$ (or 12 $\text{g}3$?, since the bishop comes to the long diagonal anyway later on, while having $\text{f}4$ protected by a pawn is desirable) 13...0-0 14.0-0 $\text{c}e7$ 15 $\text{c}f3$ and White was slightly better in Z.Franco Ocampos-J.Arizmendi Martinez, Mallorca 2001.

11 $\text{c}g3$ $\text{h}5$

Was this a bluff? Instead, Black could try 11... $\text{c}d4$ 12 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}c6$.

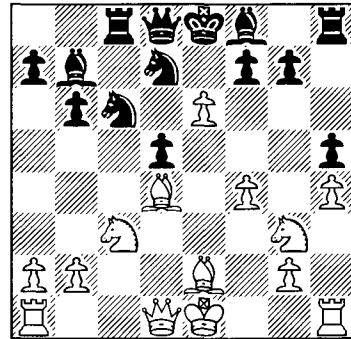
12 $\text{h}4$?!

There was nothing wrong with 12 $\text{d}xc5$! grabbing a pawn. After 12... $\text{c}c4$, for instance, he can choose between 13 $\text{c}xc4$ $\text{d}xc4$ 14 $\text{c}ge4$ and 14 $\text{c}xb6$ $\text{a}xb6$ 15 0-0 with a safe edge in both cases.

12... $\text{c}c8$ 13 $\text{c}e2$

After 13 $\text{c}xh5$?! either 13... $\text{g}6$ 14 $\text{c}g3$ $\text{c}xh4$ or 13... $\text{c}c6$?! leads to complications.

13... $\text{c}d4$ 14 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}c6$ 15 $\text{e}6$!



15... $\text{c}c5$ 16 $\text{e}xf7$?!

16 $\text{f}5$! was stronger, but the text doesn't spoil too much.

16... $\text{c}x7$ 17 $\text{c}xh5+$ $\text{c}g8$ 18 $\text{c}f3$ $\text{c}d4$ 19 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{c}e4$ 20 $\text{c}xe4$ $\text{d}xe4$ 21 0-0-0?!

Better was 21 $\text{c}d8$! $\text{c}d8$ 22 $\text{d}1$, leaving the king in the centre.

21... $\text{c}d4$ 22 $\text{c}d4$ $\text{e}3$ 23 $\text{c}f5$?

And here 23 ♖ge4 when White can't lose.

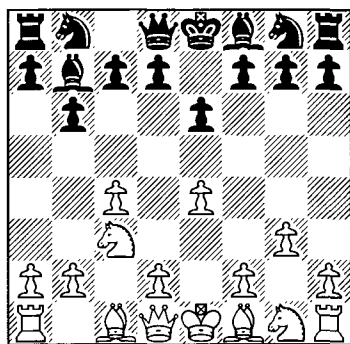
23...♞h5 24 ♖xe3 ♙c5 25 ♞d3 ♙a6 26 ♗d2 ♙xd3 27 ♗xd3 ♞d8+ 28 ♗e2 ♞e8 29 ♖cd1 ♞d5 30 ♗f3 ♞d2 31 ♖c4 ♞d3+ 32 ♗g4 ♞e2 33 ♖e5 ♙xg2+ 34 ♗f5 ♞d6 35 ♖c3 g6+ 36 ♗e4 ♙xb2 37 ♖d5 ♞e2+ 38 ♗d3 ♞xe5 0-1

Game 54

J.Gomez Esteban-J.Speelman

Pamplona 1996

1 c4 b6 2 ♖c3 ♙b7 3 e4 e6 4 g3



This provocative move obviously aims at fianchettoing the light-squared bishop. White has noticed that his bishop will be restricted on the f1-a6 diagonal, and therefore tries to find it a more useful post. As apparent as the merits of 4 g3 is its drawback: the long diagonal is weakened and Black usually obtains decent counterplay by pressuring the e4 spot, by means of ...f7-f5, ...♖d6, ...♙b4 etc. All in all, the 4 g3 line leads to rich positions, but where Black's chances shouldn't be worse.

4...f5 5 ♙g2 ♖f6

Black must delay the capture on e4 as 5...fxe4? 6 ♖xe4, threatening ♖d6+, only helps White. While 5...♙b4!? provides White with an extra option: 6 ♞h5+!? (he can play the standard 6 ♖ge2, 7 d3 and 8.0-0 if he wishes) 6...g6 7 ♞h3, with the idea 7...♙xc3 8 exf5, although this isn't frightening for Black.

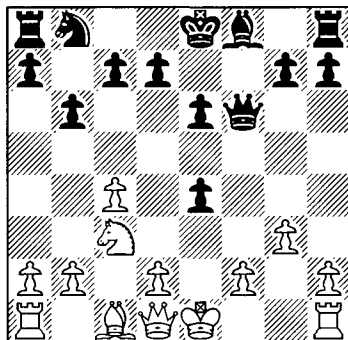
6 ♖ge2?!

6 d3! is natural and best (see the next two games). Other moves emphasise the weakness of d4; e.g. 6 ♞c2 fxe4 7 ♖xe4 ♖c6 8 ♖xf6+ ♞xf6 9 ♞c3 0-0-0 (or 9...♞xc3!?) 10 ♖e2 ♙c5 11 ♞xf6 gxf6 and Black's game looks preferable already, V.Hort-D.King, German Bundesliga 1994.

6...♖xe4 7 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 8 ♙xe4 fxe4 9 ♖c3

In his annotations, Speelman points out that 9 ♞c2 ♖c6 10 ♞xe4 ♞f6 is also comfortable for Black. Indeed, after the possible 11 d4 ♙b4+ 12 ♗f1 0-0 13 ♙e3, Black maintains his initiative thanks to the funny 13...♙d2! 14 ♗g2 ♙xe3 15 ♞xe3 ♖b4 16 ♞hc1 ♞f5.

9...♞f6!



10 ♞g4

10 ♖xe4?! is met by 10...♞e5 or 10...♞f5, followed by 11...♖c6, and Black is better due to the weaknesses of d4 and f3; but 10 ♞h5+ was worth considering.

10...♖c6 11 0-0! ♙e7

Alternatively, Black could try 11...♙c5!? 12 ♖xe4 ♞f7, or the endgame 11...♞f5 12 ♞xe4 ♞xe4 13 ♖xe4, in both cases with some edge for him.

12 ♞xe4 0-0 13 d3 ♙b4 14 ♖e2

After the better 14 ♙d2 Black has an amusing draw if he wants: 14...♖d4!? 15 ♖d5! ♞f3 16 ♞xd4 ♙c5 17 ♖e7+ ♗h8 (not

17...♙f7? 18 ♖xd7) 18 ♗g6+ ♕g8 19 ♗e7+ ♕h8 etc. Or he can be more ambitious with 18...hxg6 19 ♖h4+ ♕g8 20 d4 ♗d6.

14...♗c5 15 ♗g2 ♖ad8

Speelman finds the correct plan: the ...d7-d5 push.

16 ♗f4 ♖fe8!

Consistent, even if it's a pity to withdraw the rook from the semi-open f-file.

17 ♖b1

17 ♗h5! was a better defensive option, for instance 17...♖f7 18 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 19 ♕xf3 ♖f8+ 20 ♕g2 e5!? 21 g4 and the offside knight heads to e4.

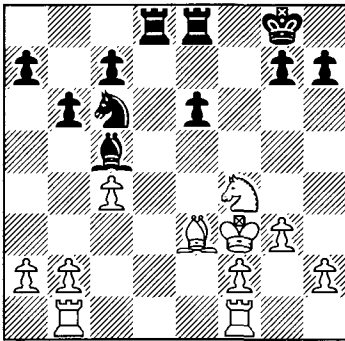
17...d5 18 ♖e2 dxc4

18...♗d4?! 19 ♖g4 doesn't yield Black anything tangible.

19 dxc4 ♖f5 20 ♗e3 ♖e4+!

20...e5 isn't convincing: 21 ♗d5 ♗d4 22 ♗xd4 exd4 23 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 24 ♕xf3 ♗d6, followed by ...c7-c6, and Black gets an advantageous rook ending, but I doubt he can win.

21 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 22 ♕xf3



22...♗xe3

Speelman credits this move with an exclamation mark, judging that 22...♗e5+ is weaker. In fact both seem adequate to me and leave Black on top. For example, after 22...♗e5+ 23 ♕e2 ♗xc4 24 ♗xc5 Black has the intermediate move 24...e5!, denying the white knight the d3-square (if 25 ♗d3?! e4!), and only then recaptures the bishop. Whereas

the immediate 23...♗xe3? 24 fxe3 ♗xc4 25 ♖bc1! would give White dangerous counterplay after 25...♗xb2 26 ♖xc7.

23 ♕xe3

23 fxe3 ♖d2 is even less appetising.

23...♗e5 24 ♖fc1

The English grandmaster recommends 24 ♖bc1 ♗g4+ 25 ♕e2 ♗xh2 26 ♖fd1 ♗g4 27 c5 with some play for the pawn, which is true. In the game White obtains the same position, but with his rook placed less actively on b1, rather than d1.

24...♗g4+ 25 ♕e2 ♗xh2! 26 c5

If 26 f3? then 26...e5 27 ♗d5 e4 frees the knight.

26...e5 27 ♗h5 ♖d4 28 cxb6?

The last chance consisted of 28 ♖h1 ♗g4 29 f3 ♗f6 30 ♗xf6+ gxf6, but with a healthy extra pawn Black should win.

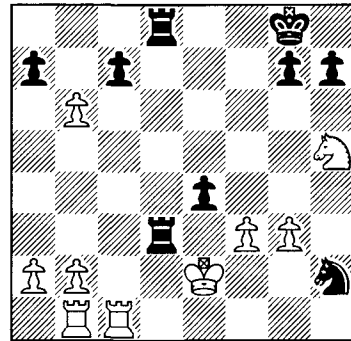
28...♖ed8!

Threatening the picturesque ...♖c4 mate!

29 f3 ♖d2+ 30 ♕e3 ♖2d3+ 31 ♕e2

The brave 31 ♕e4?! of course loses to 31...♖8d4+ etc.

31...e4!



This nice pawn sacrifice enables Black to gain the g4-square for his knight. He is now close to winning.

32 fxe4

32 bxc7 was no improvement: 32...exf3+ 33 ♕f2 ♗g4+ 34 ♕f1 ♖c8 35 ♗f4 ♖d2 with a decisive advantage.

32...♖d2+ 33 ♖e3

The sad-looking 33 ♖e1 was relatively best, though Black should win after 33...♗f3+ 34 ♖f1 cxb6 followed by 35...♞dh2 and 36...♞dd2 (even if White plays 35 ♖c7).

33...♞8d3+ 34 ♖f4 ♞f2+ 35 ♖g5

35 ♖e5 is mate in five: 35...♗g4+ 36 ♖e6 ♞d6+ 37 ♖e7 ♞f7+ 38 ♖e8 ♞dd7 and 39...♞fe7 mate.

35...h6+ 36 ♖h4 ♗f3+ 37 ♖h3?!

37 ♖g4 was more stubborn, but also losing: 37...♗e5+ 38 ♖h3 ♞dd2 39 ♞h1 (if 39 g4 ♞d3+ 40 ♗g3 ♗g6 41 g5 h5 42 ♞h1 h4 wins) 39...g5 40 ♗f6+ (if 40 g4 ♞f3+ 41 ♗g3 ♗g6 and 42...♗f4 mate, or 40 ♗f4 ♞h2+! 41 ♞xh2 g4+ 42 ♖h4 ♞xh2+ 43 ♗h3 ♞xh3 mate) 40...♞xf6 41 bxa7 (or 41 bxc7 ♞c6, and if 42 ♞bc1? ♞xc1 43 ♞xc1 g4+ 44 ♖h4 ♞h2 is mate again) when Black would stop thinking about mate and become materialistic with 41...♞a6!, as the too brilliant 41...g4+ 42 ♖h4 ♞ff2?? is a final self-trap: 43 a8♞+ ♖g7 44 ♞h3!! ♞h2 45 ♞h1! and it is White who wins!

37...♞h2+ 38 ♖g4 ♗e5+ 39 ♖f4 ♞xh5 40 ♞f1 ♞g5 0-1

6...fxe4

6...♙b4 doesn't change much: sooner or later Black has to take on e4.

7 ♗ge2

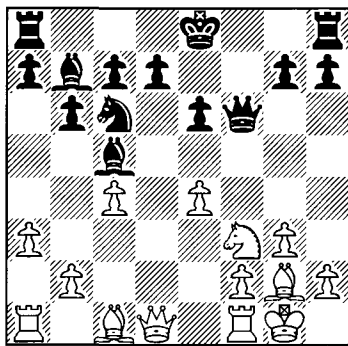
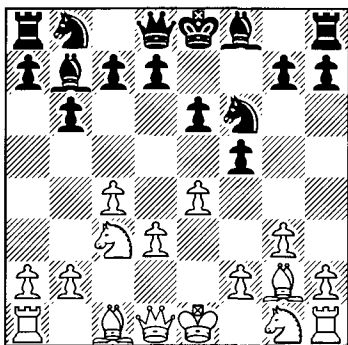
Again the most precise. Alternatively:

a) 7 dxe4 allows Black the extra possibility of 7...♙b4?!, when White can only cover e4 at the cost of a misplaced piece, i.e. 8 ♙d2 or 8 ♞c2.

b) 7 ♗xe4?! is even less attractive: 7...♗xe4 8 dxe4 ♞f6! (eyeing b2 and f2) 9 a3 (9 ♞c2? led quickly to a prospectless position in B.Lepelletier-C.Bauer, French Championship, Besançon 1999: 9...♗c6 10 ♗f3 ♙c5 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♙f4 e5 13 ♙d2 h6 when White had run out of constructive ideas and counterplay; the game continued 14 ♙c3 ♞f7 15 ♖h1 ♞e6 16 ♞d3 ♞af8 17 ♞ad1 g5 18 b3 a5 19 ♞d2 d6 20 h3? – the decisive mistake, but good advice against ...♗e7-g6 and ...g5-g4 is hard to find – 20...♞xf3 21 ♙xf3 ♞xh3+ 22 ♖g1 ♞xg3+ 23 ♙g2 ♞g4 24 ♞e2 ♞h4 25 ♞d3 g4 26 ♞e3 ♗d4! 27 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 28 ♞d1 ♙xe3 29 ♞xe3 ♞f6 30 ♞g3 h5 31 ♞d3 ♞g5 32 f3 ♞f4 33 fxg4 ♞xg4 34 ♖h2 ♖h7! 0-1) 9...♗c6?! (9...♙c5! was more accurate, not allowing 10 ♗f3, while enabling Black to castle kingside; in that case he would have stood better) 10 ♗f3 ♙c5 11 0-0 and then:

Game 55
E.Cekro-D.Hausrath
Belgian League 1997

1 c4 b6 2 ♗c3 ♙b7 3 e4 e6 4 g3 f5 5 ♙g2 ♗f6 6 d3!



b1) 11...d6?! is strongly met by 12 e5!, when the 'computeresque' 12...♗xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♙xg2 14 ♞a4+ ♖e7 15 ♞d7+ ♖f8 16 ♖xg2

♖xe5 is not only acrobatic, but bad too. After 17 ♔e3! Black's unsafe king is the most important factor. Black could try 12...dxe5, but after 13 ♘g5, followed by either ♔e4 or ♘e4 depending on the circumstances, White has plenty of compensation for his pawn.

b2) 11...0-0 12 e5! (again the right decision; instead 12 ♖xd7? would be perilous, due to 12...♙d6, threatening ...♗d8, and forcing 13 e5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♔xg2 when Black is clearly better after either 15 ♖xg2 ♔xe5 or 15 ♘g4?! ♖f3 16 ♖xe6+ ♗f7) 12...♘xe5 (or 12...♖f5 13 ♔f4 is unclear) 13 ♘xe5 ♔xg2 14 ♘xd7 ♖f7 15 ♖xg2 ♗ad8 with equality.

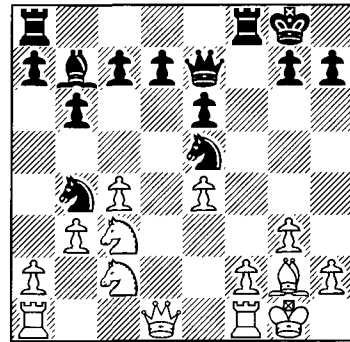
b3) 11...♘e5 12 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 was about level in E.Cekro-H.Groffen, Belgian League 1997, which continued 13 ♗b1 0-0-0 14 b4 ♔d4 15 ♖d3 d6 16 ♗d1 c5 17 ♔e3 ♔xe3 18 ♖xe3 g5 19 ♗d2 h6 20 ♗bd1 ♗hf8 21 ♗d3 ♖c7 22 ♖d2 ♔c6?! (22...h5!?) 23 b5 ♔b7 24 a4 ♗d7 25 a5 h5 26 a6 ♔a8? (the pin on the e-file renders the e4 pawn taboo, while the text entombs his own bishop; hence 26...♔c8 was called for) 27 ♖c3 ♖xc3 28 ♗xc3 e5 29 ♗e3 ♗df7 30 ♗d2 ♗f6 31 ♗e3 ♗d8 32 ♗d1 ♗df8 33 ♗d3d2 ♗d8 34 f3 ♗ff8 35 ♗f2 ♗f6 36 ♗df1 ♗df8 37 ♔h3 ♗8f7 38 ♔f5? (the beginning of his troubles; although Black is playing without his bishop, exploiting this wasn't easy, so the wisest course for White was 'doing nothing', especially as he was now short of time) 38...d5! (and the bishop escapes, leaving White with a worse ending) 39 cxd5 ♔xd5 40 ♗d1 ♔b3 41 ♗dd2 ♔c4 42 ♗b2 ♗d6 43 ♗fc2 ♔d3 44 ♗c3 ♗f8 45 ♖f2 ♗d4 46 ♖e3 ♔c4 47 f4 gxf4+ 48 gxf4 ♖d6 49 ♗g2 exf4+ 50 ♖xf4 ♗xe4+ 51 ♖xe4 ♔d5+ 52 ♖e3 ♔xg2 53 ♗d3+ ♖e5 54 ♗d2 ♗xf5 55 ♗xg2 ♖d5 56 ♗g7 ♖c4 57 ♗xa7 ♖xb5 58 ♗a8 ♗d5 59 ♖e4 ♗d7 60 a7 ♖a6 61 ♗h8 ♖xa7 62 ♗xh5 ♖a6 63 h4 c4 64 ♗h8 ♖a5 65 h5 ♖b4 66 h6 b5 67 h7 ♖c3 68 ♗b8 ♗e7+ 69 ♖f3 ♗xh7 70 ♗xb5 ♗e7 0-1.

7...♘c6

a) 7...♔b4?! 8 0-0 just leaves the black

bishop on an inferior square and White can count on a slight edge.

b) 7...♔c5 is a viable alternative: 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♔g5! (9 dxe4? is erroneous, as the obvious reply 9...♘g4 yields a big advantage for Black) 9...♔e7 (if 9...h6 10 ♔xf6 ♖xf6 then 11 d4! and 12 ♘xe4 secures White a stable plus) 10 dxe4 ♘g4 11 ♔xe7 ♖xe7 12 ♘d4 ♘e5 13 b3 (Black's task is now to prevent the expansion f2-f4, e4-e5) 13...♘bc6 14 ♘c2 ♘b4 and then:



b1) Having more space, White could seriously consider 15 ♘e3! (as pointed out by Ribli), though I'm not sure whether this is enough to claim an edge. Indeed, 16 f4?! isn't an immediate threat, on account of 16...♖c5, while 16 a3 ♘bd3 17 f4 ♖c5 18 ♖d2 ♘g4 looks messy too; on the other hand, this means the desirable ...c7-c5 push, planning to redirect a knight to d4, isn't an option for Black. Perhaps 15...g5 comes into consideration?

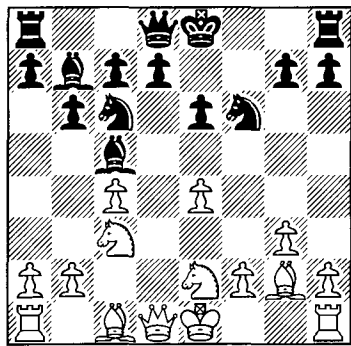
b2) 15 ♘xb4 ♖xb4 16 ♗c1 ♗ad8 (five years later, 16...♖c5 led to an uneventful draw in J.Smejkal-D.Bunzmann, German Bundesliga 1998) 17 f4 ♘f7 18 ♖d2 a6 19 ♗f2 ♖e7 20 ♗c1 ♔c6 21 ♖d3 (if 21 e5! ♔xg2 22 ♖xg2 d6 and Black should get enough counterplay to maintain the balance) 21...♖c5 22 ♖h1 b5 23 cxb5 axb5 24 ♗c2 ♖b6 25 ♘e2 (or 25 ♗fc1!?) 25...e5 26 ♘c3 b4 27 ♘d5 ♔xd5 28 ♖xd5 (recapturing with the pawn

was interesting, but probably not better; i.e. 28 exd5 exf4 29 ♖xf4 ♕e5 with reciprocal chances) 28...c6 29 ♖c5 ♖xc5 30 ♖xc5 ♖a8 31 ♖h3 ♖fd8 32 ♖d1 ♖xa2 33 ♖xd7 ♖a1+ 34 ♖g2 ♖a2+ 35 ♖f3 ♖xh2 36 ♖xc6 (another way to reach a drawish rook ending was 36 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 37 ♖xe5 ♖xh3 38 ♖e8+ ♖f7 39 ♖xd8 ♖h2 40 ♖d7+ ♖f8 and Black will attack the b-pawn) 36...♖xh3 37 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 38 ♖c8 exf4 39 ♖xd8+ ♖f7 40 ♖xf4 h5! 41 ♖d7+ ♖f8 42 ♖b7 h4! 43 gxh4 ♖xb3 44 e5 ♖b1 45 e6 b3 46 ♖g3 ½-½ J.Smejkal-E.Kengis, Prague 1993 (based on the notes by Ribli).

8 dxe4

8 ♕xe4 is harmless and invites simplifications: 8...♕xe4 9 ♖xe4 ♖b4+ 10 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 11 ♖xd2 0-0 with equal chances; e.g. 12 0-0 ♖f6 13 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 14 ♖c3 ♕a5 15 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 16 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 17 d4 ♕d6 18 b3 ♖f3 19 ♖g2 ♖df8 20 ♕f4 ♖c3 21 ♖c1 ♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 ♕f5 23 ♕e2 ½-½ J.Smejkal-E.Kengis, German Bundesliga 2000; a peaceful conclusion to an equally peaceful game.

8...♖c5



8...♕e5 9 b3 ♖c5 is more usual (for which see the next game). But the immediate 8...♖c5 also deserves attention and is probably good enough to equalise.

9 0-0 0-0

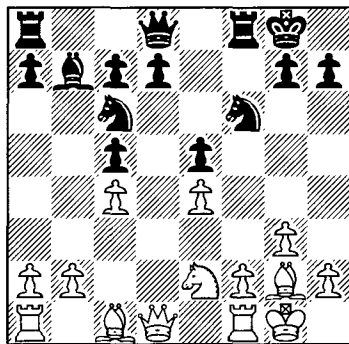
9...♖b8, from another Cekro-Groffen clash, is playable as well; although since 9...0-0

10 e5? ♕g4 is excellent for Black, it may just be a waste of time. Perhaps Black wanted to discourage his opponent from ♕a4xc5, when the rook is already adequately placed. The game continued 10 a3 a5 11 ♕f4 (I think 11 ♕a4!? should have been preferred anyway) 11...0-0 12 ♖b1 ♖d4? (this is a serious mistake, or at best a lost tempo; 12...♕e5! was correct, followed, after either 13 b3 or 13 ♖e3, by 13...♖e7 when I believe Black is at least equal) 13 ♕b5 e5! (it was best to retreat again with 13...♖c5, but I imagine it was a painful decision to take) 14 ♕d5 ♖c8 15 b4 axb4 16 axb4 (White is now much better and the rest of the game is disgusting from Black's point of view) 16...♖a6 17 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 18 b5 ♕xd5 19 exd5 ♖b7 20 ♖b2 (winning a pawn, as 20...♖f6 21 f4 is a disaster for Black) 20...c5?! 21 bxc6 dxc6 22 ♖xd4 exd4 23 ♖xd4 cxd5 24 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 25 ♖xb6 ♖a8 26 cxd5 ♖c2 27 ♖d6 ♖a2 28 ♖d7 ♖d2 29 ♖h3 h6 30 ♖e6+ ♖h7 31 f4 ♖e2 32 f5 ♖h8 33 ♖a1 1-0 F.Cekro-H.Groffen, Belgian League 1998.

10 ♕a4 e5

This looks sound enough, but for people wanting something less academic, maybe 10...♖d6, with the idea 11 f4 e5 12 c5!? ♖e7, would do instead.

11 ♕xc5 bxc5



This kind of pawn structure is quite convenient for Black. He has a strongpoint on d4,

can protect his e- and c-pawns with ...d7-d6, and should White play b2-b3, then ...a5-a4xb3 becomes thematic. White's task, I suppose, should be to open up the game for his bishops.

12 ♖c3 ♘d4 **13** f4 exf4 **14** ♙xf4 d6 **15** ♙g5 ♜b8 **16** ♚d2 ♚e7 **17** ♞ae1 ♚e5 **18** ♙f4 ♚h5 **19** h3 ♘d7 **20** g4

20 ♘b5 deserved attention, when White gets rid of the dominant black knight, and after 20...♘xb5 21 cxb5, he can contemplate moves like ♚a5.

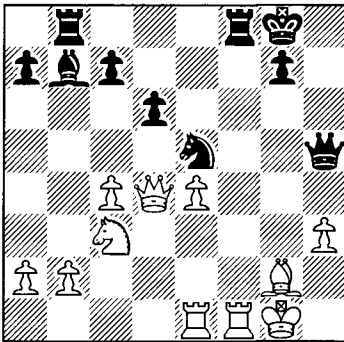
20...♚g6 21 ♙e3

Now Black is more or less forced to sacrifice a pawn, as retreating the knight would allow the nasty 22 ♘d5. He will, however, get a strong knight at e5 in return, and has fair chances to exploit the white king's slight vulnerability.

21...h5?!

21...♘e5 seems a better way to proceed. After 22 ♙xd4 cxd4 23 ♚xd4 c5 24 ♚d1, Black can't regain the material with 24...♘xc4? because of 25 ♚b3 ♙a6 26 ♞xf8+ ♞xf8 27 ♚a4, but I have the feeling that he should be about OK with 24...h5 25 gxh5 ♚g3.

22 gxh5 ♚xh5 **23** ♙xd4 cxd4 **24** ♚xd4 ♘e5



25 b3?!

Why not 25 ♚xa7 - ? Black can try 25...c5 and hope for 26 ♞xf8+ ♞xf8 27 ♚xb7? ♘f3+

28 ♙xf3 ♚xf3 29 ♞e2 (or 29 ♚d5+ ♘h7 30 ♚d2 ♚g3+ 31 ♘h1 ♞f2) 29...♚f1+ 30 ♘h2 ♚f4+ with perpetual check, but if White doesn't take the piece he can surely consolidate.

25...♚g5 26 ♘h1 ♚h4?!

26...♚g3 27 ♘e2 ♚h4 was more accurate, as now 27 ♚xa7 was again possible.

27 ♘d5 ♙xd5 **28** ♚xd5+ ♘h7 **29** ♚d1 ♚g3 **30** ♞f5 ♞xf5

30...g6! was better, forcing the exchange of rooks on f8.

31 exf5 ♚g5 **32** ♚c1 ♚h5 **33** ♚d1 ♚g5 **34** ♚c1 ♚h5 **35** ♚f4??

A terrible blunder in time-trouble. After any other move White has a healthy extra pawn and reasonable winning chances.

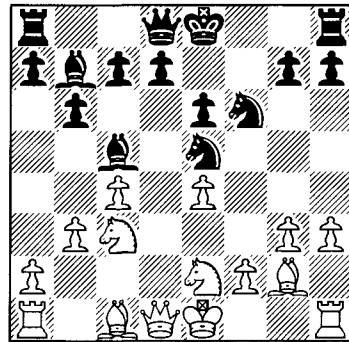
35...♘d3 36 ♚e4? ♘f2+ 0-1

Game 56

D.Serafimov-E.Kengis

Sautron 2003

1 c4 b6 **2** ♖c3 ♙b7 **3** e4 e6 **4** g3 f5 **5** ♙g2 ♘f6 **6** d3! fxe4 **7** ♘ge2 ♘c6 **8** dxe4 ♘e5 **9** b3 ♙c5 **10** h3

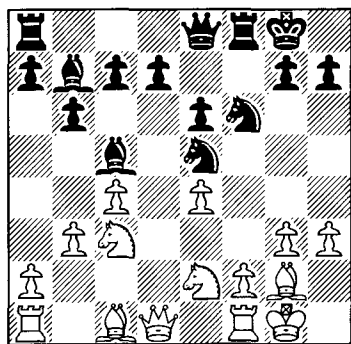


10...0-0

In an earlier game the Latvian grandmaster had played 10...♚e7, which brought him an astonishingly quick success: 11 f4 (had White chosen 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘h1 and only then f2-f4, he would have saved himself some head-

aches) 11...♟f7 12 a3? (this innocent move is the real cause of White's trouble; he should have preferred 12 ♖d3 0-0 13 ♙e3, when it's still roughly equal) 12...a5 13 ♖d3 0-0 14 g4? (now 14 ♙e3? simply drops a pawn to 14...♙xa3, but perhaps the computer's solution 14 ♖h2 – no laughing, please! – intending e4-e5, avoids immediate disaster?) 14...d5! (as the saying goes, when attacked on the flank one must counter-attack in the centre!) 15 e5 ♟e4 16 ♙xe4 dxe4 17 ♖g3 ♖ad8 18 ♙e3 ♙xe3 19 ♖xc3 ♟xe5 0-1 D.Heinbuch-E.Kengis, Bonn 1995. If 20 fxe5 both 20...♖d3 and 20...♖f3, followed by 21...♖h4+, are lethal.

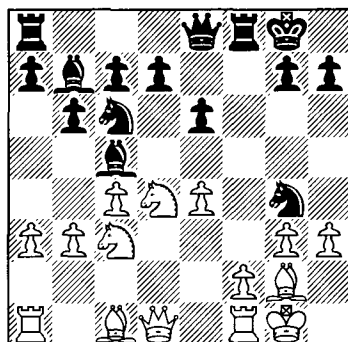
11 0-0 ♖e8



12 ♟f4

12 a3?! was J.Rukavina-C.Bauer, European Rapid Championship, Basle 2005. I was ill and, after a good start, my tournament was spoiled by two consecutive losses. Playing this last round for nothing, in this not very glorious context, I was thus in a perfect state of mind to play completely freely, which helped me lash out this knight sally after only 2 or 3 minutes thought: 12...♟fg4!? (12...a5 is good enough for Black) 13 ♟d4 (the knight cannot be taken: 13 hxg4? ♟xg4 14 ♟f4 ♖xf4 15 ♙xf4 ♖h5 16 ♖e1, when I had planned to continue with 16...♖f8?!, but in fact 16...g5! is the correct move and yields Black a sizeable advantage; e.g. 17 ♖xd7 gxf4 or 17 ♙xg5

♙xf2+ 18 ♙f1 ♖f8, or 17 ♖a2 gxf4 18 gxf4 ♖h4! 19 ♖f3 ♖f8 20 ♙h3 ♟xf2 21 ♖xf2 ♖xf4 22 ♖g2+ ♙h8 23 ♟d1 ♙xe4, while if 23 ♖ef1 ♖f6! 24 ♖h2 ♖f3 wins, but not 23...h5? 24 ♟e2 ♖xe4 25 ♙h2 ♙d6+ 26 ♟g3 ♖g4 27 ♖f8+ ♙h7 28 ♖1f7+ with a draw) 13...♟c6 and now:

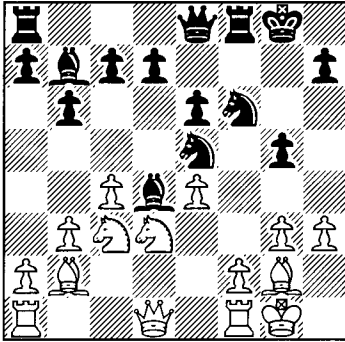


a) 14 ♖xg4?! ♙xd4 15 ♙d2 ♖f6 16 ♖ab1 ♖f7 17 ♖e2 ♖f8 18 ♟d1 ♙c3 19 ♙e3 ♟d4 20 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 21 ♟e3 h5 22 ♖bd1 c5 23 ♖d2 ♖g6 24 ♖d3 h4 25 ♟g4 hxg3 26 ♖xg3 ♖f4 27 e5 ♖f3 28 ♖h4 (if 28 ♙xf3 ♖xf3 29 ♖h4 ♖g5!! 30 ♖xg5 ♖g3+ 31 ♙h2 ♖g2+ 32 ♙h1 ♖xf2+ leads to mate) 28...♙c6 29 ♙h2 ♖f5 30 ♖e2 ♖f4+ 31 ♙h1 ♖xb3 32 ♙xc6 dxc6 and Black went on to win shortly; if 33 ♖g1 then 33...♙f7 etc., but not 33...♖b1? 34 ♖xb1 ♖f3+ 35 ♙h2 ♖xc2 36 ♟h6+! with a draw.

b) 14 ♟f3! (luckily for me I didn't see this calm retreat after my ambitious 12th move; in better shape I would probably have spent more time and given up the whole idea; then again being ill and ruining one's tournaments also has some drawbacks) 14...♟xf2! (the only consistent move; 14...♟g5?! 15 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 16 ♙f4 or 16 ♟a4 was not really what Black was looking for) 15 ♖xf2 ♖g6 16 ♙f4 e5 (not 16...♙xf2+? 17 ♙xf2 d6 18 ♙g1 e5 19 ♟h4! or 16...d6 17 ♖aa2 e5 18 ♙g5 with the advantage) 17 ♖d5+ ♖f7 (better than 17...♙h8 18 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 19 ♖xe5 d6 20 ♖c7 ♖f7 21 ♖h4

or 20...♖ae8 21 ♖h4) and Black seems to be OK, for instance 18 ♔d2 ♔xf2+ 19 ♗xf2 ♘d4 or 18 ♔g5 ♘d4, or if 18 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♖xe5 d6 20 ♖f5 ♖e8 21 ♖g4 h5 22 ♖g5 ♖e5 23 ♖xe5 dxe5.

12...g5 13 ♘d3 ♔d4 14 ♖b2



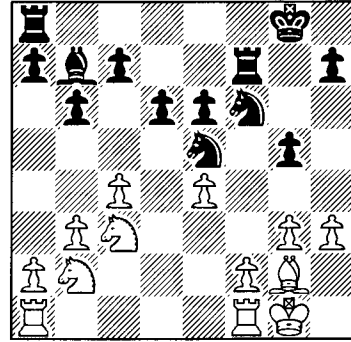
14...d6

Perhaps more appropriate than swapping knights at once, though 14...♘xd3 15 ♖xd3 c5 proved good enough in O.Fossum-C.Ward, Gibraltar 2004. The position should in fact be balanced in either case, if rather easier to play with Black. The game continued 16 ♘a4?! (the knight will find itself out of play for the entire game, so that something like 16 ♖a1 g4!? 17 h4 ♖h5 18 ♔c1, intending 19 ♘b5 or 19 ♘e2, was better) 16...e5 17 ♔xd4 exd4 18 ♖a1 d6 19 f4?! (even worse was 19 e5? ♔xg2 20 exf6? ♔xf1 and wins, or 20 ♗xg2 dxe5 21 ♖f5 e4 22 ♖xg5+ ♗h8 and Black's central duo provides him with a nice edge; White should have gone for 19 ♖d2 ♖g6 20 f3 and then reroute the knight to d3) 19...gxf4 20 gxf4 ♖g6 21 ♗h2 ♗h8 22 ♘b2 ♖ae8 23 f5 ♖g5 24 ♖e2 ♖h4 25 ♖g3 ♖xg3+ 26 ♗xg3 ♖g8+ 27 ♗f4 ♘h5+ 28 ♗f3 ♘g3 0-1.

15 ♖e2 ♖h5

15...♖g6!?, keeping the queens on, was also possible.

16 ♖xh5 ♘xh5 17 ♘e2 ♔xb2 18 ♘xb2 ♘f6 19 ♘c3 ♖f7



This endgame is somewhat more pleasant for Black, because of the bad bishop at g2. If White tries to activate it, with f2-f4 then, after ...g5xf4, g3xf4 ♘g6, the f-pawn becomes loose. The manner in which Kengis conducts the rest of the game is quite instructive.

20 ♖ad1 ♖af8 21 ♘d3

21 f4? gxf4 22 gxf4 ♘g6 illustrates the drawbacks of f2-f4, and after 23 f5 (otherwise 23...♘h5) 23...♘h4 24 fxe6 ♖g7 Black is much better.

21...♘f7 22 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 23 ♘b5

Here – or, perhaps better, on move 25 – White should have opted for 23 ♘e2, in order to reply f2-f4 when Black plays ...h7-h5.

23...a6 24 ♘d4 ♔c8 25 ♖d2?! h5 26 f3 h4 27 ♗h2 ♗g7 28 gxh4 gxh4 29 ♔h1 ♗h6 30 ♖df2 c5 31 ♘c2 ♖b7 32 ♗g1 ♘d3

Now White can't avoid losing material.

33 ♘e3 ♘xf2 34 ♖xf2 ♗g5 35 ♖g2+ ♗f6 36 ♘g4+ ♗e7 37 ♖f2 b5 38 ♔g2 ♔c6 39 ♖e2 bxc4 40 bxc4 ♖b8 41 ♖f2 ♖b1+ 42 ♗h2 ♖f4 43 ♖c2 ♖f8 44 ♘f2 ♖fb8 45 ♘d3 e5 46 ♖d2 a5 47 f4 exf4 48 ♔f3 ♖g8 49 ♘xf4 ♖f1 50 ♖d3 ♖g3 0-1

Game 57

G.Seul-E.Kengis

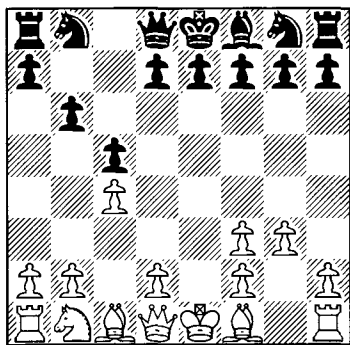
Bonn 1995

1 c4 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♘f3

This position can also arise via the move order 1 f3 b6 2 g3 b7 (examined in Chapter 4), though I guess it would be slightly illogical to play 3 c4, having started 1 f3 and 2 g3. Then again, one might argue that after 1 c4 b6 the 'natural' move is 2 c3 , and in fact Seul-Kengis began this way, continuing 2...e6 3 f3 b7 4 g3 xf3 5 exf3 c5 6 d4 cxd4 7 xxd4 c6 etc.

Anyway, by our move order, after 3 f3 Black has make a decision. He can transpose into 1 f3 b6 schemes (discussed in Chapter 4) with standard continuations like 3...c5, 3...e6, 3...f5, 3...g6 and 3... f6 . Or he can try the more exotic 3...e5!? or 3...g5!?, though in these cases I wouldn't be surprised if it took Black longer than just the opening moves to equalise. Or else he can take the knight on f3, as we see in the remaining games of this section.

3... xf3 4 exf3 c5



Black has parted with his beloved bishop in order to damage the white pawn structure. In contrast to the position treated in Chapter 2 (Games 24-25), where a white pawn stood on d4 rather than c4, Black can also highlight the weakness of d4 here. He would indeed be pleased to install a knight on this excellent outpost. Therefore White's best continuation is...

5 d4!

After 5 b3?! c6 6 g2 e6 7 f4 ge7 8

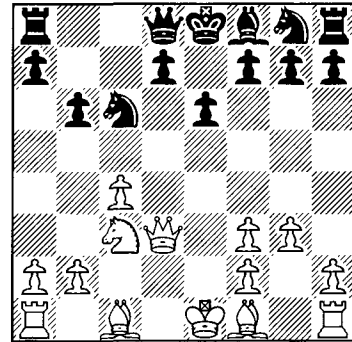
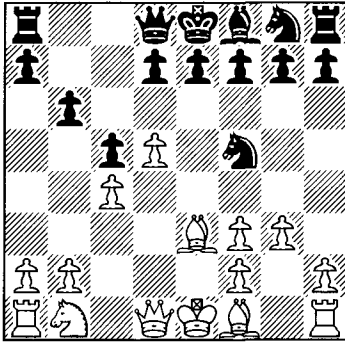
0-0 f5 (Black is not afraid of 9 xc6 , as in that case the white d-pawn would be backward and the d4-square permanently weak, while White couldn't even console himself with the two bishops) 9 b2 e7 10 a3 f6 11 c3 0-0 12 c2 g6 (so as to answer 13 e3 fd4 14 g4 with 14... g7) 13 e3 fd4 14 a3 a5, Black had a slight, but enduring edge in G.Hertneck-D.King, German Bundesliga 2000, which he eventually converted on move 62: 15 b1 g7 16 b4 axb4 17 axb4 cxb4 18 xd4 xd4 19 c2 a5 20 xb4 c7 21 xd4 xd4 22 b3 d6 23 a4 c5 24 a2 d4 25 c2 a1 26 e3 xf1 + 27 xf1 a1 28 c3 xc3 29 xc3 a8 30 c2 f8 31 g2 a3 32 e2 e7 33 h4 h5 34 f3 d4 35 g4? (Hertneck was probably bothered about the black monarch's pending march to b3, but this ugly move seems like a death sentence for f4) 35...hgx4 and Black went on to win after 36 gx4 c5 37 h5 f5 38 c2 gxh5 39 hx5 d3 40 e2 d4 41 f3 xf4 42 c1 d4 43 d3 d6 44 h1 e5 45 g3 d6 46 h4 e3 47 f1 f4+ 48 g4 d4 49 h2 c3 50 a2 c6 51 a7 c8 52 xd7 g8 + 53 h4 g3 54 h3 e5 55 g4 d4 56 g5 xd3 57 c7 g1 58 f5 c1 59 e6 xc4 60 f5 + c3 61 b7 d2 62 d5 c3 0-1.

With the inclusion of b1-c3 and ...e7-e6, we also have 6 f4 c6 7 g2 g6 (no need for ... e7-f6 here) 8 b3 g7 9 b2 ge7 10 b1 0-0 11 e2 xb2 12 xb2 d5 and Black had the more pleasant position in L.Ftacnik-F.Kengis, German Bundesliga 2001.

5...cxd4

5... c6 ?! is less good, as Black isn't ready to cement his knight on d4 after 6 d5 (opening up the position for the pair of bishops with 6 dxc5!? bxc5 has some logic, but it's not too troublesome for Black, e.g. 7 g2 g6 8 0-0 g7 9 f4 c8 10 c3 with chances for both sides) 6... d4 7 e3 , but has to play 7... f5 and then:

7 ♖c3 ♗c6 8 ♖d3



a) 8 ♖d2 g6 9 ♖c3 (9 ♖c3 ♖g7 10 ♖d3 ♖d4 is acceptable for Black) 9...♖g7 10 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 11 f4 (11 ♖h3 e5 12 0-0 d6 looks roughly equal, even if Black loses the right to castle after 13 ♖a4+) 11...♗h6 12 ♖d2 0-0 13 ♖h3 e6 14 ♖f3 ♖f6 15 ♖b1 d6 16 dxe6 ♖e7! 17 0-0 fxe6 18 ♖e1 ♗hf5 19 ♖e2 ♖ae8 20 ♖d2 ♖f6 and a draw was agreed in D.King-J.Plaskett, London 1991. Black might even have tried 15...exd5 16 ♖xd5 ♖ae8+ 17 ♗f1 ♗hf5, as King's 18 ♗e5 isn't that powerful after 18...♖e7 19 ♖xd7 (not 19 ♗xd7?! ♖d8 20 ♖d1 ♖fe8 21 ♗g2 when 21...♖e2! creates serious problems; even if Black can't win the knight so easily, one needs iron nerves to play like this as White!) 19...f6 20 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 21 ♗f3 ♖fe8 22 ♗g2 ♖e2 23 ♖hc1!? ♖d6 with decent compensation for what is, after all, only half a pawn.

b) Plaskett's suggestion of 8 ♖f4!, intending 9 g4 or 9 ♖h3, is more to the point; e.g. 8...g6 9 g4 (or 9 ♖h3 ♖h6 10 ♖e5 ♖g7 11 f4 and White is better) 9...♖h6 10 ♖xh6 (10 ♖g3?! ♖xg3 11 hxg3 ♖g7 seems OK for Black, as it's not clear how White can make use of the half-open h-file) 10...♗fxh6 and the uncomfortable placement of Black's cavalry gives White the better chances.

