starting out!

1 d4!

a reliable repertoire for the improving player

JOHN COX

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Best regards!! Saludos!

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Understanding the Leningrad Dutch, Valeri Beim (Gambit 2002)

These are the books I've particularly used; of course there are others on the openings in question. It's been my invidious habit in the past to comment on the books in my bibliography, but, partly since all of the above do more or less what they say on the tin, and partly because of glass houses, I haven't this time. I will say though that all the above have at least something to commend them, that Khalifman, Watson, Sakaev, Sadler, Kindermann and Beim in particular are by common consent among the best opening books of the last ten years, and that Ruslan Scherbakov's Queen's Gambit section of *www.chesspublishing.com* also has a justly deserved reputation as superb.

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Introduction

This is a repertoire book for White: it should give the reader enough ideas and theoretical knowledge to sit down and play 1 d4 with some confidence that he's going to know roughly where to go in the opening stages.

White repertoire books are a lot harder than Black ones. With Black the author just ends every line by saying either that Black has 'a solid position' or that he's got 'counterchances'. If the opening can't provide either of *those*, then you've really got problems. With White though you're supposed to give some idea that the reader might obtain the advantage, which is a lot trickier.

Historically White repertoire books deal with this problem broadly in two ways, which might be called the honest and the dishonest.

The dishonest are characterized by titles such as 'Play the X and Win'. These usually take some 'system' opening where White's play for the first few moves is always the same (it's all so easy to win when you're White, you see), show a few flashy White wins, ignore any inconvenient Black defences, give only lines leading to an advantage for White, and assure the reader that, let us say, the Colle is a deeply underrated opening and that if they take it up they will live happily ever after and add an immediate 200 points to their Elo rating. It's easy to fall for their charms – I have a few on my own shelves – but they can broadly be best described as meretricious trash.

The honest on the other hand (Richard Palliser's *Play 1 d4!* and John Emms' *Attacking with 1 e4* being two fine examples) give a set of solid but non-critical approaches and provide decent coverage of those. No pretence is made that White has an advantage in all variations: instead the selling point here is that by regular use of these lines the buyer will acquire a sense for their nuances and will score better by reaching familiar positions. There is some truth in that and certainly works of this sort have their value. It also tends to be said that by playing such lines there's less theory to be studied and that they are therefore ideal for the player with limited studying time (all of us, in other words). There's a little bit of truth in that too, but I don't approve of it quite so much for the reasons I give later on.

Starting Out: 1 d4!

A slightly different genre was pioneered by the American Weaver Adams and his endearingly bonkers attempts to prove that 1 P-K4 (never 1 e4!) wins by force, based among other things on the Vienna Opening. In our times Khalifman's two magisterial multi-volume series have been the pre-eminent examples. These take main lines and purport to show, if not necessarily an advantage for White everywhere, at least where the debate is continuing.

The present book is an attempt to do the impossible – that is to provide in one book what Khalifman does in five. In most Black openings I've given the absolute main lines: I've tried to show where the world's best are presently fighting it out to establish whether White can obtain real winning chances in the opening.

So hang on, you'll say, isn't this is a *Starting Out* book? How can players rated 120-160 on the BCF scale (about 1560-1880 Elo) expect to grasp the intricacies of, say, the Botvinnik Semi-Slav? They don't need to be studying openings where the theory goes down to move twenty-odd when they don't know the first thing about the game.

Well, first of all, I think that's patronizing tosh. Lower-rated players may not play as strongly as GMs, and they may not understand, recall, or have need of deep theory in their games to the same extent, but that doesn't mean they're not interested to know what that theory is, and it doesn't mean they can't improve by looking at it. Still less does it mean they shouldn't use the most thrilling openings in our game just because a lot of people have played them before (which is all 'theory' amounts to).

Secondly, I think everyone ought to play main line openings most of the time. If you want to be a strong player, then you have to play strong moves. It doesn't make sense to approach that by deliberately playing moves in the opening that aren't the strongest. For one thing, sooner or later, you will find that you need to play strong openings. And when that time comes, it's terribly difficult to make the change. These openings are not just the best, they are also the richest (in the end that's why they're the best) and hence the hardest to play well. If you don't make a start, it never gets any easier.

Look at the world champions: all of them (except perhaps Lasker and Petrosian) have played the main lines of their time. Mickey Adams has been quoted as saying that he feels the thing that really holds him back is that he didn't play the main lines as White (particularly the Open Sicilian) early enough in his career. You may say that there are counter-examples, Morozevich or Hodgson perhaps. However, I would say that these players have achieved what they have despite their devotion to the bizarre, not because of it. Morozevich is widely regarded as the strongest of all top players in the middle game: if he'd had equality out of the openings in San Luis and then played the way he did after that he'd probably be world champion now. And as a junior Hodgson had a fabulous talent (easily the equivalent of Short's): he may have reached number 100 or so in the world and he may have inspired the devotion of Tromp fans everywhere, but if he'd played 2 c4 his whole

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career I reckon he would have got higher. Nigel Short himself, who also had a notoriously ramshackle opening repertoire when young, was let down when he challenged Kasparov by his lack of mastery of the real main lines as much as anything.

Not everyone aspires to those heights of course, but I think you can see the same thing lower down the pyramid. It makes sense. Chess is about playing the best moves. The opening is only a chronological stage in the game. If you aren't in the habit of searching for the best moves there, your experiences in the opening aren't helping you to develop as a player.

Then there's the aesthetic side. Much of what draws us to chess is the search for that little bit of truth. The ultimate question about the game is: can White win? And assuming he can't, how can he pose the most sustained and complex difficulties for Black, and how accurately can he make Black play? These openings are humanity's best guess at answering that question; if you don't want to know something about the process and maybe even help in some small way towards resolving it, I think you're missing out on part of our game.

I think people tend to be afraid of the main lines. They think: gosh, there's so much theory, Kasparov has his zillion gigabyte playbook; how can I compete? The fact is of course that you can't compete with Kasparov, but then you only need to compete with your opponents. Anyway, titled players know much less theory than people tend to imagine. When I took up 9 b4 against the King's Indian my first game was against an IM who's played the KID all his life; essentially his knowledge of theory ran out on move nine (about the same time as mine) but that didn't stop him playing fairly sensibly.

Another excuse tends to be; sure, I'm going to take up (say) 5 Bg5 against the Semi-Slav, once I've got time and learned it properly. This tends to be a way of lying to yourself – it certainly was for me. My advice is – don't bother. The more you learn anyway, the more you'll recognize how little you know. If you wait until you've memorized forced sequences leading to White's advantage, you'll be waiting all your life. 5 Bg5 is a good move – get it on the board, get ready to fight, and see what happens.

Sure, there will come a time, whether on move two or move twenty, when your knowledge of theory runs out and you have to decide what to do on your own. The same will be true whatever opening you play; sometimes you will leave your theory first, sometimes your opponent. Nothing will stop this happening. It happens in every well-contested GM game at some point, usually a very significant point. This is a part of the game: an important part, something you have to get better at. Playing system openings is a comfort blanket, but it's also holding you back: in chess – in any sport, really – to improve you have to challenge yourself; you have to stand up and have confidence in your abilities and your methods.

If you're playing a main line and your opponent plays a move you've not seen before, that's fine. It'll happen half the time; there are many reasonable non-critical

moves Black can play which aren't in this book; that's why it's 200 pages and not 10,000. You know you start from a good position: there are probably many moves White can play which maintain a reasonable position and enable you to keep on with the plans you're used to. If the position is very tactical then if you know the normal move for your opponent and he plays something else one of two things has happened: either your opponent has produced a devastating novelty which has escaped the notice of Kasparov et al, or there is a good reply to his move and you have to find it. If you don't know the normal move then still there has to be a reasonable reply: dig in and find it. These are the moments that make good players, and you can't run away from them.

Anyway, enough lecturing. As far as the material goes, the chapters differ in style. In some chapters I have used several illustrative games which I hope are relevant, interesting and helpful in showing what White is trying to do: this is because some openings lend themselves more to typical plans (say the King's Indian for example). Others less so – the Botvinnik Semi-Slav, for example, is largely a matter of moves. It would be silly not to be honest: chess is not always or indeed often only about plans; usually it's about tactics, and openings no less so than the rest of the game. Some openings are forcing and theory runs deep for a reason, which is that on the whole there are not so many good alternatives. Tactics are seldom random either and I've tried to link them to the strategic ideas, but the fact is that to understand some openings you have to follow them to some depth, and in those openings I haven't hesitated to give deep theory and try to show why the moves usually played work. This synthesis of tactics and strategy is at the heart of the game and it isn't possible to say anything intelligent about some openings without showing specific long sequences. Few players can memorize these, but to follow them and understand them is interesting, instructive and worthwhile in itself. I'd urge you to try these sharp lines out as well: just because you're not a professional doesn't mean you should miss out on some of the game's most gripping openings, and just because you don't know the theory to move 20, that doesn't mean your opponent is going to or that you're not going to be able to work out some sensible moves to play by yourself.

Anyway, whether you play one or all of the lines herein, I wish you luck with them, and I hope you find something interesting in this book. If nothing else, many of the games are fine creative achievements.

One final confession; after ranting about dishonest opening books, I'm afraid White wins all the games in this book. So shoot me. I've got openings to sell.