6 ♖xd4 e6

The immediate 6...♗c6 is seen in Games 58-60. Here the inclusion of ♖b1-c3 and ...e7-e6 makes little difference.

White seldom retreats the queen to this square, perhaps fearing a knight jump to e5 or b4. As the present encounter shows, however, Black must come with something more concrete to demonstrate the possible precariousness of the queen on d3. I would even conclude, quoting Daniel King, that 'Black has some work to do before he can equalise.'

Nevertheless, White usually prefers either 8 ♖d2 (transposing to Game 60) or 8 ♖d1 ♖c8 and then:

a) 9 b3?! ♗f6 10 ♖g2?! (here, or on move 12, the little move a2-a3 was more cautious) 10...♖b4 11 ♖d2 d5 12 cxd5? ♗xd5 13 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 14 ♖xb4 ♖e5+! (this nasty intermezzo secures Black a big, if not decisive advantage) 15 ♗f1 ♗xb4 16 ♖c1 0-0 17 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 18 h4? ♖b2 0-1 C.Duncan-C.Ward, British League 2002.

b) 9 ♖f4! ♖b4 10 ♖c1 is far better, as in D.Fridman-G.Mainka, Recklinghausen 2002. White scored a convincing win in that game, though his opponent's play could have been improved: 10...♗ge7 11 a3 ♖xc3+ 12 ♖xc3 d5 13 cxd5 ♗xd5 14 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♖b5 ♗e7 16 ♖a4 ♖d5? (16...♖d7! 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♖d1 ♖b7 19 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 was the correct defence; the bishop may be stronger than the knight, but Black shouldn't have to much trouble holding this) 17 0-0 0-0 18 ♖d1 ♖xf3 19 ♖d3 ♖e2 20 ♖d7 ♖e1+ 21 ♗g2 ♖fc8 22

♙xc6 1-0, since 22...♘xc6 23 ♚xc6 wins a piece.

8...♞c8 9 f4

Clearing the long diagonal for the light-squared bishop, while stopping Black from grabbing the c-pawn with 9...♘e5 and 10...♘xc4.

9...♙b4 10 ♙d2!

A necessary prophylactic measure. The direct 10 ♙g2? is refuted by 10...♘a5 11 b3 d5! and White loses material.

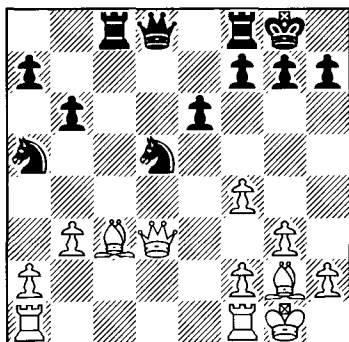
10...♘f6 11 ♙g2 ♘a5!

As we will see, weakening the c3-square is essential for Black's plans, even if he won't fully equalise.

12 b3 0-0 13 0-0 d5

Now or never!

14 cxd5 ♙xc3 15 ♙xc3 ♘xd5



16 ♙xa5

Unfortunately for him, White can't keep his two bishops (which, by the way, makes the whole thing playable for Black):

a) 16 ♙d2? runs into the simple tactic 16...♘xf4! 17 ♚xd8 ♘e2+ 18 ♖h1 ♞fxd8 and Black emerges with an extra pawn.

b) 16 ♞fc1!? was King's suggested improvement on the game. The English GM correctly assessed the position after 16...♘xc3 17 ♞xc3 ♞xc3 18 ♚xc3 as clearly in White's favour, due to the poor knight on a5. However, 17...♞xc3 isn't forced; Black could wait at least one more move before exchanging

rooks. Another option is to swap queens instead by 17...♚xd3 18 ♞xd3 ♞c7 19 ♞ad1 g6 20 ♞d7 ♞fc8 with chances to hold, though the terrible ♘a5 still is a serious concern.

16...bxa5 17 ♞fd1?!

After this Black definitely is OK. Instead, both 17 ♞fc1 and 17 f5 (with the idea 17...♘c3 18 ♚xd8 ♞fxd8 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♞fe1 ♖f7 21 ♞e5) would have kept some pressure.

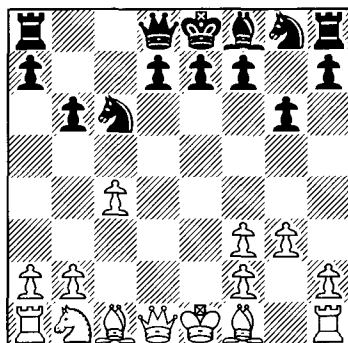
17...♘c3 18 ♚xd8 ♞fxd8 19 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 20 ♖f1 ♖f8 21 ♖e1 ♖e7 22 ♙f1 a4 23 bxa4 ♘xa4 24 ♞c1 ♘b6 25 ♞c3 ♘d5 ½-½

Game 58
P. Claesen-V. Bologan
Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 c4 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♘f3 ♙xf3 4 exf3 c5 5 d4! cxd4 6 ♚xd4 ♘c6 7 ♚d1

The main alternative, 7 ♚d2, is examined in Game 60.

7...g6?!



Here 7...e6 is the normal move (see the next game). Putting the bishop on g7 is less effective.

8 ♙e3

In a later encounter with H. Groffen, Belgium League 1998, the same Pieter Claesen (his brother plays chess too!) employed 8 ♘c3 ♙g7 9 ♙e3 h5 10 ♞c1. Rather than prevent-

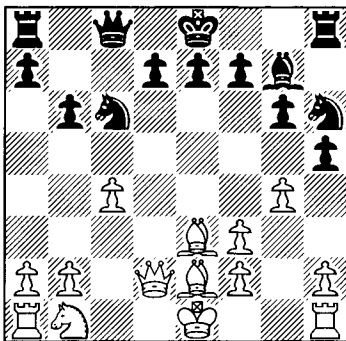
ing ...♔xc3+, the main refinement of this move order (over that in the main game) must be that ♕g2 is possible in some lines, while leaving the queen on d1 supports the advance g3-g4, and means White doesn't need to calculate ...♗e5 on every move. On the downside, a not so unlikely 0-0-0 is now impossible. **8...♕g7 9 ♖d2 h5!?**

This looks a bit strange, but after a more standard approach White would have kept an opening advantage; e.g. 9...♖c8 10 ♕e2 ♗f6 11 ♗c3 0-0 12 ♖c1! and White will continue 0-0, ♖fd1, b2-b3 (if necessary), whereas counterplay for Black is difficult to find. The obvious 12 0-0?!, on the other hand, would allow Black to breathe: 12...♗a5 13 b3 d5!, intending 14 cxd5 ♖xc3 15 ♖xc3 ♗xd5, and Black has fair chances to equalise.

10 ♕e2 ♗h6 11 g4!

Preventing ...♗f5.

11...♖c8



12 ♖g1!?

White had a more promising alternative in 12 ♗c3! (12 gxh5 gxh5 13 ♖g1 ♗f5 is unclear) 12...hxg4 (or 12...♗e5 13 ♕d4) 13 fxg4 d6 14 f3 with an edge, mainly due to the pair of bishops and the misplaced black knight on h6.

12...hxg4 13 fxg4 ♗g8 14 ♗c3 ♗e5

After 14...♖xh2 15 0-0-0 White has decent compensation for his pawn. The text move involves a piece sacrifice and is quite interest-

ing, at least from a practical point of view.

15 ♕d4 ♖xh2 16 ♖e3

Not 16 f4? ♗xc4!

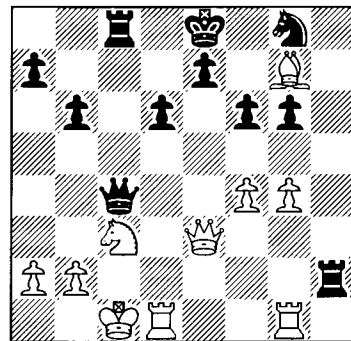
16...d6

16...f6? looks grim: 17 ♕xe5 fxe5 18 ♕d3 and Black is in trouble.

17 f4 ♗xc4 18 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 19 ♕xg7 f6 20 0-0-0

The position is messy and I wouldn't dare to risk a definitive assessment. White could have tried 20 g5!?, too, though if he can't save his bishop it's not clear what benefit he gains from this push; after 20...♗f7 (not 20...♖xb2? 21 ♕xf6! when the bishop is out and White seems in control) 21 ♕h6 ♖xb2 22 f5!?, gxf5 23 g6+ ♗e8, Black should be fine.

20...♖c8



21 g5??

A blunder that immediately decides the outcome of the game. The correct way to proceed was 21 ♖h1! ♖e2 22 ♖d3 ♖xd3 (not 22...♖xa2?? 23 ♖xg6+ ♗d8 24 ♖xd6! exd6 25 ♕xf6+ and White wins, as you can check; the big problem is that Black's king can't cross the c-file because of ♗xa2) 23 ♖xd3 ♖g2 24 g5 fxg5 25 fxg5 ♖xg5, though with three pawns for the bishop Black is in no danger of losing. On the other hand, with such a passive knight, I'm not sure whether he can successfully play for more than a draw either.

21...♖xa2

The rest needs no comment.

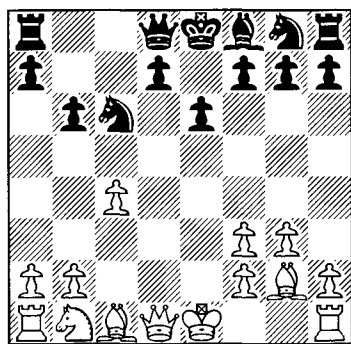
22 ♖d2 ♜xd2 23 ♜xd2 ♜a1+ 24 ♔c2
 ♜xg1 25 ♜d5 ♔d7 26 ♜b7+ ♜c7 27
 ♜a8 ♜h2+ 28 ♔b1 ♜xf4 29 ♜xg8 ♜xg5
 30 ♜f7 ♜c5 31 ♔f8 ♜e5 32 ♜h7 ♜g4 33
 ♜h1 b5 0-1

Game 59

M.Gurevich-D.Bunzmann

Polanica Zdroj 1999

1 c4 b6 2 g3 ♔b7 3 ♔f3 ♔xf3 4 exf3 c5
 5 d4! cxd4 6 ♜xd4 ♔c6 7 ♜d1 e6 8 ♔g2



8...♜c8?!

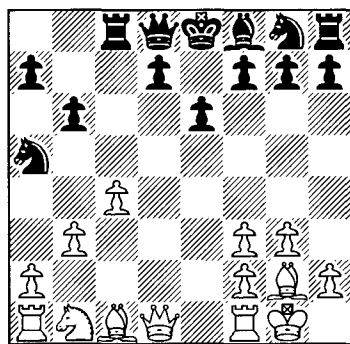
Although Gurevich doesn't criticise this in his annotations of the present game, I believe the rook move is already 'too subtle'. Instead, 8...♔b4+ has been tried, but I would also suggest the primitive 8...♔a5. Now White can't afford 9 b3 (as in the game) because of 9...♜f6!, so 9 ♔d2 ♜c8 10 ♜a4 or 10 ♜e2 is virtually forced. Black then continues ...♔f6, ...♔e7 (or ...♔b4 if the enemy queen stands on e2), ...0-0 and ...d7-d5. In that case White's advantage, based on the two bishops, is questionable since Black is quite active and has slightly the better structure, while the weakness of c3 might tell.

9 0-0

On 9 ♔d2 Black should probably develop quietly, in the same vein as after 8...♔a5, and refrain from any direct tactical play. He can then rely on the inferior position of the knight

at d2 (instead of c3) to achieve a decent game.

Instead, the following fiasco occurred in Z.Ribli-L.Gutman, German Bundesliga 1987: 9...♔e5?! 10 ♜e2 ♜c7 11 b3 ♔d3+ 12 ♜xd3 ♜e5+ 13 ♔e4 ♔b4+?! (13...♜xa1 was the lesser evil, though 14 0-0 ♜xa2 15 ♔f4 yields White tremendous compensation for the exchange) 14 ♔e2 ♜xa1 15 ♜c2 ♜e5 (if 15...d5 16 ♔b2 ♜xa2 17 ♜a1 ♜xa1 18 ♔xa1 with a decisive material advantage) 16 ♔b2 ♜f5 17 ♔xg7 and White was winning. 9...♔a5 10 b3!



Gurevich's strong novelty which questions Black's set-up with 8...♜c8 and 9...♔a5.

10...b5

The tempting 10...♜f6 fails now to achieve the desired effect after 11 ♜c2 ♜xa1 12 ♔c3 when all three of Black's sensible moves prove insufficient:

a) 12...♔xc4? 13 bxc4 ♜xc4 14 ♔d2 with a huge plus for White.

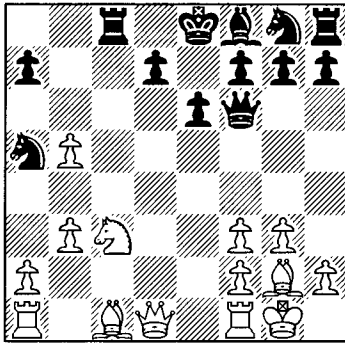
b) 12...♔f6 13 ♔f4 ♜xf1+ 14 ♔xf1 ♔e7 15 ♔b5 ♔c6 16 ♔d6+ ♔xd6 17 ♔xd6 and although material is approximately level, Black will find it hard to castle and thus to bring his h8 rook into play.

c) 12...♔b4 13 ♔d2! ♜xf1+ 14 ♔xf1 with the idea of ♔b5, when White enjoys a nice initiative.

11 ♔d2?!

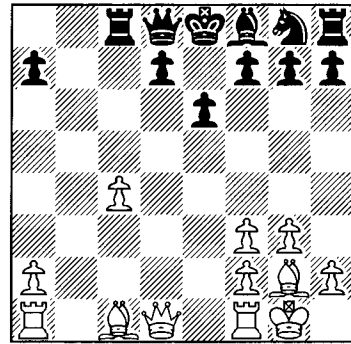
But this timid move allows Black to stay in the game. Instead, 11 cxb5! ♜f6 12 ♔c3 (as

discovered by Bunzmann) was apparently a killer. Black now has three natural-looking replies, but none of them is satisfactory:



b6xa7, and at best Black will soon have to give his extra piece back.

11...bxc4 12 Qxc4 Qxc4 13 bxc4



a) 12...♖xc3 13 ♔d2 ♕d3 14 ♔xa5 ♖xb5 15 ♕d2 with the two bishops, a queenside majority and a big lead in development. White can hardly get more from the opening!

b) 12...♞xc3 13 ♔b2 and Black can't really parry the twin threats of 14 ♔xc3 ♖xc3 15 ♞c1 and 14 ♕e1. The following sample variations show his difficulties:

b1) 13...♙e7 14 ♕e1 ♔b4 15 ♕e4 (15 a3 ♞xb3 is less good) 15...♖e7 16 a3 ♞xb3 17 ♙g7 ♙c3 and White is on top after either 18 ♙xh8 ♙xh8 19 ♖xh7 ♙xa1 20 ♖xg8+ ♕f8 21 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 22 ♞xa1 ♞xb5 or 18 ♞ac1 ♙g7 19 ♞c8+ ♕d8 20 ♞xd8+ ♖xd8 21 ♕a4 ♙c3 22 ♞c1 etc.

b2) 13...d5 14 ♙xc3 ♖xc3 15 ♞c1 ♕b4 16 ♞c8+ followed by 17 ♕c1, aiming for c7 (or g5 in some cases), when White should win.

c) 12...♔b4 13 ♔b2 ♙xc3 14 ♞c1 d5! (after 14...♗e7?! 15 ♙xc3! ♞xc3 16 ♕a1 ♗d5 17 f4 White wins the rook back with a decisive advantage) 15 b4! (15 ♙xc3?! ♞xc3 16 ♕d2 only leads to an unclear situation, where White's queenside pawns and the enemy king's vulnerability compensate for the sacrificed piece) 15...♗b7 16 ♕a4, and while Gurevich assesses this position as unclear, it seems in fact that White has a marked edge here. His main trump is the looming b5-b6+,

13...Rxc4

After 13...♙c5! 14 ♔b2 ♗f6 15 f4 0-0 16 ♕d3, intending f4-f5, White has only a small edge and Black shouldn't suffer too much.

14 ♔e3 ♗f6

14...♙c5 was more shaky than on the previous move, as 15 ♙xc5 ♞xc5 16 ♕d4 hits both g7 and the rook, while 14...♖c7 was well met by 15 ♖b3, planning ♞fc1 and a queenside initiative.

15 ♙xa7?!

Here 15 ♕d3! was stronger according to Gurevich, who gives 15...d5 16 ♞fc1 ♙xc1+ (or 16...♖c7 17 ♙f1) 17 ♞xc1 ♙c7 18 ♖b5+ ♕d7 19 ♖b8+ ♙d8 20 ♙f1! 0-0 21 ♔b5 with a clear advantage, or if 15...♞c7 16 ♞fc1 ♙e7 17 ♞xc7 ♖xc7 18 ♞c1 with the initiative, though Black may be OK after 18...♖b8 19 ♞b1 ♖a8 20 ♕a6 0-0.

15...♙e7

Now 15...♙c5! was better again; e.g. 16 ♖b3 ♕c7! 17 ♙xc5 (17 ♖xc4? fails to 17...♙xf2+ 18 ♙xf2 ♖xc4 19 ♞fc1 ♕a6 and Black keeps his extra material) 17...♞xc5 18 a4 0-0 19 ♞fb1 d5 is unclear.

16 ♖b3! ♞b4 17 ♕c2 0-0 18 a3 ♞b5 19 a4 ♞a5 20 ♙d4 ♗d5 21 f4 ♕c8

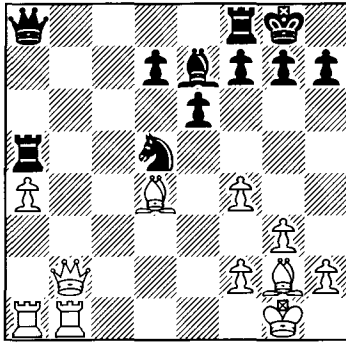
If 21...♙f6 22 ♞fd1 (22 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 23 ♙xd5 exd5 24 ♕c7 ♕d8 is only equal)

22...♙xd4 23 ♖xd4 with a slight edge to White.

22 ♖b2 ♖a8

Intending either 23...♗xa4 or 23...♗b8.

23 ♗f1!



Not 23 ♙xg7? ♗b8 and White has to go for 24 ♙xd5 (otherwise he can't hold his bishop on g7; or if 24 ♖d4 ♗b4 25 ♙xd5 ♗xd4 26 ♙xa8 ♖xg7 and the a-pawn falls), when Black has an immediate draw with 24...♗xd5 25 ♖c3 ♗c5 etc.

The text move prevents 23...♗b8, while 23...♗xa4 runs into 24 ♙xd5 exd5 25 ♙xg7 with a clear advantage. Instead, Black decides to insist on ...♗b8, but in so doing gives up a crucial square on the long diagonal.

23...♙d6?

After 23...f6! 24 ♖b3 White has only a small advantage.

24 ♙xd5! ♗xd5

24...♖xd5 25 ♙xg7 ♗b8 26 ♖c3 ♗xb1+ 27 ♗xb1 ♖e4 was probably more stubborn, and if 28 ♗d1 ♙b4 29 ♖b2 ♗xa4 30 ♗xd7 ♗a8.

25 ♙xg7 ♗b8 26 ♖f6

The drawback of 23...♙d6 is now clear.

26...♗xb1+ 27 ♗xb1 ♙c5

If 27...♖xa4 28 ♙h6 ♗d1+ 29 ♖g2! and wins.

28 ♖c3 ♖a7?

Capitulation. 28...f6 was necessary and after 29 ♙xf6 (not 29 ♖xf6?? ♗d2 and Black

wins!) 29...♖xa4 30 ♗b8+ ♖f7 31 ♙h8 ♙d4 defends for the time being.

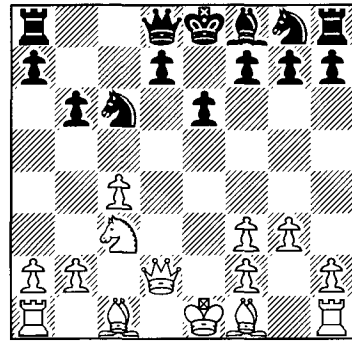
29 ♙h6 f6 30 ♖xf6 ♙xf2+ 31 ♖g2 ♙d4 32 ♖f8 mate

Game 60

T.Manouck-S.Matveeva

Cappelle la Grande 1995

1 c4 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♗f3 ♙xf3 4 exf3 c5 5 d4! cxd4 6 ♖xd4 ♗c6 7 ♗d2 e6 8 ♗c3

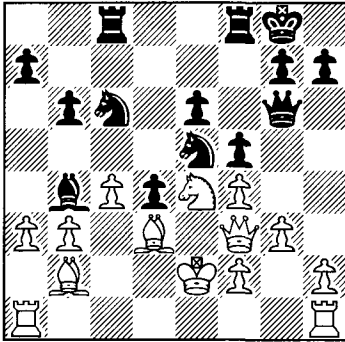


8...♖f6!

On 8...♗c8 White's best reaction seems to be 9 ♙e2, as in V.Bukal-D.Bunzmann, Paks 1998, where after 9...♗a5 10 b3 ♙b4 11 ♙b2 ♗f6 12.0-0 0-0 13 ♖d3, he had the better of things.

White should certainly avoid 9 b3? ♖f6 10 f4 d5!, when he is facing all sort of problems with his king and the loose knight on c3. Then H.Titz-E.Kengis, Vienna 1990, continued 11 ♙b2 (if 11 cxd5 ♙b4 12 ♙b2 ♗d4 gives Black a dangerous initiative as well) 11...d4 12 ♗e4 ♖g6 13 ♖e2 ♙b4+ 14 ♖d1 ♗h6 15 ♖f3 0-0 16 ♙d3 f5 17 a3 ♗g4? (stronger was 17...♙c7! 18 ♗d2 e5 and White's position collapses) 18 ♖c2? (or 18 axb4? fxe4! 19 ♙xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♗xf2+ and Black is a piece up; however, the Austrian missed his chance to make a fight of it with 18 ♗g5! ♙c3 – otherwise ♖xg4 is very bad for Black – 19 ♙xc3 dxc3 20 ♖xg4 when both

20...♖d4 and 20...♗fd8 21 ♖e2 ♗d4 lead to obscure complications) 18...♗ge5!!



and after this blow White can't survive anymore. The game concluded 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗f6+ ♗xf6 21 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 22 ♖d5+ ♗h8 23 ♗xb4 ♗cd8 24 ♖g2 ♗f4 25 ♗d2 ♖d3+ 26 ♗c1 ♖xb3 27 ♗b1 ♗xc4 0-1.

9 ♗e2

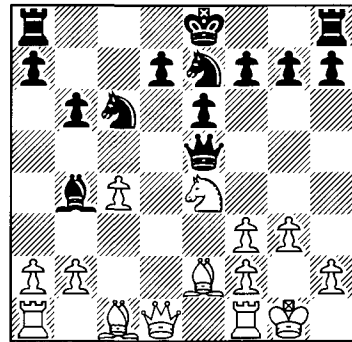
As the bishop is still covering c4, it is better placed here than on g2 (see, for example, the note to 12...♗d8 below).

Furthermore, after 9 ♗g2, Black might play 9...♖e5+!? (9...♗b4 was more natural, but the queen check is correct too) 10 ♖e2 ♗c8 as in L.Van Wely-V.Zviagintsev, New York Open 1997, which continued 11 ♗d2 (very prudent, and thus quite atypical of the Dutchman; instead 11 ♗f4! was dubious for tactical reasons: 11...♖xe2+ 12 ♗xe2 ♗a5 13 b3 d5 and White loses a pawn due to the unprotected knight at c3, or if 12 ♗xe2 ♗b4 and again a pawn is dropping. However, given the game continuation, I don't understand why Loek didn't play 11 ♗e3 at once) 11...♗f5 12 ♗e3 (perhaps 12 ♗f4!?) 12...♗f6 13 0-0 ♗e7 (now it is Zviagintsev's turn to waste a tempo; even if Black can afford it in the present position, he should still have gone for the immediate 13...♗c5; unless they were both already thinking about a subtle zugzwang situation I fail to grasp at such an early stage...?) 14 ♗fd1 0-0 15 h3 ♗c5 16 ♗f4 ♖b8 17 ♗ac1 ♗d8 18

♗d2 ♗f7 19 a3 ♗fe8 20 b4 ♗f8 21 ♗e3 ♗cd8 22 ♗d4 ♗e8 (White now is better but the enemy position is a hard nut to crack) 23 ♗b1 g6 24 ♗dc1 ♗g7 25 ♗e3 ♗c7 26 ♖d3 d6 27 a4 d5 28 cxd5 ♗xc3 29 ♗xc3 ♗xd5 30 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 31 ♗c1 ♖d7 32 ♗xd5 exd5 33 ♖d4 ♗e8 34 b5 ♗e4 35 ♖f6 d4 36 ♗d2 ♗e6 and the players agreed a draw. 37 ♗c7 ♖xc7 38 ♖xe6 ♖c2 39 ♖e1 is a possible continuation, or maybe even 39 ♗b4 ♖b1+ 40 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 41 ♗xe1.

9...♗b4 10 0-0 ♗xc3

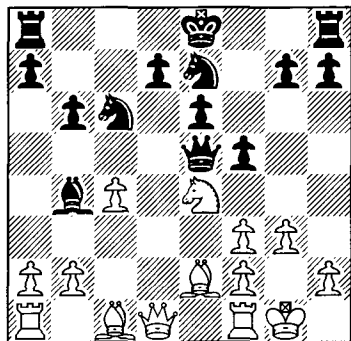
Keeping the pin one more move seems playable as well, and in that case White can't continue 12 ♗a3, while the knight jump to e4 isn't that frightening: 10...♗ge7 11 ♗e4 (inserting 11 ♗d1 ♗d8 may be more annoying, though Black looks OK anyway: 12 ♗e4 ♖g6 13 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 14 ♖xd6 ♗f5 and a knight will access the d4-square; but not 12...♖e5?! 13 ♖c2 ♗d4 14 ♖d3 ♗xe2+ 15 ♖xe2 and White stands better, with 16 a3, 16 ♗f4 or 16 ♗f4 to follow) 11...♖e5 (if 11...♗xd2?! 12 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♗xd2 ♗d4 14 ♗d1 should be somewhat better for White, owing to his pair of bishops) 12 ♖d1 and now:



a) 12...♗f5 13 ♗b1 ♗fd4 14 ♗f4 ♖h5 15 ♗d6+ ♗xd6 (or 15...♗f8!? intending ...g7-g5 or ...e6-e5) 16 ♗xd6 ♗f5 17 ♗g2 (the threat was 17...♗xe2+ 18 ♖xe2 ♗d4, which failed on the previous move to ♖e4) 17...♗f4? (17...♗xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♗f7 was still tenable, if

not much fun for Black) 18 b4?! (18 ♔d3!) 18...e5?! 19 ♖e1 ♗f7 20 c5 b5?! (accelerating the end, but Black's position was already quite unappealing) 21 ♔xe5! 1-0 C.Duncan-A.Dunnington, British League 2001. If 21...♗xe5 22 ♔c4+ bxc4 23 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♗xd4 and White wins easily.

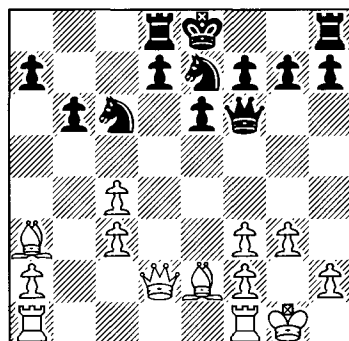
b) 12...f5!? was T.Manouck-J.L.Chabanon, Cannes 1995.



White lost the game, but more because of his usual time-trouble than his treatment of the opening: 13 a3 ♔xa3 (funny) 14 ♖xa3 fxe4 15 b4!? (the simple 15 fxe4 was possible as well, and probably stronger; for instance, after 15...♗xe4?! 16 b4 gains in strength, e.g. 16...0-0 17 ♖e3 followed by 18 b5 regaining the material with a better game; therefore Black should play 15...0-0 with mutual chances) 15...♖xb4 16 ♔f4 ♗f6 17 fxe4 ♖ec6?! (the wrong horse; Black should have gone for 17...♖bc6!, when after 18 ♖d3 0-0 19 ♖xd7 ♖ad8, he is alright) 18 ♔d6 ♗d4 19 e5 ♗xd1 20 ♖xd1 a5 (as an outcome of the early middlegame Black has an extra pawn; yet he is rather tied down, and White can claim very good compensation) 21 ♖b3 (I think 21 ♔f3 ♖c8 22 ♔e4, intending g3-g4 and ♖h3, was better) 21...♖a7 22 f4 ♗f7 23 ♗f2 ♖ha8 24 ♖b2 ♖b7 25 ♖db1 ♖c8 26 ♗e3 b5 (if Black just waits, then g3-g4, f4-f5 may be a nuisance at some point; he therefore returns the pawn to gain the important d5-square) 27

cx b5 ♖d5+ 28 ♗d2 ♖cb4? (28...♖d4! was required) 29 ♖a1 ♖c3 30 ♖xa5 ♖c6 31 ♖a6? (here 31 ♔h5+! g6 32 bxc6 ♖e4+ 33 ♗e3 ♖xb2 34 ♗xe4 gxh5 35 ♖a7 ♖xc6 36 ♖xd7+, followed by ♖e7 and ♖xe6, was close to winning for White) 31...♖xe2 32 ♗xe2 ♖d4+ 33 ♗d3 ♖xb5 34 ♖c2 ♖xc2 35 ♗xc2 ♖d4+ 36 ♗c3 ♖f5 37 ♖a3 ♖e3 38 ♖a8 ♖f1 39 ♖f8+ ♗g6 40 ♖g8?? (40 g4! ♖e3 41 h3 h5 was still in White's favour, but perhaps not enough to win) 40...♖xh2 41 ♖f8 ♖f1 42 g4 ♖e3 43 ♔c5 ♖xg4 44 f5+ exf5 45 ♗d4 ♖b1 46 ♔d6 ♖d1+ 47 ♗c5 h5 48 ♗b6 h4 49 ♖h8 ♖h6 50 ♖a8 h3 51 ♖a2 ♖g4 0-1.

11 bxc3 ♖ge7 12 ♔a3 ♖d8



With the white bishop on g2, 12...♖a5! would secure Black fine play, as in C.McNab-R.McKay, Scottish Championship 1988.

13 c5

Logical, since Black was intending ...d7-d6, while White takes the opportunity to get rid of one doubled pawn.

13...bxc5 14 ♔xc5 d6

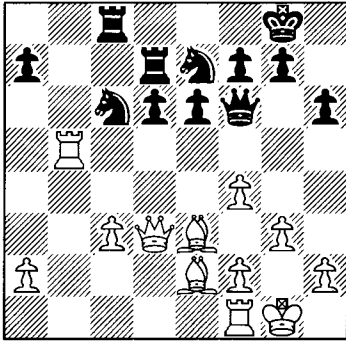
If 14...0-0?!, then 15 ♔d6 is pretty annoying. The d-pawn is of course immune because of ...♖c8.

15 ♔e3 h6 16 ♖ab1 ♖d7

Black handles the position with extreme care. Castling was still premature as White would have invaded the 7th rank. White must still be doing OK, but finding a plan is difficult. *Fritz* suggests 17 ♔d4 ♗g6 (if 17...♖xd4

18 ♖b8+ ♜d8 19 ♜xd8+ ♔xd8 20 cxd4, the black king in the centre should outweigh White's damaged structure) 18 ♙d3, trying to create a target in Black's compact camp.

17 f4 0-0 18 ♛d3 ♜c8 19 ♖b5



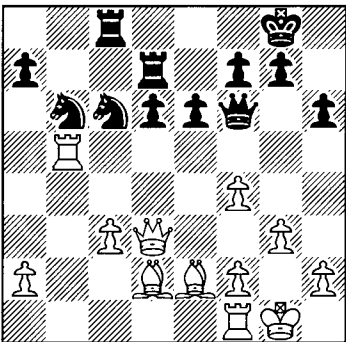
19...♔d5?

After 19...♔f5! Black probably has a small plus.

20 ♙d2?

In truly gentlemanly fashion Manouck returns the favour. After 20 ♜xd5! exd5 21 ♙g4 White not only wins back the exchange, but the d5 pawn as well, and thus stands clearly on top.

20...♔b6



21 ♙d1?!

Here 21 ♙e3! would have limited Black's edge to bearable proportions.

21...♔e7 22 ♙b3 d5 23 ♖b1 ♔f5 24 ♙c2

♜dc7

Or 24...d4! immediately.

25 ♙e1 g6 26 ♜5b4 d4

White's position now explodes.

27 g4 ♔h4 28 ♜xd4 ♔d5 29 ♜d1 ♜xc3 30 ♙xc3 ♜xc3 31 ♛a6 ♔f3+ 32 ♔f1 ♔xd4 0-1

1 c4 b6 2 ♔c3 ♙b7 3 e4 e6
4 ♔f3

Game 61

S.Djuric-C.Bauer

Autun (rapid) 2001

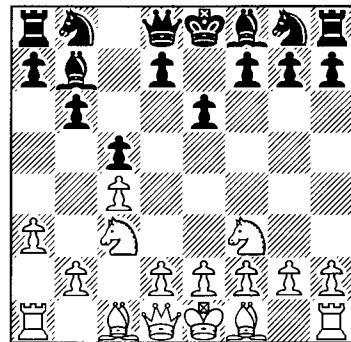
1 c4 b6 2 ♔c3 e6

We have already seen this move order subtlety in Chapter 2. It allows Black to answer 3 d4 with 3...♙b4 (Games 38-41), thus avoiding the 3...♙b7 4 a3 variation (Games 31-37).

3 a3

Forestalling ...♙b4 in preparation for d2-d4. Now 3...♙b7 4 d4 would transpose to Chapter 2 again. Otherwise Black may prefer...

3...c5 4 ♔f3 ♙b7



5 e4

Instead:

a) 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♔xd4 ♔f6 (preventing 7 e4; though 6...♔c6 and 6...a6 are good too) 7 ♔db5 d6 8 ♙g5 a6 9 ♙xf6 gxf6 10 ♔d4 f5

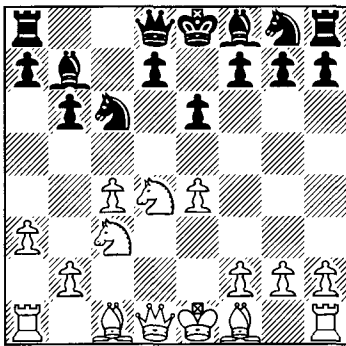
and Black shouldn't be worse.

b) 5 e3 ♖f6 (the original 5...f5!? seems less sound and has never been tested in practice; all the same, I believe it is playable and might suit creative players quite well, e.g. 6 d4 ♗f6 7 d5 ♗a6 with an unclear game) 6 d4 cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 cxd5 ♗xd5 reaches a position that traditionally arises from a Queen's Indian. According to theory Black now equalises after 9 ♗b5+ ♗c6!, while the more tricky 9 ♗e5!? a6 10 ♖f3 or ♖h5 leads to wild complications and mutual chances.

5...♗c6

5...♗f6 is likely to simplify the position. On the natural 6 e5 ♗e4, White hardly can avoid the exchange of knights, since 7 ♗b1?! ♗g5 suits Black very well. (As a matter of curiosity, the same position without inclusion of a2-a3 and ...e7-e6 would be disastrous for Black, as 6 ♗b1! threatens 7 d3, and the g5-square is not available for the black knight). While in reply to 6 d3 or 6 ♗d3, Black can either adopt a favourable Hedgehog formation or try an ambitious quick ...d7-d5.

6 d4 cxd4 7 ♗xd4



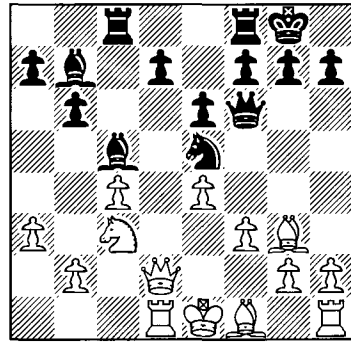
7...♗f6

Black could prevent his opponent's next move by playing 7...♖b8, when 8 ♗c2, keeping all pieces on the board, makes sense; but White's edge may be only symbolic after the standard black formation ...♗f6, ...♗e7, ...0-0, ...d7-d6, ...a7-a6 and eventually ...♗e5-d7.

8 ♗f4 ♗xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♗c5 10 ♖d3 ♗g4 11 ♗g3 ♖f6 12 f3 ♗e5?!

The jump forward was probably better: 12...♗e3 13 ♗f2 (on 13 e5 either 13...♖g6 or 13...♖h6 is OK for Black) 13...♗xf1 (if 13...♖g5 White can try the sharp 14 h4!? ♗xg2+ 15 ♗xg2 ♖xg2 16 0-0-0 with good compensation for the pawn, e.g. 16...0-0 17 ♗xc5 bxc5 18 ♖e3 ♖g3 and now 19 h5 or 19 ♖xd7 both favour White) 14 ♗xc5 bxc5 15 0-0-0 ♗c6 and after White recaptures on f1 the position looks about level to me.

13 ♖d2 0-0 14 ♖d1 ♖ac8



15 ♗e2

Taking on e5 and d7, here or on the previous move, would have been a crime against the dark squares. The dominant bishop on c5, together with the white king stuck in the centre, would have given Black more than enough compensation for a mere pawn. However, 15 ♖f4 was a viable alternative, leaving White slightly better after 15...♖xf4 16 ♗xf4 ♗g6 17 ♗d6 ♗xd6 18 ♖xd6 ♗e5 19 b3.

15...♖fd8 16 f4 ♗g6 17 b4 ♗f8 18 e5 ♖f5

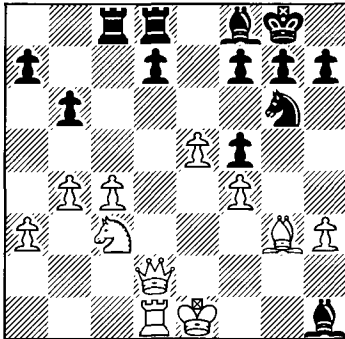
The passive 18...♖e7?! was worse: after 19 0-0 (19 ♗b5!? looks attractive too: 19...♗xg2 20 ♖g1 ♗c6 21 ♗d6 ♖c7 when Black is paralysed, though his position will be a hard nut to crack) 19...d6 20 exd6 ♖xd6 21 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♗xd6 23 f5 ♗xg3 (not 23...♗e5? 24

♭b5 ♖b8 25 fxe6 fxe6 26 ♖xa7 when Black doesn't even have the bishop pair) 24 fxg6 ♙e5 25 ♜xf7 ♙c6 26 ♖d1 White has won a pawn and is clearly better, although the two bishops still allow some fight.

19 h3 ♙xg2!?

19...♖e7 was less committal, and if 20 ♙d3 ♜h5 with chances for both sides; but giving up the queen isn't bad.

20 ♙g4 ♙xh1 21 ♙xf5 exf5



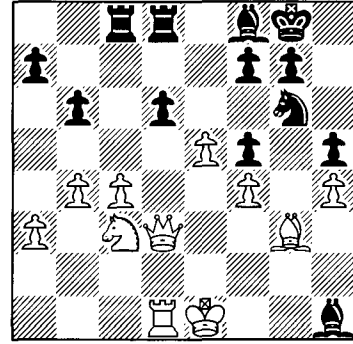
Black has enough material for the sacrificed queen, while some positional factors, such as the loose c4-pawn and the somewhat silly ♙g3, also speak in his favour. On the other hand, f5 and d7 are weak, and Black's pieces need to be activated.

22 ♜d3

Possibly inaccurate. Instead, 22 ♙f2 ♙b7 23 ♜d3 d6 offered reciprocal chances; for example, 24 ♖b5 ♙e4! (not 24...dxe5? 25 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 26 ♜xd8 exf4 27 ♙h2 and Black's queenside pawns will be plucked one after the other) 25 ♜e2 (not 25 ♜d2? ♜xc4) 25...dxe5.

22...d6 23 h4 h5?!

Better was 23...dxe5 24 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25 ♜xd8 exf4 26 ♙f2 f6 27 c5 ♖e5 28 cxb6 axb6 29 ♙xb6 ♙f7 intending to set the kingside majority in motion by ...g7-g5. White's pawns seem much faster in the coming race, but it's not obvious how he should actually push them; while if 30 ♙c7 ♖c4 is unclear.



24 ♖b5?

White is losing the plot. 24 ♜xf5! was correct, when e5-e6 is in the air and Black has to be on his guard; e.g. 24...♜xc4! 25 e6 ♖h8 (hmmm...) 26 exf7+ ♖xf7 27 ♖d5 ♜e8+ 28 ♙f2 and White is on top; instead 24...♜e8 25 ♙f2 ♜xc4 26 e6! (26 ♜xh1 ♜xc3 causes Black no problems) 26...♜xe6 is *Fritz's* suggestion, though it's not clear whether Black can hold the ensuing disgraceful ending: 27 ♜d3 ♜xf4+ 28 ♙xf4 ♖xf4 29 ♜d4 ♙b7 30 ♜xf4! ♙f6 31 ♜xf6 gxf6 32 ♖b5 d5 33 ♖xa7 f5.

24...♙e4 25 ♜e2 dxe5 26 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 27 fxe5 ♙d3

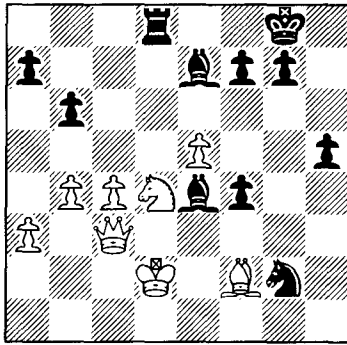
Simpler was 27...♜d3 28 ♙f2 a5 with a clear advantage for Black, but the game continuation doesn't spoil much.

28 ♜d2 ♙e7 29 ♜c3

If 29 ♖d6 the following devilish line maintains a big plus for Black: 29...♜xc4 30 ♜c2 f4 31 ♜xc4 ♖xe5 32 ♜c7 ♜xd6 33 ♜xe7 ♜e6 34 ♜d8+ ♙h7 and White loses his bishop, due to the threat of ...♖c6+. Black can then consolidate with the plan ...b6-b5, ...a7-a6, ...g7-g6 and slowly make progress on the kingside.

29...f4 30 ♙f2 ♖xh4 31 ♖d4 ♖g2+ 32 ♙d2 ♙e4

I was now much better on the board, but had less than two minutes left on the clock, which is the unfortunate explanation for the rest of the game...



33 ♖c1 h4 34 ♖h3 g6 35 ♖b2 ♗g7 36 ♖c3 a5 37 b5 ♙xa3 38 e6 ♙b4+?!

38...f5 was the easiest way to deal with complications, e.g. 39 e7 ♙xe7! 40 ♗e6+ ♖f7 41 ♗xd8+ ♙xd8 and I'll let you guess what Black's plan is.

39 ♖b3 f5 40 e7 ♙e8

Again I could have settled for the safe 40...♙xe7! 41 ♗e6+ ♖f7 42 ♗xd8+ ♙xd8 and Black should win.

41 ♗e6+ ♖f6 42 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 43 ♖xh4+ g5 44 ♖h6+ ♗g6??

Turning the tables completely. Instead 44...♖f7 45 ♖xg5 ♗e6 is still winning.

45 ♙d4+ ♖xe7 46 ♖xg6 1-0

Now White was on top and went on to win...

Game 62

A.Huzman-E.Liss

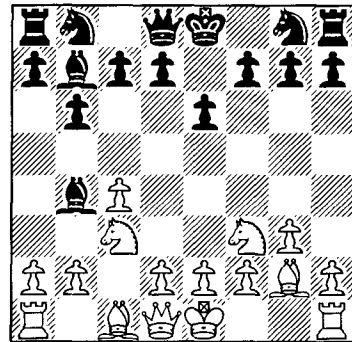
Tel Aviv 1999

1 c4 e6 2 ♗c3 b6 3 ♗f3 ♙b7 4 e4

Instead, 4 a3 c5 returns to the previous game, or else to Game 30 after 4...f5 5 d4.

If 4 g3, then 4...♙xf3 5 exf3 c5 transposes to the line 1 c4 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♗f3 ♙xf3 4 exf3 c5 in the previous section, but with the insertion of ♗c3 and ...e7-e6. This small nuance slightly speaks in Black's favour, as ...e7-e6 is a must, whereas ♗c3 can sometimes be delayed (see Games 57-60 for details).

Another possibility is connected with ...♙b4. This common sortie in the English Defence can be preceded by ...♗f6 or ...f7-f5 in the current situation, but here are two bare examples where Black played it at once; i.e. 4 g3 ♙b4 5 ♙g2 and then:



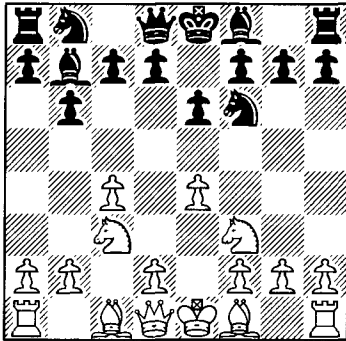
a) 5...♙xc3 6 bxc3 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 d3 d6 9 e4 ♗d7 10 ♙e1 e5 11 a4 a5 12 d4 ♗g6 13 ♙a3 ♙e8 14 ♖c2 ♗f6 15 ♗d2 ♖d7 16 f3 ♙a6 17 ♙f1 h6 18 ♙d3 ♗h7 19 ♗f1 ♗g5 20 ♖d1 exd4 21 cxd4 f5 22 h4 fxe4 23 hxg5 exd3 24 ♖xd3 ♖f7 25 gxh6 ♙xc4 26 ♖c3 ♙xf1 27 ♙xf1 ♙e2 28 ♙f2 ♙ae8 29 ♙af1 ♙8e3 30 ♖c1 ♙xf2 31 ♖xe3 ♙c2 32 ♙c1 ♙a2 33 ♙f2 ♙xf2 34 ♖xf2 ♖xa4 35 ♖e3 ♖d1+ 36 ♖f2 ♖c2+ 37 ♖e1 ♖h2 38 ♖g5 ♖h1+ 39 ♖f2 ♖h2+ 40 ♖e1 ♖h1+ 41 ♖f2 ♖h2+ 42 ♖e1 1/2-1/2 G.Kasparov-V.Kramnik, Moscow (rapid) 2001.

b) 5...♗f6 6 0-0 0-0 7 d3 ♙e8 8 e4 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 d6 10 ♗h4 ♗bd7 11 f4 a6 12 ♙b1 ♙c6 13 ♗f3 e5 14 h3 b5 15 cxb5 axb5 16 ♙f2 ♙a5 17 ♙e3 ♖a8 18 ♙bb2 ♙a3 19 ♖c2 ♖a6 20 ♙b3 ♙a5 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♗h4 g6 23 ♙b2 ♙b7 24 g4 ♙e7 25 ♙b1 c5 26 ♙f3 ♗e8 27 g5 ♗d6 28 ♙g4 c4 29 ♙xd7 ♙xd7 30 ♙f6 cxd3 31 ♖xd3 ♙xe4 32 ♖d1 ♖c6 33 ♙d2 ♖xc3 34 ♖b3 ♖xb3 35 axb3 ♙a1+ 36 ♖f2 ♙d3 37 ♙xd3 ♗e4+ 38 ♖e2 ♗g3+ 0-1 M.Taimanov-Zhu Chen, Amsterdam 2001.

4...c5

After 4 e4 the most challenging move is

4...♙b4, which is also the main line (see Games 63-68). However, Black has two perfectly viable alternatives: 4...c5 (as in the current game) and 4...♘f6



which follows the same goal as 4...♙b4, i.e. putting pressure on White's centre and, more particularly, on the e4 pawn. White has many ways to deal with this, of which the most often played is 5 ♙d3, intending ♙c2 and d2-d4, as well as 'threatening' to advance the e-pawn. White is scoring wonderfully with this line, though I don't believe it should cause Black too many headaches.

Before getting on to the scary 5 ♙d3, I will briefly say a few words about the alternatives:

a) 5 e5 leads to immediate equality after 5...♗e4 6 ♙d3 (or 6 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 when Black will try to surround the e5 pawn by ...♙xf3, ...♗c6, and ...♙c5-d4) 6...♗g5 7 ♙e2 ♗xf3+ 8 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♗c6.

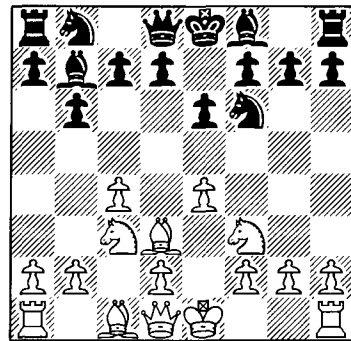
b) 5 d3 is a shy move, to which Black can reply either 5...d6 6 g3 ♙e7 7 ♙g2 0-0 8 0-0 c5, obtaining a good Hedgehog formation, or, more ambitiously, 5...c5 followed by a quick ...d7-d5.

c) 5 ♗c2 is best answered by 5...c5 6 d4 (otherwise 6...♗c6 will stop this push forever – OK, maybe not forever, but for a while at least!; while 6 e5?! ♙xf3 7 exf6 ♙b7 8 fxg7 ♙xg7 is already better for Black) 6...cxd4 7 ♗xd4 when we have reached another Queen's Indian position (i.e. after 4 a3 ♙a6 5

♗c2 ♙b7 6 ♗c3 c5 7 e4 cxd4 8 ♗xd4), but minus a2-a3 for White. One might argue that the b3-square is not weakened, but this definitely should favour Black (...♙b4 is possible, for instance).

d) 5 ♗e2 is the most interesting sub-line to my point of view. Black's best reaction seems to be 5...♙b4 6 e5 ♗g8 7 d4 ♗e7 with mutual chances, whereas the provocative 5...c5 runs into problems after 6 e5 (this move can't be always innocuous!) 6...♗g8 7 d4 ♙xf3 (7...cxd4 8 ♗xd4 is slightly better for White) 8 ♗xf3 ♗c6 9 d5 ♗xe5 (if 9...♗d4 10 ♗e4!) 10 ♗g3 when White had huge compensation for a mere pawn in M.Roos-H.Handel, correspondence 1979.

Returning to 5 ♙d3.



Black has in my opinion two critical continuations to choose from:

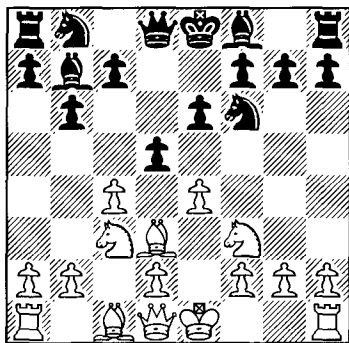
a) 5...c5 6 0-0 (after 6 e5 ♗g4 7 h3 ♙xf3 8 ♗xf3 ♗xe5 9 ♗xa8 ♗xd3+ 10 ♗e2 ♗f4+ 11 ♗f1 ♗c6 12 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 Black was OK in V.Korchnoi-L.Polugaevsky, Evian (match) 1977, or else 10...♗xc1! 11 ♗axc1 ♗c6 12 ♗xd8+ ♗xd8 as in A.Beliavsky-A.Sokolov, Reykjavik 1988) and then:

a1) 6...d6 (safest) 7 ♙c2 ♗bd7 (7...e5, stopping d2-d4, is an option as well) 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 a6 and Black should have a decent version of a Hedgehog set-up.

a2) 6...♗c6 also seems acceptable, e.g. 7 e5 ♗g4 8 ♙e4 and then 8...f5 9 exf6 ♗xf6 10

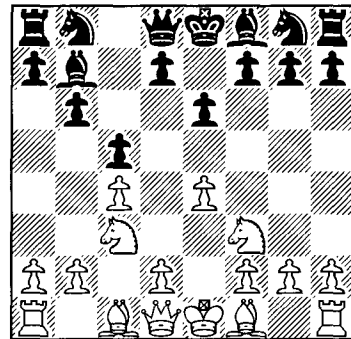
♙xc6 ♙xc6 11 d4 ♙xf3 12 ♚xf3 cxd4 13 ♖b5 ♜c8 was unclear in J.Speelman-N.Short, Barcelona 1989. Instead, 8...♚c8?! is probably suspicious, as the following game convincingly demonstrates: 9 d3! ♖gxe5 (Black is consistent and grabs the pawn, thus justifying his queen move) 10 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 11 f4 ♖c6 12 f5 g6 (12...♖d4 13 ♚h5 ♖xf5 14 ♙xf5 g6 loses to 15 ♙xg6 fxg6 16 ♚e5 ♜g8 17 ♚f6) 13 ♙g5! gx5 14 ♙xf5 ♙e7 (14...♜g8 may be better, e.g. 15 ♖e4 ♜xg5 16 ♖xg5 ex5 17 ♚h5 and now Black's king has to run away, i.e. 17...♖d8 18 ♖xf7+ ♖c7 with unclear consequences; 14...ex5?, on the other hand, would have speeded up the end after 15 ♚e2+ ♖e7 16 ♜a1 ♜g8 17 ♙xe7! ♙xg2+ 18 ♚xg2 ♙xg2 19 ♙g5+ and White wins) 15 ♚h5 ♙xg5 16 ♚xg5 ♖e7 17 ♙e4 ♙e4 (on 17...f5 18 ♖b5 decides) 18 ♖xe4 ♚c6 19 ♜xf7 ♖xf7 20 ♚f6+ ♖g8 21 ♚xe7 ♜f8 22 ♜f1 1-0 M.Tal-J.Van der Wiel, Moscow Interzonal 1982.

b) 5...d5



6 cxd5 exd5 7 e5 ♖e4 8 ♙c2! (8 0-0? would be inaccurate in view of 8...♖c5 followed by ...d5-d4 and Black is already better) 8...♙e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜e1 (10 d4 is playable too, but after 10...f5 Black has no reason to complain) and now the best plan, in my opinion, is to sacrifice a pawn (though 10...♖c5 11 d4 ♖e6 could be alright as well), which Black can do in three ways: 10...♖a6, 10...c5 or

10...f5. The last of these seems the most appropriate, i.e. 10...f5 11 exf6 ♙xf6 (if 11...♖xf6?! 12 ♖g5! is annoying) 12 ♖xe4 dxe4 13 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 14 ♜xe4 ♚d5, when in return for a pawn (which is backward and isolated) Black is better developed and has no weaknesses. After 15 ♚b3?! ♚xb3 16 axb3 ♖c6 Black had enough compensation in R.Pogorelov-M.Narciso Dublan, Zaragoza 1993.



5 d4

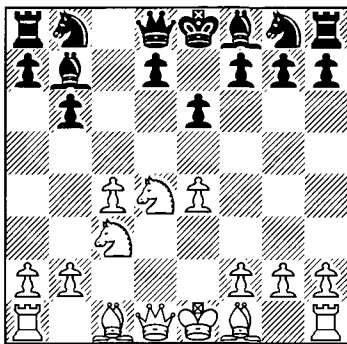
White does best to transpose to a Hedgehog-type pawn structure. Instead:

a) 5 a3?! is rare and not particularly useful in the present case. (Indeed, after 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♖xd4, Black should refrain from playing 6...♙b4?!, as 7 ♖b5 would highlight the weakness of the d6-square.) Black can equalise at once with 5...♖f6, intending 6 e5 ♖e4, or he can keep the game more complex with 5...♖c6 (as in the previous game).

b) The weird 5 ♙d3?!, from M.Voiska-G.Flear, Saint Affrique 2004, looks like a confusion of variations. The failure to play d2-d4 risks leaving the central dark squares permanently weak: 5...♖c6 6 0-0 ♙d6 (6...g5! is probably better, as White now got an opportunity to play d2-d4 later on) 7 ♙c2 ♚b8 8 ♖b5 ♙e7 9 d3?! (after 9 d4! White couldn't be worse) 9...♖f6 10 h3 0-0 11 ♜e1 a6 12 ♖c3 ♙d6 13 ♙g5 ♖e5 14 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 15 ♜f1 d6?! (although it may simplify the posi-

tion, I believe it was best to carry out the push 15...d5! 16 exd5 exd5 17 ♖xf6!? ♖xf6 18 cxd5 ♜f4 and Black has full compensation for the pawn: the white bishop is passive at c2, Black has some attacking chances against the enemy king, and if he doesn't find anything better, he can at any moment regain the pawn with ...♙xc3 and ...♙xd5; but not 18 ♘xd5?! when, despite the presence of opposite-coloured bishops, White would be in serious danger after 18...♙xd5 19 cxd5 ♙xb2 20 ♚b1 ♙d4 and the difference in activity of the two bishops speaks for itself) 16 ♘e2 ♘d7 17 ♙a4 (at the risk of repeating myself, I would suggest 17 d4 again; now although White can probably improve her play over the next few moves, the initiative definitely passes to Black) 17...♙f6 18 ♙e3 ♘e5 19 ♚b1 b5 20 cxb5 axb5 21 ♙xb5 ♙xe4 22 dxe4 ♜xb5 23 ♘c3 ♜a6 24 b3 ♘c4 25 ♙d2 ♘a3 26 ♚c1 ♚fb8 27 ♙f4 ♙xc3 28 ♚xc3 ♘b5 29 ♙g3 ♘d4 30 ♚e1 e5 31 ♙h6 g6 32 a4 c4 33 bxc4 ♜xc4 34 ♜d2 ♚xa4 35 ♚c3 ♜a6 36 ♜g5 ♘e6 37 ♜f6 ♜a5 38 ♚ec1 ♚a1 39 ♚xa1 ♜xa1+ 40 ♚c1 ♚b1 41 ♙xb1 ♜xb1+ 42 ♘h2 ♜xe4 43 ♜e7 ♜c6 44 g3 d5 45 ♜f6 ♜c7 46 ♜f3 ♜d6 47 ♜f6 d4 48 f4 exf4 49 ♙xf4 ♜d8 50 ♜xd8+ ♘xd8 51 ♘g2 f5 52 ♘f2 ♘f7 0-1.

5...cxd4 6 ♘xd4



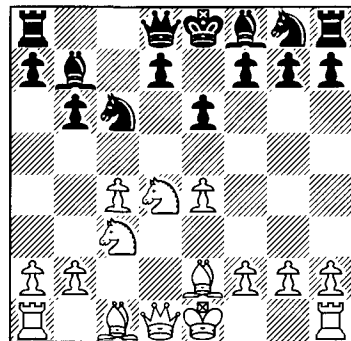
Here Black can opt for a standard Hedgehog by playing ...d7-d6, ...♘f6, ...♙e7, ...0-0, ...a7-a6, etc. The most accurate move order is

to postpone the development of the b8 knight until White's plan of a4-a5 has been rendered ineffective. In other words, Black must be ready to answer a2-a4 with ...♘b8-c6; otherwise White will get strong queenside pressure after a4-a5, followed by either axb6 or ♘d4-b3xa5 (if Black takes on a5 himself).

For White two different set-ups are possible: one including the fianchetto of the f1 bishop, and eventually of the queen's bishop as well; the second (and more common) being ♙e2, 0-0, f2-f3, ♙e3, ♜d2, ♚fd1, ♚ac1, etc.

Black has an additional scheme at his disposal, which consists of ...♘c6, ...♙c5, ...♘f6 and eventually ...♜b8. Against this set-up White's fianchetto doesn't seem to cause Black any problems, but White should retain a slight plus with ♙e2.

6...♘c6 7 ♙e2



7...♜b8

On 7...♘f6 8 ♙f4 is perhaps the most promising move for White, intending to exploit the weakness of the d6-square; e.g. 8...♙b4?! 9 ♘db5 ♘xe4 10 ♜d3 (or 10 ♜c2!?) with fine compensation for the pawn in D.Pavasovic-V.Zviagintsev, Portoroz 1999, even if Black's position should be defensible. Or 8...♘xd4 9 ♜xd4 ♙c5 10 ♜d3 d6 and although Black soon equalised in V.Zvjagintsev-RLeitao, Poikovsky 2001, the position should still be a tiny bit better for White; while 10...0-0 11 e5 ♘e8 12 0-0 also

gave White slightly the better chances in S.Rublevsky-Ye Jiangchuan, Shanghai 2001.

8 0-0 ♖f6 9 ♙e3

9 ♘c2! looks better, and experience has borne this out. White enjoys a space advantage and thus needs to avoid trading pieces to maintain his edge. In the notes to his game versus F.Bistic, Zadar 1997, Bogdan Lalic recommends either 9...♗b4 10 a3 ♘xc2 11 ♙xc2 or 9...♙e7 10 f4 d6, assessing both as slightly better for White.

9...♙d6

Provoking f2-f4, so that the e4 pawn will need constant piece protection.

10 f4 ♘xd4 11 ♙xd4 e5 12 ♗d2 0-0 13 ♜ad1 ♙b4 14 ♗c2 ♙xc3 15 ♗xc3 d6 16 ♗d3 ½-½

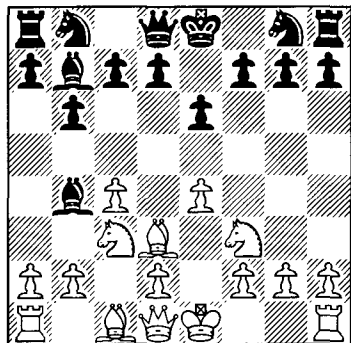
After 16...♘xe4 17 ♙f3 f5 18 ♙xe4 fxe4 (or 18...♙xe4) 19 ♗xd6 etc., the game is equal.

Game 63

B.Ostenstad-E.Kengis

Gausdal 1991

1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 ♙b7 4 e4 ♙b4 5 ♙d3



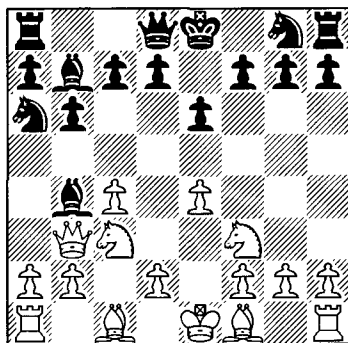
This is a very ambitious variation for White. First, he develops his bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal, then he aims to activate it by pushing e4-e5 or capturing a black pawn should one appear on f5. Nevertheless, Black

doesn't need to create any special plan; his strategy consists simply of preventing the bishop's activation. If Black succeeds, then his play is usually quite satisfactory.

White's main alternative is 5 ♗b3!? and then:

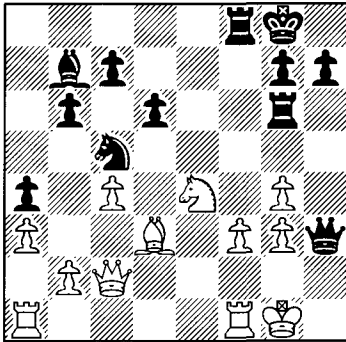
a) 5...c5?! is too weakening and White can exploit it by playing 6 ♘b5 d6 (or 6...♙f8 7 ♘d6 ♗c7 8 ♘xb7 ♗xb7 9 ♗e3, V.Gavrikov-V.Eingorn, Riga 1980, when Black had no real compensation for the loss of the bishop pair and his right to castle) 7 ♗d3 d5 8 e5 dxc4 9 ♗xd8+ ♙xd8 10 ♘g5! ♙e7 11 a3 ♙a5 12 ♘xf7 ♙xf7 13 ♘d6+ ♙e7 14 ♘xb7 ♘c6 15 ♙xc4 ♘xe5 16 ♙a6 ♘f6 17 b3 ♘c6 18 ♜b1 ♘d5 19 ♘xa5 ♘xa5 20 b4 ♘c7 21 ♙e2 ♘b7 22 ♙b2 ♜hg8 23 ♙e5 ♜ac8 24 0-0 g6 25 ♜fe1 ♙gd8 26 ♜b2 ♙f7 27 h4 was much better for White in I.Csom-R.Keene, Hanover 1977.

b) 5...♘a6! is the most popular reply and also the best:



b1) 6 a3!? ♘c5 7 ♗c2 (not 7 ♗xb4?? a5 8 ♗b5 ♙c6 and the queen is trapped) 7...♙xc3 8 ♗xc3 and here Black can choose between 8...♘xe4 9 ♗xg7 ♗f6 10 ♗xf6 ♘gxf6 11 d3 ♘d6 with a level endgame in D.Cramling-H.Schussler, Sweden 1993 (much better than that after 5...♙xc3 6 ♗xc3 ♙xe4 7 ♗xg7 ♗f6 below), or 8...f6 9 d3 e5 when Black can achieve good kingside play by ...♘e7, ...d7-d6, ...f6-f5, etc.

b2) 6 ♖e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 d3 and here both 8...f5 and 8...♗g6 are fine for Black; e.g. 8...♗g6 9 a3 ♗c5 10 ♖c2 ♖xc3 11 ♖xc3 a5 12 ♖e3 a4 13 ♗d2 f5 14 exf5 ♗h4 15 f3 ♗xf5 16 d4 ♖f6 17 ♖f2 ♗a6 18 ♗e4 ♖h6 19 d5 d6 20 dxe6 ♖ae8 21 ♖d3 ♖xe6 22 ♖c1 ♖h5 23 g4 ♖g6 24 ♖g3 ♗xg3 25 hxg3 ♖h3 26 ♖c2 ♗c5

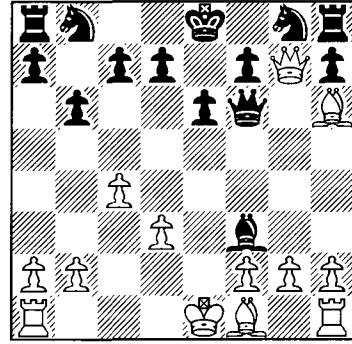


27 ♗xc5 ♖xg4!! 28 ♖xh7+ ♖h8 0-1 S.Knott-J.Hodgson, British Championship, Millfield 2000.

c) 5...♖xc3!? 6 ♖xc3 ♖xe4 looks worse to me (though not for the tactical reason given by Plaskett in his book *English Defence ...e6, ...b6, ...♖b7*), and here White has two continuations:

c1) 7 ♖xg7 ♖f6 8 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 9 ♖e2 ♖g8 10 d3 ♖b7 11 ♖g1 ♗c6 12 ♖d2 d6 (12...0-0-0, from L.Gustafsson-J.Larsson, correspondence 1990, may well be an improvement; Black is not troubled at all by 13 ♖g5 ♖g6 and can play with ...d7-d5 rather than ...d7-d6) 13 ♖c3 ♗g4 14 h3 ♗ge5 15 0-0-0, as in J.Smejkal-A.Miles, Reykjavik 1978, where the two bishops mean that White's chances are slightly to be preferred. I think this is the real argument against 5...♖xc3. Although Black is far from lost here, he gets better play with the alternative method, 5...♗a6!

c2) After 7 d3!? the reply 7...♖xf3 8 ♖xg7 ♖f6 9 ♖h6!



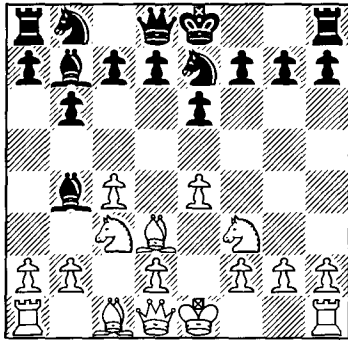
is the supposed refutation. According to Plaskett, this line (found by GM Speelman) wins material and therefore spells the end of 5...♖xc3. (Interestingly, GM Daniel King shares this view in his 1999 book.) In my opinion, however, the position after 10...♖b7 (in note 'c22' below) is not so clear, as the ♖h8 finds it hard to escape its 'pseudo-jail'. After 9 ♖h6 (threatening 10 ♖f8 mate!) Black has two possibilities:

c21) 9...♖xh6?! is interesting but probably insufficient: 10 ♖xh8 ♖g6 11 gxf3 ♗c6 (11...f6?! would give Black the upper hand, if only White didn't have 12 d4 ♖f7 13 ♖d3!! ♖xd3 14 ♖g1 and wins, or if 12...♗c6 13 ♖d3 f5 14 d5 and her majesty escapes) 12 ♖c3 e5?! (12...♗ge7 13 d4 ♖g5 is a bit better) 13 f4! ♖g4 (if 13...exf4 14 0-0-0) 14 fxe5 ♗d4 15 h3 ♖f4 (if 15...♗f3+ 16 ♗d1 ♖f4 17 ♖g2) 16 ♖g2 0-0-0 17 ♖f1 and although White's pieces are uncoordinated for the moment, the material disparity is the predominant factor. Right now 18 ♖e1 and 19 e4 is a threat, while after 17...f6!? 18 ♖e1! fxe5 (or 18...♗c2?! 19 ♖c1) 19 ♖e4 forces the exchange of queens.

c22) 9...♖xg7 10 ♖xg7 ♖b7 11 h4 (if 11 ♖xh8 f6 12 ♖g1 ♗c6 13 ♖e2 ♗d4 14 ♖c1 ♗xe2 15 ♖xe2 ♖f7, or 12 ♖e2 ♗c6 13 ♖h5+ ♖e7 14 g4 ♗d4 or 14...♗e5 seems OK for Black; and 11 ♖e2 ♗c6 doesn't seem to change anything, unless I'm missing something) 11...f6 12 h5 ♗h6! 13 ♖xh6 (not 13

♙xh8? ♖f7) 13...♞g8 14 d4 ♘c6 15 ♙e3 was tested in M.Turner-S.Gillen, Bunratty 1999, twelve years after Plaskett's book. Now, instead of the imprecise 15...0-0-0?! which saw White on top after 16 f3 ♘e7 17 ♙f2 ♘f5 18 ♞h3!, Black should have transferred his knight immediately to f5. Then White cannot keep his two bishops and chances are equal.

5...♘e7



As this 'tabiya' is the very main line of the 1 e4 b6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 e4 variation, another five annotated games will complete our 'tour' of the subject. That might seem rather exhaustive, but this particular variation is quite rich and certainly needs thorough investigation to be understood.

For those who wish to avoid complications, 5...♙xc3 is a sound alternative.

In the game B.Badea-A.Musat, Bucharest 2002, White delayed castling, until finally putting his king on the queenside; while he eventually won, chances were equal for quite a while: 6 dxc3 d6 7 ♞e2 e5 8 ♘d2 ♘d7 9 f3 ♘c5 10 ♙c2 ♘e7 11 ♘f1 0-0 (11...♞d7 was interesting, waiting for White to castle before committing his own king) 12 ♘e3 a5 13 ♙d2 ♙c8 14 0-0-0 f5 15 exf5 ♘xf5 16 ♘f1 ♙b7?! (either 16...♞h4!? or 16...a4!? was better) 17 ♘g3 ♘h4 18 ♙e3 ♞f6 19 ♖b1 ♞f7 20 ♙xc5 bxc5 21 ♘e4 ♞e7 22 ♞hf1 ♘g6 (maybe he should have waited for g2-g3 and then retreated to f5 instead; in the subsequent course

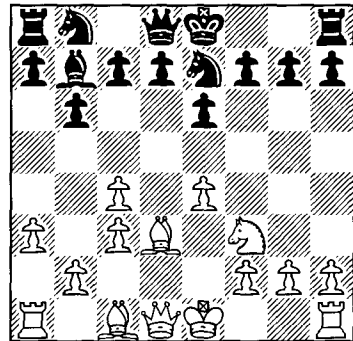
of the game Black never tried to implement any sort of counterplay!) 23 g3 ♙c6 24 h4 ♞fe8 25 ♞de1 ♙d7 26 ♘g5 ♞f6 27 ♞e4 ♞f8 28 g4 (28 f4! was more cunning, the main idea being 28...exf4? 29 ♞d5+ ♖h8 30 ♘xh7! ♖xh7 31 ♞xf4 and wins) 28...h6 29 ♘h3 ♘xh4 30 ♞h7+ ♖f7 31 f4 ♖e7 32 ♞f2 ♞e6 33 fxe5 ♞xg4 34 exd6+ ♖xd6 35 ♞d3+ ♖c6 36 ♙a4+ ♖b6 37 ♙xd7 ♞fd8 38 ♙xg4 ♞xd3 39 ♘f4 1-0.

6 a3?!

This is not convincing: Black obtains the better pawn structure, while White's two bishops are not very impressive. The game is probably still roughly equal, but Black is certainly more flexible.

Instead, 6 ♘e2! is the next game, while the normal 6 0-0 0-0 is covered in Games 65-68.

6...♙xc3 7 dxc3



7...d6

7...0-0 is more risky, as White can attack with 8 e5 ♘g6 9 ♘g5 ♞e8 10 ♞h5 h6 11 ♘xf7?! (better was 11 ♘e4! with the idea 11...♘c6 12 ♘f6+! gxf6 13 exf6 ♞d8 14 ♙g5!! and wins; nevertheless, Black can survive if he finds 11...f5! 12 exf6 ♘f4 13 ♞xe8 ♘xd3+ 14 ♖e2 ♞xe8 15 ♖xd3 d5! 16 cxd5 exd5 17 ♘g3 ♙a6+ 18 ♖d2 ♞f8 and the position is level) 11...♞xf7 12 ♞xg6 ♞xf2+ 13 ♖d1 ♞xg2 14 ♞h7+ ♖f7 15 ♙g6+ ♞xg6 16 ♞f1+ ♖e7 17 ♞xg6 ♞xf1+ 18 ♖e2 ♞f7 19

♖e3 ♘c6 20 ♖f1 ♖af8 21 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 22
 ♖d4 ♘a5 23 c5 ♖a6+ 24 ♘d1 ♘b3 25 c6
 ♖c4 26 ♖e3 dxc6 27 ♖g4 b5 28 ♖h4+ ♘d7
 29 ♖h5 ♘e7 30 ♖h4+ ♘e8 31 ♖g4 a5 32 a4
 ♖d5 33 ♘c2 ♘d7 34 ♖g6 ♘e7 35 ♖g4 ♘d8
 36 ♖g1 g5 37 ♖e3 ♘c8 38 ♖g1 ♖f4 39 ♖h5
 bxa4 40 ♖e2? ♖e4+ 0-1 J.Mellado Trivino-
 C.Bauer, Barcelona (rapid) 2000.

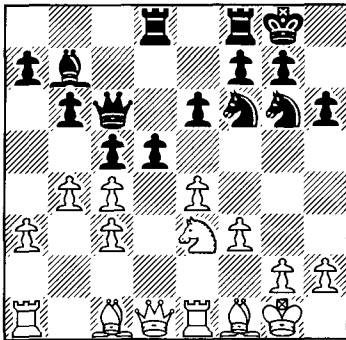
8 0-0 ♘d7 9 b4

Depriving Black of the c5-square; but this move has a serious drawback in that the c4 pawn will be irremediably weak.

9...0-0 10 ♖e1 ♘g6 11 ♖g5 ♖e8

11...f6 was playable too, as the weakness of e6 is irrelevant here.

12 ♘d4 h6 13 ♖c1 ♘f6 14 f3 ♖d8 15 ♖f1 c5 16 ♘c2 ♖c6 17 ♘e3 d5



Everything is ready for this central break and, although White's bishops will now gain in strength, Black maintains the equilibrium thanks to his active pieces.

18 cxd5 exd5 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 21 ♖c2 ♖f6 22 ♖e3 ♖h5 23 bxc5 ♖e5 24 h3 bxc5 25 ♖f2 ♘f4 26 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 27 ♖e7?

An unnecessary blunder, whereas 27 ♖ad1 was still about equal.

27...♖xh3! 28 ♖e2

If 28 gxf3 ♖g5+ regains the rook.

28...♖a8

Or 28...♖h2+ 29 ♘f1 ♖d6, forcing White to take the rook after all.

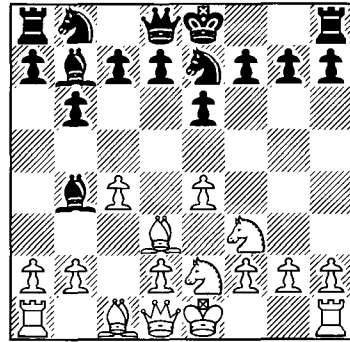
**29 ♖xa7 ♖h5 30 g3 ♖d2 31 ♖d1 ♖xc3
 32 a4 ♖c6 33 a5 ♖e8 34 ♖c7 ♖c2 35
 ♖e1 ♖b5! 36 ♖xb5 ♖xe1+ 37 ♖xe1
 ♖h2+ 38 ♘f1 ♖h1+ 0-1**

Game 64

A. Chernin-J. Spielman

European Cup, Slough 1997

**1 c4 b6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 ♖b7 4 e4 ♖b4 5
 ♖d3 ♘e7 6 ♘e2!?**



6...f5

The most direct and thematic response. Instead:

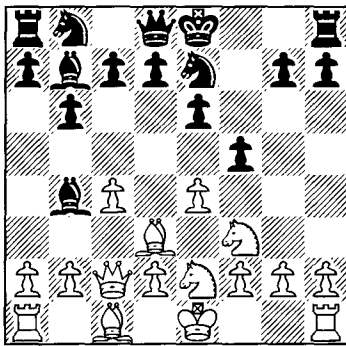
a) 6...♘g6 7 ♖c2 ♘h4 8 a3 ♖d6 9 ♘xh4 ♖xh4 10 ♘g3 ♘c6 11 d4 0-0 was unclear in E.Agrest-S.Atalik, Bled 2002, which eventually led to a draw after wild complications: 12 ♖e3 ♘a5 13 ♖d3 f5 14 exf5 (on 14 0-0-0! the strongest reply is 14...♖a6!; whereas 14...f4 is not for the faint-hearted: 15 ♖d2 fxf3 16 hxg3 ♖g4 17 e5 ♖e7 18 ♖xh7+ ♘f7 and now 19 ♖h6 permits the devilish 19...♘b3+! 20 ♘b1? ♖xd1+! 21 ♖xd1? ♖e4+! 22 ♖xe4 ♘xd2+ and wins, or if 20 ♖xb3 ♖e4 21 ♖h4 ♖xh4 22 ♖xh4 ♖xh4 23 gxf4 ♖xg2 and Black has the upper hand; while after 19 f3 ♖xg3 20 ♖h6 ♘e8 there's nothing immediately decisive, so Black must be alright too) 14...♖xg2 15 ♖g1 ♖f3 16 b3 (a cool move designed to free up the queen) 16...♖xh2 17 ♘d2 ♖xg3 18 ♖xg3 ♖xf5 19

♖ag1 g6! (19...♞f7?! may also be playable, though it leaves an uncomfortable feeling after 20 ♖f1 h6 21 ♖d3 g5, and *Fritz* claims that sacrifices on f3 or g5 are incorrect, but even so...) 20 d5 ♙h5 21 ♗c1 ♖h4 22 dxe6 dxe6 23 ♖d7 (perhaps 23 ♙g5 was better, though 23...♞xg5 24 ♞xg5 ♖xf2 or 23...♖h2!? is still rather uncertain) 23...♖f6 24 ♙xf5 ♖c3+ 25 ♗b1 ♖xb3+ with perpetual check.

b) 6...♗bc6!? 7 a3 ♙d6, as in E.Agrést-J.F.hlvst, Swedish Team Championship 2001, is also worth attention.

7 ♗g3

7 ♖c2 still isn't very much explored. Its merits are clear: the e4-pawn is covered; White initiates a direct threat to the b4 bishop (i.e. a2-a3 and e4-e5 would win it); the position after 7...fxe4 8 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 9 ♖xe4 is undoubtedly superior for White; and last but not least, the reference for the English Defence, Jon Speelman, lost to Krasenkow. On the other hand, White's bishop on d3 is temporarily stalemated, so he will find it harder to push the d-pawn.



Black can choose between:

a) 7...♗bc6?! 8 exf5 ♗xf5 9 ♙xf5 exf5 10 ♖xf5 ♖e7?! (10...♗e7!? 11 ♖h5+ g6 12 ♖h3 d5 would probably have been a better attempt to find activity for the sacrificed pawn; in the game White needed some time to regroup his forces, but bit by bit Black's compensation

disappeared) 11 0-0 ♖xe2 12 ♙e1 ♖xe1+ 13 ♗xe1 with a clear advantage to White. M.Krasenkow-J.Speelman, European Team Championship, Batumi 1999, continued 13...0-0-0 14 b3 ♞hf8 15 ♖h3 ♙c5 16 ♗d3 ♗d4 17 ♙b2 ♗e2+ 18 ♗f1 ♗f4 19 ♗xf4 ♞xf4 20 d4 ♞df8 21 ♖e3 ♙e7 22 ♙e1 (22 ♖xe7 seems winning, but Black gets a chance to confuse matters after 22...♞xf2+ 23 ♗e1 ♙xg2 24 ♙c1 a5 or 24...♞8f3, and as long as White's king does not reach the queenside he may suffer a perpetual check) 22...♙h4 23 g3 ♞f3 24 ♖e2 ♙d8 and although Black put up tough resistance, he still had to resign eventually: 25 d5 ♞3f7 26 ♙a3 d6 27 ♙b2 ♗b8 28 ♙d4 ♙c8 29 ♗g2 g6 30 h3 h5 31 ♖d2 g5 32 ♙e2 a5 33 ♖e1 ♙d7 34 ♙e4 c5 35 ♙e3 ♙f5 36 ♙e6 ♙xe6 37 dxe6 ♞f6 38 ♖d1 ♖xe6 39 ♖xh5 ♞ef6 40 ♖d1 ♗c7 41 ♖d2 ♞6f7 42 f4 gxf4 43 ♙xf4 ♞d7 44 h4 ♙f6 45 h5 ♙e5 46 ♙xe5 dxe5 47 ♖e3 ♙e8 48 h6 e4 49 g4 ♞f7 50 g5 ♞f3 51 ♖e1 ♞f5 52 ♖g3+ ♗b7 53 h7 e3 54 g6 e2 55 g7 ♞g5 56 ♖xg5 e1 ♖57 g8 ♖ ♙e2+ 58 ♗h3 ♖h1+ 59 ♗g4 ♞g2+ 60 ♗f5 ♞f2+ 61 ♗g6 ♖e4+ 62 ♗h6 ♞h2+ 63 ♗g7 ♖d4+ 64 ♗f8 ♞f2+ 65 ♖f7+ ♞xf7+ 66 ♗xf7 ♗a6 67 ♗g8 1-0.

b) The prophylactic 7...♙c5!? hasn't been tried yet. If White takes the f5 pawn (with or without inserting a2-a3, ...a7-a5), then Black certainly gets enough compensation; e.g. 8 a3 a5 9 exf5 ♙xf5 10 gxf3 ♗xf5 11 ♙xf5 exf5 12 ♖xf5 ♖e7 or 12...♗c6 and Black is fine; but keeping the tension by 9 b3 is worth consideration.

c) 7...a5 8 a3 ♙d6 was also superior than Speelman's choice. M.Joffe-G.Hjorth, correspondence 2000, continued 9 b3 ♗a6 (the point of withdrawing the bishop to d6 rather than c5) 10 ♙b2 ♗c5 11 e5 ♗xd3+ 12 ♖xd3 ♙c5 when Black had a pleasant position, and although he erred a little over the coming moves, the game nevertheless ended peacefully: 13 h4 ♗g8 14 ♗f4 ♗h6 15 ♖e2 ♙e7 16 d4 c6 17 0-0-0 ♙a6 18 ♖c2 b5 19 c5 1/2-1/2.

7...♟g6 8 0-0

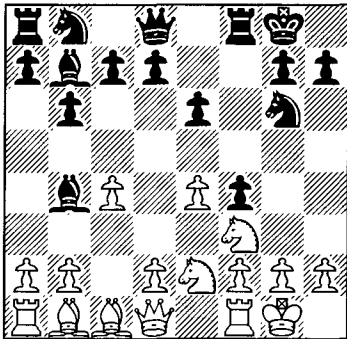
White can grab a pawn with 8 exf5?, but the prize is too high: 8...♟f4 9 ♙f1 exf5 10 ♟xf5 0-0 11 ♟e3 ♙xf3 12 gxf3 ♟c6 and murder to follow.

8...f4 9 ♟e2

If 9 ♟h5!? (playable, but somewhat suspect) 9...0-0 10 ♙c2 then 10...♟h4! gives Black a decent game; e.g. 11 d4 (11 a3?! ♙c5, intending 12 b4 ♟xf3+ 13 ♟xf3 ♙d4, is worse) 11...♟c6 12 ♟xh4 ♟xh4 13 g3 fxf3 14 hxg3 ♟d8 with unclear consequences. I am less trustful of 10...e5?! (seemingly mentioned by Chernin in the post mortem), as in that case 11 d4 exd4 12 ♟xd4 ♙d6 (or 12...♟g5 13 g3) 13 ♟f5 ♙e5 14 ♟g4! is good for White.

9...0-0 10 ♙c2

10 ♙c2 is a suggestion by Daniel King from his book, *English Defence*, and a very good one as far as I can see. In many lines White will gain a crucial tempo to develop his queenside, whereas the drawback of 10 ♙c2 remains obscure.

**10...♟h4**

The retreat 10...♙e7! was employed successfully some weeks later on. The point of bringing the bishop back home is to play ...c7-c5, without it being left out of play (after a2-a3, ...♙a5). E.Agrest-V.Zviagintsev, Kazan 1997, continued 11 d4 c5 12 ♙d2 (12 d5 e5!? would paint a funny picture with all four

bishops biting on granite; then in order to avoid ...d7-d6 followed by a kingside assault, I guess White has to go for 13 d6 ♙f6 with chances for both sides) 12...♟c7 (threatening to take on d4 and c4) 13 b3 ♟c6 14 ♙c3 e5 15 dxe5 (not an easy decision, I imagine; White will have to cope with a silly light-squared bishop anyway, but opening the might make this easier for Black to exploit; on the other hand 15 d5 wasn't necessarily better, as after the logical 15...♟d4 16 ♟exd4 exd4 17 ♙d2 Black objectively has all the trumps) 15...♟cxe5 16 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 17 f3 ♟g6 (the exchange of dark-squared bishops is next on the agenda) 18 ♟d2 d6 19 ♙c2 ♙ad8 (19...♙f6 20 ♙ad1 ♙e5 was plausible, but after 21 ♙xe5 dxe5 22 ♟d6 White dominates the only open file and should hold, despite his stupid bishop) 20 ♙ad1 ♙f6 21 ♙xf6 ♟xf6 22 e5! (before Black prevents it with ...♟f7) 22...♟xe5 23 ♟xf4 ♟f7 24 ♟d5 ♙xd5 25 cxd5 (White would naturally have liked to keep the pressure on d6, but after 25 ♟xd5? ♟xd5 26 ♙xd5 ♟c6! the knight would have a bright future on d4; whereas now Black's edge, due to the dominant knight, isn't so great, and Agrest will be up the defensive task) 25...♙f8 26 ♙e4 h6 27 ♟e1 g5 28 ♟e2 ♙f4 29 a4 h5 30 a5 (this counterplay arrives just in time and Black won't reach more than a drawish rook endgame. The rest of the game seems logical, and so is its outcome...) 30...bxa5 31 ♟a6 ♟c7 32 ♙a1 g4 33 ♟xa5 ♟xa5 34 ♙xa5 gxf3 35 gxf3 ♟xf3+ 36 ♙xf3 ♟xf3 37 ♙xf3 ♟xf3 38 ♙xa7 ♙f5 39 b4 cxb4 40 ♙b7 ♙xd5 41 ♙xb4 ♟f7 42 ♟f2 ♙d2+ 43 ♟g3 ♙e2 44 ♙h4 ♙e5 45 ♟f3 d5 46 ♙a4 ♟f6 47 ♟f4 ♙e2 48 ♙a6+ ♙e6 49 ♙a4 ♙c6 50 ♟e3 ♙c2 51 ♙f4+ ♟g6 52 ♙d4 ♙c3+ 53 ♟f4 1/2-1/2.