John Cox,
Ruislip, England
May 2006

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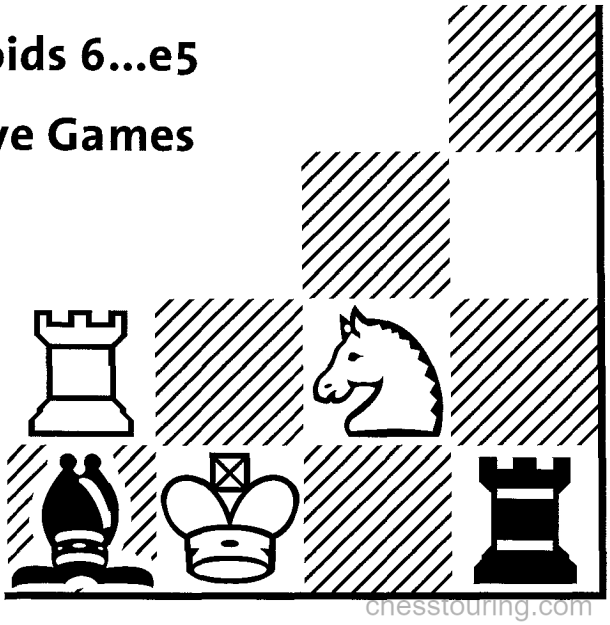
Chapter One

The King's Indian

- Introduction
- The Bayonet Attack
- The Fashionable 7...Na6
- Alternatives to 7...Nc6 and 7...Na6
- Black avoids 6...e5
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 (Diagram 1)

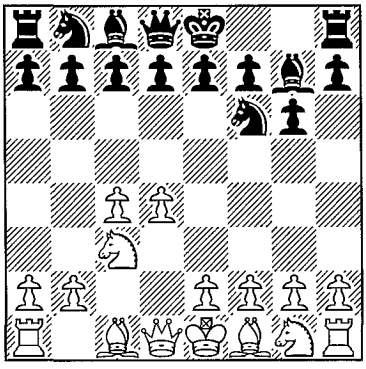

Diagram 1 (W)
The King's Indian Defence

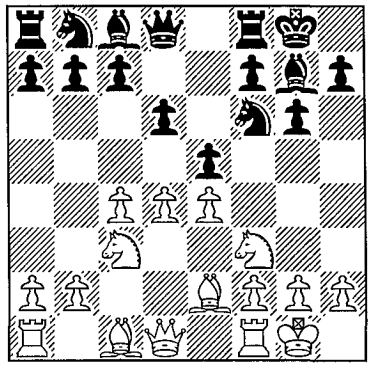

Diagram 2 (B)
The Classical Variation

I'm going to begin with the King's Indian for two reasons. First, I suspect it is the most popular defence of all to d4 in amateur chess. Second, it happens, of all defences to 1 d4, to be the one where there is perhaps the greatest consensus among 2600+ GMs what White's best system is.

4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2

White develops simply and correctly. The knights go where God meant knights to go, and the bishop goes to e2 because on d3 it would obstruct the defence of the d4 pawn and allow Black to equalize all too easily with something like 6...Bg4 7 h3 Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Nc6 9 Be3 e5, hitting most annoyingly at the central black squares. This has been the main line of the opening since time began and probably always will be: White has of course many other systems but each of them, by comparison, has just a little bit of an artificial air about it.

6...e5

By far the main move, although 6...Na6, 6...Nbd7, 6...Bg4 and 6...c5 are all alternatives as we will discover.

7 0-0 (Diagram 2)

There is no reason to break the tension now, although 7 d5 is another respectable system named after the eighth world champion Tigran Petrosian. After 7 0-0, we will consider Black's traditional response, 7...Nc6, and then the fashionable 7...Na6, before moving on to 7...Nbd7 and 7...exd4.

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The Bayonet Attack

7...Nc6 8 d5

Now White must advance: 8 Be3 Re8 forces him to release the tension anyway when 9 d5 Nd4 equalizes at once, and so White's hopes, such as they are, lie in 9 dxe5.

8...Ne7 9 b4 (Diagram 3)

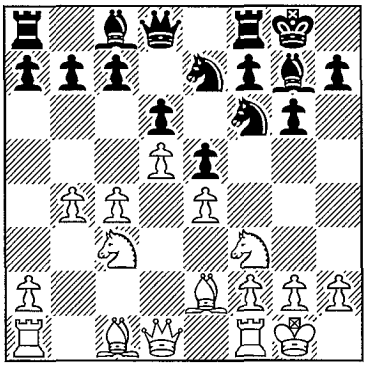

Diagram 3 (B)
Kramnik's favoured Bayonet

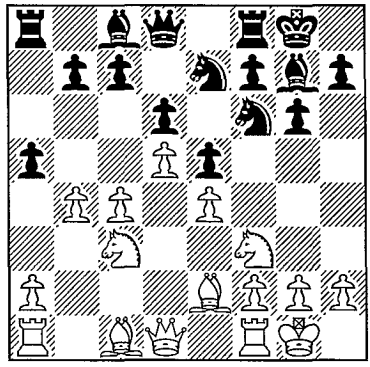

Diagram 4 (W)
Not so problematic for White

It's worth looking at this position for a moment. The structure more or less demands that White will play on the queenside and Black on the kingside, and we can assume that White will want to break with c5 and Black with ...f5. In that context the text is a very natural move, yet until the mid-1990's, although known, it went practically ignored. Instead White would move his f3 knight either to e1 or d2, preparing to bring this piece to the queenside and meet ...f5 with f3. A race ensued: sometimes White got the bear, and sometimes, especially if any one of White's next twenty moves or so was the least little bit inaccurate, the bear got him. Many thousands of games were played along these lines.

The text was seen to have two drawbacks. First, it allowed Black to play ...a5. White does not want to play b5, which would enable Black to play ...b6, preventing any opening of lines with c5, and batten down the hatches on the queenside for ever. However, since a3 is not possible, that means that Black will succeed in exchanging the White b-pawn for his a-pawn, and that in turn will take the c5 break off the agenda for some time and will leave the White a-pawn a little sad, isolated on an open file (although there have always been those who felt the opening of queenside lines was more important than these structural considerations). Second, and perhaps more important, 9 b4 allowed 9...Nh5. It was felt that...Nf4

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had to be prevented with 10 g3, and then Black played 10...f5 at a time when it was not possible to answer this with f3.

Then, in the middle of the 1990's, came Vladimir Kramnik, who demonstrated that neither of these is anything like the problem which it had been thought to be, and ever since 9 b4 has been the undisputed main battleground of the King's Indian, and one from which most of the top-level warriors on the Black side have now fled (including, most significantly of all, Garry Kasparov, whose subsequent never-quite-solved problem against d4 was a big factor in him losing the world title to Kramnik). Radjabov is perhaps the last top-flight player who is still willing to do battle here.

9...Nh5

9...a5 **(Diagram 4)** is naturally Black's main alternative, and now White's idea is 10 Ba3 (10 bxa5? Rxa5 11 a4 would come to the same thing if Black sat back and allowed Ba3-b4, but he doesn't; he plays 11...c5). Here 10...Nh5 is best met with 11 c5 (once the queenside lines are open White is no longer afraid of losing the e2 bishop for a knight) 11...axb4 12 Bxb4 Nf4 13 cxd6 cxd6 14 Nb5, when White's play on the queenside is the dominant feature of the position.

More usual is thus 10...axb4 (10...b6 11 bxa5 Rxa5 is the same thing after 12 Bb4 Ra8; since 11...Nh5?! 12 Re1 f5 13 Bb4 forces 13...bxa5 14 Ba3 when it was clear in V.Kramnik-I.Smirin, Belgrade 1999 that White was going better on the queenside than Black on the kingside) and after 11 Bxb4 Black has two main continuations:

a) 11...b6 12 a4 **(Diagram 5)**

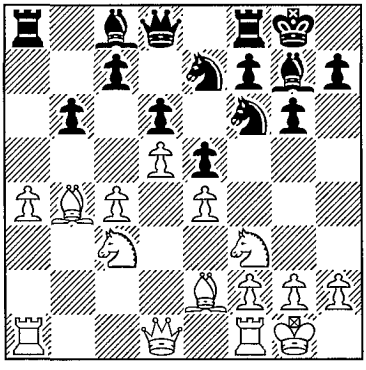

Diagram 5 (B)
Pressing ahead on the queenside

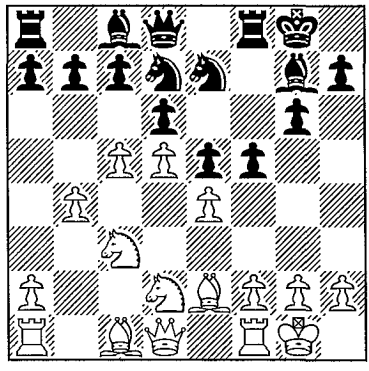

Diagram 6 (B)
White is pretty fast

12...Ne8 (12...Re8 is a more passive option, preparing ...Bf8 to cover a later c5 break, when 13 Re1, preparing Bf1 and then getting on with Nb5, a5 and so forth, should give White the edge) 13 Nb5 f5 14 Nd2 c6 15 dxc6 Nxc6 16 Ba3 is a typical position, probably a bit better for White.

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WARNING: White must avoid 13 a5?? c5 14 dxc6 bxa5 and Black wins a pawn; a trap which has claimed several grandmasters.

b) 11...Nd7 is the alternative when a sensible way for White is 12 a4 Bh6 13 a5 f5 14 Bd3 Nf6 15 c5 fxe4 16 Nxe4 Nxe4 17 Bxe4 Bf5 18 Re1 Qd7 19 Rb1 with a typical slight advantage in J.Lautier-M.Röder, Bundesliga 2001.

After 9...Nd7 White can revert to 10 Nd2.

NOTE: Normally Black meets 9 Nd2 with either 9...c5 or 9...a5, but by playing b4 first White has denied him that opportunity and the game usually enters a race in which White has a set-up he couldn't otherwise have got.

Then 10...f5 11 c5 **(Diagram 6)** 11...Nf6 (11...dxc5 12 bxc5 Nxc5 offers White decent chances of a slight advantage after 13 Ba3 b6 14 Bxc5 bxc5 15 Nb3) 12 f3 f4 13 Nc4 g5 14 Ba3 (White should head straight for d6 to take advantage of his c4-knight) 14...Ng6 15 b5 **(Diagram 7)** reaches an important divide:

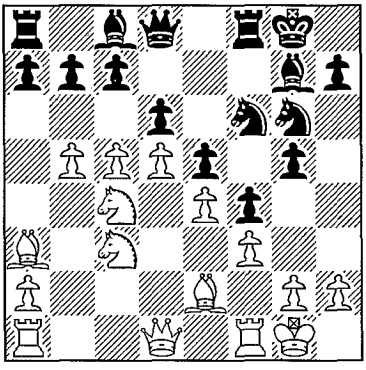

Diagram 7 (B)
How can Black defend?