11 ♟xh4 ♟xh4 12 f3!

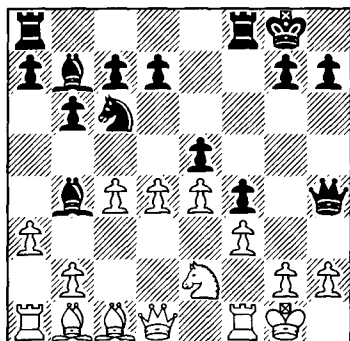
Prophylaxis. The immediate 12 d4?! was inadvisable, due to 12...f3 13 gxf3 ♙d6 14 f4 (more secure than 14 ♟g3?! ♙f4 when White's king might feel uncomfortable later

on) 14...♖g4+ 15 ♘g3 ♖xd1 16 ♗xd1 ♕xf4 and Black isn't worse, to say the least.

12...e5 13 d4 ♘c6

13...exd4 runs into 14 ♘xf4 (with the transparent idea 14...♗xf4? 15 g3), and given the relative vulnerability of d4, as well as the mobile white e- and f-pawn duo, White's position seems clearly more attractive to me.

14 a3



14...♕e7?!

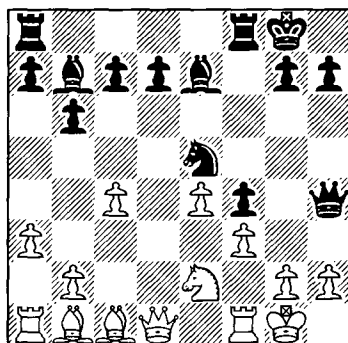
14...♕d6! was more to the point, as Black soon wasted a tempo coming here anyway, and the bishop is better placed on d6 to support the offensive against the enemy king. Presumably Black rejected it for tactical reasons, as it offers White the extra possibility 15 c5 ♕e7 (the pawn was immune due to 16 ♖b3+), but pushing his pawns isn't necessarily a big achievement for White:

a) 16 b4 ♘xd4 17 ♘d4 exd4 18 ♖xd4 (or 18 cxb6!? axb6 19 ♖xd4 with about equal chances) 18...bxc5! 19 bxc5 ♖g5 20 e5 d6 and now the following continuation is quite funny: 21 ♖d3 d5 22 ♖xh7+ ♔f7 23 e6+ ♔xe6 24 ♗e1+ ♔d7 and with the white pieces back on their starting blocks, Black should be OK.

b) 16 cxb6!? ♘xd4 (not 16...axb6?! 17 dxe5 ♘xe5 18 ♕xf4 ♗xf4 19 g3 when White wins the exchange with the better play) 17 ♘xd4 ♕c5 18 bxc7 ♕xd4+ 19 ♔h1 ♔h8! and though White has an extra pawn, his position doesn't inspire much confidence. Instead, the

direct 19...♗f6? (threatening 20...♖xh2+ and mates) would be erroneous, because of 20 ♕xf4!! d5 (if Black captures on f4, either 21 ♖b3+ or 21 ♖xd4 regains the piece) 21 ♕g3 ♖xg3 22 ♖xd4 ♗h6 23 ♖g1 and White is much better.

15 dxe5! ♘xe5



16 ♔h1

16 ♕xf4! was interesting and probably stronger, forcing Black to sacrifice by 16...♗xf4 17 g3. This variation is similar to 14...♕d6 15 c5 ♕e7 16 cxb6 axb6 17 dxe5 ♘xe5 18 ♕xf4 ♗xf4 19 g3 in the previous note, though the circumstances have changed in Black's favour: White has a knight (rather than the two bishops) and still has his weak c-pawn (which also rules out the useful ♕a2+). Thus after 17...♗g4 (17...♘xf3+?! 18 ♗xf3 ♗g4 19 ♖xd7 is worse for Black) 18 fxg4 ♖xg4 19 ♘f4, while White seems to be on top, his opponent still has reasonable positional compensation for the exchange.

16...♕d6?

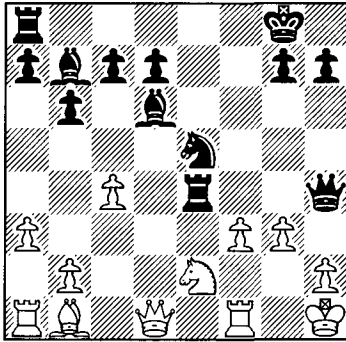
This fails to the now familiar tactical ploy, so 16...♕g5 was to be preferred. The bishop looks a bit dumb here, but what about the whole white queenside? I believe Black would have been doing just fine.

17 ♕xf4! ♗xf4?!

Jonathan is a player with principles, which explains the game continuation. This state of mind can sometimes help in producing mas-

terpieces (and he has, indeed, a remarkable collection of them). Here, unfortunately, the materialistic approach will triumph...

18 g3 ♖xe4



19 gxh4

19 ♗xe4 was also sufficient: 19...♖xe4 20 fxe4 ♗xe4+ 21 ♖g1 ♗c5+ 22 ♔d4 ♔d3 23 h3 ♗xd4+ 24 ♖h2 with a decisive material advantage, as Speelman indicated in *Informator* 71. In both cases, Black is missing a whole piece to make things really entertaining. The remaining notes are also Speelman's, and show that all ways lead White to Rome, provided that he isn't too careless.

19...♖xh4 20 ♔d4

Alternatively, 20 ♔g1? ♔d3 21 h3 ♔f4 22 ♗f5! or 20...♔g4 21 h3 ♔e3 22 ♖e1 and White wins in both cases.

20...♖f8

20...♔g4 was no improvement after 21 c5! ♖xh2+ 22 ♖g1 ♗xc5, when the easiest win is to simplify by 23 b4! ♖g2+ 24 ♖xg2 ♔e3+ 25 ♖h1 ♔xd1 26 bxc5 ♔e3 27 ♖e1 bxc5 28 ♗a2+ ♖f8 29 ♖ab1 and the game is over; while if 21...♗xh2 22 ♔f5! ♖h5 23 ♖xd7 ♗d6+ (White now makes a series of 'only' moves, but he is in no real danger) 24 ♖g1 ♗xc5+ 25 ♖g2 ♖g5 26 ♖h3 ♔f2+ 27 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 28 ♗e4 and wins.

21 ♗e4! ♔g4

If 21...♔xf3 22 ♗xf3! ♖xh2+ 23 ♖g1 etc., or 21...♖xe4 22 fxe4 ♖xf1+ 23 ♖xf1 ♗xe4+

24 ♖g1 ♗c5 25 ♖d1 ♔f3+ 26 ♖f2 ♔xd4 and now I like the cynical 27 ♖e3, grabbing another piece.

22 ♗xb7 ♔xh2

22...♖xh2+ 23 ♖g1 ♔e3 24 f4! avoids the perpetual check by ...♖g2+, ...♖h2+ etc., while after 24...♔xd1 25 ♖xh2 the extra rook (for two or three pawns) will decide.

23 ♗d5+ ♖h8 24 ♖g2 ♔xf1 25 ♖xf1 ♖xd4 26 ♖f2 ♖df4 27 ♖e1 ♖4f6 28 ♗e4 g6 29 ♖d4 ♖g7 30 b4 c5 31 ♖c3 g5 32 ♖d1 ♖h6 33 ♖h1+ 1-0

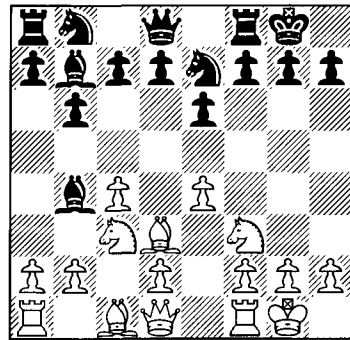
A fairly complicated game, on both strategic and tactical counts. Unfortunately, Black spoiled his chances by his 14th and 16th moves, and was then fighting a lost cause.

Game 65

J.Mellado Trivino-J.Oms Pallise

French League 2002

1 c4 e6 2 ♔c3 b6 3 ♔f3 ♗b7 4 e4 ♗b4 5 ♗d3 ♔e7 6 0-0 0-0



For fans of statistics: out of the 56 games I found in my database, Black scores an impressive 60% from this position! Even if some of these games aren't so relevant, it is certainly a clue that he has nothing to fear from a theoretical standpoint.

7 e5

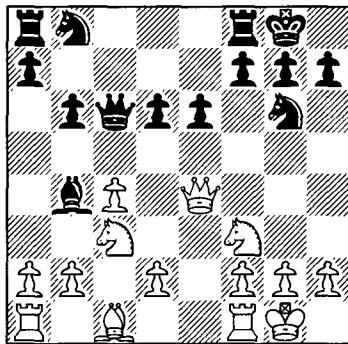
White more often plays either 7 ♖e1 (see the next game) or 7 ♗c2 (Games 67-68). In-

stead, the straightforward 7 e5 has brought White only a miserable half point from five games, according to the sources at my disposal. Even if it is a bit primitive (maybe White is dreaming about a miniature involving ♖xh7+) and doesn't cause Black any problems, the move isn't objectively that bad.

7...♖g6 8 ♖e4 ♗c8

Black had two valid alternatives in 8...♖xe4 9 ♖xe4 d5 10 cxd6 cxd6 (or 10...♖xd6) and 8...♖c6. Here is an example of the latter: 8...♖c6 9 d4 ♖xc3 10 bxc3 ♖a5 11 ♖xb7 (11 ♖d3!?) 11...♖xb7 12 ♖g5 h6 13 ♖e4 d6 14 f4 c5 15 ♖e3 d5 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 17 ♖g3 cxd4 18 cxd4 f5 19 exf6 ♖xf6 20 ♗g4 ♖e7 21 ♖ac1 ♖af8 22 ♖c7 ♖8f7 23 ♖h5? (the beginning of White's troubles; whereas after a neutral move such as 23 a3, removing the pawn from the queen's attack, the game would still have been balanced; for instance 23...♖f5?? would then be a serious mistake, on account of 24 ♖h5! netting the exchange, while after 23...♖h7 24 ♖h5 Black must either settle for a draw by 24...♖f5 25 ♖g3 ♖5f6 26 ♖h5, or try 24...♖g6!? 25 ♗f3 ♖d6 26 ♖xa7 ♖b5 when he has sufficient compensation for the pawn but probably not more) 23...♖g6 24 ♗f3 (had White foreseen how quickly he would collapse after this, he would surely have kept the queens on, though his chances of a swindle after 24 ♗e2 ♖f5 25 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 are not very high) 24...♖f5 25 ♖c8+ ♖h7 26 ♗xd5 exd5 (with such a useless piece of wood on e3, White can only hope to make a draw if Black cooperates) 27 ♖f2 ♖bd6 28 ♖d8 ♖c7 29 h3 (no better was 29 ♖g3 ♖c2! 30 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 and the d5-pawn is immune because of the deadly 31 ♖xd5? ♖e3!) 29...♖c3 30 ♖h2 ♖c2 31 g4 ♖e3 32 ♖g1 ♖xf1 33 ♖xf1 ♖e4 34 ♖e1 ♖g6 35 ♖d7 ♖c7 36 ♖xd5 ♖xa2 37 f5 ♖c1 0-1 A.Wohl-

N.Sulava, Metz 2003. A nice victory by the Croatian grandmaster.
9 ♗e2 d6 10 exd6 cxd6 11 ♖xb7 ♗xb7
12 ♗e4 ♗c6!



A refinement on the direct trade of queens. Exchanging on c6 would now help Black to develop, while the strategically desirable capture ...♖xc3, creating doubled pawns, remains in the air.

13 ♖d4?!

White's play wasn't particularly inspired up to here, but I don't believe he had yet entered the danger zone. For instance, after the more cautious 13 ♖d1! then 13...♖c8 14 d3 ♖xc3 15 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 16 bxc3 leads to an acceptable position for White.

13...♗xe4 14 ♖xe4 ♖d8

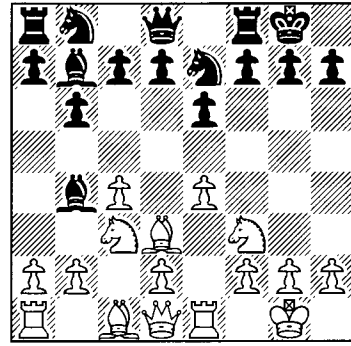
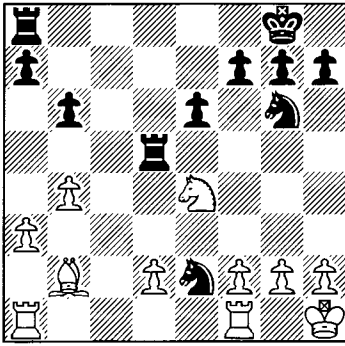
Black's advantage is slowly taking shape. Now the advance ...d6-d5 is the threat, leaving the opponent with an isolani after c4xd5 ...♖xd5.

15 a3?!

White smelt the danger, but with his next three moves he goes from Charybdis to Scylla. The lesser evil was either 15 d3 d5 16 cxd5 ♖xd5 17 ♖e3 or 15 ♖c2 ♖c6 16 d4 d5 17 cxd5 ♖xd5, in either case with a only slight, albeit enduring edge for Black.

15...♖c5 16 ♖f3 ♖c6 17 b4 ♖d4 18 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 19 ♖b2 ♖e2+ 20 ♖h1 d5
21 cxd5 ♖xd5

White's play has generated more weaknesses, and his d-pawn is not only isolated but backward too. The way Oms exploits his better endgame and converts it into a win is exemplary.



22 g3 ♖e5 23 ♜fe1 ♗d3 24 ♜xe2 ♗xb2
25 ♜c1 ♜ad8 26 ♗g2 ♗d3 27 ♜c7 ♜5d7
28 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 29 f4 h6 30 ♗f3 f5?

Black's only inaccuracy; 30...♗b2! would have kept his advantage intact.

31 ♗c3?

Swapping knights with 31 ♗f2! ♗f7 32 ♗e3 ♗xf2 33 ♜xf2 would have eased White's defence a lot, while 32...♗c1 33 ♜e1 ♗b3 34 ♗d3 ♗f6 35 ♗e5 or 32...♗b2?! 33 d3 ♗a4 34 ♜c2 are at least not worse for White.

31...♗f7 32 ♜e3 g5 33 fxg5 hxg5 34 g4

If 34 ♗e2 ♗b2! 35 d3 g4 and White is powerless against ...♗f6 followed by ...♜h7 or ...e6-e5, ...f5-f4.

34...♗f6 35 gxf5 exf5 36 ♜e8 ♗e5+ 37 ♗e2 g4 38 a4 ♗f3 39 h3 ♗g1+ 40 ♗e3 ♗xh3

The rest is easy.

41 d4 g3 42 ♜f8+ ♗g7 43 ♜xf5 g2 44 ♗e2 ♜e7+ 45 ♜e5 ♗f6 46 ♗e4 g1 ♜47 ♗xg1 ♗xg1 48 ♗d5 ♗f3 49 ♜xe7 ♗xe7 50 ♗c6 ♗xd4+ 51 ♗b7 ♗d6 52 ♗xa7 ♗c6 53 ♗b8 ♗c2 54 b5+ ♗c5 55 ♗b7 ♗d4 56 ♗a6 ♗b3 57 ♗b7 ♗a5+ 0-1

Game 66

I. Ibragimov-D. Bunzmann

Fuerth 2000

1 c4 e6 2 ♗c3 b6 3 ♗f3 ♗b7 4 e4 ♗b4 5 ♗d3 ♗e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1

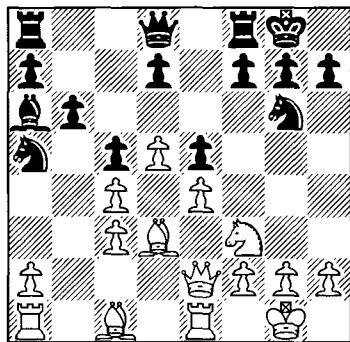
7...f5

7...♗g6 is a major alternative, and then:

a) 8 a3 ♜xc3 9 dxc3 e5 (a principle borrowed from the Nimzo-Indian: once the bishop has been exchanged on c3, the black pawns are placed on the dark squares) 10 ♗d2 ♗f4 11 ♗f1 a5 12 a4 (so as not get fixed by ...a5-a4) 12...♗e6 13 ♗d3 ♗f4 14 ♗f1 (White wasn't averse to a draw...) 14...d6 (but his opponent was in fighting mood; indeed, Black's game isn't worse) 15 b3 ♗d7 16 ♜a2?! (not a bad idea, but White should have started by expelling the annoying knight on f4; i.e. 16 g3 ♗e6 and Black will prepare ...f7-f5, while White's natural plan consists of ♗f1-e3-d5; Black's edge, if he really has one, would then have been confined to very bearable proportions) 16...♗c5 17 ♜e3 ♜d7 18 g3 ♗h3+ 19 ♗xh3 (forced, since 19 ♗g2? f5 20 f3 f4 21 ♜e1 fxg3 22 hxg3 ♗g5 yields Black a dangerous attack) 19...♜xh3 20 g4 (otherwise ...f7-f5, but this weakens the white king even more) 20...♜h4 21 h3 g6 22 b4 ♗e6 23 ♗f3 ♜e7 24 ♗h2 ♗h8 25 ♜e1 f5 (Black has finally achieved this push and quickly shows that White's position is in shreds) 26 exf5 gxf5 27 gxf5 ♜xf5 28 ♜g3 ♜d7 (28...♜h4 was more direct, being closer to the white monarch) 29 b5 ♗f4 30 ♗g4 ♜e6?! (missing the nice shot 30...♗xh3+! 31 ♜xh3 ♜h5!! winning immediately; though Black has such an overwhelming position, his move doesn't spoil anything) 31

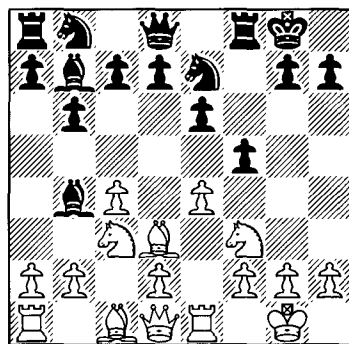
♙xf4 ♜xf4 32 ♘e3 ♜af8 33 ♞d2 ♜f3 34 ♖h2 ♜f7 35 ♘g1 ♜f4 36 c5 (desperation; instead White could safely have resigned here) 36...bxc5 37 c4 ♜e4 38 ♖h2 ♜xg3 39 fxg3 ♜f3 40 ♘g2 ♜xc4 41 b6 ♜f7 42 bxc7 ♜xc7 43 ♜d1 ♜f6 44 ♘e3 ♜f7 45 ♜e2 c4 46 g4 c3 47 ♜c2 ♙e4 48 ♘f5 ♙xf5 49 gxf5 ♜xf5 50 ♜e1 ♜g5 51 ♜f2 ♜c4 52 ♜f8+ ♖g7 53 ♜f2 ♜g6 54 ♜a8 ♜f4+ 55 ♜xf4 exf4 56 ♜xa5 ♖f6 57 ♜a6 ♖e5 58 ♜c6 ♖d4 59 a5 f3 0-1 M.Vokac-K.Chernyshov, Prague 2000.

b) 8 ♙c2 ♘c6 9 d4 (9 ♘e2!? looks a bit artificial now, though it may be playable) 9...♘a5 10 ♙d3 (back again) 10...♙a6 11 ♜e2 c5 12 d5 ♙xc3 13 bxc3 e5 reaches a sort of Nimzo-Indian position.



This version is surely comfortable for Black, since here he has a mobile f-pawn. L.Ftacnik-J.Speelman, European Team Championship, Batumi 1999, continued 14 ♙g5 f6 15 ♙e3 d6 (trying to intensify the pressure on c4 with the cumbersome manoeuvre ...♘e7-c8-d6 was perhaps a bit too eccentric, even for a 'connoisseur of the bizarre' like Speelman) 16 g3 ♜d7 17 ♘d2 ♜ae8 18 a4 (in the event of 18 f4 exf4 19 gxf4 Black isn't obliged to enter the complications resulting from 19...f5 20 ♜h5, but can keep calm with 19...♜a4 or 19...♜f7 for instance) 18...♙c8 19 f3 ♜e7 20 ♜f1 ♙h3 21 ♜f2 ♜d7 22 ♖h1 f5 23 exf5 ♙xf5 24 ♘e4 (White has conquered the e4-square for his horse, but he

also has to keep permanent watch over his a4 and c4 pawns; all in all the game is still in equilibrium, and remains there to its conclusion) 24...♖h8 25 ♙c2 ♘e7 26 ♙g5 h6 27 ♙d2 ♙h7 28 ♜af1 ♘g8 29 g4 ♘f6 30 g5 (if he doesn't act energetically, White runs the risk of ending up worse) 30...hxg5 31 ♙xg5 ♘xe4 32 fxe4 ♜xf2 33 ♜xf2 ♖g8 34 ♜h5 ♜a8 (this looks strange at first sight, but Black is vacating the e8-square for his queen, e.g. if 35 ♜f3? ♜e8) 35 ♙d3 ♜xa4 36 ♜f7+ ♖h8 37 ♙h6 ♜d1+ 38 ♜f1 ♜g4 39 ♜g1 ♙xe4+ 40 ♙xe4 ♜xe4+ 41 ♜g2 ♜e1+ 1/2-1/2.



8 exf5

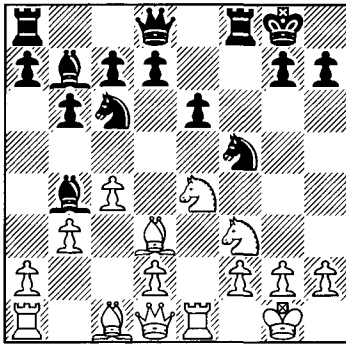
White can't keep the game closed, whether he likes it or not, as 8 e5? is met by 8...♘g6 9 ♙f1 ♙xf3 10 ♜xf3 ♘c6! and White lost a pawn in R.Hübner-A.Miles, Bad Lauterberg.

8 a3 ♙xc3 9 dxc3 has also been seen, and while it weakens the b3-square on the one hand, on the other the ♘e7 is not as pleased as after 8 exf5. Then 9...fxe4 10 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 11 ♜xe4 ♘bc6 offers roughly equal chances (though I would prefer to be Black) and led to a draw on move 66 in K.Schuh-F.Kengis, Weilburg 1996.

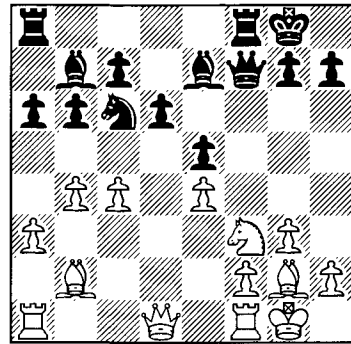
8...♘xf5 9 ♘e4?

9 ♙e4! was essential, neutralising the bishop at b7 and freeing the d-pawn, and would have kept the balance. White's tortuous move probably aimed at keeping the game complicated, but it has more cons than pros.

9...♖c6 10 b3



♙f1 e5!



10...♙e7?!

A bit timid. Black could have firmly seized the initiative with the more aggressive 10...♖h4! and then:

a) 11 ♖eg5? loses on the spot to 11...♖xf3+ 12 ♖xf3 ♙f6 13 ♖b1 ♖d4.

b) 11 ♖fg5?! h6 12 ♖h3 (the counter-attack with 12 ♙h5? backfires after 12...♖e5 13 ♙c2 hxg5 14 ♖xg5 ♙xg5 15 ♙xg5 ♖ef3+ and the tactical skirmish has left Black a piece up) 12...♖e5 13 ♙f1 (on 13 ♙e2 ♖f3!! is devastating) 13...♖hf3+ 14 gx f3 ♖xf3+ 15 ♖h1 ♙h4 and Black regains the piece, with a pawn and a ruined enemy position to his credit.

c) 11 ♖xh4 (the only move) 11...♙xh4 12 ♙b2 d5 13 ♖g3 ♙c5 (13...♖xf2? is over the top; after 14 ♖xf2 ♙xh2 15 ♙g4 ♖f8+ 16 ♖f5 or 14...♙c5+ 15 ♖e3 ♙xh2 16 ♙h1! Black's compensation for the invested material is clearly insufficient) 14 ♖f1 and while Black has a nice advantage, it is still possible to defend.

11 ♙b2 ♖b4 12 ♙f1 ♖d6 13 d3

White is now back on track.

13...♙e8 14 a3 ♖c6 15 b4 a6 16 g3?!

This weakens f3; and in this particular position g2 is not a wonderful square for the bishop anyway. 16 ♖xd6 ♙xd6 17 d4 ♙h5 18 h3 or 18 ♖e5 with mutual chances, should have been preferred.

16...♖xe4 17 dxe4 ♙f7 18 ♙g2 d6 19

Exchanging dark-squared bishops before this push would be desirable, but after 19...♙f6 White can try the pawn sac 20 e5!? (20 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 gives Black a slight edge) 20...♖xe5 21 ♖xe5 (or even 21 ♙xe5 ♙xf3 22 ♙xf3 ♙xe5 23 ♙xf7+ ♖xf7 24 ♙xa8 ♙xa1 25 ♙c6 when the opposite-coloured bishops give White fair chances to hold) 21...♙xe5 22 ♙xe5 ♙xg2 23 ♖xg2 dxe5 24 ♙e2 with a likely draw.

20 ♙d3

20 ♙d5!? might be better.

20...a5 21 ♙c3 ♖h8 22 b5 ♖d8 23 ♖e1 ♖e6 24 ♖c2 ♙g5 25 ♙e2 ♖c5 26 ♖ad1 ♖ae8

Black is now ready to reroute the bishop to e6, after which c4 would drop. This explains the necessity of White's next move.

27 ♙d2 ♙xd2 28 ♖xd2 ♖e6 29 f3 ♖f6 30 ♖dd1 ♖e6

Black is conducting the game precisely. Now 31 ♖e3 would be answered by 31...♖d4. 31 ♙e3 ♙h5 32 ♖f2 ♖h6 33 ♙f1 ♖g5 34 ♖d3?

The decisive error. More tenacious was 34 ♖e1! when there is no direct way for Black to break through; for instance, 34...♖hf6 35 ♖dd2 ♖xf3+?? fails to 36 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 37 ♙e2 and White wins, while if Black starts with the prophylactic 35...♖g8, avoiding back rank troubles, then 36 ♙g2 holds for the moment.

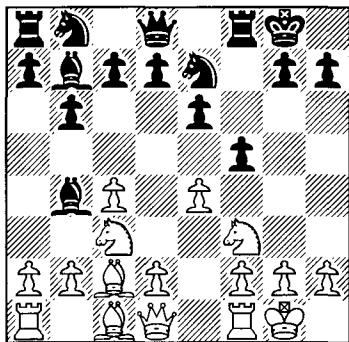
34...♖xf3+ 35 ♜xf3 ♜xf3 36 ♜dx3 ♜f6

And Black's material superiority decides the outcome. The rest is easy.

37 ♙g2 ♜g5 38 ♜e3 ♙xe4 39 h4 ♜g6
40 h5 ♜g5 41 ♜xf6 gxf6 42 ♙xe4 ♜xe3
43 ♙d5 ♜g7 44 a4 ♜g5 0-1

Game 67
I.Smirin-S.Atalik
Sarajevo 2001

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 b6 3 ♘f3 ♙b7 4 e4 ♙b4 5
♙d3 ♜e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♙c2 f5



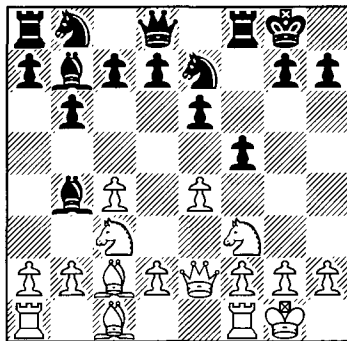
8 exf5

The most straightforward continuation. Instead, the naive 8 d4?! is seen in the next game. White also has:

a) 8 ♜e1 ♙xc3 9 dxc3 h6?! (9...♙xe4 was safe and good: 10 ♙xe4 fxe4 11 ♜xe4 ♘bc6 or 11...♜e8 and Black has nothing to complain about) 10 exf5 ♘xf5 11 ♘d4 ♜f6? (he had to try 11...♘h4! 12 ♜d3 ♜f6 13 ♜h7+ ♙f7 and pray... Actually, as far as I can see, Black is still alive here, whereas 12...♘g2? 13 ♜h7+ ♙f7 14 ♙g6+ ♙f6 15 ♙h5 is curtains after 15...♘xe1 16 ♙f4! or 15...♘h4 16 ♙hx6 gxh6 17 ♜xb6+ ♙c7 18 ♜xe6+ and mates) 12 ♘xf5 exf5 13 ♙f4 d6 (13...♜c6 was a trifle better: 14 f3 ♘a6 15 b4 or 14 ♜d5+! ♜xd5 15 cxd5 with a clear advantage to White) 14 c5 bxc5 15 ♙b3+ ♙h7 16 ♜h5 ♜g6 17 ♜xg6+ ♙xg6 18 ♜e7 ♘a6 19 ♙xd6 ♜ae8

(19...cxd6 20 ♜xb7 would also lose, as the knight is simply too bad) 20 ♜ae1 ♙e4 21 ♜xe8 ♜xe8 22 ♙f4 1-0 A.Rotstein-N.Sulava, Geneva 1996. Black was probably disgusted with his play, and anyway after 22...♙c6 23 ♜xe8 ♙xe8 24 ♙c4 ♘b8 25 ♙xc7 ♘d7 White would not have to display much technique to convert his big advantage.

b) 8 ♜e2 and then:



b1) The standard liquidation 8...♙xc3 9 dxc3 ♙xe4 10 ♙xe4 fxe4 11 ♜xe4 ♘bc6 is ineffective in the present case on account of 12 ♘g5 ♘g6 (12...g6 13 ♜h4 h5 is definitely too ugly) 13 ♘xe6, winning a pawn for nothing.

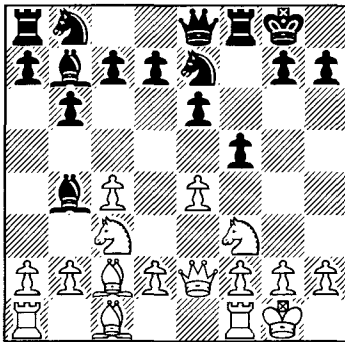
b2) I also have doubts about 8...f4?!, as in P.Harikrishna-K.Sasikiran, Indian Championship, Mumbai 2000. Compared with the line 6 ♘e2 f5 7 ♘g3 ♘g6 8 0-0 f4 (as in Game 64), White hasn't wasted a single tempo attracting the f-pawn to f4. He simply has developed the central tension makes a strange impression on me. The game continued 9 d4 ♘g6 10 e5 ♙xc3 11 bxc3 ♘h4 and now:

b21) 12 ♘hx4?! (after this it seems that White's edge evaporates) 12...♜hx4 13 f3 ♘c6 14 ♙a3 ♜f7 15 ♜ab1 and while White may still be a bit better, I don't think he can win against a reasonable defence. The rest of the game is no more spicy and eventually ended in a drawish rook endgame: 15...♙a6

16 ♖d3 ♜e8 17 ♗h1 ♘e7 18 ♙xe7 ♚xe7 19 a4 ♙b7 20 a5 ♙c6 21 axb6 axb6 22 ♜a1 ♞ff8 23 ♙e4 ♙xc4 24 ♚xe4 ♞b8 25 ♞fb1 ♚d8 26 ♜a7 ♜a8 27 ♞ba1 ♞xa7 28 ♞xa7 ♚b8 29 ♚b7 ♚xb7 30 ♞xb7 ♜c8 31 g3 fxg3 32 hxg3 ♗f7 33 ♗g2 h5 34 f4 g5 35 fxg5 ♗g6 36 d5 ♗xg5 37 d6 cxd6 38 exd6 ♞xc4 39 ♞xd7 ♞xc3 40 ♞b7 ♗g4 41 ♞g7+ ♗f5 42 ♞b7 ♜c6 43 d7 ♞d6 44 ♗f3 ♗f6 45 g4 hxg4+ 46 ♗xg4 ♗e7 47 ♗f4 ♞d4+ 48 ♗e3 ♞b4 49 ♗d3 ♞b5 50 ♗e4 ♞b3 51 ♗e5 ♞b4 52 d8♚+ ♗xd8 53 ♗xe6 ♗c8 54 ♞h7 ♞d4 55 ♗e5 ♞d1 56 ♗e4 ♗b8 57 ♗e3 ♗a8 58 ♞g7 ♞d8 59 ♞h7 ♞d6 60 ♞g7 b5 61 ♞g5 ♞b6 62 ♗d3 ♗a7 63 ♗c3 ♗a6 64 ♗b4 ♞h6 65 ♞g4 1/2-1/2.

b2) The more punchy 12 d5! could well have caused Black serious problems; e.g. 12...exd5 (on 12...♖a6 13 ♞d1 is good enough, as 13...♘c5 14 ♞d4 is no joy for Black) 13 cxd5 ♙xd5 14 ♙xh7+ (14 ♚d3? would almost turn the tables, but luckily for White things are still messy after 14...♙xf3 15 ♚xh7+ ♗f7 16 ♙xf4 or 16 g3) 14...♗xh7 15 ♚d3+ ♗h8 16 ♚xd5 ♘xf3+ 17 ♚xf3 and given the exposed f4 pawn and Black's weakened castled position, White enjoys a nice plus.

b3) The 'remote war' with 8...♚e8 seems a better option.



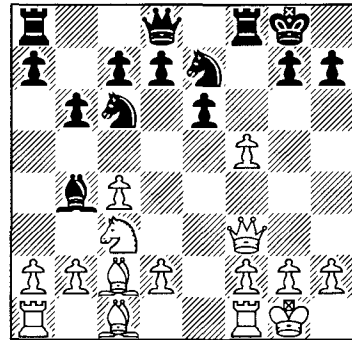
Then 9 ♘b5 ♘a6?! 10 a3 fxe4 11 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 12 ♚xe4 ♙d6 13 d4 would give White a pleasant edge, as the ♘a6 and ♙d6 are mis-

placed. But 9...♚h5! could well render 9 ♘b5 suspicious, e.g. 10 d4 (not 10 ♘xc7?? ♙d6 11 ♘xa8 ♙xh2+ 12 ♗h1 ♙d6+ 13 ♗g1 fxe4 14 ♙xe4 ♞xf3 and Black wins, while if 10 ♘fd4 ♚xe2 11 ♘xe2 a6! 12 ♘xc7 ♜a7 and the knight will soon perish) 10...a6 and the white knight has to go back again, since 11 ♘xc7? ♜a7 will win the knight again with a big advantage for Black. If this works (and I believe it does!) we can conclude that 9 d4 is more sensible, leading after 9...♙xc3 10.bxc3 ♚h5 to approximate equality.

8...♙xf3!?

An interesting attempt to grab the initiative based on the exploitation of the weak d4-square. Formerly 8...♘xf5 9 ♘e4 was played, when White has a favourable version of Ibragimov-Bunzmann (see the previous game) and may claim a slight edge.

9 ♚xf3 ♘bc6



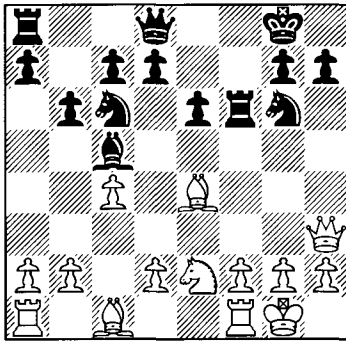
10 ♘e2

Maybe White should have won the exchange another way; i.e. 10 f6 ♞xf6 (10...♘g6 11 ♙xg6 hxg6 looks playable too) 11 ♚e4 ♘f5 12 d4 ♘cxd4 13 ♙g5 c6, followed by ...d7-d5 at some point, when Black's strong centre provides him with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

In his annotations for *Informator* 81, the winner also gives 10 ♙e4 exf5 11 ♙xc6 dxc6 with the initiative. 10...♘xf5?!, on the other hand, would yield Black a draw at best: 11

♙xc6 ♘d4 (perhaps 11...dxc6!? 12 ♖xc6 ♘d4 with some compensation in the form of active pieces and a lead in development) 12 ♙xa8 ♘xf3+ 13 ♙xf3 ♖xf3 14 gxf3 ♖g5+ 15 ♖h1 ♖f4, and now White can either accept the draw by 16 ♖g2 ♖g5+ or try the brave 16 ♖e1 ♖xf3+ 17 ♖g1 ♖g4+ 18 ♖f1, though after 18...♗h3+ 19 ♖e2 ♗h5+ 20 f3 ♖xh2+ 21 ♖d1 ♖g2, followed by the advance of the h-pawn, Black should be alright.

10...♙c5 11 f6 ♘g6 12 ♙e4 ♖xf6 13 ♗h3



13...♗f8!

Increasing the pressure against f2, though Atalik had to calculate and evaluate all ensuing complications correctly following White's obvious reply.

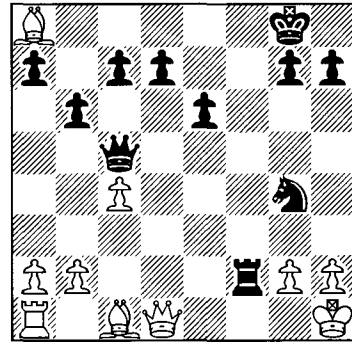
14 d4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♙xa8?

As the game demonstrates, White is much worse after this move. He should have inserted 16 ♗d3! when Black has three sensible continuations:

a) 16...♖xf2?! is the worst one: 17 ♙e3 ♖xf1+ 18 ♖xf1 ♙xe3+ 19 ♖xe3 ♗e8 20 ♙xa8 ♗xa8, and although material is roughly equal, White is clearly on the good side of a draw.

b) 16...c5 17 ♙g5! ♖f7 (17...♖xf2? 18 ♙e3 is a bad version of 16...♖xf2) 18 ♙xa8 ♗xa8 and with a pawn, a strong bishop on d4 and active pieces, Black has adequate compensation for the exchange.

c) 16...♙xf2+ 17 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 18 ♙xa8 leads to a unclear endgame after 18...♘e5 19 ♗d1 ♗c5 20 ♖h1 ♘g4! (or 20...♖f8!? 21 ♙f3 ♘xf3 22 gxf3 ♗xc4 when Black has three pawns for the piece, and the white king isn't completely safe) and then:

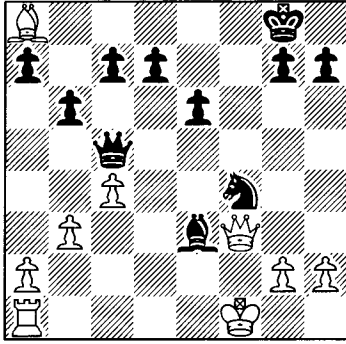


c1) 21 ♙f3?? loses to the devilish sequence 21...♗d6! 22 ♙f4 ♗xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖xf3 24 gxf3 ♘f2+ 25 ♖g2 ♘xd1 26 ♙c1 and now the d-pawn comes to rescue the knight: 26...d5 27 ♖f1 d4 28 ♖e2 ♘e3 29 ♙xe3 dxe3 30 ♖xe3 ♖f7 with an elementary winning pawn endgame.

c2) 21 ♙d2 ♗d4 22 ♙c3 ♖f4 23 ♗g1 ♖e2 24 ♖f1 ♘f2+ 25 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 26 g3 ♗e3 27 ♙g2 ♗e2 leaves White completely tied down.

c3) 21 h3 ♗d6 22 ♙f4 ♖xf4 (22...♖xf4!? 23 hxg4 ♖xc4 is unclear) 23 hxg4 (perhaps safer than 23 ♖xg4 ♗xg4 24 hxg4 ♖xb2 which is difficult to assess) 23...♗h6+ 24 ♖g1 ♗e3 25 ♖h2 (or 25 ♖b3 ♗c5 26 ♗a3 ♗xa3 27 bxa3 ♖c2 28 ♖d1 d6 29 ♖d4 ♖xa2 30 ♖d3 and it is uncertain if Black has real winning prospects; but not 25 ♖h1?? ♖f6 when Black definitely wins) 25...♖f6 26 ♙f3 ♖h6 27 ♖g3 ♗e5+ 28 ♖f2 ♗xb2+ 29 ♖e3 and White should be able to hold, as Black's rook is somewhat out of play, making it hard for him to create serious threats against the white king.

16...♖xf2 17 ♙e3 ♘f4 18 ♗g4 ♖xf1+ 19 ♖xf1 ♙xe3 20 ♖f3 ♗c5 21 b3



21...d3

21...d3! was more precise, preventing 22 e1, or if 22 e2? c1+! 23 f1 d4 wins.

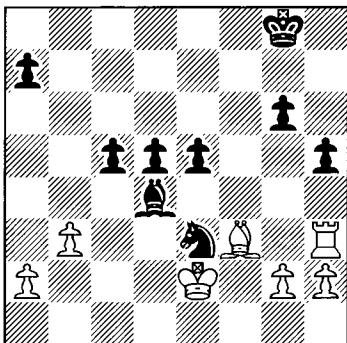
22 e1 d4 23 e4 e5 24 f4 b5 25 cxb5 bxb5+ 26 e2 c5 27 h4 g6 28 c2?

The active 28 d8+! g7 29 e8 offered better chances of salvation. Then the knight has to stay on e5 or f7 in order to avoid a perpetual check, and with his d-pawn pinned as well, Black can't easily make progress.

28...b8 29 e4 b5+ 30 e2 b8 31 e4 c6

31...d5 was perhaps a more direct approach, but Black is not in any hurry.

32 g4 g7 33 g3 e5 34 f2 d4 35 g3 f8+ 36 f4 h6 37 h4 xh4 38 xh4 b4 39 b1 d5 40 e4 e3+ 41 e2 d5 42 f3 e5 43 h3 h5



White's rook has become seriously misplaced and the game is more or less over.

44 xh5

Or 44 g3 f7, followed by ...e5-e4, ...d5 etc., and Black has a huge advantage.

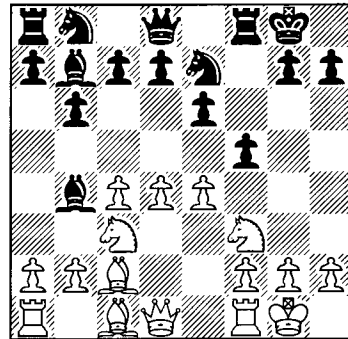
44...xg2 45 g3 f4+ 46 f3 xh5 47 xg6+ f7 48 a6 e4+ 49 g4 e3 50 xa7+ f6 51 f3 c4 52 a6+ f5 53 bxc4 f4 54 cxd5 e2 55 e6 xe6 56 xe2 f4+ 57 f3 xd5 58 a4 b6 59 h4 c3 60 h5 xa4 61 h6 c3 62 h7 d4 63 g3 g6 64 f3 xh7 65 g4 g6 66 f3 f5 67 g3 e3 68 f3 f4 69 g2 g4 70 f2 d2 71 g2 e1 72 f1 h4 73 g2 g3 74 g1 f3 75 h1 e4 76 g1 f2 77 f1 h2 78 e1 e4 79 d1 e3 80 c2 d2 0-1

Game 68

Z.Rahman-J.Spelman

Calcutta 1996

1 c4 b6 2 d3 e6 3 f3 b7 4 e4 b4 5 d3 e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 c2 f5 8 d4?!

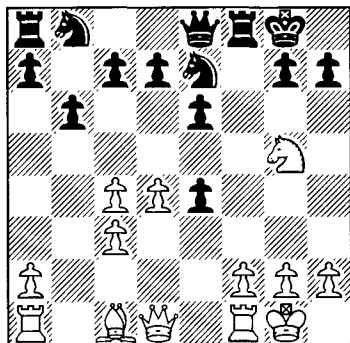


After this White will permanently have to look after his doubled c-pawns, and since he has nothing tangible in return, I guess Black is already slightly better.

8...xc3 9 bxc3 xe4!

Naturally Black takes this way, in order to eliminate the enemy bishop pair.

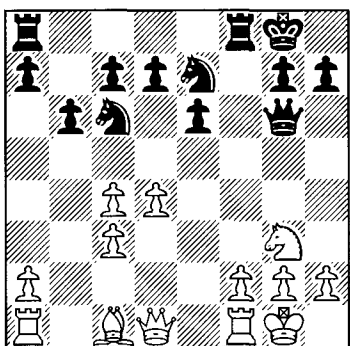
10 xe4 fe4 11 g5 e8



12 dxe4

12 ♖a3! was interesting, according to Speelman, but not good enough to equalise in my opinion after 12...♟bc6 13 d5 ♟e5, and as 14 dxe6 d6 is bad for White (he is likely to lose both e6 and c4, remaining a pawn down), he has to embark upon 14 ♜d4 ♞f5 15 ♜xe4 (15 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 16 ♟xe4 ♟g6 is probably the lesser evil, but Black keeps an edge on account of his pawn structure) 15...♞xg5, though Black seems on top after both 16 f4 ♟xc4 17 fxg5 ♟d2 (regaining the exchange while keeping the extra pawn) 18 ♜d3 ♟xf1 19 ♞xf1 ♟g6 etc., and 16 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 17 f4 ♜c5+ 18 ♜d4 (if 18 ♟h1 ♟xc4 19 fxg5 ♟d2 again) 18...♞xd4+ 19 cxd4 ♞xg2! 20 ♟xg2 ♟xc4 21 ♞fe1 exd5 and with three pawns for the exchange Black has a huge plus.

12...♜g6 13 ♟g3 ♟bc6



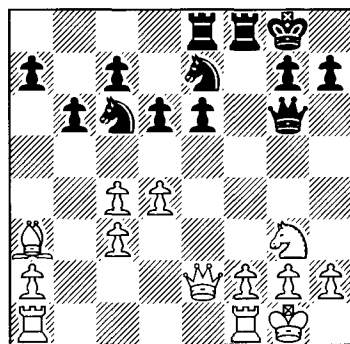
14 ♖a3 ♞ae8?!

An inaccuracy which allows White to get rid of his worst piece. Indeed, the bishop has no nice square available, and could at best be exchanged for an enemy knight. Therefore 14...d6! should have been played.

15 ♜e2!

Missing the chance to reduce Black's advantage with 15 ♖xe7!. Again 15 d5?! would have failed to accomplish the desired effect: 15...♟a5 (or 15...♟e5!?) 16 dxe6 d6 and here, too, e6 is condemned and c4 shouldn't last much longer.

15...d6



16 f4!

In his comments for *Informator* 66, Jonathan Speelman considers this move forced, meaning that White has to prevent ...e6-e5. This is indeed true from a strategic viewpoint, otherwise White virtually can't move his pawns anymore, as the following brief line illustrates: 16 ♞ae1! e5 17 c5 (or 17 d5 ♟b8) 17...bxc5 18 dxc5 d5 and Black has a clear advantage.

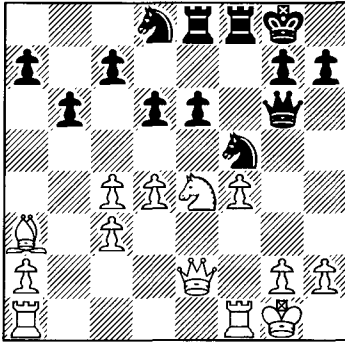
16...♟f5

After the faulty 16...♜h6? 17 ♞ae1! Black's edge would suddenly have vanished.

17 ♟e4 ♟d8

On 17...♟a5! 18 c5! would be no relief for White because of 18...bxc5!, when 19 ♜a6? ♟e3 loses on the spot, while 19 dxc5 d5 yields Black a marked plus. Instead, 18 ♞fe1

c5 19 ♖ad1 might be tenable for White.



18 c5?!

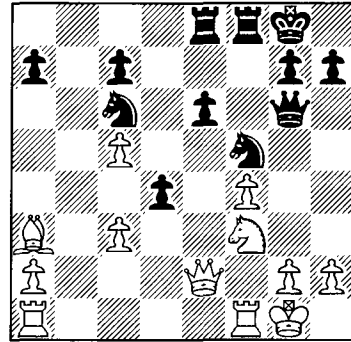
As the English grandmaster mentions, 18 ♖ad1! was a more pertinent way to seek counterplay; e.g. 18...♗f7 19 ♖d3 c5 20 g4 with a messy position and mutual chances, or 18...c5 19 ♖d3 (planning g2-g4) 19...h5!? 20 ♖h3 h4 21 g4 hxg3 22 hxg3 ♗f7 23 g4 ♗7h6 (23...cxd4! 24 cxd4 ♗xd4 25 ♖g2 ♖c8 is probably safer, when after 26 ♖c3 and 27 ♖d1 White should regain his pawn and achieve approximate equality) 24 ♗g5 e5 25 gx5 ♖xf5 26 ♖h5 (26 ♖g2!? would make sure that White won't lose; indeed, after the rather forced sequence 26...exf4 27 ♗f3 ♖xg2+ 28 ♗xg2 ♗g4 29 ♖c1 ♖e2+ 30 ♖g1 ♖xa2 31 ♗h4 ♖g5 32 ♖xf4 ♗f2+ 33 ♖g3 ♖xg3+ 34 ♖xg3 ♗e4 Black can only hope to share the point, though his chances of doing so are quite realistic, as White only has three pawns left) 26...♖h5 27 ♖xh5 exf4 28 ♖c1 ♗f7 29 ♗xf7 (if 29 ♖xf4 ♖f8! wins the piece back with a level game) 29...♖h5 30 ♗xd6 ♖e2 31 ♖xf4 ♖xa2 and the endgame arisen is difficult to evaluate. (Can White really make use of a passed d-pawn?)

18...bxc5 19 dxc5 d5 20 ♗d2

20 ♗f2 ♗c6 21 ♗d3 was no improvement, because of 21...♖f6! (21...d4 22 ♖b2 seems just about to hold for White) 22 ♗e5 ♗xe5 23 fxe5 ♖e7 and with a strong knight and better pawns, Black undoubtedly has

brighter prospects.

20...♗c6 21 ♗f3 d4!



22 ♖ac1

The best, as other attempts would give Black a comfortable advantage; e.g. 22 ♖e4? ♗e3! 23 ♖xg6 hxg6 24 ♖f2 d3, or 22 ♖b5? ♗e3 23 ♖f2 e5 with a dangerous attack, while if 22 cxd4 ♗fxd4 23 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 24 ♖b2 ♖d3 and Black firmly holds the initiative, especially as White's bishop is out of play and won't help his monarch much against Black's four pieces and e-pawn.

22...♗e3 23 ♗xd4

Practically the only move. If 23 ♖f2?! ♗g4 24 ♗h4 (or 24 ♖ff1 d3) 24...♖h5 25 h3 ♖xh4 26 ♖xg4 ♖xg4 27 hxg4 d3 and this nasty boy will cause White some headaches, while after 26 hxg4 e5 Black is a lot better, and 27 fxe5?! ♖xf2+ 28 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 29 ♖xf2 ♗xe5 would win outright.

23...♗xd4 24 ♖xe3

24 cxd4?! ♗xf1 25 ♖xf1 c6 26 ♖f3 ♖c8 is pretty hopeless for White.

24...♗c2 25 ♖f3

After 25 ♖e2? ♗xa3 26 ♖a6 the knight perishes too, but Black's activity decides the outcome: 26...♖d8! 27 ♖xa3 ♖d2 28 ♖f2 (if 28 g3? ♖fd8 and 29...♖e4 or 29...♖h5 wins) 28...♖xf2 29 ♖xf2 ♖h6 30 h3 ♖xf4+ 31 ♗g1 ♖d2 32 ♗h2 ♖f2 33 ♖g1 ♖xa2 with a close to decisive advantage.

25...♗xa3 26 c4 e5 27 ♖xa3

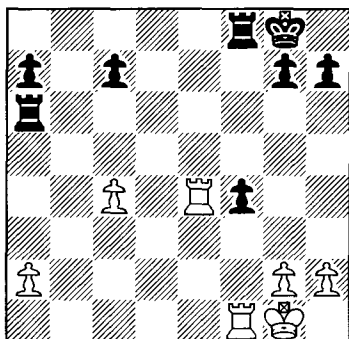
Perhaps 27 f5! e4! (or 27... ♖a6 28 ♜c3) 28 ♖xa3 ♜xf5 29 ♖xa7 would offer White more chance of salvation.

27...exf4 28 ♖f3 ♜e5 29 c6!? ♜c5 30 ♜ce1 ♖xc6!

30... ♜xc4? 31 ♖d5+ ♖f7 32 ♖d7! is inadvisable for Black.

31 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 32 ♜e4 ♜a6

32...g5?! 33 h4! h6 34 hxg5 hxg5 35 ♜e5 would lead to a draw straightaway, as White's active rook compensates for the pawn minus.



33 ♜f2?

33 ♜exf4! was the correct solution, as Speelman demonstrates: 33... ♜xf4 34 ♜xf4 ♜a4 (or 34... ♜xa2 35 ♜d4!) 35 ♜d4, when both 35...h6 36 ♜d5! and 35...c5 36 ♜d8+ ♖f7 37 ♜c8 ♜xc4 38 ♜c7+ ♖f6 39 ♜xa7 ♜c2 are

drawish.

33...h6 34 h4 ♜a4 35 ♖h2 ♜f7

Perhaps not the most precise. The immediate 35... ♜f6, intending ... ♜c6, seemed more appropriate, as now White had a good chance to escape on move 37.

36 ♜d4 ♜f6 37 ♜fd2?!

37 ♖h3! and if 37... ♜a3+ 38 ♖h2 f3 39 g4 ♜c3 40 ♖g3 was the last way to stay afloat

37...f3!? 38 gxf3

If 38 ♜f2 ♜d6! (38...fxg2!? 39 ♜xf6 gxf6 40 ♖xg2 ♖f7 41 ♜d7+ ♖g6 42 ♜xc7 ♖f5 43 c5 ♜xa2+ may not be quite good enough) 39 ♜xd6 cxd6 40 ♜xf3 ♜xa2 41 ♜d3 ♜a6, followed by the king's march to the centre, should win.

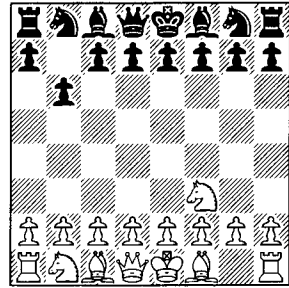
38... ♜xf3 39 ♖g2?!

Or 39 ♖g2 ♜f7 and Black should win, but 39 c5! was more tenacious and Black can indeed easily go astray; e.g. 39... ♜xd4? 40 ♜xd4 ♜f2+ 41 ♖g3 ♜xa2 42 ♜d8+ ♖h7 43 ♜c8 or 39... ♜f4? 40 ♜xf4 ♜xf4 41 ♖g3 ♜c4 42 ♜d8+ ♖h7 43 ♜a8 ♜xc5 44 ♜xa7 with a likely draw in both cases. However, I believe that after 39... ♜fa3! 40 ♜xa4 ♜xa4 41 ♖g3 ♜a5 42 c6 ♜a6 43 ♜c2 ♖f7 Black will convert his extra pawn.

39... ♜c3 40 ♜b2 ♜cxc4 41 ♜d7 ♜xh4 42 ♜xc7 ♜a3! 43 ♖g1 ♖g4+ 44 ♖f1 ♖h7 45 ♜e2 ♜f3+ 46 ♖e1 ♖g1+ 47 ♖d2 ♜a3 0-1

CHAPTER FOUR

1 ♘f3 b6



1 ♘f3 b6: Introduction

In this chapter we will examine the different positions arising after 1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♗g2.

Games in which White adopts a reversed King's Indian set-up – i.e. with 1 ♘f3, a fianchettoed light-squared bishop, and a d3-e4 pawn formation – are grouped together in the middle of the chapter. As is often the case, Black's pawn army is quite flexible, which enables him to choose his set-up to taste, from ...f7-f5 and ...e7-e6; ...e7-e6 and ...d7-d5; or ...g7-g6 and ...c7-c5. Actually, the first of these is rare and generally disregarded by theory, but this is a superficial judgment in my opinion. As one can see from Schwarz-Bauer (Game 72), Black usually has little to fear, whichever way White recaptures on e4. In any case, I would recommend placing the bishop on e7 rather than g7.

Another independent variation treated here is 3...g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 d4 ♘f6 6 c4. As 1...b6 guru Jonathan Speelman convincingly shows, this shouldn't worry Black, provided that he delays castling by 6...e6! (see Game 78). If White holds back his d-pawn, preferring just 5 c4 (as in Games 80-82), the Symmetrical English position after 5...c5 are also quite accept-

able for Black.

But we begin with the real business after 3...f5. As in the double fianchetto variation, Black may sometimes be inspired to delay castling in order first to achieve the desirable swap ...♗e4xc3. But here Black exerts more influence in the centre, which makes a possible d4-d5 followed by e2-e4 less frightening in any case. We can state from Murey's prolific experience with this system, that Black has excellent prospects of equalising, and can even conveniently play for a win; especially as the resulting positions are often rather complex with few early exchanges. From a practical point of view, White can run out of ideas quite quickly, while Black may be successful advancing his kingside pawns and starting an assault against the white king.

Game 69

M.Leski-J.M.Degraeve

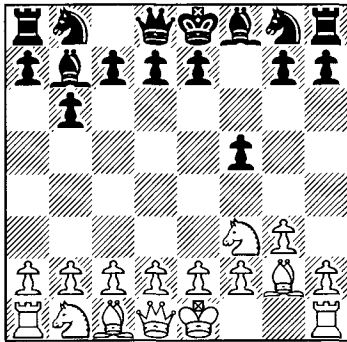
French Cup, Clichy 2004

1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3

A different game arises if White elects to advance 2 e4, when we reach positions covered in Chapter 1 (Games 5-6). However, it is worth noting that Black usually stops his opponent from getting the 'dream' pawn centre

d4-e4, and thus thus gains better prospects than in the main lines of that chapter and, I believe, excellent chances to equalise.

2...♙b7 3 ♙g2 f5



After 3...f5 the game takes on the character of the Dutch Defence. Instead, 3...♗f6 is covered in Games 73-75, while 3...g6 4 0-0 ♙g7 (without ...f7-f5) is the next section of this chapter (Games 76-82).

4 0-0 ♗f6 5 c4 g6 6 ♗c3

White sometimes tries 6 b3 ♙g7 7 ♙b2 0-0 8 d4 e6 (or 8...♗e4 9 ♗bd2, transposing to the next game after 9...e6 10 ♖c1 d6 11 ♗xe4 ♙xe4) 9 ♗bd2?!, which looks quite flexible, but it soon becomes hard for White to find a constructive plan, whereas Black can start advancing his pawns on the kingside at leisure. I..Schandorff-C.Bauer, German Bundesliga 2001, continued 9...c5 10 ♗c2 ♗a6 11 ♖ac1 ♗e7 12 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 13 ♗b1 d6 14 e3 ♙h6!?, (14...h6 was more conventional, but I wanted White to recapture on d4 with a piece later on) 15 ♙c3 cxd4 16 ♗xd4 (if 16 exd4, both 16...♗e4 and 16...e5, exploiting the fact that the ♗d2 is hanging if White takes twice on e5, yield Black the better prospects) 16...♙xg2 17 ♗xg2 e5 18 ♗d4f3 ♗c5 19 b4 ♗e6 20 ♗b3 ♗h8 (the c4-c5 break is now safely hindered and Black is ready to attack the enemy king) 21 ♙b2 g5 22 ♗g1 f4 23 exf4 (the other capture looked less advisable, but the computer sees nothing wrong with it:

23 gxf4 exf4 24 ♗e4 ♙g7 25 ♗exg5 ♗xg5 26 ♗xg5 and despite the wide open position of the white king, things are pretty unclear, while if 23...gxf4 24 e4 ♖g8+ 25 ♗h1 or 25 ♗f1 with mutual chances, as again it isn't easy for Black to scalp the enemy king) 23...gxf4 24 ♗d3 fxg3 25 hxg3 ♗g4 26 ♖c3 ♗d4 (26...♗g5! was stronger) 27 ♗xd4?? (27 ♗e4 would have defended, whereas now White collapses) 27...♗xf2 28 ♗f5 ♗xd3 29 ♗xe7 ♗xb2 30 ♖b1 ♙xd2 31 ♖c2 ♙e3+ 32 ♗g2 ♗d3 33 ♗d5 ♙g5 0-1.

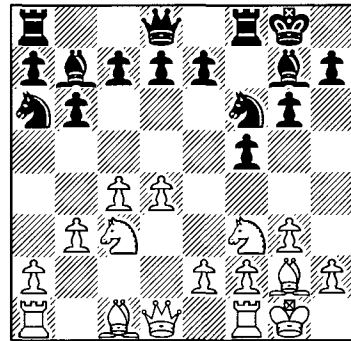
6...♙g7 7 d4

The restrained 7 d3 is seen in Game 71.

7...0-0 8 b3

For 8 d5 see 6 d4 ♗f6 7 d5 in the notes to the next game.

8...♗a6



8...e6 transposes to the next game again. Instead, 8...c5?! looks like an improvisation that turned out badly in D.Komarov-A.Bertagnolli, Bozen 1998: 9 ♙b2 ♗e4 10 ♖c1 ♗a6?! (maybe 10...♗c6!?) 11 ♗xe4 fxe4 12 ♗g5 e5 13 ♗xe4 exd4 14 e3 (there was nothing wrong with the obvious 14 ♗f6+ ♙xf6 15 ♙xb7 ♗c7 16 ♙xa8 ♗xa8 when Black's compensation for the exchange is inadequate) 14...d5?! 15 cxd5 dxe3 16 ♙xg7 exf2+ 17 ♖xf2 ♖xf2 18 ♗xf2 ♗xg7 19 ♗d2 ♗d6 20 ♖e1 ♗c7 21 ♗b2+ ♗f7 22 ♗g4 and 1-0 as the black king will soon get mated.

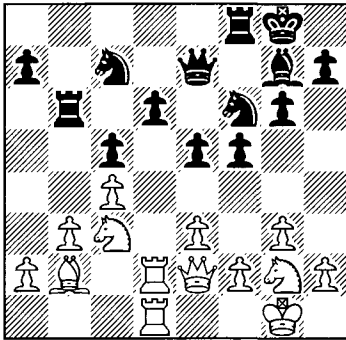
9 ♙b2 e6 10 ♖c1 c5 11 e3

Or 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 ♖c2 ♖e7 13 ♖d2 ♖ad8 14 ♖e1 ♗xg2 15 ♖xg2 ♖c7 and Black was fine in M.Vassallo-C.Bauer, Saint Vincent 2003. The game continued 16 ♖f4 g5 17 ♖d3 d6 18 f3 ♖d7 19 ♖f2 ♖e5 20 ♖a4 ♖c6 21 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 22 ♖a1+ ♗g8 23 ♖fd1 e5 and, similar to my games vs. Schandorff (above) and Hauchard (Game 71), we have a position in which White has little to do, but on the other hand is quite solid. Here too, Black can conveniently undertake a kingside offensive, which might have been more rewarding with accurate play: 24 e3 f4 25 exf4 gxf4 26 g4 ♖d4 27 ♗g2 ♖cc6 28 ♖e4 h5 29 h3 ♗f7 30 ♖ac3 ♖h8 31 ♖h1 ♖h4 32 ♖f2 ♖dg8 33 ♖d1 ♗f8 34 ♖d5 ♖g5 35 ♖df6 hxg4 36 hxg4 ♖xh1+ 37 ♖xh1 ♖xh1 38 ♗xh1 ♖h8+ 39 ♗g2 ♖f7 40 ♖d5 ♗g7 41 ♖b2 ½-½.

11...♖e7 12 ♖e2 ♖c7 13 ♖fd1 d6 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 ♖e1 ♗xg2 16 ♖xg2 e5 17 ♖c2 ♖ab8 18 ♖cd2

Haven't we seen something like this before somewhere?

18...♖b6

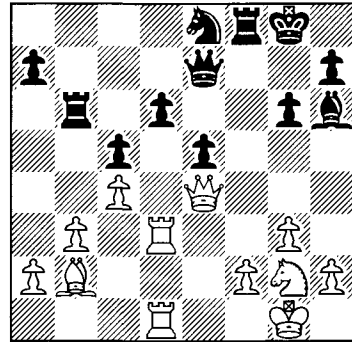


The new plan! From here the rook can efficiently defend d6, while ruling out ♖b5 or ♗a3 ideas. Nevertheless, the assessment of the position remains unchanged: Black has slightly the better prospects and doesn't risk much.

19 e4 ♗h6 20 ♖d3 fxe4

I would prefer 20...♖e6!?

21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♖e8



23 ♗c3

Or 23 f4.

23...♖f7 24 f3 ♖a6?!

Maybe 24...♖f6 25 ♖e2 e4, with the idea 26 fxe4 ♖xe4 27 ♖xe4?? ♖f2+ 28 ♗h1 ♖f1+ 29 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 mate.

25 ♖e2 ♖b6 26 ♖e4 ♖a6 27 ♖e2 ♖b6 28 ♖f1 ♖b7 29 ♖e3

Here 29 f4! was stronger.

29...♗xe3+ 30 ♖xe3 ♖f5 31 f4 ♖b7 32 ♖e1 ♖h3 33 ♖g2 ♖h6?

33...♖xg2+ 34 ♗xg2 ♖f6 35 fxe5 ♖g4 offered reasonable chances of salvation, but given the situation in the match, Degraeve thought he needed to win.

34 ♖3e2 ♖g7 35 fxe5 ♖e6 36 exd6 ♖g5 37 ♗d2 ♖h3+ 38 ♗h1 ♖h5 39 ♖d5 ♖f2+ 40 ♗g1 ♖h3+ 41 ♗g2 g5 42 d7 1-0

Game 70

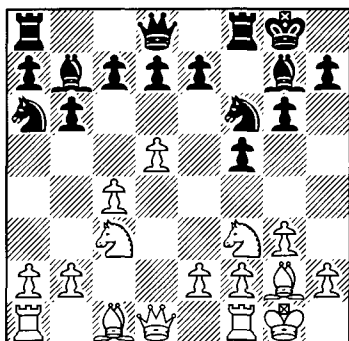
G.Miralles-J.Murey

Lyon 1988

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♗g2 f5 4 0-0 ♖f6 5 c4 g6 6 ♖c3

6 d4 seems the most principled move to me. White intends to shut the long diagonal as soon as possible, while at the same time denying Black the possibility of trading knights with ...♖e4. One can indeed observe from the

current game and Akesson-Speelman (Game 78) that Black's position is considerably eased by this exchange. After 6...♙g7 7 d5 0-0 (maybe Black can play 7...♘e4!? in similar fashion to Romanishin-Speelman and Fridman-Mainka in the notes to Game 79, though I believe that White should be able to extract a plus out of the opening here) 8 ♖c3 ♘a6 (or 8...c6!?) and then:



a) 9 ♘d4 ♘c5 10 b4 ♘ce4 11 ♙b2 e6 (after this move White can hardly avoid the ensuing exchanges, so the position can already be assessed as equal) 12 dxe6 ♘xc3 13 ♙xc3 ♙xg2 14 ♙xg2 ♘e4 15 ♙c1 dxe6 (the attempt to win material by 15...♘xc3?! 16 ♙xc3 c5? miscarries due to 17 ♙e3!; instead 16...dxe6 17 ♙d3 with a slight edge for White is the lesser evil) 16 ♙a1 ♙e8 17 ♘f3 and a draw was agreed in J.Lautier-C.Bauer, Enghien les Bains 2003.

b) 9 ♙e3!? may be more testing. Black can continue 9...c6 or 9...♘c5 with complex play in either case. Here is an illustration of the second possibility: 9...♘c5 10 b4 ♘ce4 11 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12 ♙d4 e6 13 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 14 dxe6 dxe6 15 ♙c2 ♙f6 16 ♙ad1 ♙fd8 17 ♘d2 ♙xd2 18 ♙xd2 ♘xd2 19 ♙xb7 ♘xf1 20 ♙xa8 ♙a1 21 ♙g2 ♙e1 22 ♙b2+ ♙h6 23 ♙f6 ♘e3+! 24 fxe3 (not 24 ♙f3?! ♙xf2+! 25 ♙xf2 ♘g4+) 24...♙xe2+ 25 ♙h3 ½-½ K.Ninov-J.Murey, Cappelle la Grande 1994.

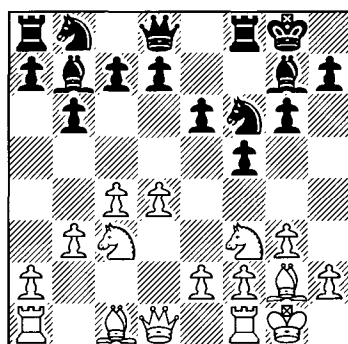
6...♙g7 7 d4

Actually White played this on move 1. The game began as a Dutch (1 d4 f5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 g3 b6 etc.) and only transposes after the exchange of knights on move 11.

7...0-0

7...♘e4 8 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 9 ♙f4 led to a rather dry game in N.Bonafous-B.Taddei, Cannes 2000: 9...♘c6 (or 9...0-0) 10 d5 ♙xf3 11 ♙xf3 (or 11 exf3!?) 11...♘e5 12 ♙b3 ♘xf3+ 13 exf3 0-0 and so on, leading eventually to a draw on move 51.

8 b3 e6



9 ♙b2

The alternative 9 ♙a3!? looks somewhat artificial but aims at discouraging Black from playing ...c7-c5. Then the familiar simplifying knight jump is again possible and results in approximate equality. For example, 9...d6 10 ♙c1 ♘e4 11 ♘xe4 ♙xe4 with equality, was similar to the current encounter, and brought the Israeli another victory in C.Gilbert-J.Murey, Paris 1998.

The more complex 10...c5?! is another option, but leads to some difficulties for Black after 11 dxc5 bxc5 (if 11...dxc5 12 ♙xd8 ♙xd8 13 ♙fd1 White has a risk-free position and can count on a slight advantage, based on ♘g5 and/or ♘b5 to exploit the weaknesses in his opponent's camp) and then:

a) 12 ♘b5?! (this direct attempt backfires as tactics favour Black here) 12...♘e4 13 ♘d2 a6 (the bishop on a3 remains undefended after a

subsequent ...a6xb5) 14 ♖xe4 axb5 15 ♖xc5 (White's best) 15...dxc5 (not 15...♙xc2? 16 ♖xe6 ♜f6 17 ♖xf8 ♜xa3 18 ♙xg2 with a big edge for White) 16 ♙xc5 ♙xg2 17 ♙xf8 ♜xf8 18 ♙xg2 b4!? (18...bxc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜xa2 should be drawish) 19 ♜d2 ♖a6 and Black has good compensation for the small material deficit.

b) 12 ♜d2! ♖e4 (both 12...♜a5 13 ♙b2 and 12...♜e7 13 ♜fd1 favour White) 13 ♖xe4 fxe4 14 ♖g5 ♙h6 15 h4, followed by 16 ♜e3, and White is on top.

9...♖e4

9...♖a6 returns to Game 69.

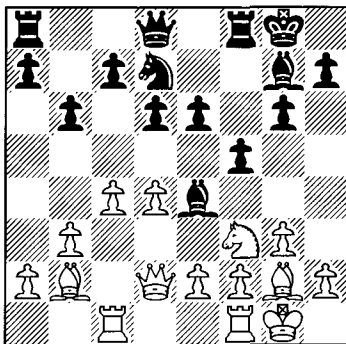
10 ♜c1 d6 11 ♖xe4

White has also tried:

a) 11 d5 ♖xc3 12 ♙xc3 e5 (if White can't get his knight to e6, then closing the centre is perfectly good for Black, who can then start an attack on the kingside where he enjoys a space advantage) 13 ♜d2 h6 14 ♜b2 a5 15 ♖d2 ♖d7 16 f4 ♜e7 17 ♜ce1 ♖c5 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 ♖f3 ♜ae8 20 ♖h4 ♙h7 21 a3 ♙c8 22 ♜c2 ♙d7 23 ♙a1 e4 24 ♙xg7 ♜xg7 25 ♙h3 ♜e5 26 ♖g2? g5 27 ♖e3? ♜d4 0-1 G.Goldsztejn-J.Murey, Paris 1999.

b) 11 ♖e1 ♖xc3 (or 11...♖d7!? as in O.Bruk-J.Murey, Tel Aviv 1990) 12 ♙xc3 was agreed drawn immediately in I.Csom-B.Kristensen, Gausdal 1993. Indeed, after 12...♙xc2 13 ♖xg2 ♜e7 (to answer 14 ♖f4 with 14...♙h6), the game is equal.

11...♙xc2 12 ♜d2 ♖d7

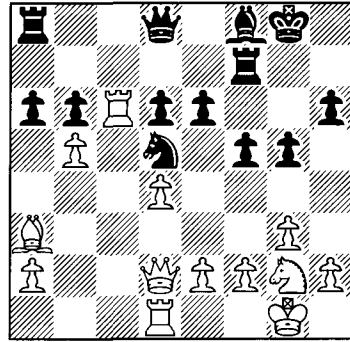


White chosen a solid, but rather unambitious set-up. As a consequence Black has equalised easily.

13 ♜fd1 h6 14 b4 g5 15 c5?!

This attempt at creating counterplay only concedes a great d5-square for Black's knight. The passive 15 ♖e1 was probably White's best.

15...♖f6 16 b5 ♖d5 17 cxd6 cxd6 18 ♙a3 ♜f7 19 ♜c6 ♙f8 20 ♖e1 ♙xg2 21 ♖xg2 a6!



22 bxa6?

After this mistake White won't be able to hold his position together. Much better was 22 ♖e3! axb5 (if 22...♖xe3 23 ♜xe3 axb5 24 ♜d3 intending 25 ♜xe6 or 25 d5) 23 ♖xd5 ♜xa3 24 ♖b4 and White has reasonable compensation for the pawn.

22...♜xa6 23 ♜c1 ♜c7 24 ♜d3 b5 25 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 26 ♜xc7 ♖xc7 27 ♖e3 ♜a4 28 ♖c2 ♖d5 29 ♜b3 ♜c4 30 ♖e3 ♜xd4 31 ♜xb5 ♖c3 32 ♜b8 ♖xe2+ 33 ♙g2 ♙f7 34 ♙b2 ♜a4 35 ♖c2 ♜xa2 36 ♜b7+ ♙g8 37 ♙f3 ♖c1?

So far a neat endgame display by Murey. His last was presumably a time-trouble blunder, as now 38 ♙e3 and 39 ♙d2 would see White back in the game. Instead 37...♖c3 frees the knight and wins. Fortunately, it didn't affect the result.

38 ♖d4? ♖d3 0-1

Game 71

A. Hauchard-C. Bauer

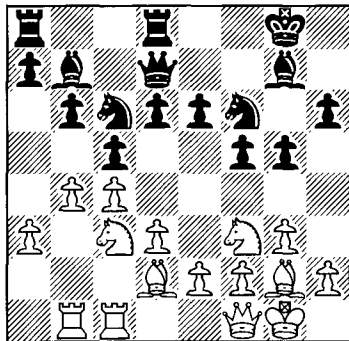
French Championship, Vichy 2000

1 $\text{d}f3$ $\text{b}6$ 2 $\text{g}3$ $\text{b}7$ 3 $\text{g}2$ $\text{f}5$ 4 0-0 $\text{d}f6$
5 $\text{c}4$ $\text{g}6$ 6 $\text{c}3$ $\text{g}7$ 7 $\text{d}3$ 0-0 8 $\text{d}2$

This set-up isn't in itself bad, but it surely lacks ambition and I took over the initiative rather quickly.

Instead, 8 $\text{e}1$ is interesting, while the logical and direct follow-up 8 $\text{e}4$ $\text{fx}e4$ 9 $\text{d}g5$ was employed in Y. Gozzoli-C. Bauer, Cannes 2003. It is certainly a more active continuation, though in my opinion it also fails to bring White any tangible plus: 9... $\text{d}c6$ 10 $\text{d}4$ $\text{e}6$ 11 $\text{e}3$ (11 $\text{d}5$ $\text{d}a5$ is unclear) 11... $\text{d}e7$ 12 $\text{d}gxe4$ $\text{d}xe4$ 13 $\text{d}xe4$ $\text{b}8$ and the point was halved in this roughly equal position.

8... $\text{c}5$ 9 $\text{a}3$ $\text{d}c6$ 10 $\text{b}1$ $\text{d}6$ 11 $\text{b}4$ $\text{w}d7$
12 $\text{w}a4$ $\text{f}d8$ 13 $\text{f}c1$ $\text{e}6$ 14 $\text{w}d1$ $\text{h}6$ 15
 $\text{w}f1$ $\text{g}5$



Both sides made useful moves so far, but it is quite clear that Black has benefited more.

16 $\text{h}4$

A responsible choice: it invites Black to temporarily close the kingside, thus reducing his aggressive options there. Black can, however, still prepare ... $\text{f}5$ - $\text{f}4$, without being worried about any unlikely white counterplay.

16... $\text{g}4$ 17 $\text{d}e1$ $\text{d}h5$ 18 $\text{b}5$ $\text{d}e5$ 19 $\text{b}xb7$
 $\text{w}xb7$ 20 $\text{w}g2$ $\text{w}f7$

Of course Black declines the exchange of queens.

21 $\text{e}3$ $\text{a}b8$ 22 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{d}g6$ 23 $\text{c}3$ $\text{e}5$ 24
 $\text{a}1$

24 $\text{w}d5?$ loses a pawn to 24... $\text{w}xd5$ 25
 cxd5 $\text{d}f6$.

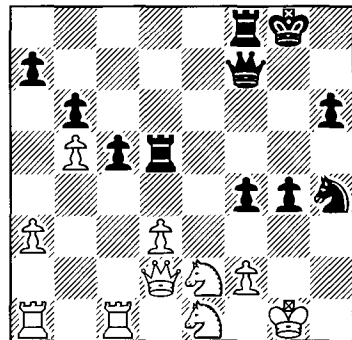
24... $\text{d}5$

The positional threat of ... $\text{d}5$ - $\text{d}4$ forces the following capture, after which $\text{d}3$ becomes vulnerable. Of course I could instead have pursued the initial plan of ... $\text{f}5$ - $\text{f}4$.

25 cxd5 fxd5 26 $\text{e}4$ fxe4 27 wxe4 $\text{f}f8$
28 $\text{w}e3$ $\text{d}hf4!$

Although time-trouble was looming and I couldn't calculate everything, this sacrifice was simply too tempting!

29 gxf4 exf4 30 $\text{w}d2$ $\text{d}xa1$ 31 fxa1
 $\text{d}xh4$



With two pawns and a persistent attack Black obviously has ample compensation for the piece. Unfortunately I lost the thread later on and failed to find one of the many wins at my disposal.

32 $\text{d}f1$ $\text{g}3?$

Starting a comedy of errors. 32... $\text{d}f3!$ was the killing move, e.g. 33 $\text{d}xf3$ gxf3 34 $\text{d}g1$ $\text{w}f5$, followed by ... $\text{fxd}3$ and/or ... $\text{w}g4$ - $\text{g}2+$, or if 35 $\text{d}xf3$ $\text{w}h3+$ 36 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{f}e8+$ and wins. Another defensive try is 33 $\text{w}a2$ $\text{w}h5$ 34 $\text{d}c3$, but then 34... $\text{w}h1+$ 35 $\text{d}e2$ $\text{f}e8+$ 36 $\text{d}e4$ $\text{d}g1+$! 37 $\text{d}f1$ $\text{f}e5$ and White can't survive the onslaught.

33 f3?

After the correct 33 ♖c3! it looks like Black has to content himself with a draw by 33...♗d7 34 ♖a2 ♖h3+ 35 ♖e2 ♖e6+ 36 ♖f1 etc. The greedy 34 ♖xd5?, on the other hand, leads to trouble for White after 34...♖h3+ 35 ♖e2 gxf2 36 ♖f6+ (if 36 ♖xf2? ♖h2+ wins the queen) 36...♖xf6 37 ♖a2+ ♖e6+ 38 ♖xf2 ♖f8 and White is powerless against his enemy's multiple threats, e.g. 39 ♖c4 ♖e3+ 40 ♖f1 ♖f5 followed by ...♖g6.

33...♖h7?

Better was 33...♗d7! 34 ♖xf4 (or 34 ♖g1 ♖xb5) 34...♖df5 35 ♖c4 ♖xf4 36 ♖xf4 ♖h3+ 37 ♖e2 ♖h2+ 38 ♖d1 ♖xd2+ 39 ♖xd2 ♖xf4 with a decisive material advantage.

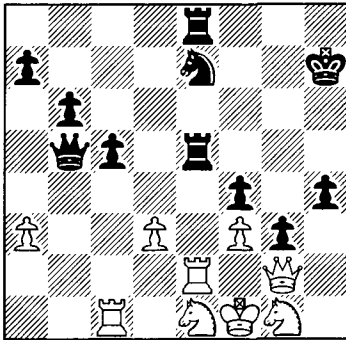
34 ♖g1?

The more active 34 ♖c4 was called for, when the position would have been unclear.

34...♖g6 35 ♖g2 ♗d7 36 ♖c3 h5 37 ♖e1 h4 38 ♖g2 ♖e5

Or 38...♖xb5.

39 ♖b1 ♖fe8 40 ♖c2 ♖xb5 41 ♖bc1 ♖e7 42 ♖e2

**42...♖xe2**

42...♖f5 was stronger, when after 43 ♖h3 g2+! all captures lose for White; i.e. 44 ♖xg2 ♖c3+, or 44 ♖xg2 ♖g3+ 45 ♖f2 ♖xe2 46 ♖xh4+ ♖g6, or finally 44 ♖xg2 ♖xe2+ 45 ♖xe2 ♖xe2+.

43 ♖xe2 ♗d7?

43...♖b2! 44 ♖c2 ♖xa3 45 ♖h3 ♖g6 was

still much better for Black. After the game continuation Black is left with too few pawns to have realistic winning chances.

44 ♖xf4 ♖f5 45 ♖h3 ♖e5 46 ♖c2 ♖c6 47 ♖g1 ♖f6 48 ♖f1 ♖g5 49 ♖g4 ♖xg4 50 fxc4 ♖h6 51 ♖g2 ♖xg4 52 ♖h3 ♖h2 53 ♖e1 ♖f3 54 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 55 ♖e3 b5 56 ♖xh4 b4 57 axb4 cxb4 58 ♖xg3 a5 59 ♖c2 b3 60 ♖a3 b2 61 ♖f2 a4 62 ♖e2 b1♖ 63 ♖xb1 a3 64 ♖xa3 ♖xd3 65 ♖xd3 ½-½

*Game 72***M.Schwarz-C.Bauer**

European Cup, Rethymnon 2003

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 f5 4 0-0 ♖f6 5 d3 e6

5...g6?! looks less reliable here, as White hasn't 'wasted' time with c2-c4. In consequence Black would experience difficulties completing his development after the logical sequence 6 e4 fxe4 7 ♖g5 ♖g7 8 dxe4, when White is already threatening e4-e5.

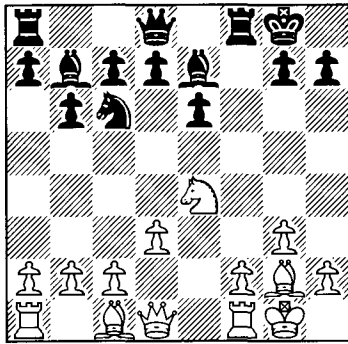
6 e4 fxe4 7 ♖g5 ♖c6 8 ♖xe4

8 dxe4 was tried in A.Weindl-C.Bauer, Swiss Team Championship 2003, continuing 8...h6 9 ♖f3?! (dubious, but after 9 ♖h3 e5 Black is OK) 9...♖xe4 10 ♖h4 ♖f6 (10...♖d6 was interesting and perhaps simpler, e.g. 11 ♖h5+ ♖f7 12 ♖g6 ♖g8, intending ...♖f6 and 0-0-0, while 13 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 14 ♖e5 g6 15 ♖xg6 ♖f6 allows White to regain his pawn, but at the cost of an awfully weak king) 11 ♖g6 ♖g8 12 ♖c3 ♖d6 13 f4 (13 ♖b5 can be met by 13...♖c5 14 ♖f4 d6 15 c3 and now 15...♖f7!) 13...♖c8?! (13...♖c5+ 14 ♖h1 ♖c8 was the best way to proceed, and after 15 ♖e5 ♖e7 16 ♖e2 ♖f5 or 15...♖xe5 16 fxe5 ♖xg2+ 17 ♖xg2 ♖b7+ 18 ♖h3 ♖d5, Black is a safe pawn up) 14 ♖e3 ♖e7 15 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 16 ♖d3 ♖xg2 (or 16...g6 17 ♖e4 with decent compensation for the pawn) 17 ♖g6+ ♖f8 (maybe 17...♖d8!? was better) 18 ♖xg2 c5 19 ♖a1 and White had about enough play for

the pawn. The game eventually ended peacefully on move 65.

8...♙e7 9 ♘bc3 0-0 10 d4

Here 10 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 11 ♘e4 ♙e7



reaches a position already considered in Chapter 1, and 12 c4 ♙e8 13 d4 is in fact Game 2 (Olesen-Brondum). Instead:

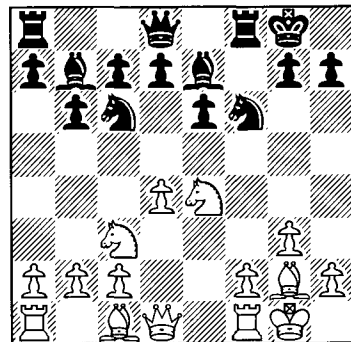
a) 12 ♙h5?! is too impetuous and completely backfired in H.Pingitzer-C.Bauer, Austrian Team Championship 1999, after 12...♙f5 13 ♙h3 d5 14 g4? (weakening the kingside unnecessarily) 14...♙f7 15 ♘d2 ♘d4 16 c3 ♘e2+ 17 ♖h1 ♘f4 18 ♙f3 ♙b8 19 d4 ♙a6 (the rest is a brief agony) 20 c4 dxc4 21 ♙c3 ♘xg2 22 ♖xg2 ♙d5+ 23 f3 ♙bf8 24 ♘e4 ♙xf3 25 ♙xf3 ♙xe4 26 ♖g3 ♙h4+ 27 ♖xh4 ♙xf3 28 ♙b4 h5 29 ♖xh5 ♙h7+ 30 ♖g5 ♙h6 mate.

b) 12 ♙d2 transposes to the encounter M.Euwe-S.Tartakower, Bad Kissingen 1928 (this heavyweight fight actually began 1 ♘f3 f5 2 g3 b6 3 ♙g2 ♙b7 4 0-0 ♘f6 etc.), which continued 12...♙e8 13 ♙c3 ♙g6 14 f4 h5?! 15 h4?! (I would never have dared to play such an irremediable move – the same goes for Black's previous push too! – and indeed, White will pay for this later on) 15...♙b4 16 ♘g5 ♙xc3 17 bxc3 ♘d8 18 ♙e4 ♙xe4 19 dxe4 d6 20 f5 exf5 21 ♙d5+ ♘f7 22 exf5 ♙f6 23 ♙ae1? (23 ♘e6 was much better, and if 23...♙xc3 24 ♙b3 ♙xb3 25 axb3 ♙fc8 26 f6 g6 27 ♙a6 Black may have an extra pawn, but

he is quite tied down, so the position is still balanced; note that 26...gxf6? 27 ♙xf6 is bad as the h5 pawn is bound to fall) 23...♙xc3 24 ♘xf7 ♙xg3+ 25 ♖h1 c6 26 ♘h6+ ♖h7 (the rest needs no comment) 27 ♙g2 ♙xg2+ 28 ♖xg2 ♙f6 29 ♘g4 hxg4 30 ♖g3 ♙af8 31 ♖xg4 g6 32 ♙c7+ ♖h6 33 ♙xa7 ♙xf5 34 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 35 a4 ♙a5 0-1.

Some 75 years later, in the blitz game J.Nogueiras-C.Bauer, Dos Hermanas 2003, White found the improvement 13 ♙g4 ♙f7 (13...♘e5!? was possible, but after the retreat 14 ♙e2, Black has to parry the threat of ♙f4) 14 ♙c3 ♖h8 (14...b5 was worth consideration, intending to dislodge the white bishop from the unpleasant diagonal) 15 h4 (15 f4! would have yielded White the initiative, as 15...♙b4 runs into 16 ♘g5) 15...h6 16 ♙ae1 ♙ae8 17 f4 ♙b4 18 ♘g5?! (the first step in the wrong direction) 18...♙e7 19 ♙h5 ♙xc3 20 ♙g6? (20 bxc3 was already clearly better for Black, but was still very playable in a blitz game) 20...♙c5+ 21 ♖h2 ♙f5 22 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 23 bxc3 hxg5 24 hxg5 ♘d8 25 ♙h3 ♙a5 26 g6 ♖g8 27 ♙g4 ♖f8 0-1.