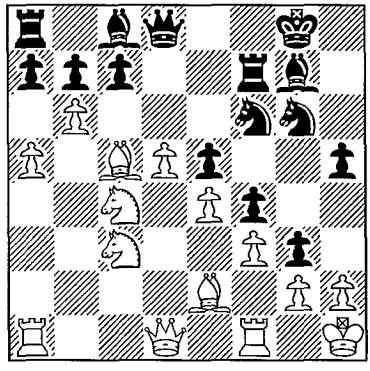

Diagram 8 (B)
Preparing to defend with Bg1

a) 15...Ne8 allows White to open the queenside with 16 b6 axb6 17 cxb6 cxb6 18 Qb3 h5, with a quintessential King's Indian position where White is probably better and will likely win as long as he doesn't get mated. For the moment he needs to put a rook on b1 in order to take on b6 without falling for ...Rxa3 in reply, and either 19 Rfb1 (Khalifman, who says that having f1 for the king or bishop helps defend on the king's wing) or the more natural 19 Rab1 ought to enable White to defend, although some far-sighted calculation still tends to be needed. After the latter, 19...g4 20 Nxb6 Qh4 21 Nxc8 is good for White since the idea of moving the queen to h4 was to sacrifice a bishop after ...g3; h3, ... Bxh3; gxh3, ...Qxh3, and with this idea denied him Black has wasted a tempo.

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TIP: Exchanging Black's light-squared bishop – 'the venom-tooth of Black's attack' – is often more valuable in these positions than winning the rook in the corner.

Instead 20...Qg5 can be met by Mikhail Golubev's 21 fxg4!? which looks crazy but the idea is to win the f3-square to help defend on the kingside, whereas 21 Nxa8 g3 22 h3 Qh4 23 Rb2 Bxh3 24 gxh3 Qxh3 25 Bb5 Nh4 (Shirov) loses for White and illustrates Black's possibilities well.

b) 15...dxc5 16 Bxc5 Rf7 17 a4 h5 18 a5 g4 19 b6 g3 is a natural sequence in which both sides advance their plans predictably, and now White needs to involve the c5 bishop in the defence with 20 Kh1 **(Diagram 8)**. Black has a number of possibilities here, although probably White is better after all of them, but the one which has hit the headlines is 20...Nh7 (watch out for 20...Bf8!? 21 Bxf8? Nxe4! followed by the crushing ...Qh4; instead 21 Bg1 is best, while 20...Ne8 is well met by Golubev's 21 d6, because 21...axb6 22 dxc7 Qxd1 23 Rfxd1 bxc5 24 Nb6 Nxc7 25 Nxa8 Nxa8 26 Bc4 Bf6 27 Nb5 wins) 21 d6 Qh4 22 Bg1 Bh3, and here's where all the newsprint was spilled, when Lubomir Ftacnik unwarily tried 23 bxc7 in L.Ftacnik-O.Cvitan, Bundesliga 1997. I won't spoil the fun by pointing out Black's next five moves and instead 23 gxh3 Qxh3 24 Rf2 gxf2 25 Bxf2 is good for White: only embers of Black's attack are left and White's advanced pawns are going to win quite a bit of material on the other side.

Before returning to 9...Nh5, it's worth noting that 9...Ne8 10 c5 f5 11 Nd2 Nf6 leads to the same lines as 9...Nd7. Instead 11...Bh6 12 Nc4 Bxc1 13 Rxc1 f4 14 Bg4 is a little better for White, while after 11...f4 12 Nc4 g5 13 Ba3 both sides can try various ideas to avoid 13...Nf6 14 f3 transposing to the above lines: for example, Black can play 13...Ng6 or 13...Rg6 here, and White can consider taking advantage of having been able to get by without f3 by meeting either of those moves with 14 Bg4, or perhaps even 13...Nf6 with 14 g4!?.

10 Re1 (Diagram 9)

This was the star move which revived 9 b4. Kramnik was not the first to play it, but it was his successes with it which set the fashion.

10...f5

10...Nf4 (10...a5 11 bxa5 Rxa5 12 Nd2 Nf4 13 Bf1 leads to the same thing, while 11 Ba3 Nf4 12 Bf1 Bg4 is not good for White) 11 Bf1 is White's idea, of course. Black finds that actually the knight on f4 doesn't assist his kingside play so marvellously; in fact it gets in the way and both 11...f5 12 Bxf4 exf4 13 e5 dxe5 14 Nxe5 a5 15 c5 axb4 16 Qb3! and 11...Bg4 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 f5 14 g3 fxe4 15 Qxe4 Nh5 16 Bg5 are fine for White. Thus Black normally plays 11...a5 when the original plan of V.Kramnik-G.Kasparov, Novgorod 1997 has not been improved upon: 12 bxa5 Rxa5 13 Nd2 c5 14 a4 Ra6 15 Ra3 **(Diagram 10)** 15...g5?! (15...f5 16 g3 Nh5 17 exf5 is Black's whole problem since now he has to retake with a piece which illustrates the point I made before about the f4 knight only being in the way) 16 g3 Nh3+ 17

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Bxh3 Bxh3 18 Qh5 Qd7 (18...g4 19 Nf3!) 19 Qxg5 h6 20 Qe3 f5 21 Qe2 f4 22 Nb5 Kh7 23 gxf4 exf4 24 Kh1 Bg4 25 Nf3 Ng6 26 Rg1 Bxf3+ (26...Nh4 27 Ng5+) 27 Qxf3 Ne5 28 Qh5 Qf7 29 Qh3 Nxc4 30 Rf3 Be5 31 Nc7 Rxa4 32 Bxf4 1-0. This game led to an entertaining bout of hair-pulling between the two Ks, when Kasparov declared in the press that Kramnik had played badly in this game, to which Kramnik took the opportunity in his book of selected games to reply that that might have been so, but even this had been good enough.

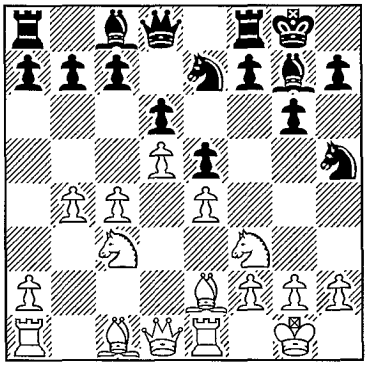

Diagram 9 (B)
Enabling the bishop to retreat

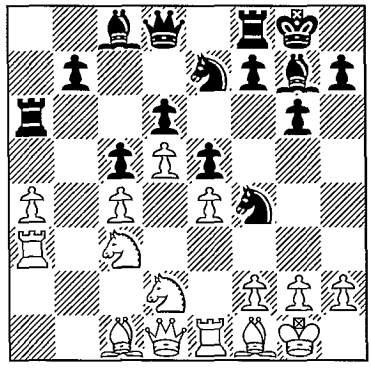

Diagram 10 (B)
Black is struggling on the kingside

These days Kramnik's 15...Kh8 with the idea of ...Ne7-g8, activating this very poor piece, is considered essential. With the queenside structure the way it is White cannot get anywhere over there – he can't open a line and he can attack b7 all he likes, but all Black need do is keep the bishop on c8 – so he needs to think of something else, and usually his plan is Nb5, Bb2 and preparing for f4, with a difficult struggle ahead.

11 Ng5 (Diagram 11)

NOTE: This is the whole idea of Re1 as White intends to sink this knight into e6. Black will have to take that and may even manage to win a pawn, but White believes that the resulting gain of time and opening of the position for his bishops will favour him: Black's numerous pawn moves were fine for a closed game, but in an open one they create weaknesses.

11...Nf6

11...Nf4 12 Bxf4 exf4 13 Rc1 is somewhat better for White: Kramnik again showed the way (against Shirov, at Tilburg 1997) after 13...Bf6 (there are other moves such as 13...h6 14 Ne6 Bxe6 15 dxe6 fxe4 16 Nxe4 Nc6 when I think White ought to play

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17 Nc3 Nxb4 18 Qb3) 14 Ne6 Bxe6 15 dxe6 Bxc3 16 Rxc3 fxe4 17 Bf1 e3 18 fxe3 fxe3 19 Rcxe3 c6, with the fine manoeuvre 20 Qd2, threatening Rh3 and Qh6 and so enticing 20...d5 21 cxd5 cxd5, but then 22 Qd4 left White in charge.

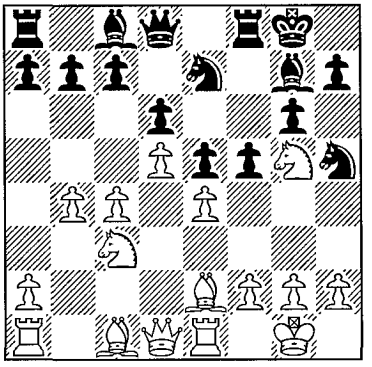

Diagram 11 (B)
Heading for e6

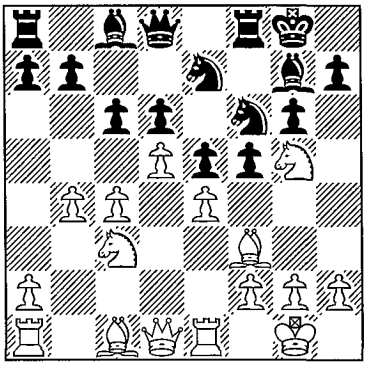

Diagram 12 (W)
White has several options

12 Bf3

Clumsy-looking, but d5 and e4 are going to disappear and then the bishop will come into its own, although 12 f3 is a major alternative. After 12 Bf3:

a) We will examine Black's main move, 12...c6 **(Diagram 12)**, in our first illustrative game.

b) 12...Kh8 is also popular, although according to Kramnik it is, while generally useful, not worth the tempo. At any event he obtained the advantage quite convincingly in V.Kramnik-J.Polgar, Vienna 1996 with 13 Bb2 a5 14 b5 (I know I said White doesn't want to play this, but it's a different matter when the position is going to be opened anyway by dxe6 and exf5; he doesn't need the c5 break to open lines) 14...Rb8 (best according to Kramnik as this rook will have to move anyway) 15 Ne6 Bxe6 16 dxe6 Ne8 (16...Qc8 17 b6!) 17 Qd3 c5 (17...Qc8 18 c5 dxc5 19 Rad1 Nd6 20 b6! again) 18 exf5 gxf5 19 Bh5 Nc7 20 Bf7 Qc8 21 Nd5 and the e6 pawn lived, which meant that White was almost winning.

c) 12...fxe4, trying to equalize rather than create counterplay, is sometimes played, although White should be able to maintain a slight advantage along the lines of V.Kramnik-B.Gelfand, Vienna 1996. That continued 13 Ngxe4 Nf5 14 Bg5 Nd4 15 Nb5 Nxf3+ 16 Qxf3 Bf5 17 Qb3 Bxe4 18 Rxe4 Qd7 19 Bxf6 Rxf6 and Nc3-e4, reaching a common position-type which is not always as good for White as it looks, but is certainly at least a little better for him.