White's last move, 10 d4, seems a reasonable alternative to 10 ♘xf6+, but as the present game shows, it's unlikely to cause Black serious problems.

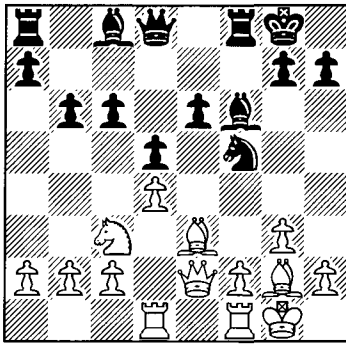


10...♘xe4 11 ♙xe4 d5 12 ♙g2 ♙f6 13 ♙e3?!

My opponent probably wanted to prevent

...e6-e5, but the right way to do so was by 13 ♗e2, when 13...e5? would run into 14 dxe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗f4 and Black cannot satisfactorily defend his d-pawn and against the fork on e6; for example, if 15...♗f7 16 ♗xd5 ♗d7 17 c4! c6 (not 17...♗xc4?? 18 ♗xf6+ gxf6 19 ♗g4+ and wins) 18 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♗e2 and Black has nothing in return for the pawn. Instead, Black's best continuation is probably 13...♗d6 14 f4 ♗e7 15 ♗e3 ♗f5 16 ♗f2 c5 and/or ...♗a6, when I prefer his side.

13...♗e7 14 ♗g4 ♗f5 15 ♗ad1 ♗c8 16 ♗e2 c6!



Black has now a small, but pleasant edge, as his position is much more elastic. He can prepare either ...c6-c5 or ...c6-e5, and also consider ideas like ...a7-a5, ...♗a6 and/or the rook transfer to a more useful place (i.e. ...♗a7-e7 or f7). White must watch out for his d-pawn and after something like ♗d2, ♗e2, c2-c3 his position remains quite passive; nevertheless this was his best way to suffer.

17 f4? ♗a6!

Winning the exchange. The next few moves are forced.

18 ♗xa6 ♗xe3 19 ♗e2 ♗xd1 20 ♗xe6+ ♗f7

So that the king stays closer to the centre and the rooks can quickly be doubled on the e-file.

21 ♗xd1 ♗e8 22 ♗xe8+

The arising queenless ending is difficult for

White to hold, but retreating would have allowed 22...♗e3+, while 22 ♗h3 ♗f8 would not have solved White's problems either.

22...♗xe8 23 ♗f2

23 ♗xd5? cxd5 24 ♗xd5 ♗e2 loses instantly, but White could have considered h2-h4, here or on the next move.

23...♗fe7 24 ♗f3 g5 25 f5 ♗d7 26 g4 ♗ed8 27 ♗d3 ♗f7 28 h3 ♗f8 29 b3 ♗e7

Black finally changes his mind as 29...c5? is obviously not the right plan. In fact 30 dxc5 ♗xc3 31 ♗xc3 ♗c7 32 ♗d3 ♗xc5 33 c4 would be even bad for him.

30 ♗e2 ♗d6 31 ♗f1 ♗e7 32 ♗c3 ♗c7 33 ♗d3 b5 34 ♗g2 a5 35 ♗f1 ♗a8 36 ♗e3 ♗e7 37 ♗d3 a4 38 ♗c3 ♗a6 39 ♗d3 b4 40 ♗g1 axb3 41 axb3

Now the time-control had been reached, and after some hesitations, I found the right way to press Black's advantage.

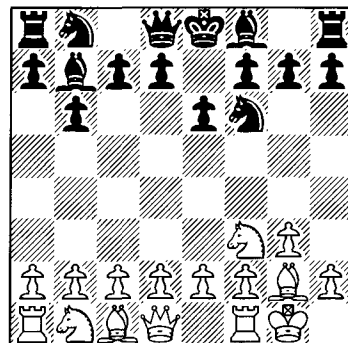
41...♗a1+ 42 ♗d1 ♗f4 43 ♗f3 ♗f7 44 ♗f2 ♗c1 45 ♗f1 ♗f6 46 ♗f2 h6 47 ♗f1 h5 48 ♗f2 hxg4 49 hxg4 ♗e4 50 ♗d2 ♗f7 51 ♗f3 ♗g7 52 ♗g1 ♗c7 53 ♗e2 ♗a1 54 ♗f3 ♗b6 55 ♗d2 ♗a8 56 ♗d3 ♗h8 0-1

Game 73

D. Norwood-C. Crouch

London Lloyds Bank 1992

1 ♗f3 b6 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♗g2 ♗f6 4 0-0 e6



This is an acceptable continuation, but Black must bear in mind that d2-d4 and c2-c4 by White will take the game into a Queen's Indian Defence or Symmetrical English, which are beyond the scope of this book.

5 d3

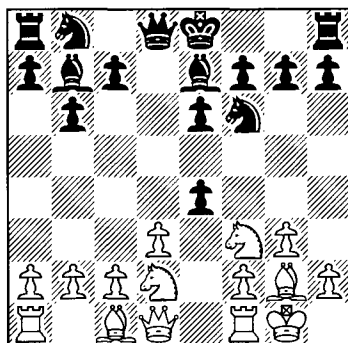
White persists with his King's Indian set-up. Instead, 5 c4 ♖e7 6 d4 (or 5 d4 ♖e7 6 c4) 6...0-0 7 ♘c3 is a main line Queen's Indian, while 5 c4 c5 6 ♘c3 ♖e7 7 d4 or 5 d4 c5 6 c4 is an English Opening.

5...d5 6 ♘bd2

6 e4 dxe4 7 ♘g5 can lead to simplifications and a dull game, which explains why the move is rare. According to my database this precise position is a curiosity. Although the tension in the centre has just been resolved, the position is still rather lively and complex; after all, only a pair of pawns will have vanished from the board. Nevertheless, all ten games that featured this line ended in a draw! And three of them short ones, though that doesn't apply to the following game: 7...♘a6!? (if Black is not averse to a draw he can choose 7...h6, which is indeed his most frequent reply, and then 8 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 9 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 10 dxe4 ♗xd1 11 ♗xd1 is completely equal; who said the position was lively and complex?!) 8 ♘c3 ♘c5 9 d4 ♘cd7 10 ♘cx4 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♖b8 (Black has succeeded in keeping the game unbalanced, at the cost of a slight White edge; the position is similar to the Rubinstein Variation of the French: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘bd7 5 ♘f3 ♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 g3, but in a favourable version for White) 12 ♖e1 ♖e7 13 ♗g4 g6 14 ♗e2 (White has created a small weakness in Black's kingside and now retreats as the fork ...f7-f5 was threatened; instead 14 ♗h3?! 0-0 15 ♗h6 ♘f6 leads nowhere) 14...0-0 15 ♖h6 ♖e8 16 ♖ad1 b5! (securing a strongpoint at d5 for the bishop; the weakness of c5 is less important) 17 h4?! (this seemingly natural attacking move doesn't bring anything; more to the point was 17 ♖f4! when the bishop is eyeing

c7 and may come to e5 one day) 17...♖d5 18 a3 ♘f6 19 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 20 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 (now the game is about equal, and Black will soon be better) 21 b3 ♖bd8 22 ♗g4 c6 23 ♗f4 ♗f5 24 ♗xf5 gxf5 25 c3 a5 26 a4 ♖b8 27 ♖f4 ♖b7 28 ♖e5 ♘g7 29 ♖a1 bxa4 30 bxa4 ♖b3 31 ♖xf6+ ♘xf6 32 ♖e5 ♖xc3 33 ♖xa5 ♖c4 34 ♖c5 ♖xc5 35 dxc5 ♖a8 36 a5 ♘e5 37 h5 h6 38 a6 ♖a7 39 ♖d1 ♖xa6 40 ♖d6 f4 41 g4 ♘f6 42 ♘g2 ♘g5 43 ♘f3 ♖a3+ 44 ♘e4 ♘xg4 45 ♖xc6 ♖a4+ 46 ♘e5 ♘f3 47 ♖c7 ♖c4 48 ♘d6 ♘xf2 49 ♖xf7 f3 50 ♖f6 e5 51 ♘d5 ♖f4 52 ♖xf4 exf4 53 c6 ♘g3 54 c7 f2 55 c8♗ f1♗ 56 ♗g8+ ♘h4 57 ♗g6 f3 58 ♘e4 ♗g2 59 ♘e3 ♖e2+ 60 ♘f4 f2 ½-½ T.Seeman-D.Ruzele, Lubniewice 1998; since 61 ♗g3+ ♘xh5 62 ♗h3+ ♘g6 63 ♗f5+ ♘g7 64 ♗d7+ is a draw, e.g. 64...♘f8 65 ♗c8+ ♘f7 66 ♗d7+ ♖e7 67 ♗d5+ etc., but not 61 ♗f6+? ♘h3! 62 ♗c3+ ♘g2 63 ♗g3+ ♘f1 and Black wins.

6...♖e7 7 e4 dxe4!



This gives Black a very decent game, but unlike 6 e4 dxe4 7 ♘g5 h6 above, no clear-cut path to peace. The difference consists of White's ability to take back with a knight on e4, when the pawn structure isn't symmetrical; though as we will see, White may sometimes be well advised not to use this 'advantage'.

7...c5 is considered in the next two games.

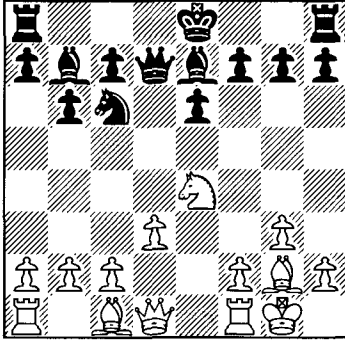
8 ♘g5 ♗d7

Black can also play 8...♘bd7 9 ♘dxe4

♖xe4 10 ♖xe4 0-0 or 10...♖b8, when in comparison with Seeman-Ruzele above, he is two tempi up! One can therefore probably assess the position as equal.

With his last move Black initiates a plan based on ...0-0-0. He can then either go for the attack with ...h7-h5, or opt for central play by means of ...f7-f5, ...♗f6 etc.

9 ♖dxe4 ♖xe4 10 ♖xe4?! ♖c6



11 ♗d2

A bit passive to my taste, but the more I looked at this position, the less appealing I found it for White. All the seemingly natural moves White can now play present serious drawbacks. For instance:

a) 11 ♖g4?! g6 doesn't make sense for White here, as the enemy king will hide on the other flank anyway. Black has a slight advantage and threatens both ...f7-f5 and ...♖d4.

b) 11 ♖h5, moving her majesty one square further, seems more active, but after 11...g6 (11...♖d4?! 12 c3 ♖c2 13 ♖b1 ♖xd3 would be too greedy, as Black is in big trouble after 14 ♖c5 ♗xc5 15 ♗xb7 followed by ♗c6+, ♗g5 and ♖bd1 with a decisive advantage) 12 ♖h6 0-0-0 White's position is still far from a dream.

c) 11 c3?! 0-0-0 12 d4 e5 13 d5, playing for 13...♖xd5 14 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 14 ♖g5, runs into 13...♖a5 and the adventurous d-pawn is just lost.

All these lines lean towards the conclusion

that White's mistake came earlier, so 10 dxe4 should probably have been preferred.

11...0-0-0 12 ♗c3 f5

Inviting some tactics (one couldn't expect positional play much longer from two Brits!), though the more cautious 12...e5 wasn't bad at all. Black is then ready for ...f7-f5 and ...h7-h5, and can meet 13 a4 with 13...a5. It is not evident how White will make further progress on the queenside, so Black's game is fully acceptable.

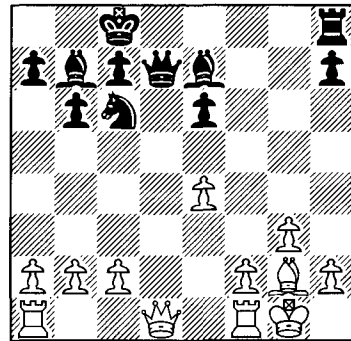
13 ♗xg7

On 13 ♖d2 Black could consider either 13...♗f6 or the sacrifice 13...h5.

13...fxe4

Not 13...♖hg8? 14 ♖f6 with a clear advantage.

14 ♗xh8 ♖xh8 15 dxe4



After a rather forced sequence, the material balance speaks (a little) in White's favour. In such a situation, the side with two minor pieces vs. rook + two pawns should generally avoid exchanging queens, as this would reduce his dynamism. Given the particularly good cooperation between Black's bishops and knight, however, the present position can be considered an exception to the above-mentioned 'rule'.

15...♖xd1!

15...♗d6!?, with ...h7-h5-h4 (if White allows it) and ...♖f7 or ...♖g7 to follow, was the alternative.

16 ♖axd1 ♗e5

From here the knight is performing a great job: it stops f2-f4 (because of ...♙c5+, ♖h1 ♗g4 and a fork at e3 or f2), while at the same time looming over the c4-square.

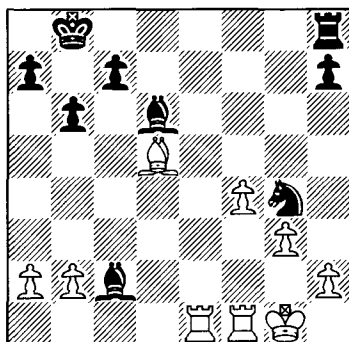
17 ♙h3?!

This plays into Black's hands, but even on the more stubborn 17 b3 ♖f8 18 f3 (intending h2-h3 and at last f3-f4), Black would keep the better prospects after 18...♙c5+ 19 ♖h1 a5 (not 19...♙a6? 20 c4 b5 21 ♙h3!) 20 h3 ♙a6 21 c4 b5 22 f4 ♗d7, and now if White takes on b5 he will lose an exchange (though this may be the lesser evil as otherwise the c4 pawn is bound to fall), i.e. 23 cxb5!? ♙xb5 24 e5 ♙xf1 25 ♙xf1 with chances to hold.

17...♙xe4 18 ♙xe6+ ♖b8 19 ♙d5 ♙xc2

Not 19...♗f3+?? 20 ♖h1 and the advantage would pass to White.

20 ♗de1 ♙d6 21 f4 ♗g4



Here and for the next few moves Black was obviously doing very well. He only committed a blunder with his final move, making the end quite dramatic.

22 ♖g2 ♙b4 23 h3 ♗f6 24 ♙c6 ♙xe1 25 ♖xe1 ♗d8 26 g4 ♗d4

After 26...♗d6! 27 ♙f3 c6 28 ♖e7 Black is clearly better, being a piece up for only one pawn. All the same, White could generate some counterplay on the kingside and good technique is required from Black.

27 g5 ♙e4+ 28 ♙xe4 ♖xe4??

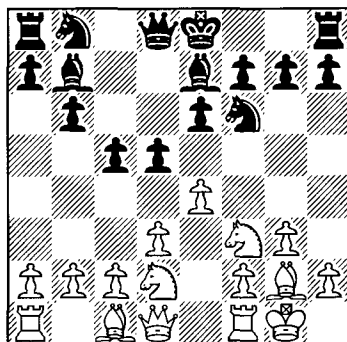
Instead, 28...♗xe4 29 ♖f3 ♗d2+! 30 ♖g4 ♗d7 31 f5 ♗d4+ 32 ♖g3 (32 ♖h5? ♗f3 wins for Black) 32...♗e4+ 33 ♖f4 ♗d6+ 34 ♖e5 ♗d2 and the extra piece should tell in the end.

29 ♖xf6! 1-0

If 29...♖xe1 30 f7 wins, while after 29...♖xf4 30 ♖f1 Black must give his whole rook to stop the f-pawn, the h3-pawn depriving Black of the defence ...♖g4+ and ...♗g8.

Game 74
R. Vaganian-J. Bosch
German Bundesliga 1999

**1 ♗f3 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♙g2 ♗f6 4 0-0 e6
5 d3 d5 6 ♗bd2 ♙e7 7 e4 c5**



We have reached a position known as the King's Indian Attack. Indeed, White's set-up is reminiscent of the King's Indian Defence (1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗f3 0-0 etc.), albeit with opposite colours. I'm not sure if the term 'Attack' is because White is using the set-up, or denotes the attack he often gets in the main line of this system.

Usually this type of position arises via the French (1 e4 e6 2 d3 d5 3 ♗d2 etc.) or Sicilian Defence (1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 e6 3 d3). By the standard move order a black knight often lands on c6 fairly early, which means that the capture ...d5xe4 is less effective (i.e. than 6 e4 dxe4 or 6 ♗bd2 ♙e7 7 e4 dxe4 as in the previous game). Indeed, White can simply take

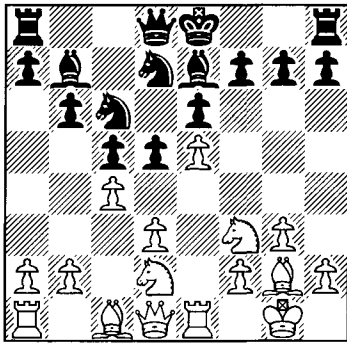
back, without trading queens, and count on a slight edge.

Finally, I would like to mention that the formation with ...b7-b6 against the King's Indian scheme has become quite rare recently. Nowadays Black mostly prefers a quick queenside expansion involving ...b7-b5 when he gets here from a French, whereas ...g7-g6, ...♙g7 plans are more frequent via the Sicilian move order.

8 ♖e2

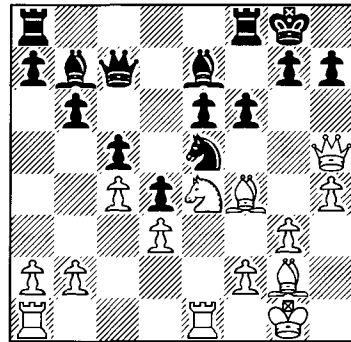
I like this move more than 8 e5 and 8 ♖e1. Indeed, as White doesn't fear 8...dxe4 9 dxe4, he can postpone the e-pawn advance, while if 8...♘c6?! 9 e5 ♘d7 10 c4! gives White a pleasant initiative. The point is that after the immediate 8 e5 ♘fd7 9 c4, White doesn't threaten 10 cxd5 exd5 11 e6 yet, so 10...♙xd5 is fine; whereas the drawback to 8 ♖e1 ♘c6 9 e5 ♘fd7 10 c4! is the knight jump to b4 (see line 'b' below).

The direct 8 e5 is considered in the next game. White's other main option is 8 ♖e1 ♘c6 9 e5 ♘fd7 10 c4! (10 h4 transposes to 8 e5) and then:



a) 10...d4?! 11 h4 ♖c7 12 ♘e4 (an interesting way to animate the game; as analysis shows, this pawn sacrifice isn't worse than the more cautious 12 ♘f1, when 12...h6 intending ...0-0-0 and ...g7-g5 leads to mutual chances; instead, the tactical line 12...♘cxe5?! 13 ♘xe5 ♙xg2 14 ♘xf7! ♙xf7 15 ♙xg2 gives White a

lasting plus, due to the beautiful e4-square for his horse and the weak e-pawn) 12...♘dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 (13...♖xe5 14 ♙f4 ♖f5 seems suspicious, but Black might survive; e.g. 15 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 16 ♙e4 ♖h3 17 ♙g2 ♖f5 is only a draw; while after 15 ♙d6! ♖h6, vacating the h7-square for her majesty as 16 g4 ♖g6 17 h5 ♖h7 18 ♙xe7 and 19 g5 trapping the queen was in the air, Black still needs some moves to consolidate his extra pawn, so the position looks unclear to me) 14 ♙f4 0-0 15 ♖h5 f6 and now:



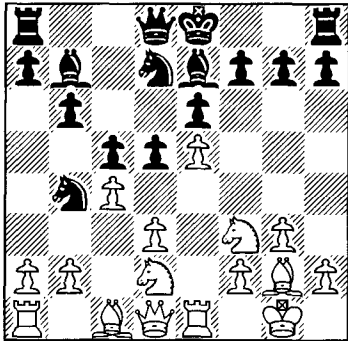
a1) 16 ♘xf6+ forces a draw: 16...gxf6! (16...♙xf6? only leads to an inferior ending after 17 ♙xe5 ♖d7 or 17...♙xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xe5 ♙xg2 20 ♙xg2, with a better and risk-free game for White in either case) 17 ♖xe5 fxe5 18 ♙xe5 ♖d7 (avoiding the perpetual check with 18...♙d6?! is dubious due to 19 ♖g5+ ♙f7 20 ♖f6+ ♙e8 21 ♖xe6+ ♖e7, and with two pawns for the exchange, either 22 ♖xd6 ♙xg2 23 ♙xg2 or 22 ♖xe7+ ♙xe7 23 ♙xd6+ ♙xd6 24 ♙xb7 gives White the better prospects) 19 ♖g4+ ♙f7 20 ♖h5+ etc.

a2) 16 ♙xe5 was also sensible, as after 16...fxe5 17 ♘d2 or 17 ♙h3 ♙c8 White has good compensation for his pawn, though perhaps no more than that.

a3) 16 ♙h3!? g6 17 ♘xf6+?? (a terrible blunder – and in a correspondence game moreover; White could still claim an edge after 17 ♙xe6+ ♙h8 18 ♙xe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xe5

fxe5 or 18...fxe5 19 ♖g4) 17...♙xf6 18 ♙xe6+ (if 18 ♙xe5 ♖c6 wins the queen) 18...♗f7 19 ♖xg6+ hxg6 20 ♙xc7 ♔g7 21 ♗h2 ♙d8 22 ♙xd8 ♗xd8 0-1 S.Welbhoff-G.Beisser, correspondence 1998.

b) 10...♗b4! (giving up the e4-square wasn't necessary)

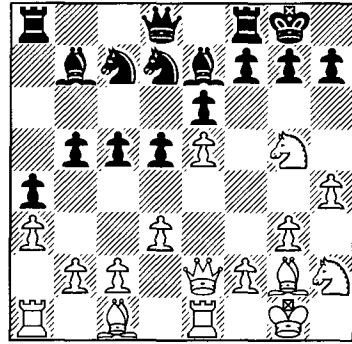


11 ♗f1 dxc4 (11...♗f8!? may be viable and even better, since after 12 a3 ♗c6 White obviously won't take on d5 as c4xd5 e6xd5! provides the ♗f8 with a perfect post on e6; the real question is: can Black maintain the central tension without running out of useful moves?) 12 dxc4 ♗b8 (12...♗f8?! would put the knight on a less adequate square, and after 13 ♙d2! the tempting thrust 13...♗d3?! fails to the reply 14 ♖e3 and if 14...♗xb2?? 15 ♖c2 and wins) 13 ♙d2! ♗8c6 14 a3 ♗a6 (again the presumptuous jump 14...♗d3? backfires as 15 ♖e3 ♖d7 16 ♖b3, followed by ♖d1 and ♙d2 somewhere, simply eats the knight) 15 ♖c2 and White was slightly better in H.Perez Garcia-H.Happel, Wijk aan Zee 2001, though the game quickly ended peacefully: 15...♖c7 16 ♖ad1 ♖d8 17 ♙c3 0-0 18 ♗e3 ♖xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♖d8 20 h4 ♖xd1+ 21 ♖xd1 ♖d8 1/2-1/2.

8...0-0

As noted above, 8...♗c6?! 9 e5 ♗d7 10 c4! gives White a nice initiative.

9 e5 ♗e8 10 ♖e1 ♗c7 11 h4 ♗d7 12 ♗f1 a5 13 ♗1h2 a4 14 a3 b5 15 ♗g5



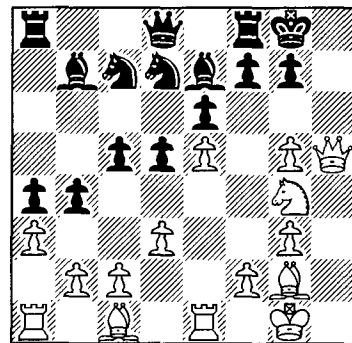
15...b4?

In this kind of position 15...♗e8! is usually a reliable defensive resource. If White continues 16 ♖h5 then 16...h6 creates the threat of ...f7-f5!.

16 ♖h5 h6 17 ♗g4!

As a consequence of Black's negligent 15th move, White has a powerful, if not already decisive attack.

17...hxg5 18 hxg5



18...g6

Manoeuvring forces via the e8-square leads to a traffic jam; e.g. 18...♗e8 19 ♗f6+ gxf6 20 gxf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖g5+ wins for White, while after 18...♖e8 19 ♙f3 ♗f8 20 ♗g2 ♗g6 21 ♖h1, the threat of 22 ♖h7+ ♗f8 23 ♖h8 ♗xh8 24 ♖xh8 mate forces the sad 21...♙d6.

Of course Black isn't happy to play ...g7-g6 either, as the f6-square becomes weaker, but

without it he couldn't touch the f-pawn because of g5-g6, ♖h7+ and mates.

19 ♖h4 ♖e8

Even taking another road, the knight couldn't rescue his monarch: 19...♖b5 20 ♖f6+ ♖xf6 21 gxf6 ♖d4 22 ♖g5 ♖f5 23 ♖h3, followed by g3-g4 and ♖h6, and White is mating.

20 ♖f3 f5

Now or never!

21 exf6 ♖exf6 22 gxf6 ♖xf6 23 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 24 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 25 ♖g4

Black has avoided direct material losses, but his position is ruined. Vaganian finishes the job in just eight more moves.

25...♖f8 26 axb4 cxb4 27 ♖d2 b3 28 cxb3 axb3 29 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 30 ♖a1 ♖c6 31 ♖a6 ♖b5 32 ♖a8 ♖xd3 33 ♖g5 1-0

Game 75

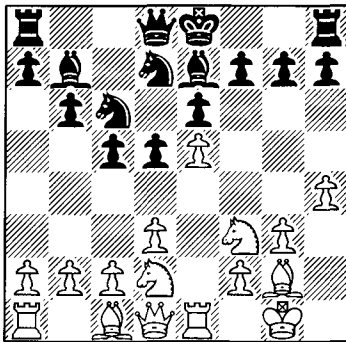
L.Van Wely-S.Tiviakov

Dutch Championship playoff (rapid) 2002

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 ♖f6 4 0-0 e6 5 d3 d5 6 ♖bd2 ♖e7 7 e4 c5 8 e5 ♖fd7 9 h4

Preventing ...g7-g5.

9...♖c6 10 ♖e1



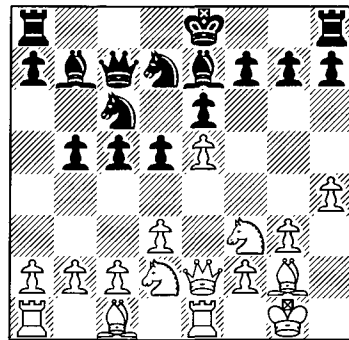
8 ♖e1 ♖c6 9 e5 ♖d7 10 h4 reaches the same position.

10...♖c6

Or 10...h6 11 ♖f1 ♖c7 12 ♖e2 g5 13 hxg5

hxg5 14 g4? (swapping e5 for g5 wasn't a good deal anyway, but I prefer 14 ♖1h2 here when White can prepare the b2-b4 push, and in the event of 14...0-0-0 15 c3 ♖dg8, the knight jump to g4 slows down the opponent's attack; also 14...♖d4? 15 ♖xd4 cxd4 16 ♖f3 ♖b4 17 ♖d2 ♖xd2 18 ♖xd2 g4 19 ♖xd4 ♖xe5 20 ♖g5 is out of question for Black) 14...♖d4! 15 ♖d1 (now after 15 ♖xd4 cxd4 White will face problems defending c2, but it was perhaps the lesser evil) 15...0-0-0 (15...♖xf3+ 16 ♖xf3 ♖xe5 was good too, but there was no hurry) 16 ♖xg5 ♖xe5 17 f4 ♖xg5 18 fxg5 ♖g6 (a superior pawn structure plus excellent attacking chances against the open king: it's more that White can bear) 19 c3 ♖c6 20 ♖e2 ♖dg8 21 ♖f2 ♖h4 22 ♖f6 ♖ce5 23 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 24 ♖f3 ♖e1 25 d4 cxd4 26 cxd4 ♖a6 27 b3 ♖xf1 28 ♖xf1 ♖gh8 29 ♖b2 ♖h1+ 0-1 (as 30 ♖xh1 ♖e3+ 31 ♖g2 ♖f4 is mate), J.Sonnet-B.Dieu, correspondence 1997.

11 ♖e2 b5!?



Quite a committal decision. Black compromises his long castling position in order to discourage his opponent from playing c2-c4. As castling short is dangerous when Black's queenside operations have already taken shape, this means the black king might have to stay in the centre for a while. More usually Black plays 11...0-0-0, or first 11...h6 and 12...0-0-0.

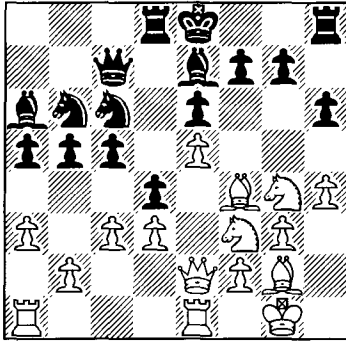
12 ♖f1 h6 13 ♖1h2 ♖b6 14 ♙f4 a5 15 c3

Planning to meet ...b5-b4 with c3-c4, which Black's next prevents.

15...♙a6 16 ♖g4 ♗d8

Of course 16...b4!? was also possible.

17 a3 d4!?



Despite his atypical treatment of the opening, Tiviakov has achieved a fairly decent game, mainly due to the closed character of the position (and of course his chess skills!). Now opening files is all White is dreaming about, so the passive 17...♗d7 was safest, followed eventually by the king walk to the queenside. That said, 17...d4 isn't bad at all, as Black obtains a strongpoint on d5 plus a target at d3.

18 cxd4 ♖xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 20 ♖h2?!

Something like 20 ♙e3 ♗d7 21 ♖ec1 or 21 b4 was more to the point, though Black might consider 21...cxb4!? 22 ♖ec1 ♗d8 23 axb4 ♙xb4 24 ♙c6 ♖d5 with compensation for the exchange.

20...♙b7

20...0-0 was also possible. Now that the knight has left g4 White's attack is not terrifying.

21 ♙e3 ♙xg2

Sacrificing the exchange wasn't forced, even if Black gets enough for it. Instead, 21...♗d8 22 ♙xb7 ♗xb7 23 ♖ac1 ♗d5 24 ♗g4 ♖f8 is unclear. Black has lost the right to

castle, but has positional pluses to compensate for this inconvenience, and can free the h8 rook by ...♙g8-h7 or ...g7-g6 and ...♙g7.

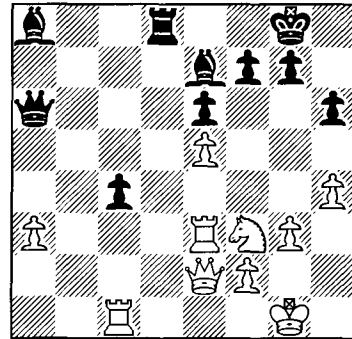
22 ♙xd4 ♙a8 23 ♙c3 ♖a4?!

Fixing the queenside with 23...a4 was probably better, though Black seems OK anyway.

24 ♙d2 ♖xb2 25 ♙xa5 ♗xa5 26 ♗xb2

0-0 27 ♙e3 ♗d8 28 ♖f3 c4 29 dxc4 bxc4

30 ♖c1 ♗a6 31 ♗e2



31...♗d3?!

A step in the wrong direction. Black should have covered c4 with the simple ...♙d5, followed by ...♙c5, when he has nothing to fear.

32 ♖c3 ♗xe3 33 ♗xe3 ♙d5 34 ♖d2 ♗b5

35 ♖c1 ♗a4!

Seeking counterplay against the white king by 35...♙c5?! would be a mistake: 36 ♗c3 ♗b6 37 ♖xc4 ♙xf2+ 38 ♖f1 (not 38 ♙h2? ♙g1+! and suddenly White is experiencing serious difficulties; if 39 ♙h3 ♗f2) 38...♙xc4+ (on 38...♗a7 39 ♖d6 is strong enough; everything is covered in White's camp and the exchange should soon tell) 39 ♗xc4 ♙xg3 40 ♗c5 ♗b2 41 ♗c8+ ♙h7 42 ♗c2+ ♗xc2 43 ♖xc2 ♙xe5 44 a4 and as the a-pawn will cost the bishop, White is much better.

36 ♗c3 ♙xa3 37 ♖a1 ♙b4 38 ♖xa4

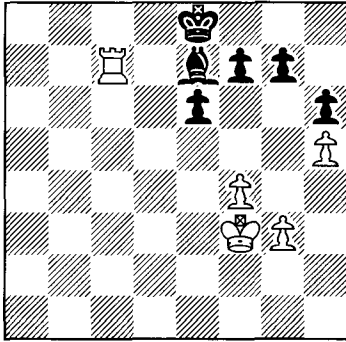
♙xc3 39 ♖xc4 ♙xc4 40 ♖xc4 ♙xe5 41

h5!

This endgame should be drawish, but pre-

venting ...g7-g6 and ...h6-h5 is White's best try.

41...♗f8 42 f4 ♖f6 43 ♜c8+ ♕e7 44 ♜c7+ ♕e8 45 ♗g2 ♖e7 46 ♗f3



46...♖f6?

This fails to hold, as the rest of the game seems to demonstrate. I believe the correct defence consisted of 46...f5!. Then Black can swap both his e- and f-pawns for White's g-pawn, as long as his king reaches h7. If White doesn't touch his g-pawn and instead prevents the king's walk to h7, I'm not sure whether his king can penetrate into Black's camp.

a) 47 g4 fxg4+ (47...♗f8 should be OK as well, but the text is simpler) 48 ♗xg4 ♖f6 49 ♗f3 (49 f5 exf5+ 50 ♗xf5 ♗f8 51 ♗g6 ♖a1 comes to the same thing) 49...♗f8 50 ♜c8+ ♗f7 51 ♗e4 ♖a1 52 f5 exf5+ 53 ♗xf5 ♖b2 and, unlike in the game, Black is in no danger here. He will keep his bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal and his king on f8 or e8 (or on h7, if allowed). White can't achieve more than exchanging his rook for the bishop and the two pawns, which is an obvious draw.

b) 47 ♗e3 ♖f6 48 ♗d3 ♗f8 49 ♜c8+ (49 ♗c4 ♗g8 50 ♗c5 e5 51 ♗d5 exf4 52 gxf4 ♗h7 is a draw; White will win the f-pawn, but that doesn't matter as Black has built a fortress) 49...♗e7 50 ♗c4 ♗d7 51 ♜a8 ♗d6 52 ♜a6+ ♗d7 and as 53 ♗c5 is answered by 53...♖e7+, Black is alive.

47 ♗e4 ♖b2 48 g4 ♖f6 49 ♜b7 ♗f8 50

♜b5 ♖c3 51 g5 ♖d2 52 ♜b8+ ♕e7 53 ♜b7+ ♗f8 54 g6 fxg6 55 hxg6 ♖c3 56 f5 exf5+ 57 ♗xf5 ♕e8 58 ♗e6 ♗d8 59 ♜d7+ ♗c8 60 ♜d5 ♖f6 61 ♗f7 ♗c7 62 ♗f8 ♗c6 63 ♜f5 ♖d4 64 ♜f7 h5 65 ♜xg7 ♖xg7+ 66 ♗xg7 h4 67 ♗f6 h3 68 g7 h2 69 g8♗ h1♗ 70 ♗a8+ 1-0

Quite an impressive game, especially given the rapid time control!

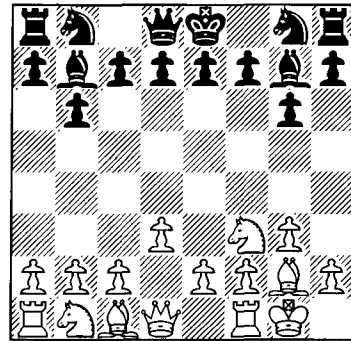
1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 g6
4 0-0 ♖g7

Game 76

Nguyen Anh Dung-J.Speelman

Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 g6 4 0-0 ♖g7
5 d3



A purely King's Indian approach, intending e2-e4. White can also set up with 5 d4 and 6 c4 (as in Games 78-79), or just 5 c4 (see Games 80-82).

5...c5

5...d5 and 5...e5 are aesthetically displeasing (each closes one bishop's diagonal), though perfectly playable. I couldn't find any example with the first one in my database, but Black has scored a tremendous 6/8 with the second! (mostly via the move order 3...e5!? 4 d3 g6 5 0-0 ♖g7).

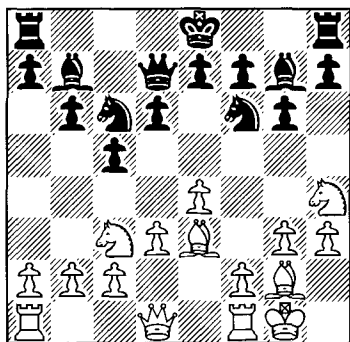
6 e4 d6 7 c3

7 c3 looks more ambitious to me (see the next game).

7...c6 8 e3 f6

If 8...e6 9 d4 g7 10 d2 (after 10 d5? exd5 11 dxd5 dxd5 12 exd5 e7 or 11 exd5 b4, the onus is on White to justify his pawn sacrifice) 10...0-0 11 ad1 cxd4 12 dxd4 e5 13 e2 c8 is unclear. It is probably best to delay the d3-d4 push, e.g. 9 d2 g7 10 h6 0-0 11 xg7 xg7 and only now 12 d4 when White may be a tiny bit better.

9 d4 d7 10 h3



10...e5

10...0-0 11 f4 e6 with reciprocal chances was played (via another move order) in T.Haub-A.Rotstein, German Bundesliga 2001. I like this set-up more than the one chosen by Speelman, as Black maintains a central flexibility. 11...d5?, on the other hand, would be too hasty after 12 dxd5! (not 12 e5? d4!) 12...dxd5 13 exd5 b4 14 c4 xb2 15 b1 g7 (or 15...f6) 16 a3 a6 17 f5 with the better prospects for White.

11 f4 h6

In order to counter f4-f5 with ...g6-g5, but this pawn will give Black headaches over castling kingside later on.

12 fxe5 dxe5

Or 12...xe5 13 f3 h5 14 h2 and again White's position is more pleasant.

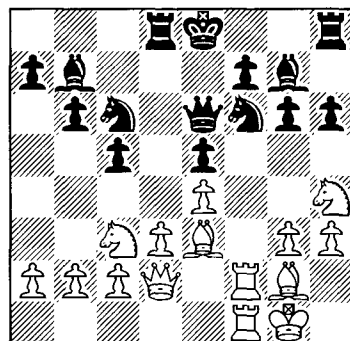
13 f2

White has easy play: he will start with d2, preventing ...0-0, then double on the f-file when Black has permanently to watch out for d5. In the game the Englishman failed to cope with this plan.

13...d8

13...0-0? 14 xh6 (if 14 d2 h7 15 af1 d6) 14...xh6 15 xf6 d4 offers decent compensation for the pawn. Moreover, it may be difficult for White to adapt psychologically: a few moves before he was pressing 'for free', whereas now he will be rather passive. A sample variation is 16 f1 g7 17 d5 f5 18 c3 b5 19 e2 xd5 20 exd5 ae8 followed by ...d6, and for the time being White's extra pawn is meaningless.

14 d2 e6 15 af1



15...e7?

Overprotecting the d5-square, but this move only disturbs the coordination between Black's pieces. Perhaps Speelman was dreaming of something like ...d7, ...c8-d6 (which might actually have been accomplished later on).

Instead, 15...d4 was called for, and if 16 xd4 cxd4 17 d5 xd5 (17...dxd5? looks suspicious, as after the rather forced sequence 18 exd5 xd5 19 xf7 xf7 20 xf7 xf7 21 e2 xg2 22 xg2, the queen and knight duo seem to be performing very well: the queen will enter Black's camp and probably do some damage) 18 exd5 d6 and Black is

fine (if 19 ♖xf6? ♗xf6 20 ♖f2 ♖e7).

White could continue as in the game with 16 b3, but then he doesn't have the f3-square to triple his heavy pieces on the f-file, while Black can defend with ...♖d7 and ...♗h5. These two facts makes his life significantly easier, e.g. 16 b3 ♖d7 17 ♖h2 and now 17...a6 or 17...♗c6, with equal chances.

16 b3

Parrying the threat of ...c5-c4.

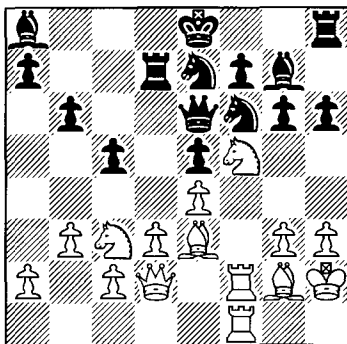
16...♖d7 17 ♖h2 ♗a8?!

This allows a tactical motif, but good advice had become expensive:

a) 17...a6! (intending ...♖d6 and ...b6-b5) 18 a4 ♖d6 19 ♖f3! ♗c6 (19...♗eg8 avoids material losses, but one needs to be desperate – or iron-minded – to play such a move! All the same, in conjunction with the great plan of ...♖h7 and ...♗h8, this might be a rather resilient defence) 20 ♖f2 ♗d4 and then 21 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 22 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 23 ♖xf6 ♗xc2 24 ♗g1, or even 21 ♗xd4 cxd4 22 ♗d1 ♖e7 23 ♖xf6 g5 24 ♖xb6 gxh4 25 ♗b2 (heading for c4) and White's weak dark squares are no real compensation for Black's devastated position. In both cases White is close to winning.

b) 17...♗c8 18 ♖e2 (White is now playing for a2-a3 and b3-b4; not 18 ♖f3? ♗xe4 which simply drops a pawn for nothing) 18...♗d6 19 a3 ♗h7 (what else?) 20 ♗d5 and White is much better.

18 ♗f5!



White finally manages to open lines, which increases his positional advantage.

18...gxf5 19 exf5 ♗xf5 20 ♖xf5 ♗xg2 21 ♖xg2 0-0

Postponing this was no longer possible, as Black was running out of useful moves.

22 ♗xh6! ♗g4+ 23 hxg4 ♖xh6+ 24 ♖h5 ♖g6 25 ♗e4

Extra pawn, dominant knight. The rest needs no comment.

25...f6

25...♖xg4?! 26 ♖g5 ♖e6 27 ♗f6+ would end the game even quicker.

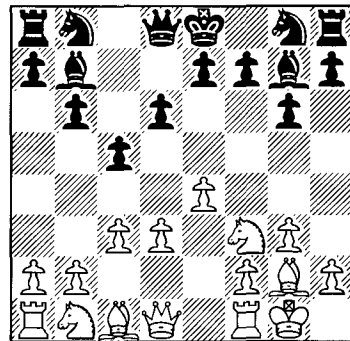
26 ♖f3 b5 27 ♗xc5 ♖c7 28 b4 a5 29 a3 axb4 30 axb4 ♖d8 31 ♖h3 ♖d6 32 ♖a1 ♖dc6 33 ♖a8+ ♗f8 34 ♗d7 e4 35 ♖xf8+ ♖g7 36 ♖f5 ♖xf5 37 gxf5 ♖xd7 38 ♖fh8 1-0

Game 77

T.Petrosian-A.Beliavsky

Moscow 1975

1 ♗f3 b6 2 g3 ♗b7 3 ♗g2 g6 4 0-0 ♗g7 5 d3 c5 6 e4 d6 7 c3



Playing for a centre of pawns.