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The Fashionable 7...Na6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Na6 (Diagram 13)

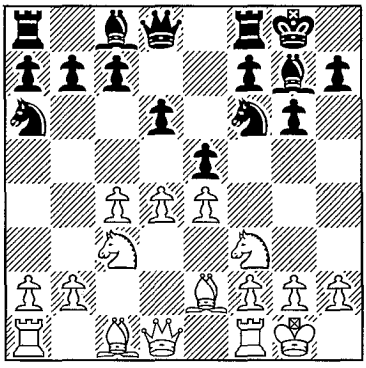

Diagram 13 (W)
Flexible development from Black

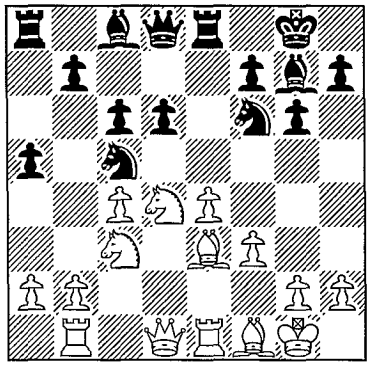

Diagram 14 (B)
How to exploit White's edge?

This development of the knight (Black can also play 6...Na6 7 0-0 e5) has been increasingly fashionable in a lot of lines of the King's Indian. Black reasons that he doesn't actually need a knight to support ...e5, since he can always deal with dxe5 dxe5, Nxe5 by a tactical discovery from the knight on f6. After ...e5, sooner or later either White will play d5 or Black will play ...exd4, and either way the knight will then have an excellent square on c5. Meanwhile Black doesn't block his queen's bishop and so avoids some of the problems we will see in Game 3 arising from Ng5 or g4.

8 Re1

One of two main lines; the other is 8 Be3, which also has a big grandmaster following. But Kramnik and Kasparov, as well as Karpov, have played the text, which is good enough for me.

8...c6

The most common, although Black also plays 8...exd4 9 Nxd4 Re8, when 10 Bf1 c6 11 Rb1 Nc5 12 f3 a5 13 Be3 **(Diagram 14)** gives a splendid old-fashioned position which they used to play in the fifties, though Black's knight travelled via d7 in those days. White has a slight advantage although it can be difficult to do much with and he has to play with a lot of patience. A model game is 13...Qc7 14 Qd2 Nfd7 15 Kh1 Ne5 16 Rbd1 Bf8 17 Bh6 Bxh6 18 Qxh6 f6 19 Qd2 Nf7 20 b3 Qb6 21 Qb2 Kg7 22 Rd2 Bd7 23 Red1 Ne6 24 Na4 Qa7 25 Nxe6+ Bxe6 26 Qc3 b6 27 Qd4 Rab8 28 f4 Qc7 29 Nc3 Rbd8 30 Be2 Bc8 31 Rf1 Bb7 32 Bf3 Re7 33 Nd1 Rde8 34 Nf2

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Bc8 35 a3 Qd8 36 Qc3 Qc7 37 Kg1 Be6 38 Rfd1 Bc8 39 Bg4 Bb7 40 Bh3 Bc8 41 Bxc8 Qxc8 42 g4 h6 43 h4 g5 44 hxg5 hxg5 45 fxg5 Nxg5 46 Rxd6 Re6 47 Kg2 Nf7 48 Rd7 R8e7 49 Rxe7 Rxe7 50 Qf3 Re5 51 Nh3 Ng5 52 Nxg5 Rxg5 53 Kg3 Qe6 54 Qf4 Qe7 55 Rd6 Rc5 56 Kf3 b5 57 Qd2 Qe5 58 Rd8 Qe6 59 Qh2 and 1-0 in V.Kramnik-W.Watson, Bundesliga 1994. The points to note about this game are the trade of the dark-squared bishops, useful for White as it weakens d6 and the black king; the careful preparation of f4; the manoeuvre of the knight to f2 where it is perfect for both defence (of e4) and attack (Ng4); and of course the final g5-breakthrough, again after preparation (Kg1 and trading the bishops to win g4 for the knight).

8...Qe8 is a modern alternative: it's difficult to say exactly what the point of this is, but part of it is that Black is not sure ...c6 is a good idea (it's not always good to have pawn tension on the queenside for Black, especially if he wants to play ...f5), but wants to wait for Bf1 before playing ...Bg4, so he plays what he hopes will be a useful move, avoiding any Bg5 pin. A splendid illustration was 9 Bf1 Bg4 10 d5 Nb4 11 Be2 a5 12 Be3 b6 13 a3 Na6 14 Nd2! Bxe2 15 Qxe2 and, after the exchange of light-squared bishops, the black kingside attack turned out to be rather ineffective in E.Kobylkin-Z.Efimenko, Kharkov 2004.

9 Bf1 Bg4

9...exd4 10 Nxd4 Ng4 is the main alternative, and is usually thought to be better. White continues 11 h3 Qb6 12 hxg4 Qxd4 and now the main continuation is 13 g5 Nc5 14 Qf3 Qe5 15 Bf4 Qe7 16 Rad1 Be5 17 Qg3 **(Diagram 15)**.

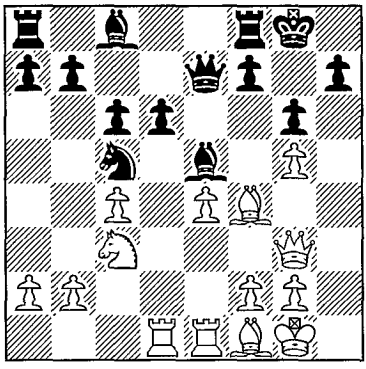

Diagram 15 (B)
Fighting for the dark squares

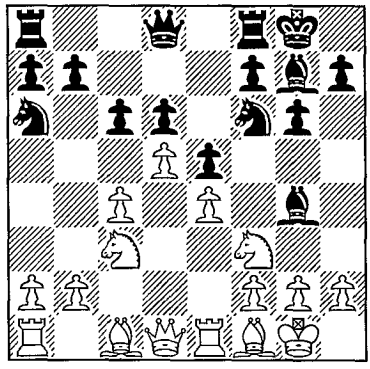

Diagram 16 (B)
White thematically seizes space

White has chances of a slight edge here, although this is certainly solid for Black. The crucial line is thought to be 17...f6 18 gxf6 Rxf6 19 Bxe5 Qxe5 20 b4 Nd7 (20...Qxg3 21 fxg3 Nd7 22 e5! is very good for White) 21 Qe3 a5 22 b5 Nc5 with something between a White edge and equality for Black.

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10 d5 (Diagram 16)

The purpose of Black's play so far has been to force this: it doesn't go with White's last two moves, which were designed to defend e4 should Black play ...exd4. However, once Black has ...Bg4 in, if White tries to keep the tension with 10 Be3 then Black has a typical plan to dominate the central dark squares and obtain equality, which was demonstrated by a young Topalov with 10...exd4 11 Bxd4 Nb4 12 Rc1 c5 13 Be3 Nd7 14 Be2 Bxf3 15 Bxf3 Be5 16 Be2 Nc6 17 Rc2 Nf6 18 Bf1 a6 and ½-½ in P.Schlosser-V.Topalov, Altensteig 1990.

10...Nb4

This looks like a shot in the dark, but in fact it is a little tactic associated with Black's last move. The point is that Black wants very much to move his knight and get in ...a5 to hold White up on the queenside, but an immediate 10...Nc5? is just met with 11 b4.

WARNING: Now, however, 11 a3? Bxf3 forces 12 gxf3 since 12 Qxf3? loses to 12...Nc2, so Black gets to play ...a5 after all.

10...c5 is also popular when normal for White is 11 h3 Bd7 12 a3 Kh8 13 b4 Ng8 14 Rb1 Bh6 and now either Bxh6 (exchanging these bishops discourages ...f5 since the Black king will lack its natural guardian) or Bb2 gives White a slight edge. Meanwhile 10...Ne8 is probably Black's best and after 11 Be2 Bd7 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 a3, he ought to play 13...c5 followed by ...Nac7-e6 with an unclear game.

11 Be2 a5 12 Bg5 (Diagram 17)

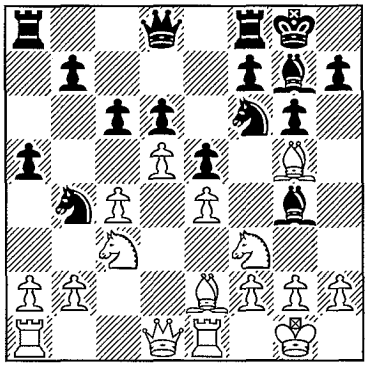

Diagram 17 (B)
Provoking ...h6

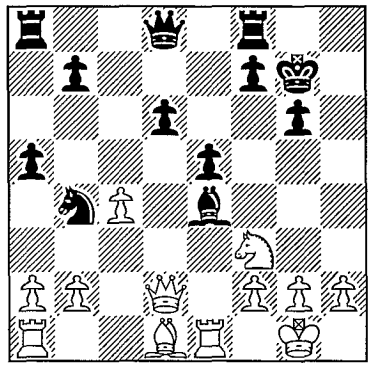

Diagram 18 (B)
A fine bishop manoeuvre

Not the only well-motivated positional move, but Karpov's choice and we will see him deal with 12...h6 in Game 2.

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NOTE: That reaction is what White was hoping for as ...h6 has two benefits for White in such a structure: it weakens g6, and it prevents ...Bh6 activating Black's potentially bad bishop.

Black also has:

a) 12...Bd7 is well met by 13 dxc6 Bxc6 14 Qd2 when M.Krasenkow-R.Kempinski, Augustow 1996 went on instructively 14...h6 15 Bxh6 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Bxe4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 and now 18 Bd1 **(Diagram 18)** was a good and typical move in this line, here making sure the knight can be exchanged before it gets to d4. White is better here with his safer king and pawns; the one thing he must stop is ...Bg4xf3 and ...Nc6-d4.

b) 12...Na6 has been favoured by the most faithful GM practitioner of this variation for Black, Zdenko Kozul. After 12...Na6, one good plan is 13 h3 Bd7 14 Nd2 Kh8 (with ideas perhaps of ...Ng8 and ...Bh6) 15 a3 Qb8 16 Be3 Be8 (sadly 16...Ng8 is met by 17 Na4, so Black has to change plans) 17 Rb1 Nd7 18 g4 as in T.Radjabov-Z.Kozul Sarajevo 2002. White's last was a typical King's Indian method of restraining ...f5, which we haven't met before. White will meet ...f5 by taking twice and plonking a knight on e4, and Black's pieces here are in no sort of state to get at White's king after that.

Alternatives to 7...Nc6 and 7...Na6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 e4 0-0 6 Be2 e5

Black also sometimes plays 6...Nbd7 here, although this is often thought to be a bit inaccurate.

TIP: White can play 7 Be3 e5 8 0-0, transposing to 6...e5 7 0-0 Nbd7, but delaying castling with 8 d5 is usually thought to be good, the point being that 8...Ng4 9 Bd2 f5 10 Ng5 is very dangerous: White can still castle queenside in a variation like 10...Ndf6 11 exf5 gxf5 12 h3 Nh6 13 Qc2.

7 0-0 Nbd7 (Diagram 19)

The continuation 7...exd4 8 Nxd4 Re8 9 f3 **(Diagram 20)** is another way of developing counterplay when Black has three ideas:

a) 9...c6 is best met by 10 Kh1, when 10...d5 (10...Nbd7 11 Bg5 – not Be3 where the bishop hangs – 11...h6 12 Bh4 Qb6 13 Nb3 also enables White to restrain ...d5 and thus maintain some advantage) is well met by 11 cxd5 cxd5 12 Bg5 dxe4 13 Ndb5 or 13 fxe4.

b) 9...Nh5 aims for ...f5. White should react by preventing that with 10 g4 Nf6 11

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Be3, when the tempo he has gained enables him to prevent d5.

c) 9...Nc6 10 Be3 Nh5 11 Qd2 is the Glek variation: 11...Nxd4 12 Bxd4 Nf4 13 Rfd1 Qg5 14 Bf1 Bxd4+ 15 Qxd4 is a little better for White, as is 11...f5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 c5!, in view of 13...d5 14 Bg5.

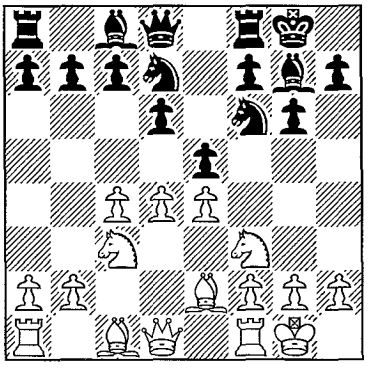

Diagram 19 (W)
An old-fashioned reply

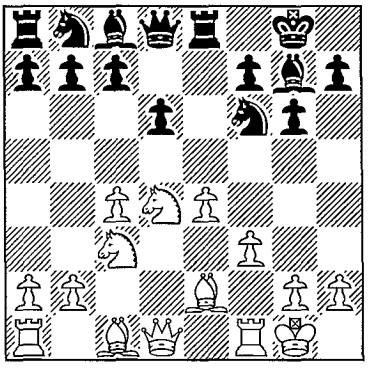

Diagram 20 (B)
Black gives up the centre

8 Be3

8 Re1 and 8 Qc2 are major alternatives; the former can lead to Kramnik-Watson in the note to Black's eighth move after 7...Na6.

8...c6

This is the main move but of course Black has many alternatives. Perhaps the most obvious try is 8...Ng4 9 Bg5 f6 10 Bc1 (this sequence is usually the reply to ...Ng4: White argues that the moves Black has gained actively hurt him; in particular ...exd4 is hardly viable once ...f6 has been played) 10...c6 11 h3 Nh6 12 Be3 Qe7 13 Qc2 Nf7 14 Rad1 Re8 15 Rfe1 Bh6 16 Bxh6 Nxh6 17 b4 Nf7 18 a3 Nf8 19 Bf1 **(Diagram 21)** which was A.Miles-A.Zapata, Manila 1990. White has begun thematically to exploit his spatial advantage, while Black could now find nothing better than 19...g5. Unable to really play ...exd4, Black doesn't have an opportunity to change the position; by contrast White has options of d5, dxe5, c5 or even b5.

Black has also tried 8...Re8 when S.Shipov-M.Saltaev, Hastings 1998/99 instructively continued 9 d5 (often the reply to ...Re8: after d5 the rook belongs on f8) 9...Nh5 10 g3 Bf8 11 Ne1 Ng7 12 Nd3 f5 13 f3 Be7 14 Qd2 Rf8 15 Kg2 a5 16 Rae1 Nf6 (16...b6 17 f4) 17 c5 fxe4 18 fxe4 Ng4 19 Rxf8+ Bxf8 20 Bg1 Ne8 21 cxd6 cxd6 22 Qd1 Ngf6 23 Be3 Bd7 24 a4 Nc7 25 Qb3 Bc8 26 Nf2 **(Diagram 22)** and White was much better. The moves to note were Rae1, luring the knight away from covering c5 by the positional threat of f4, and the fine Nf2, defending all the squares on the kingside and allowing the rest of the pieces to devote themselves to the queenside

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assault. After 26...Nd7 27 Nb5! Be7 28 Na7 Shipov proceeded to win the sort of slow-motion crush White often aims for against the King's Indian.

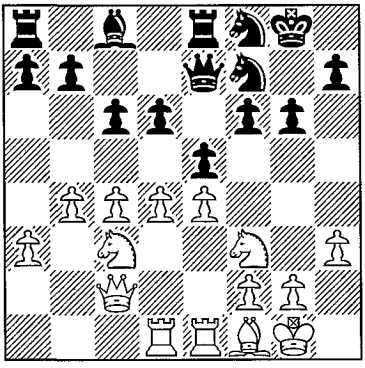

Diagram 21 (B)
Black is rather cramped

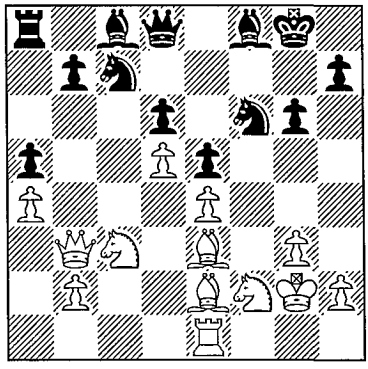

Diagram 22 (B)
Black lacks counterplay

9 d5 (Diagram 23)

Very frequently the reply to ...c6 in the King's Indian as Black doesn't really want to open the queenside at all if he's going to go in for ...f5, since he is just accelerating White's attack. On the other hand, dxc6, ...bxc6 exposes d6 and is rarely something Black wants, so he tends to be obliged to reply ...c5. White may then still play on the queenside, but it also becomes more attractive to play on the kingside, either as in this game or even with f4 – this is seldom a good idea with the pawn on c7, but when an exchange on f4 is exposing d6, or fxe5, ...dxe5 making the d5-pawn passed, it becomes more feasible.

9...c5

The alternative is to try ...Ng4 with or without ...cxd5 first, although 9...Ng4 10 Bg5 f6 11 Bd2 Qe7 12 b4 Nh6 (12...f5 13 Ng5 Ndf6 14 h3 Nh6 15 c5 Kh8 16 Qb3 Ne8 17 b5 was a classic breakthrough in H.Gruenberg-R.Knaak, Glauchau 1987) 13 dxc6 bxc6 14 b5 Bb7 15 a4 Nf7 16 a5 still gave White good pressure in A.Onischuk-K.Van der Weide, Groningen 1995.

NOTE: This b5-plan is very typical after dxc6: if Black captures then White wins d5, but otherwise it is difficult for Black to find anything to do.

10 Ne1 Ne8 11 g4 (Diagram 24)

A shocking move if you haven't seen the idea before. In essence it is preventative. White's basic plan in this position has to be on the queenside, while Black's only hope of getting active is to play f5. If White can prevent ...f5, then he can get on

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with on the queenside in peace. The idea of the text is to meet ...f5 by taking twice on f5 which wins the e4-square for White, and a knight positioned there will press eternally on the d6-weakness and at the same time imprison Black's bishop. White also calculates that if he can win enough space on the kingside he may be the one who has attacking chances over there.

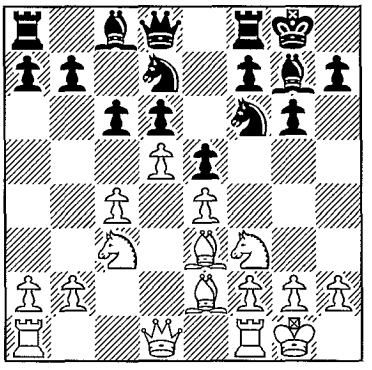

Diagram 23 (B)
White wants the c-file to open

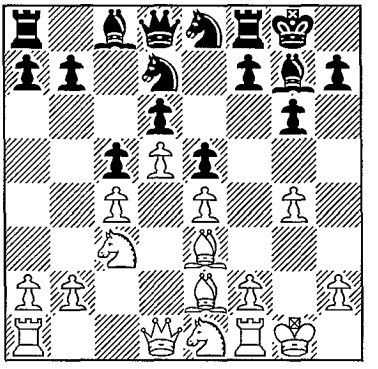

Diagram 24 (B)
Aiming to prevent ...f5

Black Avoids 6...e5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6

4...0-0 5 Nf3 c6 is occasionally seen when White should oblige Black in his search for a sharp game with 6 Bd3 d5 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 e5 Nfd7 9 h4 Nb6 10 Ng5, and not 10 h5 Bg4, when White has an extremely dangerous attack.