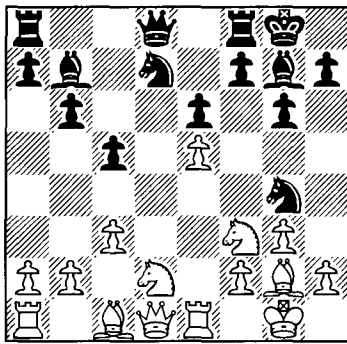
7...♗d7 8 ♖e1 ♗gf6 9 ♗bd2 0-0 10 d4

10 a3?, as in B.Badea-Z.Varga, Budapest 2000, is pointless. Obviously White wanted to achieve b2-b4, but Black's natural next move prevented it: 10...♖c8 11 d4 cxd4 12 cxd4 e5 13 dxe5 and a draw was agreed. In the final

position White is close to being worse, but luckily he has 14 ♖b3 in reply to 13...♗xe5, and 14 b4 if Black recaptures with the pawn.

10...cxd4

10...e6?! was tried 20 years later in V.Loginov-N.Alexandria, St. Petersburg 1995, but is clearly no improvement, due to 11 e5! dxe5 12 dxe5 ♗g4 (playing with fire, though one can understand that she wasn't totally satisfied with 12...♗d5 13 ♗e4 ♖c7 14 ♗d6 ♙c6 15 c4 ♗e7 16 ♙f4 when White has a firm grip on the position) and then:

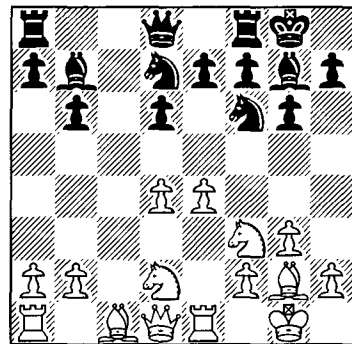


a) 13 ♗c4 (this leads to a beautiful combination, but the pragmatic 13 h3 was easier – see below) 13...♙d5 14 ♙g5 ♖c7 15 ♙e7!! ♙xc4 (if 15...♗fe8 the simplest line is 16 ♙d6 ♖b7 17 ♗h4 and White gets rid of the strong enemy light-squared bishop, when his own bishop at d6 is a monster and the ♗g4 misplaced) 16 ♙d6 ♖b7?! (there was no way Black could retain his extra piece, but 16...♖c8! was the tougher, when after 17 ♙xf8 ♗xf8 18 ♗d2 ♙d5 Black loses his knight at g4, but will take the e5 pawn with some compensation for the exchange; instead 18...♗gxe5 19 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 20 ♙xa8 ♗xb2 21 ♖d6+ ♗g8 22 ♙c6 ♗b8 23 ♙b5 ♙xc3 24 ♗ec1 is clearly better for White, not so much from a materialistic point of view, but because Black's cavalry is paralysed) 17 ♗g5 ♙d5 18 ♙xd5 ♖xd5 19 ♖xg4 h6 (now the rest is easy, but Black was suffering even after the

more tenacious 19...♗fe8!, e.g. 20 ♖f4 f6 21 exf6 ♗xf6 22 ♙e5 or 21...♙xf6 22 ♗e4 and White has a big advantage with the more active pieces and a better pawn structure; if instead 19...♗xe5?! 20 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 21 ♗ad1 ♖xa2 22 ♖h4 h5 23 ♗xe5 ♖xb2 24 ♗e4 Black has three pawns for the knight for the moment, but his king is too weakened to survive) 20 ♗ad1 ♖xa2 21 ♙xf8 ♗xf8 22 ♗xd7 hxg5 23 ♗e2 a5 24 ♖xg5 a4 25 ♗a7 ♖c4 26 ♗d2 ♖e4 27 ♗d8 ♖e1+ 28 ♗g2 ♖e4+ 29 ♗h3 1-0.

b) 13 h3! ♙xf3 and after 14 ♖xf3 ♗gxe5 15 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 16 ♙xa8 ♗xa8 17 f4, although White has a tough task ahead of him to convert his material advantage, he clearly has the upper hand here. 14 ♗xf3?! is not as good, e.g. 14...♗gxe5 15 ♗xe5 (after 15 ♙f4 ♗c6 16 ♖d6 or 16 ♖a4, followed by 17 ♗ad1, White has decent compensation for a single pawn, but maybe not more) 15...♗xe5 16 ♙f4 (16 ♙xa8?! ♖xa8 17 ♗e3 c4 is no fun at all for White) 16...♗d3 17 ♙xa8 ♗xe1 18 ♙e4 f5 19 ♖b3 ♖d7 20 ♗xe1 fxe4 21 ♗xe4 ♖d5 and Black equalises, thanks to the trick 22 ♗xe6?! c4.

11 cxd4

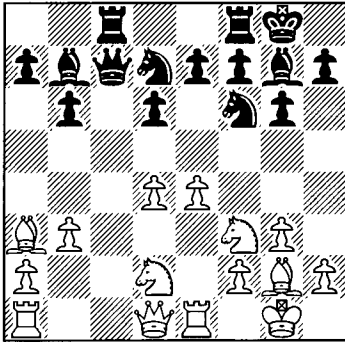


11...♖c7

Although circumstances are not as favourable as in Badea-Varga above, 11...e5!? was still worthy of attention. In that case I believe chances are about equal.

12 b3 ♖ac8 13 ♗a3!

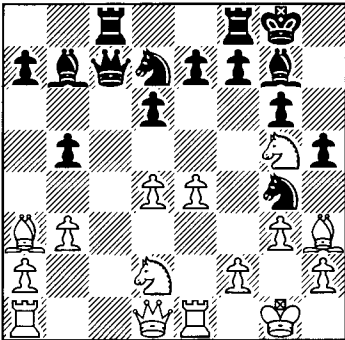
The bishop is better placed here than on b2 for two reasons: Black won't gain a tempo attacking it with ...♖c2; and as White is planning e4-e5 the pawns at d6 and e7 are directly targeted.

**13...b5! 14 ♗h3**

The game takes an amusing course. 14 e5?! ♖d5 would only suit Black.

14...h5

Intending to meet 15 e5 with 15...♗g4, when Black seems alright.

15 ♗g5 ♗g4**16 ♗df3**

It is not very typical of Petrosian to have such a minor piece arrangement...

16...♖a5?!

16...♖c2! 17 ♖e2 ♖xd1+ 18 ♖xd1 a5 was better.

17 ♗b2 ♖c7 18 ♗g2

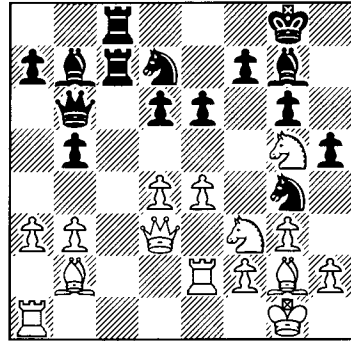
...so let's come back to more classical chess!

18...e6

To avoid 19 h3 ♗gf6 20 e5 followed by e5-e6.

19 ♖e2 ♖fc8?!

I don't like this 'logical' move, as it invites White to play the combination in the game.

20 a3 ♖b6 21 ♖d3**21...♗gf6**

21...a5 (intending ...b5-b4, a3xb4 ♗a6) could lead to wild complications; e.g. 22 h3 ♗gf6 23 ♗xf7 b4! (if 23...♗xf7 24 ♗g5+ ♗g8 25 ♗xe6 etc., but not 24...♗e7? 25 e5 when 26 ♖xg6 will be lethal) 24 axb4 (24 e5? is only rewarded by a draw after 24...♗a6 25 ♖xg6 ♗f8 26 ♗h6+ ♗h8 27 ♗f7+ etc.) 24...♗xf7 (not 24...♗a6?! 25 bxa5 ♗xd3 26 axb6 ♗xe2 27 bxc7 ♗xf7 28 ♗g5+ ♗e7 29 e5 and White clearly has the better of things) 25 ♗g5+ ♗g8 26 ♗xe6 ♗a6 27 bxa5 ♖b7 28 ♖e3 ♗xc2 29 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 30 ♖xc2 ♖xb3.

22 ♗xf7 ♗xf7 23 ♗g5+ ♗g8 24 ♗xe6 ♗f8 25 ♗xc7

25 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 26 d5 ♗8d7 achieves nothing for White.

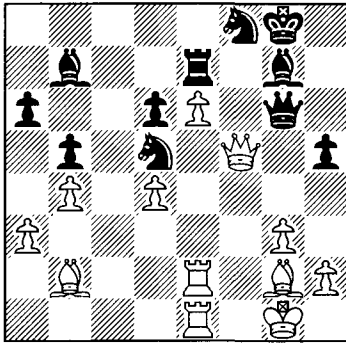
25...♖xc7 26 e5 ♗d5 27 b4 a6

27...dxe5? would help White after 28 dxe5 ♖d7 29 ♖b3 ♖e6 30 ♖d2, and with 31 ♖ad1 coming, it's already over for Black.

28 e6 ♖e7 29 ♖ae1 ♖d8 30 f4 ♖e8 31 f5 gxf5?!

This should have lost rather quickly. 31...♙f6 was Black's best hope.

32 ♖xf5 ♖g6



33 ♖xg6?!

Instead 33 ♖f1! wins material. The point is that the ♘d5 can't move because of 34 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 35 e7.

33...♘g6 34 ♖f1 h4 35 ♖f5 ♘f6 36 d5 ♘e8 37 ♖g5 ♙xb2 38 ♖xb2 ♖g7 39 ♖f2 hxg3 40 hxg3 ½-½

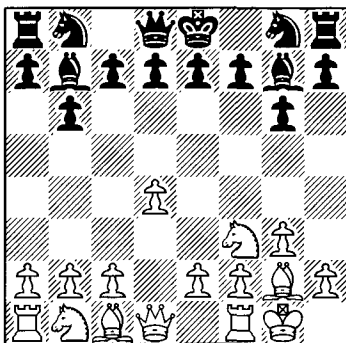
A curious moment to offer a draw as White is still much better and can hardly lose.

Game 78

R. Akesson-J. Speelman

European Team Championship, Pula 1997

1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♙g2 g6 4 0-0 ♙g7 5 d4



Move order plays a key role in reaching this position, as Black rarely gets this set-up from a King's Indian. For instance, 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 b6 it is out of question, while after 3...♙g7 4 ♙g2 0-0 5 ♘f3 b6 6 ♘e5! is annoying. If White prefers 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3, then 3...♙g7 4 g3 b6 is possible. The drawback of this sequence is that White can delay 0-0, in order to achieve the desirable d4-d5 advance. This tends to imply that, after 1 ♘f3 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♙g2 g6, White may well do better playing 4 d4 or 4 c4 than 4 0-0. Food for thought!

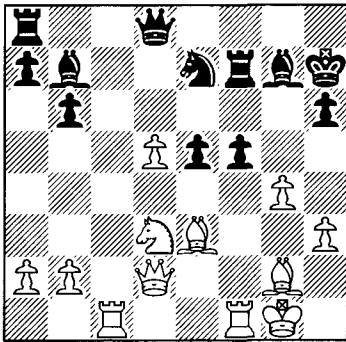
5...♘f6

Here 5...f5 6 c4 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 returns to the 3...f5 lines at the start of the chapter (Games 69-70).

Adopting a Hippopotamus formation with 5...e6 6 c4 ♘e7 shouldn't enable Black to equalise from a dogmatic point of view. Nevertheless, this choice maintains a flexible and complex position with fair practical chances for Black. For example: 7 ♘c3 d6 8 e4 ♘d7 9 ♙e3 h6 (Black doesn't want his dark-squared bishop to be exchanged by the standard manoeuvre ♖d2, ♙h6; in any case this move fits into his system, as a later ...f7-f5 then can't be answered by the nasty ♘g5) 10 d5 (on 10 ♖d2 either 10...g5 or 10...f5 is possible) 10...e5 11 ♘e1 0-0 12 ♖d2 ♙h7 13 ♘d3 was S.Osmanbegovic-A.Shchekachev, Cannes 1995. White has played the opening solidly and enjoys a pleasant edge, thanks to his space advantage. This position is similar to some lines of the g2-g3 King's Indian, except that the ♙b7 might be not too happy (though is it any better on c8?). In any case White can contemplate play on both wings, preparing either f2-f4 or c4-c5, while his opponent will find it harder to move.

The game continued 13...c6 (I suppose the thematic 13...f5?! would have been answered by the counter-thrust 14 f4, when any capture would favour, whose knights are ready to jump on better squares) 14 ♖ac1?! (possibly

14 dxc6 was stronger) 14...cxd5 15 ♖xd5 (a difficult decision: on the one hand an exchange of knights lessens Black's cramp, but on the other, eliminating a defender of c6 is quite sensible) 15...♗xd5 16 cxd5 f5 17 f3 ♖f6 18 h3 (preventing 18...fxe4 19 fxe4 ♖g4!) 18...♗f7 19 g4 (here 19 ♖b4!?, aiming for c6, is the move that strikes the eye; unfortunately Black has the resource 19...♗h5! at his disposal) 19...♗g8? (the tournament situation, more than a misjudgement of the position, probably dictated Andrei's decision; instead closing this flank with 19...f4! was more appropriate, when Black faces fewer problems, e.g. 20 ♖f2 ♗c8 21 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 22 ♗c1 ♗c7 would only be slightly better for White) 20 exf5 (here 20 gxf5 gxf5 21 f4 with the initiative would have been better) 20...gxf5 21 f4 ♖e7 22 fxe5 dxe5 and now:



a) If 23 d6!?, a temporarily piece sacrifice keeps Black afloat: 23...♗xg2! 24 dxe7 ♗xe7 25 ♗xg2 f4 (not 25...♗d7?! 26 ♗f2 ♗xd3 27 ♗xf5+ ♗h8 28 ♗e4 and White is at least slightly better) 26 ♖xf4 (if 26 ♗c2 fxe3 27 ♖xe5+ ♗g8 seems OK; White can take a draw by repetition with 28 ♗c4+ ♗h7 29 ♗c2+ etc., but I don't see more) 26...exf4 (26...♗xd2+?! 27 ♗xd2 exf4 28 b3 is bad for Black) 27 ♗c2+ ♗h8 28 ♖xf4 ♗d5+ 29 ♗f3 ♗xa2 and a draw is the likely outcome.

b) 23 ♖b4 f4 24 ♖f2 ♗h8 (or 24...f3! 25 ♗d3+ ♗g8 26 ♖xf3 ♗d6 27 ♖c2 ♖xd5, but

not 26...a5?! 27 ♖e4 axb4 28 d6 ♖xe4 29 ♗xe4 or 28...♖a6 29 ♗b3 and White is clearly better) 25 ♗fd1 (25 ♖h4!) 25...f3 26 ♖f1 ♖g6 (26...♗d6!?) 27 d6 ♖f4 28 ♖c6 ♗d7 29 ♖b4 (29 ♖e7) 29...♗d8 30 ♖e3 h5 (if 30...a5! 31 ♗c7! ♗xc7 32 dxc7 ♗xd2 33 ♗xd2 axb4 34 ♗d8+ ♗f8 35 ♖xf4 exf4 36 ♖d3 is equal) 31 ♗c7 ♗e8?? (presumably a time-trouble mistake; after 31...♗xc7 32 dxc7 ♗xd2 and 33...♗xc7 Black is at least equal) 32 d7! ♗e7 33 ♗xb7 and now a piece up, White went on to win.

6 c4 e6

A first finesse. The natural 6...0-0?! is less accurate, as it allows White to play 7 d5! (see the next game).

7 ♖c3 ♖e4 8 ♖xe4

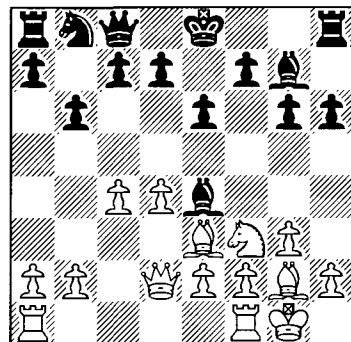
8 ♖d2! is a common move in the Queen's Indian (i.e. with ...♖e7 and ...0-0, rather than ...g7-g6, ...♖g7), and White might be a bit better here after 8...0-0 9 ♗c1. White isn't afraid of losing his bishop pair as he gets the centre in return, and moreover in a rather closed position.

8...♖xe4 9 ♖g5 ♗c8 10 ♗d2 h6

This means Black won't be able to castle so quickly, but as we will see, he has plenty of time to do so.

11 ♖e3

11 ♖f4! is also possible, as in L.Alburt-J.Spelman, London (match) 1986.



11...d6?!

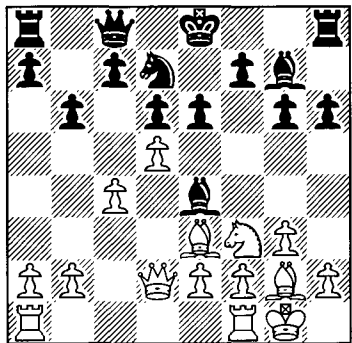
Strangely enough, Speelman had already had experience with the superior 11...♙b7! in V.Kramnik-J.Speelman, Geneva (rapid) 1996, where he dominated the Braingames World Champion. As White wouldn't be pleased by an exchange of light-squared bishops, his ♖f3 is more or less stuck there; ♔h3 or ♔f1 invites ...♙xf3, and the same goes for ♔f4 and ...g6-g5. In consequence we can state that Black has more moves to reinforce his position than his opponent, and thus a comfortable equality.

The game continued 12 ♖fd1 (threatening d4-d5) 12...d5! 13 ♖ac1 ♖d7 14 cxd5 ♔xd5 15 b3 (as the inclusion of 15 b3 ♖c8 favours Black, the immediate 15 ♖e1 was more logical, and equal) 15...♖c8 16 ♖e1 ♔xg2 17 ♖xg2 ♖f6 18 ♔f4 ♖d5 19 ♔e5 f6 20 ♔f4 g5 21 ♔e3 0-0 22 f3 ♖xc3 23 ♙xe3 ♙d5 24 ♙d3 c6 25 ♖e3 ♙d7 26 ♖c4 ♖fd8 27 e3 f5 28 ♙e2 ♙e7 29 ♖g2 ♖d7 30 ♖b2 c5 31 ♖a4 ♖cd8 32 ♖b2 cxd4 33 e4 d3! (at the cost of the extra pawn Speelman reactivates his bishop, which is indeed a correct decision, as White wouldn't risk much with a blockading knight on d3; in the rest of the game the Englishman gained a tangible advantage and probably missed his chance) 34 ♖xd3 ♙f7 35 ♖b4 fxe4 36 fxe4 ♙e8 37 ♖xd7 ♙xd7 38 ♖c6 ♙d2 39 ♖c2 ♙xe2+ 40 ♖xe2 ♖d7 41 a4 a5 42 ♖f2 ♖d3 43 ♖e3 ♖d6 44 ♖e7+ ♖f7 45 ♖c8 ♖c6 46 ♖f3+ ♖e8 47 ♖a7 ♖c2+ 48 ♖g1 ♔d4+ 49 ♖f1 ♖xh2 50 ♖c6 ♔c5 51 ♖f6 ♖d7 52 ♖e5+ ♖d6 53 ♖c4+ ♖e7 54 ♖g6 ♖f2+ 55 ♖e1 ♖f6 56 ♖g7+ ♖f8 57 ♖b7 ♖f3 58 ♖xb6 ♔xb6 59 ♖xb6 ♖xg3 60 ♖xe6 ♖g7 61 ♖e5 ♖xb3 62 ♖f2 ♖b4 63 ♖xa5 ♖xe4 64 ♖a6 h5 65 a5 h4 66 ♖b6 ♖a4 67 a6 g4 68 a7 ♖a2+? (68...♖xa7 69 ♖b4 g3+) 69 ♖g1 ♖a1+ 70 ♖g2 ♖a2+ 71 ♖g1 ♖xa7 72 ♖b4 ♖a1+ 73 ♖g2 h3+ 74 ♖h2 ♖a2+ 75 ♖h1 ♖g2 76 ♖b7+ ♖g6 77 ♖g7+ 1/2-1/2. A nice escape!

12 d5! ♖d7?!

Another inaccuracy, according to Speelman himself. 12...e5 should have been preferred,

though White is better after 13 b4!, preparing the c4-c5 break.



13 ♖d4?

Allowing his opponent to breathe. 13 ♔h3! would question the Black set-up:

a) 13...♔f5 14 ♔xf5! is simple and strong, and if 14...gxf5 15 ♖ac1 or 14...exf5 15 ♖d4 with a clear advantage to White in either case. Instead, 14 g4?! only confuses matters after 14...♔e4 15 dxe6 (if 15 ♖d4 e5 16 f3 exd4 17 ♔xd4 ♖e5 18 ♙e3 f5 or 16 ♖c6!? g5 is unclear) 15...fxe6 16 g5 ♔xf3 17 gxh6 ♔xh6 18 ♔xe6! (if 18 ♔xh6 ♖e5! 19 ♖a1 ♙d7! 20 ♙e3 ♙h7 21 exf3 ♙xh6 22 f4 ♙xh3 23 ♙xh3 ♖xh3 24 fxe5 ♖d7) 18...♔xe3 19 ♙xe3 ♔b7 20 ♔h3+ (not 20 ♔d5+? ♖e5 21 ♔xb7 ♙xb7 22 f4 ♖h5 23 fxe5 ♖xe5 and Black is a bit better in the endgame, but 20 ♙g5 ♔e4 21 ♙e3 may another way to repeat moves) 20...♖f8 21 ♙f4+ ♖g7 22 ♙d4+ ♖f7 23 ♙f4+ with a draw.

b) 13...e5 14 ♖h4 is also bad for Black, though it isn't completely over after 14...♔f6.

c) 13...♔xf3! (if this is Black's best, it surely means something has gone wrong) 14 exf3 exd5 (or 14...♖e5 15 ♙e2 with a marked advantage to White) 15 cxd5, with the idea 15...♖e5 16 ♖g2!, and White is much better.

13...♔xg2 14 ♖xg2 ♙b7!?

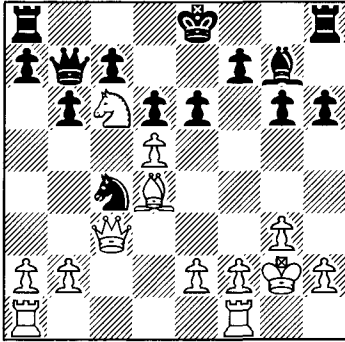
14...e5 15 ♖c6 ♖b8 16 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 should be a little bit better for White, owing to his spatial advantage.

15 ♗c6 ♗e5!?

Again 15...♗b8 16 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 should leave White with a slight edge.

16 ♗xe5?!

Better was 16 ♗d4! ♗xc4 (obviously 17 ♗xe5 can't be allowed, as the ♗c6 would then be unassailable) 17 ♖c3 and then:



a) 17...e5 18 ♖xc4 exd4 19 ♗xd4 would give White a small, but lasting advantage, as c7 is a chronic weakness.

b) 17...♗xd4 18 ♖xd4 (18 ♖xc4 ♗xb2 19 ♖ab1 is interesting; e.g. 19...exd5?! 20 ♖xd5 ♗f6 21 ♖b4 is probably more than a human can bear, despite being assessed as better for Black by *Fritz*!, while 19...♗g7 20 dxe6 0-0 21 ♖d5 ♗h7 and now 22 e7 ♖fe8 23 ♖bc1 ♗g8 and 22 exf7 ♖c8 23 ♗e7 ♖g4, parrying 24 ♖e4, are both unclear) 18...♗e5 19 f4 ♗xc6 (not 19...exd5?! 20 ♖ac1! ♗xc6 21 ♖xh8+ ♗e7 22 ♖g7 or 22 ♖xh6 and Black's position looks grim) 20 ♖xh8+ ♗d7! 21 ♖xh6 (or 21 ♖f6 ♗e7 22 e4 exd5 23 e5 d4+ 24 ♗g1 ♖d5 25 exd6 ♖xd6 26 ♖xf7 ♖e6, and if White exchanges queens, the c- and d-pawn duo will compensate for Black's small material deficit, while otherwise the somewhat exposed white king may provide Black with counterplay) 21...♗e7 (21...exd5!?) 22 e4 exd5 23 ♖h3+ f5 24 exf5 d4+ 25 ♗g1 gxf5 26 ♖ae1 and although White is of course better, maybe his opponent can hold after 26...♖d5!.

c) 17...exd5! 18 ♗xg7 ♖h7 isn't considered

by Speelman, who only gave 18...♖xc6? 19 ♗xh8 d4+ 20 ♖f3! winning for White (and thus credited 16 ♗d4 with an '!', and 17...exd5 with an '?'). The rook move seems to keep the balance; e.g. 19 b3 ♖xc6 20 ♗g1 ♗a5 21 ♖c3+ ♗d7 and Black has some pawns to console him for the weird placement of his pieces.

16...dxe5!

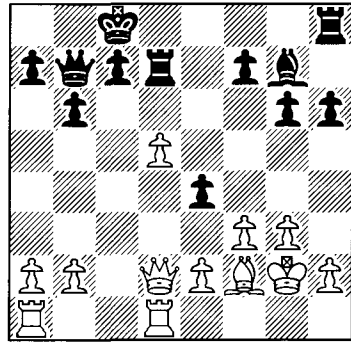
Now d5 becomes a target for Black's army.

17 ♖fd1 0-0-0! 18 f3!

Getting rid of the pin is White's priority. Instead, 18 ♖ac1? exd5 19 cxd5 wouldn't give anything concrete on the c-file, while after 19...♖d6 and 20...♖hd8, Black is ready to digest d5, leaving him clearly on top.

18...♖d7 19 ♗f2?!

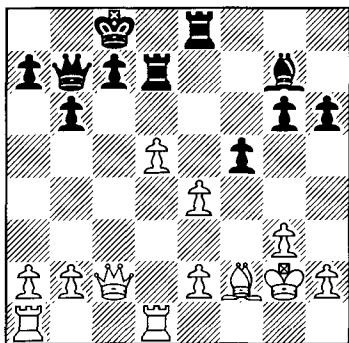
19 ♖ac1! would probably have led to a drawish ending: 19...♖hd8 (19...exd5 20 cxd5 ♖hd8 21 d6! ♖xd6 22 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♗f8 is unclear) 20 ♗xh6 ♗xh6 21 ♖xh6 exd5 22 ♖e3 (22 ♖g5?! e4!) 22...dxc4 (22...f6 23 ♖h6!) 23 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♖xe5 ♖d5 25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♖c2 and White will create counterplay by advancing his kingside pawns.

19...exd5 20 cxd5 e4!**21 fxe4 ♖e8 22 ♖c2**

White can't keep the pawn for long. If instead 22 ♖f4 f5 23 exf5 ♖xd5 24 ♖xd5 ♖xd5+ 25 ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 26 ♗xf3 ♖f8 27 ♖b1 ♖xf5+ 28 ♗g2 ♖d5, White has 3 pawn islands vs. 2 for his rival, and less active pieces;

though with precise play he should manage not to lose, e.g. 29 ♔e3! preventing both ...♞d2 and ...♞c5-c2.

22...f5!



23 exf5

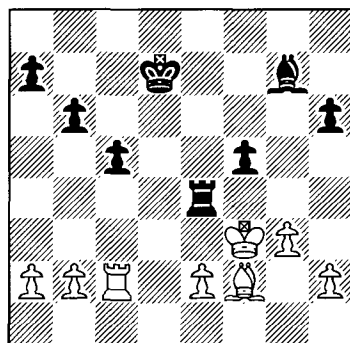
23 ♞ac1?! ♞xe4 24 ♖g1 looks worse, providing that Black finds 24...♖b8! (24...♞d6?! would lose the edge after 25 ♞d3! ♞e7 26 ♞cd1 ♞ed7 27 ♖b3 and White firmly protects his little soldier, or 25...♞b4 26 b3 ♞b5 27 ♖c4! ♞bxd5 28 ♞cd1! ♞xd3 29 ♞xd3 ♞xd3 30 exd3 and the unfortunate position of the ♖g7 ensures that White has time for 31 ♖g8+ and draws) 25 ♞d3 ♞e5 26 d6 ♞xd6 27 ♞xd6 cxd6 with a sound extra pawn (not 28 ♖d4? ♞xe2!), or 27 ♖d4 ♞xe2 28 ♖xe2 ♖xd4+ 29 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 and if White plays 30 ♖e8+ ♖c8 31 ♖xg6 f4 32 ♖xh6 to regain the pawns, then 32...♖e8 33 ♞f1 ♖e3+ 34 ♖h1 ♖e4+ 35 ♖g1 ♞d2 36 ♖h3 f3 gives Black a decisive attack.

23...♞xd5 24 ♖g1 gxf5

Alternatively, 24...♞xf5! 25 ♞ac1 (on 25 ♖d3 c5!, the double threat of 26...♞xb2 and 26...♞xf2 27 ♖xf2 ♖d4+ leaves White struggling) 25...♞e7 (25...♞ef8?! is strongly met by 26 ♖e3 g5 27 ♞d6! and 28 ♞c6, when the initiative passes to White) 26 ♖d3! ♞f8 27 ♖xg6 ♖xb2 28 ♖xh6 ♞h8 29 ♖g5 ♖e4 (29...♞eh7? fails tactically to 30 ♖f5+ ♖b8 31 ♖xh7! ♞xh7 32 ♞d8+ ♖c8 33 ♞xc8+ ♖xc8 34 ♞c2 with a decisive advantage) 30 ♞c4

♖xc4 (not 30...♖xe2?! 31 ♖d5 ♖b8 32 ♞e1 ♖h5 33 ♖xh5 ♞xe1+ 34 ♖xe1 ♞xh5, and if anyone is better, it certainly isn't Black!) 31 ♖xe7 ♖xa2 and the position is messy and quite unbalanced.

25 ♞ac1 ♞xd1+ 26 ♞xd1 ♖e4 27 ♞d2! ♖xc2 28 ♞xc2 ♞e4 29 ♖g2 c5 30 ♖f3 ♖d7



31 b3

In his extensive annotations for *Informator* 69, Speelman indicates 31 ♖e3! as the safest path to a draw, and then repeats the same suggestion two moves later. I will shorten his pertinent analysis a little, as it belongs more to an endgame book than the present one. For example, 31 ♖e3 h5 32 ♖f4 a5 33 ♞d2+ ♞d4 34 ♞xd4+ ♖xd4 35 b3 b5 36 e4 ♖e6 37 exf5+ ♖xf5 38 h3 a4! 39 g4+ hxg4+ 40 hxg4+ ♖e6 41 bxa4 bxa4 42 ♖e4 ♖f6 43 g5 ♖xg5 44 ♖xg5 ♖d6 is a draw.

31...♖c6 32 h3 h5 33 ♞c4?!

Again 33 ♖e3! is better, when 33...a5 34 ♖f4 (otherwise Black gains the upper hand with 34...♖e5) ♞d4 35 ♖d2! ♞e4 (if 35...♖e5 36 ♖c3 ♞e4 37 ♖xe5 ♞xe5 38 ♖f4) 36 ♖f4! repeats the position.

33...♖d5 34 ♞xe4 fxe4+ 35 ♖f4 b5

35...♖h6+? loses tempi and is therefore inadvisable; after 36 ♖f5 ♖d2 37 g4 hxg4 38 hxg4 b5 (or 38...e3 39 ♖h4 b5 40 g5 c4 41 bxc4+ bxc4 42 g6 ♖c3 43 ♖f6 and wins) 39 g5 c4 40 g6 ♖h6 and now either 41 bxc4+

bxc4 42 ♙xa7 or 41 ♖f6 should win for White.

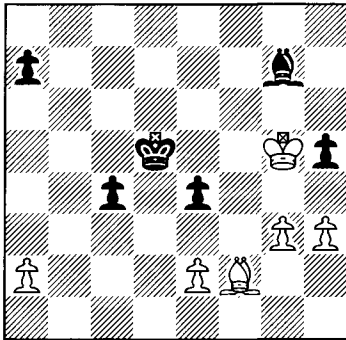
36 ♖g5?

Probably running out of time, the Swede misses his last chance here. Instead, 36 g4! would have saved the day, as the following variation shows: 36...hxc4 37 hxc4 c4 38 bxc4+ bxc4 39 g5 (but not 39 ♙xa7? ♙d4 40 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 41 g5 c3 when Black promotes with check and wins) 39...c3 40 ♙e3 c2 41 ♖f5 ♙b2 42 g6 and neither side can make progress, e.g. 42...a6 43 ♙c1 ♙g7.

36...c4 37 bxc4+

If 37 ♖xh5 ♙d4 38 ♙e1 c3 39 ♙xc3 (otherwise 39...b4, 40...e3, 41...c2) 39...♙xc3 wins as in the note with 40 ♙xc3 below.

37...bxc4



38 ♖xh5

If 38 ♙e3 ♙d4! (not 38...♙e5? 39 ♖xh5 ♙xg3 40 ♖g4 ♙e1 41 ♙xa7! ♙d2 42 ♙b6 c3 43 ♙a5 and draws) 39 ♙c1 (or 39 ♙d2 c3) 39...♙e5! 40 ♖xh5 ♙xg3 wins, e.g. 41 ♖g4 ♙e1 42 h4 c3 43 h5 ♖e6 44 h6 (if 44 ♙e3 ♙d2 45 ♖f4 ♙xe3+ 46 ♖xe3 ♖f6 and White can't move) 44...♖f7 45 ♖f5 ♙d2 46 ♙a3 c2 and the a-pawn is enough to win, or similarly 41 ♙d2 e3! 42 ♙xc3 c3 43 ♖g4 (if 43 ♙xa7 ♙f4! wins) 43...♖e4 44 ♙c1 ♙e1 45 h4 ♙d2 46 ♙a3 c2 etc.

38...♙d4! 39 ♙e1 c3 40 ♖g6

After 40 ♙xc3 ♙xc3 White loses by one tempo in the long line 41 ♖g6 ♙e1! 42 g4

♖e5 43 g5 ♖f4 44 ♖h6 ♖e3 45 g6 ♙c3 46 g7 ♙xg7+ 47 ♖xg7 ♖xe2 48 h4 ♖d3 49 h5 e3 50 h6 e2 51 h7 e1 ♖52 h8 ♖a1+ 53 ♖h7 ♖xh8+ 54 ♖xh8 ♖c3 55 ♖g7 ♖b2 56 a4 a5 57 ♖f6 ♖b3 58 ♖e5 ♖xa4 59 ♖d4 ♖b3 etc.

40...♙c4!

The winning move.

41 ♖f5 e3 42 ♙xc3 ♖xc3 43 ♖e4 ♖d2 44 ♖f3 ♙a1 45 h4 ♙f6 0-1

After his rather careless handling of the opening, Black played the endgame extremely well and was duly rewarded.

Game 79

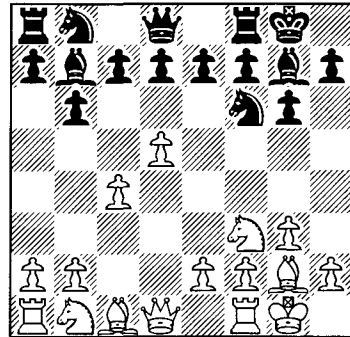
Z. Ribli-J. Plaskett

London 1986

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♙b7 3 ♙g2 g6 4 0-0 ♙g7 5 d4 ♖f6 6 c4 0-0?!

This is less accurate than 6...e6, since it permits the immediate...

7 d5!



This multi-purpose move shuts out the b7 bishop, while increasing White's space advantage; the d4-square also becomes available for the white knight.

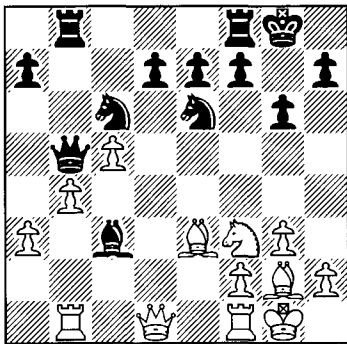
Instead, 7 ♖c3?! would return the favour, as after 7...♖e4! 8 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 9 ♙e3 c5 (or 9...d5) 10 ♖d2 d6 11 ♙h6 ♖c6 12 ♙xg7 ♖xg7 13 d5 ♙xf3 14 ♙xf3 ♖e5 15 ♙g2 White was only (very) marginally better in U.Andersson-N.Spirodonov, Sochi 1973.

7...c6!?

A logical attempt to open the long diagonal, although White maintains the better prospects here too.

Apart from the text, Black has also tried:

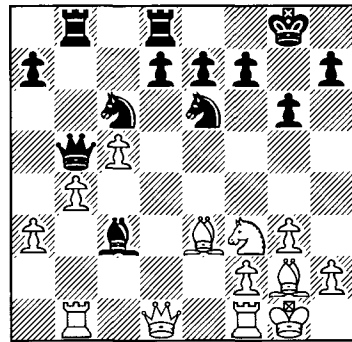
a) 7...b5? is thematic, but fails convincingly to 8 ♖b3! and Black simply loses a pawn. In B.Lalic-G.Welling, Isle of Man 1995, the Dutch player found some illusory activity, only to land in a difficult position when he regained his material: 8...♖c8 (8...a6 9 a4 doesn't save the pawn) 9 ♖xb5 c6 10 dxc6 ♟xc6 11 ♟c3 ♖b8 12 ♖a4 ♟a6 13 a3 ♟e8 14 c5 ♟c7 (taking the pawn back immediately wasn't satisfactory either, i.e. 14...♟xc3?! 15 bxc3 ♟xe2 16 ♖e1 ♟xf3 17 ♟xf3 ♖b7 18 ♟g5 or 16...♟b5 17 ♖h4 f6 18 ♟d4 and White enjoys a clear plus; the dynamism of White's pieces means the doubled c-pawns are only a minor nuisance) 15 ♖c2 ♖b7 16 b4 ♟xe2 17 ♖xe2 ♟xc3 18 ♖b1 and White has a big advantage with the bishop pair and some chances of a kingside attack (h4-h5, ♖e4-h4 etc.), while Black is deprived of any counter-play, as the break 18...a5 runs into 19 b5 and if 19...♟xb5 20 ♖d3!, threatening both ♖xb5 and a3-a4 (but not 20 a4?? ♟bd4 and Black keeps the material). The game continued 18...♖b5 19 ♖d1 ♟e6 20 ♟e3 and now:



a1) 20...a5?! again fails to achieve the desired result after 21 a4 ♖c4 22 b5 ♟cd4 (22...♟b4 is no better as 23 ♖b3 ♖xb3 24

♖xb3, followed by ♟h3xe6 and ♖fd1, leaves White clearly on top, or else 23 ♖c1!? and if 23...♟d3 24 ♖c2! ♟xc1 25 ♖xc1 ♟xc5 26 ♟xc5 ♖xc5 27 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 28 ♖xc3 with a clear advantage to White) 23 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 (if 23...♟xd4 24 ♖c1 ♖b4 25 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 26 ♖d3 and 27 ♖c4, or 25...♖xd4 26 ♟d5! and the endgame is highly unpleasant for Black) 24 ♟h1! (threatening 25 ♖c1 and wins) 24...♟f5 25 ♟f4 (not 25 ♟d5?! ♟xe3 26 ♟xc4 ♟xd1 27 ♖fxd1 ♖fc8 28 ♖xd7 ♖xc5 29 ♟d5 when it seems that most of White's edge has vanished) 25...e5 26 ♟g5 ♖xc5 27 ♖xd7 and even if the game is not over yet, the two bishops and a strong passed b-pawn obviously speak in White's favour.

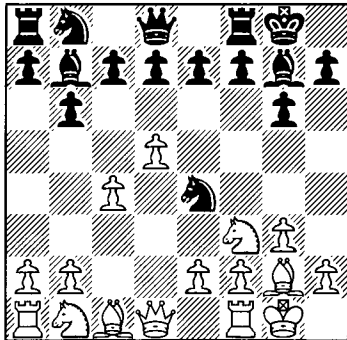
a2) 20...♖fd8



21 a4?! (probably too hasty; Lalic wanted to act straightaway since Black was ready to open the d-file with ...d7-d6, while if 21 ♖b3 or 21 ♖c2 Black has 21...♟cd4! and is OK thanks to the fork on e2; but White could have tried 21 ♖d5!, intending simply ♖fd1 and maybe ♟f1, and then 21...d6?! is bad on account of 22 ♟g5!) 21...♖c4 22 b5 ♟cd4 23 ♟xd4 ♟xd4 24 ♟h1 ♖bc8?? (24...♟f5! was called for, when Black would still have been in the game, e.g. 25 ♟f4 e5 26 ♟g5 ♖xc5 27 ♟xd8 ♖xd8 28 ♖d5 ♖xd5 29 ♟xd5 ♟e7 30 ♟b7 d5 and Black retains some chances to hold this ending; instead 26...♖dc8?! seems worse, as 27 ♖xd7 ♖xc5 28 ♟d5 ♖c7 29 ♟xf7+

♠g7 30 ♖d5 wins a pawn, or if 28...♗d6 29 ♜c6! and White is in control) 25 ♜c1 ♗f5 26 ♜d2 1-0. A clean refutation by Lalic of the impetuous ...b6-b5.

b) 7...♗e4!?, though odd-looking, is a good practical choice. Black wants to include his f-pawn in the battle, while the ♗e4 can retreat to d6. It may be a bit dubious, but at least White has to be more creative than just ♗c3, e2-e4 etc.



b1) 8 ♖c2 was White's choice in the two games in my database: 8...f5 9 ♗bd2 ♗d6 10 e4 (in the stem game O.Romanishin-J.Spelman, World Team Championship, Lucerne 1997, the Ukrainian opted for 10 ♗b3!?, but Black soon had no reason to complain: 10...c6 11 c5 ♗f7 12 dxc6 ♜xc6 13 ♜d1 ♗a6 14 cxb6 axb6 15 ♜e3 ♖b8 16 ♖d2 ♖b7 17 ♗bd4 ♜e4 18 ♗b5 ♜c6 19 ♗bd4 ♜e4 20 ♗b5 ♜c6 ½-½; possibly 11 ♜f4! offers more chances to achieve an edge) 10...c6 (10...e5 came into consideration, but it looks like White retains better prospects after 11 b3 ♗a6 12 ♜b2; Mainka's move is better, as it undermines the white centre while still preventing the development of the ♜c1) 11 ♜d1 (11 e5?! ♗f7 12 e6 dxe6 13 dxe6 ♗d6 14 c5 bxc5 is fine for Black: if White recaptures on c5, then after ...♗a6 and ...c6-c5 Black has very good control of the central squares; but 11 exf5 was possibly safer as White's centre comes under great pressure after the text

move) and then:

b11) 11...cxd5 (not bad, though Black wasn't obliged to release the tension immediately) 12 exd5 ♗a6 13 ♜b1 ♖c7 14 ♖a4 ♜ac8?! (so far Black's play has been excellent, and now with 14...♗c5! 15 ♖a3 e5 or 15...♗ce4 he could have gained slightly the upper hand) 15 b4! e5? (the beginning of real troubles; 15...♗xc4?! 16 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 17 ♖xd7 was dangerous, even if 17...♗c7 is not totally clear; but 15...e6! was the appropriate move, and if White doesn't swap on e6, then after ...e6xd5 c4xd5 his d-pawn will become a permanent target) 16 ♜b2 ♜fe8 17 ♜f1! (creating the nasty threat of c4-c5) 17...♗b8 (maybe 17...e4!?) 18 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 was more tenacious; in the game White simply nets a pawn for nothing) 18 ♖xa7 ♗c6 19 ♖a3 ♗d4 20 ♗xd4 exd4 21 ♖d3 ♗f7 22 ♜xd4 (with two extra pawns White has a decisive edge) 22...♗e5 23 ♖b3 d6 24 a4 f4 25 gxf4 1-0 D.Fridman-G.Mainka, Senden 2002.