5 Be2 0-0 6 Nf3 (Diagram 25) 6...Bg4

This has never enjoyed the reputation of 6...e5, but it is fashionable just now and has never entirely gone away. The idea is to trade the bishop for the f3 knight and dominate the dark squares, with Cebalo being perhaps its keenest exponent.

Instead 6...c6 can be sensibly met by 7 0-0 a6 8 h3 b5 9 e5 Ne8 10 Bf4 and 6...c5 is possible, although rare since Black has to be ready for an Accelerated Dragon after 7 0-0 cxd4. More in the King's Indian spirit is 7 d5 e6 (7...Na6 8 0-0 Nc7 9 h3 Rb8 10 Bf4 a6 11 e5 favours White) 8 0-0 Re8 (8...exd5 9 exd5 Bg4 10 Bf4 is possible but White tends to become better with his two bishops after ...Bxf3) 9 h3 exd5 10 exd5 Bf5 (10...Qb6 11 Bd3 and 10...Ne4 11 Nxe4 Rxe4 12 Bd3 Re8 13 Bg5 Qb6 14 Rb1 both show White preventing the development of Black's problem child on c8) 11 g4 Ne4 12 Nxe4 Bxe4 13 Ng5 when White is again going to gain the two bishops and space with the slight edge he is playing for after exd5.

7 Be3 (Diagram 26)

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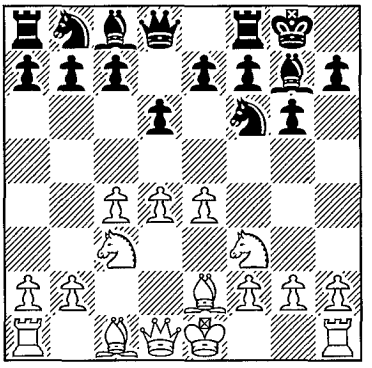

Diagram 25 (B)
6...e5 isn't the only option

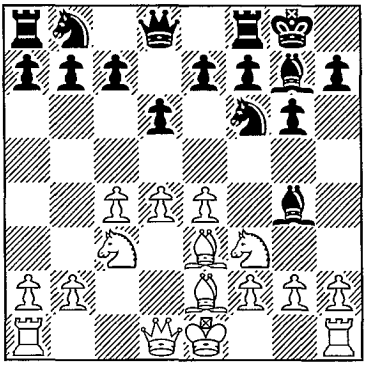

Diagram 26 (B)
White bolsters d4

The most natural move for two reasons: firstly the main objection in the King's Indian to Be3, namely ...Ng4, has been ruled out; secondly Black's plan involves an assault on d4 and it is logical to strengthen that.

7...Nfd7

The most popular move, freeing the g7 bishop to attack d4 and preparing ...Nc6, ...c5 or ...e5. Also thematic is 7...Nc6 8 d5 Bxf3 (otherwise White plays Nd4) when White can choose between the ancient 9 Bxf3 and the modern 9 gxf3. A good example of the modern way was L.Van Wely-I.Rogers, Dutch League 2000 which quickly finished 9...Nb8 10 h4 c6 11 Qd2 cxd5 12 cxd5 Nbd7 13 0-0-0 **(Diagram 27)** 13...Rc8 14 Kb1 Nb6 15 Bh6 Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 h5 Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Rxc3 19 bxc3 Qb6+ 20 Ka1 Qxf2 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 Rdg1 Nh5 23 Qxh5 and 1-0.

8 Rc1

Many moves have been played here – 8 Qb3, 8 Qd2, 8 0-0 and the recherché 8 Ng1 (actually very sensible to cross Black's plans by keeping the knight) are all possible, but the text has the most high-level support. It is directed particularly against the line 8 0-0 Nc6 9 d5 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Na5 11 Be2 Bxc3!? 12 bxc3 e5, with an interesting knights-versus-bishops struggle where Black has done rather well.

8...a6

This move and 8...c5 9 d5 a6 10 a4 b5 often lead to the same position. 8...e5 has been very popular but combining ...f5 and the exchange of the light-squared bishop is always asking for trouble in the King's Indian.

9 d5 (Diagram 28)

8 Rc1 partly prepared this move, but also it is more appealing now that the knight cannot come via a6 to c5, and we will return to 9 d5 in Game 4.

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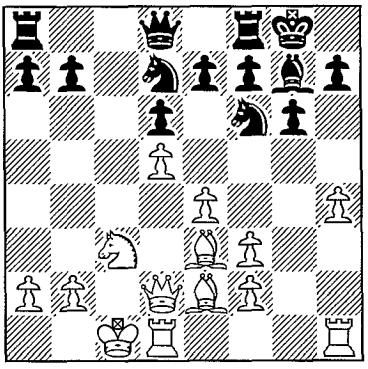

Diagram 27 (B)
White has a strong attack

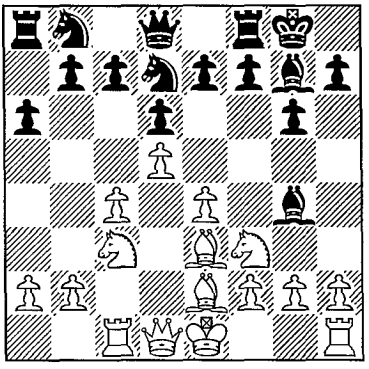

Diagram 28 (B)
White seizes some space

Illustrative Games

Game 1
☐ **A.Shirov** ■ **T.Radjabov**
Linares 2004

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 b4 Nh5 10 Re1 f5 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 Bf3 c6 13 Bb2 (Diagram 29)

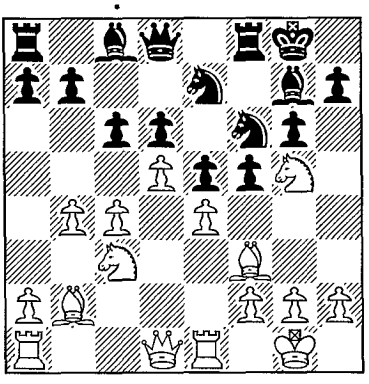

Diagram 29 (B)
Ne6 is imminent

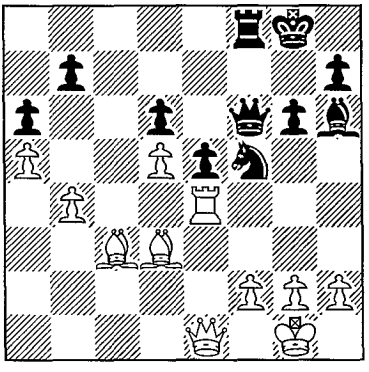

Diagram 30 (B)
White is ready for ...Nd4

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A tremendously critical position in which 13 Be3, 13 Qb3, 13 b5, 13 Rb1 and 13 Ba3 have all been and actively are being tried.

13...h6

Naturally White was waiting for this further weakening before continuing with his plan, but Black had run out of good moves to improve his position while waiting for Ne6. Another plan altogether is 13...cxd5 when one game was 14 cxd5 fxe4 15 Ngxe4 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Nf5 17 a4 Nh4 18 Be2 Bf5 19 Bd3 Rc8 20 a5 a6 21 Rc1 Rxc1 22 Bxc1 Bxe4 23 Rxe4 Nf5 24 Bd2 Qf6 25 Qe1 Bh6 26 Bc3 **(Diagram 30)** and White had an edge in I.Sokolov-S.Temirbaev, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.

This illustrates well the common position-type in the King's Indian where White has control of e4 and Black often a knight on f5. Black's trouble is that moving this knight to d4 will usually give White the advantage after Bxd4, ...exd4, since his bishop will have little scope while White's may well appear on e6. Consequently White is usually a little better in these positions, although the strategic battle is hardly over to the extent annotators sometimes suggest: this game, for instance, was a hard struggle in which Black had respectable chances until very near the end.

14 Ne6 Bxe6 15 dxe6 fxe4 16 Nxe4 Nxe4 17 Rxe4 (Diagram 31)

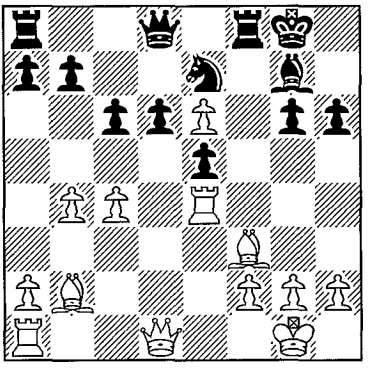

Diagram 31 (B)
White has a deep idea in mind

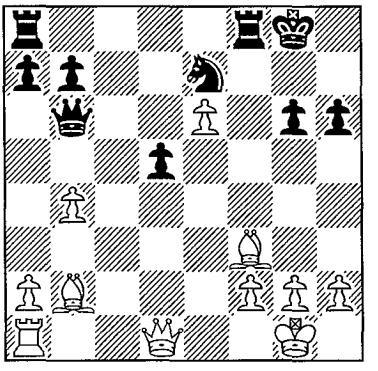

Diagram 32 (B)
A promising exchange sacrifice

Better than 17 Bxe4 for a reason we shall see in a moment.

17...d5

Extremely natural but possibly not the best move and 17...Nf5 is also possible when White should continue playing against the light squares: 18 b5 Rc8 19 Re2 Re8 20 Qa4 Qb6 21 bxc6 bxc6 22 c5 dxc5 (worse is 22...Qxc5 23 Rc1 Qb5 24 Qxb5 cxb5 25 Rec2 Rxc2 26 Rxc2 with more than enough compensation for the pawn according to Dautov, although I must say this looks like a draw to me) 23 Bxe5

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Nd4 24 Bxd4 cxd4 25 Rc1 c5 is the critical line and is unclear according to Dautov. If White now ventures 26 e7!? then I am sure this is true, but it doesn't look very unclear to me if White plays 26 Bd5-c4 to blockade the pawns and then advances cautiously on the kingside: I don't say White's winning but I'd be surprised if most players wouldn't prefer his game.

I must say my first instinct if I were Black here would be to collect that e6 pawn with 17...Rf6. Black never plays this but I don't know why not, I'm afraid. After 18 Bg4 (the immediate 18 c5 is the alternative) 18...Nf5 19 c5 Rxe6 20 cxd6 Qxd6 21 Qc2 (21 Qxd6 Rxd6 22 Bxe5 is equal) 21...Re7 22 Rae1 Rae8 23 a3 White has uneasy compensation for his pawn, but I doubt whether he can claim more than equality.

18 cxd5 cxd5 19 Rxe5

Of course. Rook and two bishops are often worth two rooks and a knight anyway, and here White has an extra pawn and exchanges the very important King's Indian bishop as part of the deal.

19...Bxe5 20 Bxe5 Qb6 21 Bb2 (Diagram 32)

This move was Shirov's novelty in place of 21 Qd2.

21...Kh7

Radjabov's move tries to obtain some freedom of movement by ensuring that a queen and bishop battery on the long diagonal can be met by ...Rg8 and 22...Qxe6 is threatened. Instead 21...Qxe6 allows White to chase the black king out to the centre with 22 Qd4 Kf7 23 Qg7+ Ke8 24 Qxh6 after which Black will always be struggling with near equality in material and his king so exposed. Also very dangerous is 21...Qxb4 22 Rb1: a key tactical point of Shirov's idea is then 22...Qh4 (23 Bg7 was threatened and 22 ...Qd6?? 23 Qd4 loses at once) 23 Bd4!, when the innocent 23...b6 is poleaxed by 24 g3 Qg5 25 h4 Qf5 26 Bg4 Qe4 27 f3, trapping the queen.

22 Qe2 d4

Another very attractive variation is 22...Qxb4 23 Qe5 Rg8 (23...Nf5 may be better) 24 a3 Qb6 25 Qf6 Nf5 26 Bxd5 Raf8 27 e7 Rxf6 28 Bxg8+ Kxg8 29 e8Q+ Rf8 30 Qe5 with a great advantage to White, and so Radjabov prefers to block the diagonal.

23 h4 (Diagram 33)

NOTE: Shirov continues very calmly. His compensation is not tactical but positional in nature, and is not going to go away.

23...Rf6 24 Re1 Qxb4 25 a3 Qd6 26 h5 Raf8 27 Qe4 Nc6 28 hxg6+ Kg7 29 Bc1

This looks almost decisive: Black can only avoid the coming sacrifice by the ghastly 29...h5.

29...Qe7 30 Bxh6+ Kxh6 31 Qh4+ Kxg6 32 Bxc6 bxc6 33 Re5

Threatening 34 Rg5+ and, owing to the cruel pin of the f6 rook against the undefended queen, it appears that Black has no defence.

33...Qxe6

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After 33...Rxe6! 34 Qh5+ Kg7 35 Rg5+ Black has to give the queen anyway with 35...Qxg5 36 Qxg5+ Rg6 37 Qe5+ Kg8 38 Qxd4 Rf7 39 Qe5 Rfg7 40 g3, but according to Shirov he has a fortress here.

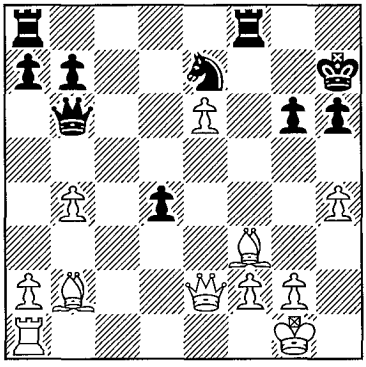

Diagram 33 (B)
Softening up the black kingside

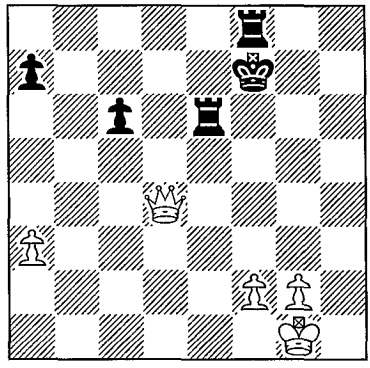

Diagram 34 (B)
Shirov's technique is good enough

34 Rxe6 Rxe6 35 Qg4+ Kf7 36 Qxd4 (Diagram 34)

Two rooks are often a match for a queen in the ending, but here White is winning with reasonable care, in view of his connected pawns and the exposed Black king. Black is kept too busy defending to co-ordinate his rooks and get the c-pawn going.

36...a6 37 g4 Rg8 38 f3 Rf6 39 Kf2 Re8 40 Qc4+ Kg7 41 Qxa6 Ref8 42 Qd3 c5 43 a4 Ra8 44 Qc3 Kg6 45 Qxc5 Rfa6 46 Kg3 Rxa4 47 Qd6+ Kf7 48 g5 R8a6 49 Qd7+ Kg6 50 f4 Ra1 51 Qd3+ Kg7 52 Qd4+ Kg8 53 Kg4 R1a2 54 Qd8+ Kg7 55 Qc7+ Kg8 56 f5 Ra7 57 Qd8+ Kg7 58 f6+

The right way to advance the pawns, of course, building a perfect home for the king on g6.

58...Kh7 59 Qd3+ Kh8 60 Kf5 Ra8 61 Qh3+ Kg8 62 Kg6 R2a7 63 Qe6+ Kf8 64 Qd6+ Kg8 65 Qd5+ Kh8 66 Qh1+ 1-0

Game 2
☐ **A.Karpov** ■ **Z.Ilincic**
Belgrade 1996

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Na6 8 Re1 c6 9 Bf1 Bg4 10 d5 Nb4 11 Be2 a5 12 Bg5 h6 13 Be3 (Diagram 35)

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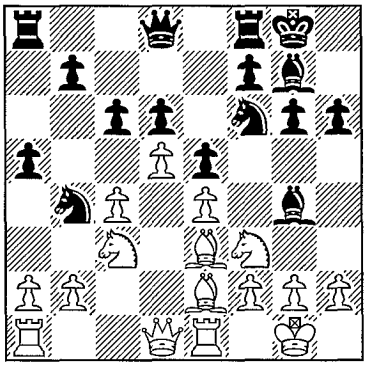

Diagram 35 (B)
...h6 is weakening

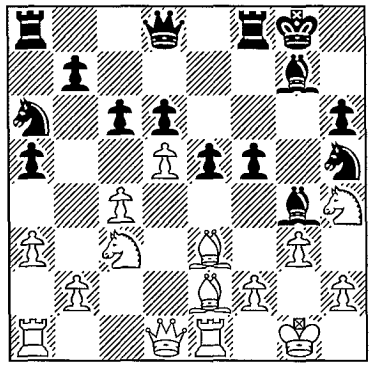

Diagram 36 (B)
Model play from White

13...Qc7

This is not a good move and has not been played again at GM level. It's worth having a long look at the position before reading further to see if you can work out why: if you can then you appreciate the typical ideas of the King's Indian pretty well and I'm afraid you probably ought to have bought a more advanced book than this one. Instead 13...Nh5 is a typical King's Indian move which should be met with 14 a3 Na6 15 g3 because 15...f5?! is then weak due to 16 exf5! gxf5 17 Nh4 **(Diagram 36)** 17...Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Qe8 19 dxc6 bxc6 20 Rad1 Rf6 21 Bb6 which exemplifies how ...c6 and ...f5 seldom mix well in the King's Indian unless Black gets in ...cxd5 in between. Black does better to continue just 15...Nf6 when White could sensibly continue with either 16 Nh4 (a typical move to restrain ...f5) or 16 Qd2 h5 17 dxc6 bxc6 18 Red1 (a different way of retraining ...f5 by creating action elsewhere).

14 h3 Bxf3

Black does not want to play this move: once the centre has been fixed with ...e5 and d5 in the King's Indian he very rarely wants to trade his queen's bishop for any other minor piece. The trouble is that after 14...Bd7 he runs into some unexpected tactical difficulties: the basic problem is that 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 Qd2 Kh7 17 a3 Na6 18 Rad1 attacks the d-pawn and the only available defence 18...Ne8 allows 19 c5 winning. So Black is going to be forced to meet 15 dxc6 with 15...Bxc6, which he doesn't want to do. Then White will drop the knight into d5 at some point and probably recapture with the c-pawn, after which he will hope to exploit the misplaced queen and weakened queenside.

15 Bxf3 (Diagram 37)

The disappearance of Black's queen's bishop lames his whole position, since it

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makes it very hard ever to play ...f5. If nothing else ...Nh5 is prevented, so the knight will have to reculer before it can mieux sauter, which will cost a tempo or two, but also a whole complex of squares like e6, g6 and f5 will be vulnerable to the unopposed white king's bishop.

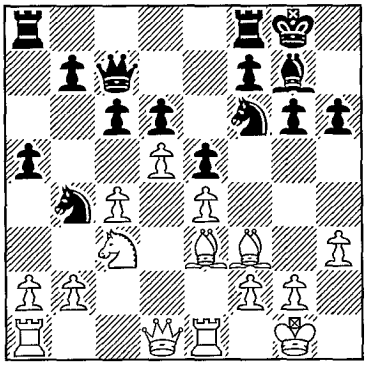

Diagram 37 (B)
Black lacks an effective plan

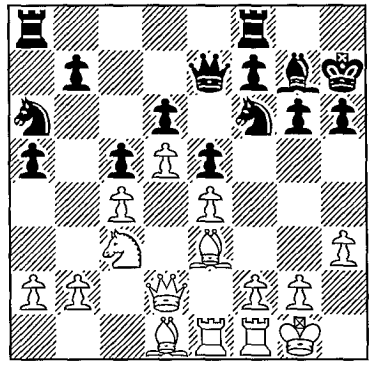

Diagram 38 (B)
Impressive regrouping from Karpov

15...c5

A controversial decision. By closing the queen's wing in this way Black gives White a choice of two plans: either to play on the queen's wing with a3, b3, Rb1, covering b4 somehow and eventually b4, or, on the other hand, f4. Black also deprives himself of the opportunity to change the position (unless he can prepare ...f5) so characteristically Karpov manoeuvres to give himself the choice of either plan (or perhaps both) depending upon where Black puts his pieces.

16 Rf1!

The best move in the game, beginning the forthcoming reorganization, which is aimed above anything else at preventing ...f5.

16...Qe7 17 Qd2

Clearing the back rank and the d1-square for the coming regrouping, while drawing Black's king to h7 will also make it still harder for him ever to contemplate ...f5 with his king on the vulnerable b1-h7 diagonal.