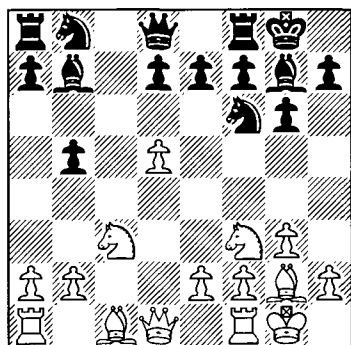
b12) 11...♖c7, trying to exploit the awkward position of the white queen, deserved serious attention. This is especially true as the march of the e-pawn once again fails to impress: 12 e5 ♗f7 13 e6 and now any of 13...dxe6 14 dxe6 ♗d8, the immediate 13...♗d8, or finally 13...♗d6, are messy and probably OK for Black.

b13) The cooperative 11...fxe4! would free White's game, but seems OK as well after 12 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♖xe4 cxd5 14 cxd5 e6 15 ♖g4! (this initiates a rather forced line; also possible is 15 ♗e5 ♗a6 16 ♖e2 when White is a little better; if instead 15 ♗g5, planning something like 16 ♖h4 h6 17 dxe6, then 15...♖f6 16 ♖e2 exd5 and Black shouldn't be bothered too much holding this, but not 15...h6? 16 ♖xg6! hxg5 17 ♜e4 ♜f6 18 ♖h7+ ♜f8 19 dxe6 and White is close to winning) 15...♜xd5 16 ♜xd5 exd5 17 ♗g5 ♖e8 (17...♜f5? loses to 18 ♜xd5+ ♜xd5 19 ♖c4 and despite being for the moment a whole rook up, Black cannot avoid huge material

losses) 18 ♔xd5+ ♖h8 19 ♔d2 h5 (on 19...♗c6 20 ♜e1 h5 21 ♞h3! yields White a powerful, if not decisive attack) 20 ♞c4 (or 20 ♞h3 ♞e2! 21 ♔f4 ♗c6 22 ♞xd7 ♗e5 23 ♔xe5 ♞xe5 24 ♔xa8 ♞xg5 and though White is a pawn up, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops gives Black fair chances to draw) 20...♗c6 21 ♜e1 ♞d8 22 ♗f7+ ♜xf7 23 ♔xf7 ♗e5 24 ♞d5 ♗xf7 25 ♞xf7 ♞f6 with reasonable drawing prospects.

b2) 8 ♗bd2 actually looks more sensible to me as Black is happy to be allowed ...f7-f5. (Fridman perhaps didn't pay attention to the fact that his opponent's Grandmaster brother is an expert in the Leningrad Dutch!) Then after 8...♗d6 (8...♗xd2 9 ♞xd2 is obviously better for White, who will continue e2-e4 with an easy game) 9 e4 e5 (Black has to stop e4-e5) 10 b3 (expanding more with 10 b4 is worth attention, but it seems that Black get sufficient counterplay after 10...a5 11 b5!? ♗e8 12 ♗e1 d6 13 ♗d3 ♗d7 or 11 c5 ♗e8 12 cxb6 axb4 13 bxc7 ♞xc7 with a balanced game) 10...f5 11 ♜e1, I prefer White here, as it is not clear how his opponent will mobilise his queenside pieces.

8 ♗c3 cxd5 9 cxd5 b5



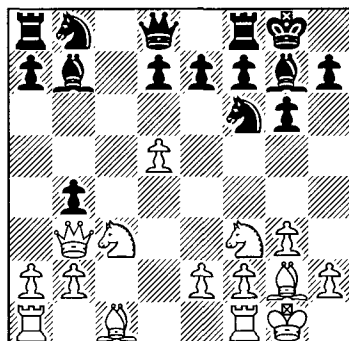
This is an improved version of 7...b5, but it still doesn't solve all Black's problems.

Boris Gulko was once successful with 9...e6 10 ♗e1 ♗xd5 11 ♗xd5 ♔xd5 12 ♔xd5 exd5 13 ♞xd5 ♗c6 14 ♗d3 ♞e7 15 ♔e3

½-½ L.Ljubojevic-B.Gulko, Vina del Mar 1988. In the final position Black can get rid of his isolated pawn by 15...♞e6 16 ♞xe6 dxe6, as declining the exchange isn't wise for White, e.g. 16 ♞b5 ♔d4 17 ♔h6 (or 17 ♗f4 ♞e4!) 17...a6 18 ♞a4 ♜fe8 and Black is very active.

This unique example of 9...e6 went well for Black, but the energetic 10 e4 would have been a tougher test, one sample variation being 10...exd5 11 e5 ♗e4 12 ♗xd5 d6 13 ♗g5! ♗xg5 14 ♗f6+ ♔xf6 15 ♔xb7 ♗d7 16 exf6 and White's advantage is indisputable. If instead 9...♗a6 10 ♗d4, with e2-e4 to follow, and Black's opening is anything but a success!

10 ♞b3 b4



11 ♗e5?!

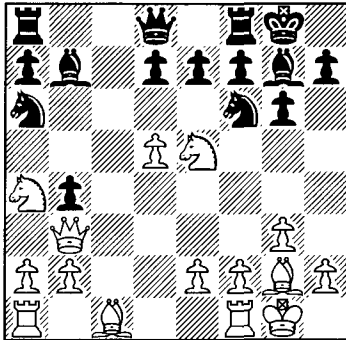
11 ♞xb4 would be less effective according to Ribli, who claims that 11...♔xd5 12 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 13 ♞h4 ♗c6 intending ...e7-e6 is already equal. But I disagree and believe that White still has the upper hand after 14 ♜d1 e6 15 ♔g5! (the tempting 15 ♗g5?! gives nothing after 15...h6 16 ♔xd5 exd5 17 ♗f3 ♞xb4 18 ♗xh4 ♜fe8 19 ♖f1 d4 or 19...♜ab8) 15...f6 16 ♔h6 or 15...♞a5 16 e4 ♗b6 17 ♔f6 and White is slightly better.

11...♗a6?!

Or 11...♞a5? 12 ♗c4 ♞c5 13 ♔e3 with a clear advantage to White as the b4 pawn is falling. Instead, 11...a5! was critical, the point being that Black will benefit from the open a-file in the event of a2-a3xb4, while if White

plays in the same fashion as the game, then the black knight isn't obliged to guard b4. For example, 12 ♖a4 (12 ♖d3 and 12 a3 lead to more or less the same position) 12...d6 13 ♖d3 (13 ♖c6 ♙xc6 14 dxc6 d5 is equal, as Black will eat c6, while White takes revenge on d5) 13...♖bd7 14 a3 and here 14...♖b6, 14...♙a6 or 14...♗b8 all give Black a decent game, as you can check!

12 ♖a4



12...♙c8?

Ribli also gives 12...♖c7 13 ♙d1 (not 13 d6? ♙xg2 14 dxc7 ♗xc7 and the ♖e5 is hanging) 13...♙xd5? 14 ♙xd5 ♖cxd5 15 ♙xd5 ♖xd5 16 ♗xd5 e6 17 ♗d6 ♗a5 18 ♖c5 with a big advantage for White. This is correct, but the computer's move 13...♗c8 might make Black's position playable.

13 ♙d1 ♗c7

On 13...d6 the correct response is 14 ♖d3! (14 ♖c6? ♙xc6 15 dxc6 ♖b8 is about OK for Black) 14...♗a5 15 e4 e6 16 a3 (not 16 dxe6?? ♙c6! winning the offside knight) 16...exd5 17 axb4 ♗b5 (otherwise 18 exd5 is much better for White) 18 ♖c3 ♗c4 19 ♗xc4 and Black is lost after either 19...dxc4 20 e5 or 19...♙xc4 20 b5 and 21 ♙xa7.

14 ♙f4! ♗c2?!

14...d6 was the last chance, even though White clearly has the better of it after 15 ♙ac1 ♗a5 16 ♖c6 ♙xc6 17 dxc6.

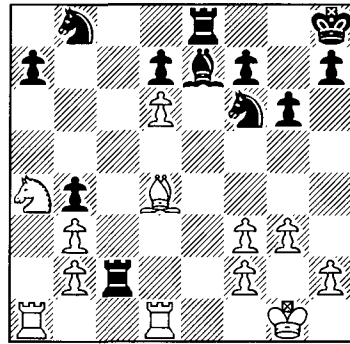
15 ♖c6!

A nice interference!

15...♗xb3 16 ♖xe7+ ♖h8 17 axb3

White is now much better.

17...♙c2 18 ♙f3 ♙e8 19 d6 ♙xf3 20 exf3 ♖b8 21 ♙e3 ♙f8 22 ♙d4 ♙xe7



23 ♙e1?!

Here White missed a nice win in 23 dxe7 ♙g7 24 g4 h6 25 h4 g5 26 f4 ♙g6 27 h5+! (the cleanest way to proceed; whereas Ribli's 27 f5+?! can become tricky for White to win: 27...♙g7 28 hxg5 hxg5 29 f4 ♖c6 30 fxg5 ♖xd4 31 gxf6+ ♙xf6 32 ♙xd4 ♙xe7 33 ♙c4 ♙d2 34 ♖c5 d5! or 34 ♙xb4 ♙ec2 and Black is fishing in troubled waters) 27...♙g7 28 fxg5 hxg5 29 f4 ♖c6 30 h6+ when White grabs the piece in more favourable circumstances and wins easily.

After the text move the Hungarian has to display all his skill again.

23...♙g7 24 ♙xe7 ♙ec8 25 ♙g2 ♙d2 26 ♙e3 ♙xd6 27 ♙xa7 ♖c6 28 ♙c5 ♙e6 29 ♙xe6 dxe6 30 ♖b6 ♙d8 31 ♙a6 ♙d3 32 ♖c4 ♖b8 33 ♙a7! ♖fd7

Not 33...♙xb3? 34 ♖e5 and wins.

34 ♙xb4 ♖c6 35 ♙b7 ♖xb4 36 ♙xb4 ♖c5 37 ♙b5 ♖xb3 38 ♖e5 ♙d5

Bad news for Black: the rook swap is forced in order to prevent 39 ♙b7.

39 ♙xd5 exd5 40 f4 ♙f6 41 ♙f3 ♙e6 42 ♙e3 d4+ 43 ♙e4 f5+ 44 ♖d3 ♖d5 45 f3! g5 46 ♖d7! h6

If 46...gxf4 47 gxf4! h6 48 ♖f6+ ♙e6 49

♖h5, followed by either h2-h3 and ♖c4, or ♖g7 (or ♖g3), depending on what Black does.

47 ♖f6+ ♖e6 48 fxf5 hxf5 49 ♖h7 g4 50 fxf4 fxf4 51 ♖c4!

Not 51 ♖g5+ ♖d5 52 ♖e4? ♖c1+ 53 ♖c2 ♖xe4 54 ♖xc1 ♖e3! 55 ♖d1 ♖d3! and it is Black who wins!

51...♖d2+ 52 ♖xd4 ♖f1 53 ♖g5+ ♖f5 54 ♖e4 ♖xh2 55 ♖d2 1-0

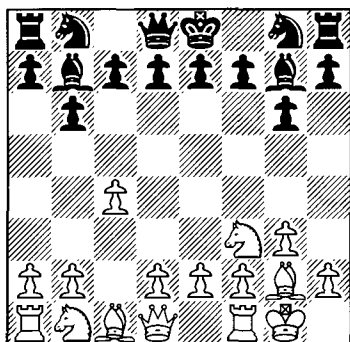
The black knight finds itself in a corral and ♖e3-f2-g2 rounds it up.

13 ♖b2 was T.Markowski-L.Psakhis, Bled Olympiad 2002. White had more space and thus a slight edge, which the Polish GM eventually converted into a win.

b) 7...♖f6 8 d4 ♖xd4 9 ♖xd4 ♖xg2 10 ♖xg2 cxd4 11 ♖xd4 0-0 12 ♖b2 was Z.Ribli-S.Dvoiryrs, European Cup 1992, with the same verdict as before. Generally Black must be ready to suffer in these lines; that is unless the immediate 12...d5 works.

Game 80
H.Wirthensohn-A.Miles
Biel 1983

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 g6 4 0-0 ♖g7 5 c4



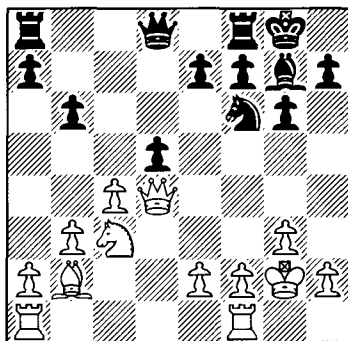
5...c5 6 ♖c3 ♖c6

Restricting White's options seems logical. For that reason, I find a bit strange to go for 6...♖f6 in the current situation, although the move is playable and in fact more popular (see the next two games).

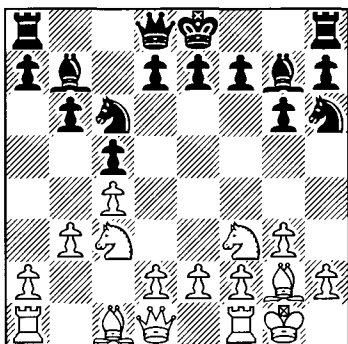
7 b3 ♖h6

A matter of taste. Black can also simplify the position with either 7...♖d4 or 7...♖f6. In both cases he gets a solid, albeit rather passive game:

a) 7...♖d4 8 e3 ♖xf3+ 9 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 10 ♖xf3 ♖f6 (10...♖h6?!) 11 d4 0-0 12 ♖d1 d6



Then White must avoid the trick 13 ♖xd5? ♖e8 14 ♖d2 e6 and Black is better (though after 15 ♖a3 it is not over yet), so the critical line is 13 cxd5 e6 and now 14 ♖ad1 (otherwise 14...♖xd5 equalises at once) 14...♖xd5 15 ♖xg7+?! (novelty!) 15...♖xg7 16 ♖xd5+ ♖h6. I am too lazy to try and find a forced win for White here, but if it exists, then 17 ♖f6 ♖c8 18 ♖g4+ should be a good start.



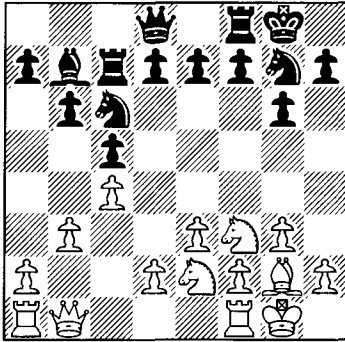
8 ♖b2 0-0 9 e3 ♖f5 10 ♖b1

The most spirited move. Of course White has many other insipid options, such as 10 d3 or 10 ♖b1.

10...♗c8 11 ♖e2 ♗c7

An interesting idea, preparing ...♗a8.

12 ♗xg7 ♖xg7



13 ♖f4

I'm not convinced about the merits of this knight jump. White would probably have done better playing for d2-d4, for example by 13 ♖b2 ♗a8 14 ♖e1?, but perhaps he was afraid of 13...d5. The immediate 13 d4?!, on the other hand, would be in Black's favour, i.e. 13...cxd4 14 ♖exd4 ♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 ♗xg2 16 ♖xg2 d5 with a slight plus.

13...e6 14 ♖b2 d6 15 h4?!

This merely helps Black generate play against the white king. 15 d4 was probably best.

15...h6 16 ♖h2!

A weird move at first sight, but it is actually good prophylaxis. As the white cavalry will be repelled by ...g5 and ...g4 in any case, it is of crucial importance for White to prepare the defensive thrust f2-f4.

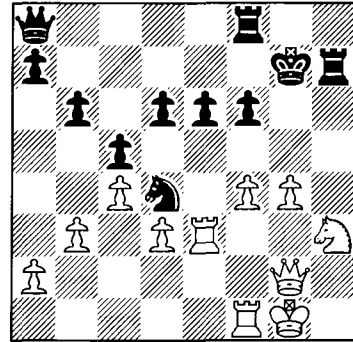
16...g5 17 hxg5 hxg5 18 ♖h3 ♖e5 19 ♗xb7 ♗xb7 20 f4 gxf4 21 exf4?

Conceding the d4-square for nothing. After the correct 21 gxf4 ♖h4 22 fxe5 ♖xh3 23 ♗f3 or 21...♖g6 Black might be a trifle better, but the result would still have been open.

21...♖c6 22 d3 ♖f5 23 g4 ♖fd4 24 ♖g2 f6!

Clearing the way for Black's silly-looking rook on b7 to enter the game.

25 ♗ae1 ♗h7 26 ♖f3 ♖g7 27 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 28 ♗e3 ♖a8



Miles judged that he couldn't achieve much with a direct attack down the h-file and therefore offers a trade of queens. Thanks to his dominant knight at d4 and White's loose pawns at f4 and g4, Black's advantage in the arising endgame is indeed indisputable.

29 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 30 ♖g2 ♗ah8 31 ♗h1 a5

Trying to open a second front with ...a5-a4, which explains White's reply.

32 a4 ♖f7

Not 32...♖xb3? 33 ♖b1.

33 ♗ee1 ♖e7 34 ♖f2 ♗xh1 35 ♖xh1 f5!

36 gxf5?!

36 g5? was even worse, as 36...♗h4 37 ♗f1 ♗g4+ 38 ♖h2 e5 or 38...♖e2 wins a pawn and the game. Instead, 36 ♖f2 fxf4 37 ♖xg4 was more stubborn; after 37...♗f8 (or 37...♗h4 38 ♖e3 and 39 ♖g3) 38 ♖g3 Black is of course much better, but the game is not over yet.

36...♖xf5 37 ♖f2 ♗g8+ 38 ♖h2 ♗g3 39 ♗e4 ♖d7 40 ♗e2 ♗f3 41 ♗d2 ♖xf4 42 ♖g2 ♖e3+ 43 ♖g1 ♗f3 0-1

The final position is hopeless for White, being condemned to passivity, while his opponent will gradually improve by ...d6-d5, ...♖d6-e5-d4, etc.

Game 81

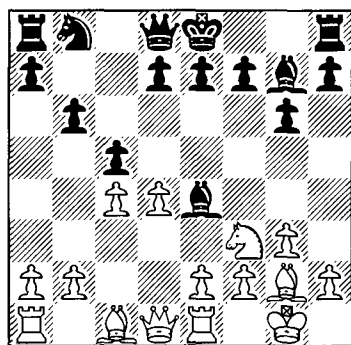
A.Summerscale-M.Adams

British Championship, Hove 1997

1 $\text{d}f3$ **b6** 2 $\text{g}3$ $\text{e}b7$ 3 $\text{e}g2$ **g6** 4 0-0 $\text{e}g7$
5 **c4** **c5** 6 $\text{d}c3$ $\text{d}f6$ 7 $\text{e}e1$

7 $d4$ $cxd4$ 8 $\text{w}xd4$ $d6$ 9 $\text{e}e3$ $\text{d}bd7$ has become a fashionable line recently. Play generally continues 10 $\text{f}fd1$ $\text{f}c8$ 11 $\text{f}ac1$ 0-0 12 $\text{w}h4$ $a6$ 13 $b3$ (by whatever move order) and the assessment oscillates between a small plus for White and equality.

7... $\text{d}e4$ 8 $\text{d}xe4$ $\text{e}xe4$ 9 $d4!$



A principled attempt to utilise White's lead in development. The more restrained 9 $d3$ (as in the next game) promises Black an easy life.

9...0-0!

Other moves are worse:

a) 9... $cxd4?$? 10 $\text{e}h6!$ secures White an enduring edge after 10... $\text{e}xh6$ 11 $\text{w}xd4$ 0-0 12 $\text{w}xe4$ $\text{d}c6$ 13 $\text{f}ad1$ $\text{f}c8$ and then:

a1) 14 $a3!$ (planning to seize more space on the queenside) 14... $\text{w}c7$ 15 $e3$ $\text{e}g7$ 16 $\text{f}e2$ $d6$ (if Black really wants to swap knights he'd do better to try it now with 16... $\text{d}e5!$?) 17 $\text{f}c2$ $a5$ 18 $b3$ $\text{f}fe8$ 19 $h4$ $\text{d}e5$ 20 $\text{d}d4$ $\text{d}d7$ 21 $\text{d}b5$ $\text{w}d8$ 22 $b4$ and White had a slight but persistent plus in P.Tregubov-R.Govedarica, Belgrade 1996. White can play on both wings and calmly reinforce his position without worrying about enemy counterplay.

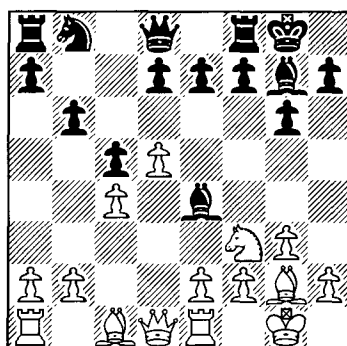
a2) 14 $h4!$? $e6!$ was seen in O.Romanishin-L.Psakhis, Jurmala 1987. Now the Ukrainian grandmaster rightly suggests 15 $\text{f}d6!$? (in the game he played the more timid 15 $e3!$!) 15... $\text{w}f6$ (if 15... $\text{w}e7$ 16 $\text{f}ed1$ with some pressure) 16 $b3$ $\text{w}b2$, but now instead of his complicated 17 $\text{f}xd7$ $\text{w}xa2$ 18 $\text{e}h3$ variation, 17 $\text{w}b1!$ seems to keep the advantages of White's position without risking any miscalculation.

b) 9... $\text{d}c6!$? is also suspicious on account of 10 $d5$ and then:

b1) 10... $\text{d}b4?$ is answered by 11 $\text{d}h4!$ and if 11... $\text{d}c2?$ (on 11... $\text{e}xg2$ 12 $\text{e}xg2$ or 12 $\text{d}xg2$ White enjoys a spatial advantage, while the $\text{d}b4$ is misplaced) 12 $\text{e}xe4$ $\text{d}xa1$ 13 $\text{w}d3$ and $\text{w}b1$ will pick up the dead meat at $a1$, after which White's two minor pieces will clearly outweigh the enemy rook.

b2) 10... $\text{d}a5$ 11 $\text{e}f1!$ has similarities with the position Speelman obtained after 12 $d5!$ in Game 78 (vs. Akesson). Once again Black's game suffers from the 'trapped' bishop at $e4$, e.g. 11... $\text{d}xc4$ (taking on $f3$ isn't satisfactory either, as after 11... $\text{e}xf3$ 12 $exf3$ White is clearly better) 12 $\text{d}g5$ $f5$ 13 $f3$ $\text{d}xb2$ (13... $h6?$? 14 $\text{d}h3$ just weakens Black's king-side further) 14 $\text{e}xb2$ $\text{e}xb2$ 15 $fxe4$ and although from a materialistic point of view Black may be OK, the poor king makes his position unattractive.

10 d5



10...b5!

Once again the best move. Instead:

a) 10...d6?! 11 ♖h3! ♗xf3 12 exf3 is no fun for Black who is deprived of any counterplay, while having conceded the bishop pair and pressure against e7. White's advantage may be not too great for the moment, but he can torture his opponent at leisure; for example 12...♗d7 13 ♖a4 ♗f6 14 f4 a6 15 f5 b5 16 cxb5 axb5 17 ♖xb5 ♗xd5 18 ♖g2 ♖b8 (18...e6!? might have been tried) 19 ♖e2 ♗c7 20 ♖xe7 ♗xb2 21 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 22 a4 c4 23 a5 d5 24 a6 d4 25 ♖c5 c3 26 a7 ♗a8 27 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 28 ♖xd4 ♖c8 29 ♖ec1 ♖d2 30 ♖e3 ♖d7 31 f6 ♖c6 32 ♖xc3 ♖a6 33 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 34 ♖xa6 ♖a8 35 ♖a1 ♖d6 1-0 G.Miralles-J.Koch, Paris 1989.

b) 10...e6 doesn't promise full equality either:

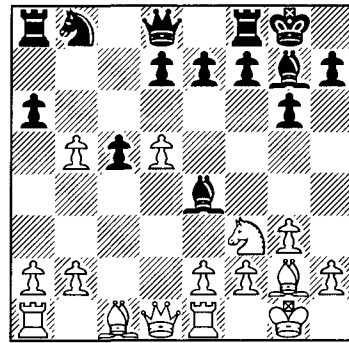
b1) 11 ♖h3 ♗xf3 12 exf3 ♗a6 13 ♖e2?! (I think 13 f4 or 13 ♖b1 is stronger; in the latter case White may become active on the queen-side himself by a2-a3, b2-b4) 13...♗c7 14 ♖f4 ♖d4 15 ♖a4 (15 ♖h6 was interesting – even if White had just played 14 ♖f4 – when Black has three sensible replies: on 15...♖e8 16 d6 ♗a6 17 f4 or 15...♖g7 16 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 17 d6, White may have achieved a little something, but after 15...exd5!? 16 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 17 cxd5 (or 17 ♖xd7 dxc4) 17...♖d6 18 f4 ♗xd5 19 ♖g2 ♖d8, despite having only one pawn for the exchange, Black has reasonable compensation with his 4-2 majority on the queenside) 15...a6 16 ♖d1 exd5 (or 16...b5!?) 17 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 18 cxd5 b5 and Black had a slight edge, though this proved insufficient against his opponent's accurate defence: 19 ♖c2 ♖d6 20 b4! ♖ac8 21 ♖d2 ♖c7?! (21...♖f6!) 22 f4 ♖f6 23 bxc5 ♖xc5 24 f5 ♗g7 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 ♖g2 ♖fc8 27 ♖e4 ♖c4 28 ♗g2 ♖e8 29 ♖f3 ♖xe2 30 ♖xe2 ♖c5 31 h4 ♖c2 32 ♖d2 ½-½ G.Borgo-M.Pavlovic, Lido Estensi 2003.

b2) 11 ♖f1 is the alternative, and it's not clear to me if the bishop is more useful pressing the e6 spot or hindering the ...b6-b5 ad-

vance. E.Lobron-A.Bandza, Wiesbaden 1993, continued 11...exd5 (or 11...♖xf3 12 exf3 ♗a6 as in Borgo-Pavlovic above) 12 cxd5 h6 13 ♖b3 d6 14 ♗d2, and now Black came up with the esoteric manoeuvre 14...♖f5 15 ♗c4 ♖c8 16 a4 ♖a6 17 e4 ♖xc4, when the bishop had made a third of all Black's moves, only to exchange itself for a knight. It is no wonder that 18 ♖xc4 gave White a clear plus.

11 cxb5

After 11 ♗d2 ♖xg2 12 ♗xg2 Black would continue his generous offer à la Benko with 12...d6, when he has interesting counterplay.

11...a6**12 bxa6**

The principled reaction. Alternatively:

a) 12 d6 is worth attention, but shouldn't be too annoying for Black, e.g. 12...axb5 13 ♖g5 f6 14 ♖b3+! e6 15 ♖e3 ♖b6 and Black isn't worse. 12...e6 is also sensible: Black can't support his c-pawn with a subsequent ...d7-d6, but White's d-pawn has also become weak.

b) 12 ♖f1 occurred in O.Romanishin-S.Conquest, Saint Vincent 2000, continuing 12...d6 13 ♗h4 (if 13 ♗g5?! ♖f5 14 e4 ♖d7 15 bxa6 ♗xa6, and although I'm not an expert in the Benko Gambit, I believe this version is quite satisfactory for Black) 13...♖a5! 14 ♖d2 (14 f3? ♖c2! was the point of Conquest's previous move: the ♖e1 is hanging, and Black has the better game after 15 ♖d2

♖a4 16 ♖c1 axb5 or 15...♙xd1 16 ♙xa5 axb5) 14...♗xb5 15 ♙c3 ♗b7 16 ♙g2 and a draw was agreed as Black can eliminate all bishops and equalise.

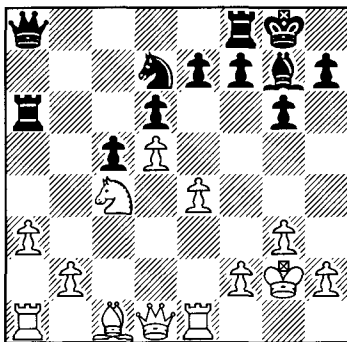
12...♗xa6 13 ♖d2

Now that the e4 pawn has vanished, playing against the 'awkward' bishop on e4 would be pointless. Indeed, after 13 ♙h3 or 13 ♙f1, the rook lift 13...♞d6 would win the d5 pawn; but even if this manoeuvre wasn't possible, 13...e6 would be perfectly OK for Black.

13...♙xg2 14 ♙xg2 d6 15 ♖c4

The knight is ideally placed here, so Black's next few moves aim at chasing it away, while at the same time exerting pressure on the white queenside.

15...♖d7 16 e4 ♗a8 17 a3



17...♗a4

17...♖b6 was a reasonable alternative, when 18 ♖e3 ♞b8 (or 18...♗a4!?) 19 ♞a2 gives a typical Benko Gambit type position, in which White has retained his extra material but can hardly move his queenside. Similarly, exchanging knights by 18 ♖xb6 ♞xb6 would leave White's pieces tied to the defence of b2, so that after 19 ♞c2 ♞fb8 or 19...f5 Black has enough play for the pawn.

18 ♗c2 ♗a6 19 ♖e3 ♖e5

Showing the point of delaying ...♖b6, since the horse now finds a more active post at e5.

20 ♞d1 ♞d4! 21 ♗a2

21 ♙d2? ♗e2 is obviously bad as White

loses the e4 pawn; but 21 ♞b1 was worth consideration.

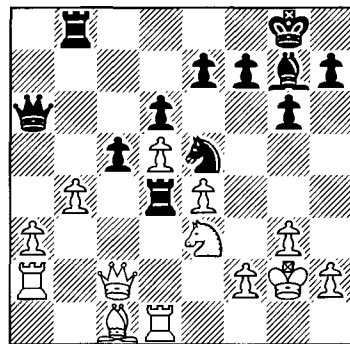
21...♞b8

Black could also opt for the double-edged 21...f5!? 22 exf5 gxf5 23 b3!? (this may be stronger than Adams' suggestion of 23 f4 ♖d3 24 b3 ♖xc1 25 ♗xc1 ♞e4, intending ...♗b7 and ...♙d4, after which Black can exchange twice on e3 and take on d5, when he is at least not worse) and then:

a) 23...♗b7 24 ♙b2?! seems too dangerous, as 24...f4! 25 ♙xd4 cxd4 26 gxf4 ♞xf4! gives Black a powerful attack (but not 26...dxe3? 27 fxec3 ♖g4 28 ♗d3 White's king isn't so vulnerable and the material advantage should tell in the end). I believe White has to try 24 b4, and hope that after 24...f4 25 gxf4 he can successfully defend his king.

b) 23...f4 can be tricky too, as the following variation shows: 24 ♞xd4 cxd4 25 ♖f5 ♗b7 (not 25...d3? 26 ♖xe7+ ♙f7 27 ♗c7 and White should win) 26 ♗e4 ♗xb3 27 ♞d2 ♞xf5 28 ♗xf5 ♗xd5+ 29 ♙h3 with a messy situation.

22 b4!



After this Adams assesses the game as equal, an opinion I share. Indeed, Black could (and should) have settled for a repetition of moves a bit later, as the final position of this well-played game is better for White.

22...♞xd1 23 ♖xd1 ♞c8 24 bxc5 ♞xc5 25 ♗b1 ♖d3 26 ♙e3 ♞c8?!

Now White consolidates. Instead, Black should take the draw by 26...♖e1+ 27 ♖g1 ♖f3+ etc.

27 f3 h5 28 a4!

Intending ♖b5.

28...♖b2?

28...♖c4 was better, when Black still has counterplay.

29 ♖xb2!

Not 29 ♖xb2?? ♖e2+ 30 ♖f2 ♖c2 31 ♖f1 ♖d4 and wins.

29...♖xb2 ½-½

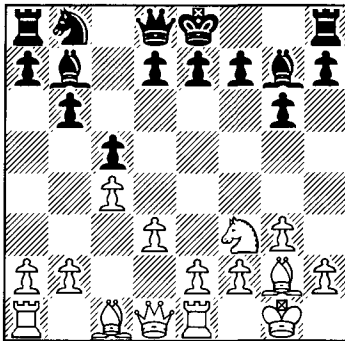
Presumably White was short of time when he agreed a draw, since he clearly has the upper hand now and can hardly lose after 30 ♖xb2 ♖xa4, or if 30...♖d3? 31 ♖d4! ♖c2+ 32 ♖f2.

Game 82

A.Dunnington-Y.Pelletier

Cannes 1998

1 ♖f3 b6 2 g3 ♖b7 3 ♖g2 g6 4 0-0 ♖g7
5 c4 c5 6 ♖c3 ♖f6 7 ♖e1 ♖e4 8 ♖xe4
♖xe4 9 d3 ♖b7



10 e4

Weakening d4, though that isn't too relevant for the time being. Instead:

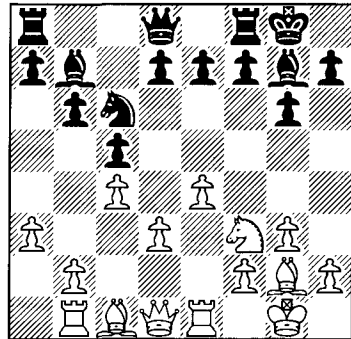
a) 10 d4 invites simplifications: 10...cxd4 11 ♖xd4 ♖xg2 12 ♖xg2 ♖c6 (12...♖c8!? 13 ♖d3 or 13 b3 is about equal too) 13 ♖xc6 ½-½ R.Ruck-E.Agrest, Griesheim 2003. Not

a hard-fought battle, but it's hard to create much in this final position!

b) 10 ♖b1 0-0 11 a3 d6 (the 'big' step forward with 11...d5 is also possible, e.g. 12 ♖d2 ♖d7 13 b4 dxc4 14 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 15 ♖xc4 ♖d7 and Black had nothing to complain about in F.Begun-V.Ikonnikov, Azov 1991; perhaps 12 cxd5 and 13 b4 is better) 12 b4 ♖d7 13 ♖b2 ♖xb2 14 ♖xb2 ♖b8 15 ♖d2 a6 16 ♖cb1 ♖c7 17 h4 h5 18 bxc5 bxc5 19 ♖e5 ♖xg2 20 ♖xd7 ♖xb2 21 ♖xb2 ♖xd7 22 ♖xg2 with complete equality in R.Dzindzichashvili-S.Kudrin, US Championship 1989, and a draw after 26 more eventless moves.

10...♖c6 11 ♖b1 0-0 12 a3

If 12 ♖e3 ♖c8 13 b3, insisting on playing for d3-d4 (which, by the way, Black could safely allow), then 13...e5!? and Black can prepare ...f7-f5, if he wants to rattle White's cage.



12...a5

Or 12...d6 13 b4 ♖d7 and Black can think about plans involving his e- and f-pawns. I would then prefer his side, but it's probably only a matter of taste.

13 ♖d2 a4 14 e5 e6 15 d4

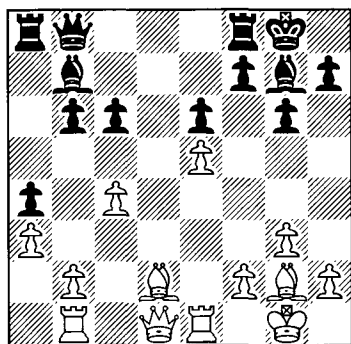
Finally there's something happening!

15...d6!

15...d5!? was less solid, but perhaps possible too; e.g. 16 ♖g5 ♖d7 or 16...f6 17 exf6 ♖xf6 with a messy position in either case.

Capturing at d4, on the other hand, doesn't

look appropriate. After 15...♖xd4? 16 ♖xd4 ♙xg2 17 ♖xg2 cxd4 18 ♙b4 White will regain the pawn and exert strong pressure against d7 with a clear plus. Or 15...cxd4? 16 ♖xd4 ♖b8 17 ♖xc6 dxc6 (if 17...♙xc6 18 ♙b4! and ♙d6 is nasty), and now open your eyes widely...



18 b4!! – this true computer move increases White's advantage. It discourages Black from playing the freeing ...c6-c5, indirectly covers e5, while Black will also have to reckon with both b4-b5 and c4-c5 pushes. For example:

a) 18...♙xe5? 19 b5! ♜c8 is the only way to protect both e5 and c6, but this runs into 20 c5! and Black is in deep trouble.

b) 18...axb3? 19 ♖xb3 ♜a6 20 ♙b4 ♜d8 (20...c5? 21 ♙xb7 ♖xb7 22 ♙xc5 wins a pawn with a marked advantage) 21 ♙d6 and White is dictating the course of the game, whether his opponent saps the exchange or not.

c) 18...♜d8 19 c5! (19 f4? reinforces e5 but leaves the king rather exposed; Black can try to exploit this by 19...c5 20 bxc5 ♙xg2 21 ♙xg2 ♖c7 22 cxb6 ♖xc4 23 ♖b2, though it is not clear if he has enough compensation for the pawn even so) 19...♙xe5 20 b5! (once again this turns out well for White) 20...♙c3 21 bxc6 ♙xd2 (if 21...♜xd2? 22 ♖c1 regains

the material with a huge dividend) 22 cxb7 ♜a5 23 c6 ♙xe1 24 ♖xe1 and I believe the two passers should give White a close to decisive edge.

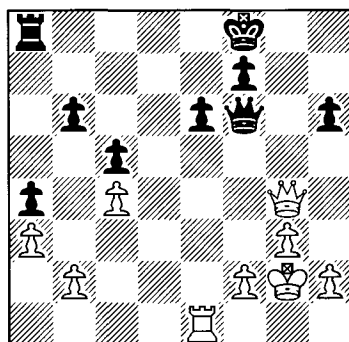
16 ♙g5 ♖b8 17 dxc5 dxc5 18 ♖e2 h6 19 ♙f6 ♙xf6 20 exf6 ♖d8 21 ♖e5

21 ♖e3 was an alternative, though the position is still level after 21...♖xf6 22 ♖xh6 ♜ab8, freeing the knight (which was restricted in its movement, due to the threat of ♖g5 winning the bishop at b7).

21...♖d4 22 ♖g4 ♙xg2 23 ♖xg6!

On 23 ♖xg2 ♜a7! defends the seventh rank and makes ...♖xf6 possible, while if 24 ♖xg6? fxg6 25 ♖xg6+ ♖h8 26 ♖xh6+ ♜h7 wins for Black.

23...♖f3+ 24 ♖xg2 ♖xe1+ 25 ♜xe1 ♖xf6 26 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8



The mist has cleared and the position is approximately equal. With so few pieces remaining on the board, exploiting the slightly vulnerable position of the black monarch isn't realistic for White.

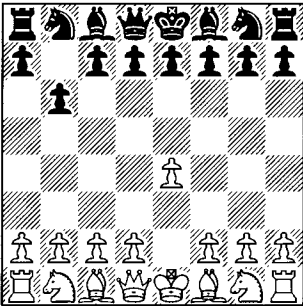
27 ♜d1 ♖xb2 28 ♖f4 ♙g7 29 ♖g4+ ♖h8 30 ♖h4 ♖g7 31 ♜d8+ ♜xd8 32 ♖xd8+ ♖h7 33 ♖xb6 ♖d4 34 ♖b5 ♖e4+ 35 ♙g1 ♖e1+ 36 ♙g2 ♖e4+ 37 ♙g1 ♖e1+ ½-½

An interesting game, despite its relatively insipid beginning.

INDEX OF VARIATIONS

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2 d4

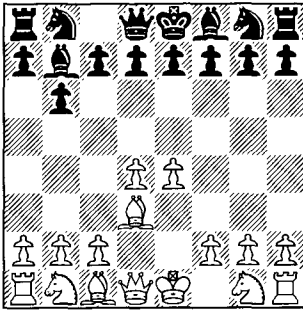
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- 2 ♜f3 ♖b7 3 ♜c3
 - 3... e6 4 d4 – 2 d4
 - 3... ♜f6 – *Game 5*
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3 ♙d3



3...e6

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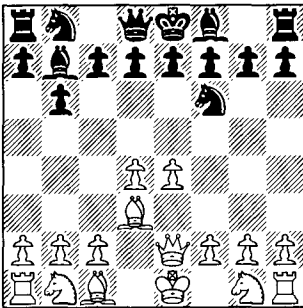
3...♘f6

4 ♘d2 e6 5 ♘gf3 c5 6 c3

6...cxd4 – Game 13

6...♘c6 – Game 14

4 ♖e2



4...e6 5 ♘f3 d5 6 e5 ♘fd7 7 0-0

7...♙e7 – Game 11

7...c5 – Game 12

4...♘c6 5 c3 e5 6 ♘f3 d6 7 0-0 ♘d7

8 ♙a6 – Game 9

8 ♘a3 – Game 10

3...e6 4 ♘f3 ♙b4

4...♘e7 – Game 7

4...d6 – *Game 8*

4...♘f6 – notes to *Game 16*

5 ♙d3 ♘f6 6 ♙g5

6 e5 – *Game 16*

6 ♖e2 d5 7 exd5

7...♗xd5 – *Game 17*

7...♘xd5 – *Game 18*

6...h6 7 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 bxc3 d6

9...d5 – *Game 19*

10 ♘d2 e5

10...g5 – *Game 20*

10...♗g6 – *Game 21*

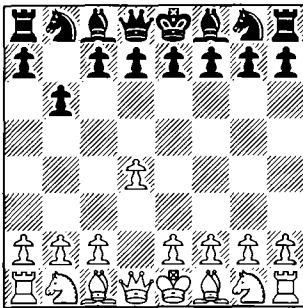
11 f4

11...exd4 – *Game 22*

11...♗e7 – *Game 23*

Chapter 2

1 d4 b6



2 c4

2 e3 b6 3 ♙d3 ♙b7 4 ♘f3 f5 – *Game 26*

2 ♙g5 ♙b7

3 e3

3...g6 – *Game 27*

3...♘f6 – *Game 28*

3 c4 f6 – *Game 29*

2 ♘f3 ♙b7 3 g3

3...g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5 0-0 – *Chapter 4*

3...♙xf3 4 exf3 d5 5 f4

5...g6 – *Game 24*

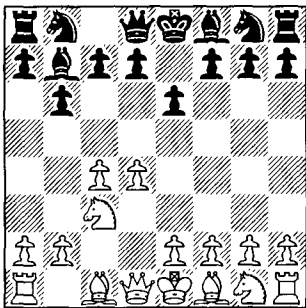
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2...e6

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3 ♘c3 e6



4 a3

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4...f5 5 d5

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5...♘f6

- 5...♗e7 6 g3 ♗f6 – *Game 31*

6 g3 ♘a6

- 6...b5
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 7 ♗g2 – *Game 35*

6...g6 7 ♖g2 ♖g7

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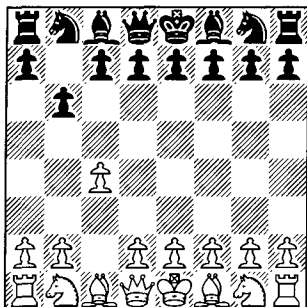
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7 ♖g2 ♘c5 8 ♘h3 ♖d6 9 0-0 ♖e5 10 ♗c2 0-0

11 ♖d2 – *Game 32*; 11 ♗d1 – *Game 33*

Chapter 3

1 c4 b6



2 ♘c3

2 b3 – *Game 51*

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6...e6 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 ♗d3 – *Game 57*

6...♘c6

7 ♗d2 – *Game 60*

7 ♗d1

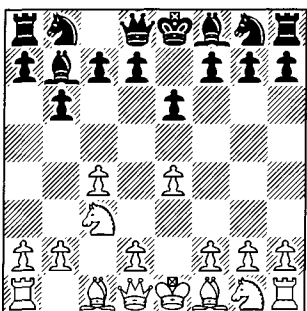
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2...e6 3 a3 c5 – *Game 61*

3 e4 e6

3...e5 – *Game 52*



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- 5 ♗b3 – notes to Game 63

5...♖e7 6 0-0

- 6 a3 – Game 63
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6...0-0 7 ♙c2

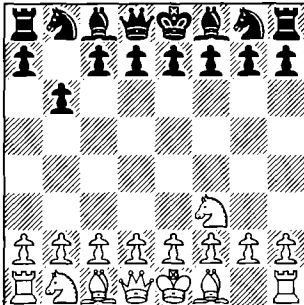
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Chapter 4

1 ♖f3 b6



2 g3

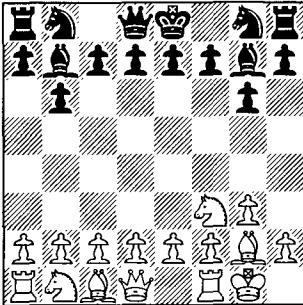
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7...dxe4 – *Game 73*
- 7...c5
 - 8 ♖e2 – *Game 74*
 - 8 ♚e1 – notes to *Game 74*
 - 8 e5 – *Game 75*

4 0-0 ♙g7



5 c4

- 5 d3 c5 6 e4 d6
 - 7 ♘c3 – *Game 76*
 - 7 c3 – *Game 77*
- 5 d4
 - 5...f5 6 c4 ♘f6 7 ♘c3 – 3...f5
 - 5...♘f6 6 c4
 - 6...e6 – *Game 78*
 - 6...0-0 – *Game 79*

5...c5 6 ♘c3 ♘f6

- 6...♘c6 – *Game 80*

7 ♚e1 ♘e4 8 ♘xe4 ♙xe4

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