17...Kh7

17...h5 also makes it harder to organize ...f5, since the h-pawn will be en prise if Black isn't careful, but if you wanted to trade Black's fianchettoed bishop after that move with 18 Bh6, deduct 10 points. That is a strategic mistake as White's e3-bishop is better than the g7 one. In fact ...h5, ...Kh7, ...Ng8 and ...Bh6 is a quite common manoeuvre which Black might well have considered in the game.

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TIP: Once the position closes like this in the King's Indian, especially if ...h6 is in and even more especially if the Black queen's bishop is missing, the possibility of 'doing' Black positionally in a knight versus bad bishop ending should never be far away from White's mind.

18 Rae1

Further prophylaxis. The rook has no immediate active prospects here, but Karpov wants to put ...f5 to bed once and for all, and if some combination of ...f5 and f4 occurred the rook would come into its own.

18...Na6

Notice how Karpov never needed to play a3 and in the end the knight went away of its own accord. You shouldn't attack pieces which are badly placed unless the move you are playing is a concrete gain. White never does play a3 and the tempo gained helps to stifle any kingside play Black might have tried to drum up.

19 Bd1! (Diagram 38)

The best place for the bishop is c2, where it doesn't get in the way of the f-pawn, further discourages ...f5, and has the possibility of infiltrating via a4.

19...Nc7 20 g3

A useful move – Kg2 will improve the king and perhaps even give the rooks a little more scope along the first rank (h4-h5 is a distant dream just now, but sometimes does come in handy in these very blocked positions, further weakening the light squares in Black's camp), while g3 may one day enable f4 exf4, gxf4, and even controlling some squares on the kingside may be useful. Meanwhile Karpov doesn't play Bc2 just yet because he wants to keep the bishop controlling h5 as long as possible.

20...Nd7

Black would love to get in ...b5 but 20...Qd7 21 Kg2 b5 loses: 22 cxb5 Nxb5 23 Ba4.

21 Bc2 Nb6

Instead 21...f5 22 f4! exf4 23 Bxf4 fxe4 24 Bxe4 is crushing for White: notice how powerfully all of his prophylactically arranged pieces leap into action. The text is part of a plan for counterplay on the queen's wing, but Karpov has the answers over there too.

22 Bd3 Qd7 23 Kg2 Na4 (Diagram 39)

Black wants to trade the c3-knight so that he can get in ...b5. Certainly it was possible to ignore this and press ahead with one of White's plans with 24 Nxa4 Qxa4 25 f4, but characteristically Karpov has a plan to defuse Black's activity first of all.

24 Rb1! Rfb8

Alternatively 24...Nxc3 25 bxc3! Rab8 26 Rb6 Na8 27 Rb5 b6 28 Rfb1 clamps down on b5 much like in the game.

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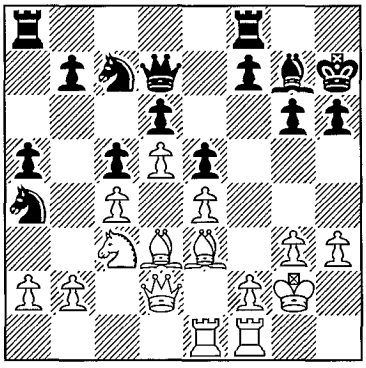

Diagram 39 (W)
How to prevent any counterplay?

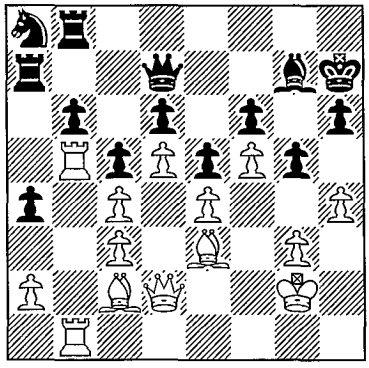

Diagram 40 (B)
Preparing a decisive infiltration

25 Bc2 Nxc3 26 bxc3 a4 27 Rb6 Ra7 28 Rfb1 Na8 29 R6b5 b6 30 f4! f6

I find myself in a bit of a quandary here. I've seen this game annotated by a couple of GMs, and they seem quite satisfied that White is already winning and that Black had no sensible alternative to this move. To me, on the other hand, it seems that this move really is the equivalent of resignation, and that Black had much better prospects of resisting after 30...exf4 31 Bxf4 (or 31 gxf4). At least Black can move most of his pieces then – just ask the g7 bishop what he ought to have played!

31 f5 g5 32 h4 (Diagram 40) 32...Rh8 33 Rh1 Kg8 34 Rbb1 Ra6 35 Rbf1 Qd8 36 Qd1 a3 37 Ba4

There is no hurry. White brings his last piece to the party before the final breakthrough on the kingside.

37...Nc7 38 Bc6 Kf7 39 Qh5+ Kg8 40 Rb1 Qb8 41 Qg6 Qf8 42 hxg5 fxg5 43 Bxg5 hxg5 44 Rxh8+ Kxh8 45 Rh1+ Kg8 46 Qh7+ Kf7 47 f6 Qh8 48 Qf5 1-0

A perfect example of Karpov's first-stop-them-playing-and-only-then-rip-their-heads-off style of play, and one of those games which look so simple they make you think that 2770 can't really be so very far away – until you try, of course.

Game 3
☐ **V.Kramnik** ■ **R.Knaak**
Dortmund 1992

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nbd7 8 Be3 c6 9 d5 c5 10 Ne1 Ne8 11 g4 f5 (Diagram 41)

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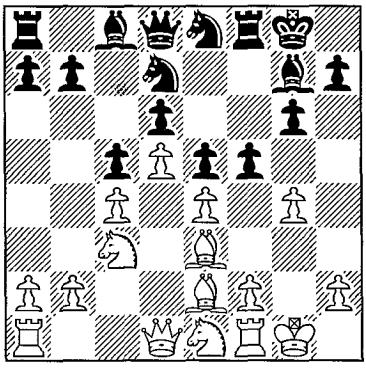

Diagram 41 (W)
Black insists on his ...f5-break

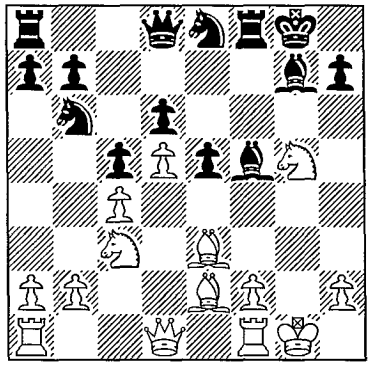

Diagram 42 (B)
The g5-knight is superbly placed

The most immediately combative move, although Black doesn't have to do this at all. One alternative is 11...Bf6 which White has to meet with 12 Qd2 to prevent the exchange of dark-squared bishops. Instead in the stem game B.Gelfand-V.Ivanchuk, Kramatorsk 1989, Black refused to co-operate, preferring 11...Qh4, and was squashed thematically on the queenside: 12 Kh1 Kh8 13 Rg1 Qe7 14 a3 Ndf6 15 b4 b6 16 Nd3 Ng8 17 a4 f5 18 g5 (spare a thought for the black knights) 18...Qf7 19 a5 Rb8 20 f3 h6 21 axb6 axb6 22 h4 f4 23 Bf2 hxg5 24 hxg5 with a remarkably crushing position for White.

12 exf5 gxf5 13 gxf5 Nb6

Black would prefer to recover the pawn with 13...Ndf6 but then 14 Bd3 defends the f-pawn, and even if Black manages to win it back he will have to allow the trade of the light-squared bishops in the process.

14 Nf3

TIP: This move was Kramnik's contribution. You have to play with all the pieces, and once this knight is on g5 it is terrifyingly active, both helping to fight for e4 and also threatening constantly to come to e6.

14...Bxf5 15 Ng5 (Diagram 42) 15...Qe7

It is natural to keep d7 free to allow the knight to return from b6. Black has also tried 15...Nf6 when Peter Wells played with characteristic power and energy in P.Wells-A.Areshchenko, Coventry 2005 with 16 a4! (notice the timing of this idea; if the knight were still on e8, say after 15...Qe7, then 16 a4 e4 17 a5 Nd7 18 a6 b6 19 Nb5? leaves b2 hanging, so Black has time for ...Nc7) 16...Qe7 17 a5 Nbd7 18 a6 b6 19 Nb5 Rfc8 20 f4 Re8 21 Ra3 Nf8 22 fxe5 Qxe5, when White had a choice of tempting continuations – 23 Nxd6 and 23 Nf7 for a start, although in the game the

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young Ukrainian's resourcefulness prevailed.

16 Kh1 Nf6

Black really has to fight for e4 and 16...h6 17 Nge4 would be feeble. Knaak's proposal of 16...e4 is thematic: this is not usually a good idea in the same structure with the c-pawn on c7, but with ...c5 in White cannot use d4. Knaak offers 17 Rg1 Nd7 but once the b6-knight comes off c4 White can play 18 Bg4 making the key trade of the light-squared bishops, and thus secures e6 for this knight and stands comfortably better. Instead 17...Bxc3 is a shocker, but White cannot win at once and this might well be worth a try; again it would be unthinkable with the pawn on c7, but here White cannot easily introduce the e3-bishop to the black king.

17 Rg1 Kh8

Instead 17...h6 18 Ne6 Bxe6 19 Bxh6 Ne8 20 dxe6 Qxe6 leaves the Black king naked, but 17...e4 is possible again. White continues in much the same way with Qd2, and perhaps doubling on the g-file, while Bf4 and Qe3 might be a way of adding to the pressure, and Nb5 ideas can also be irritating.

18 Qd2 Bg6

Neither Anand nor Knaak comments on this move but it looks strange to me to expose e6. Maybe 18...Rg8 and ...Raf8 was worth thinking about.

19 Raf1

Whether this move has in mind f4 or f3 and Bd3 is not clear to me: possibly either.

19...Nh5

19...Rae8 is another move directed against f4, when 20 Ne6 Rf7 21 Bg5 Qd7 22 Bd3 Bxd3 23 Qxd3 is a variation which illustrates White taking control.

20 Ne6 (Diagram 43)

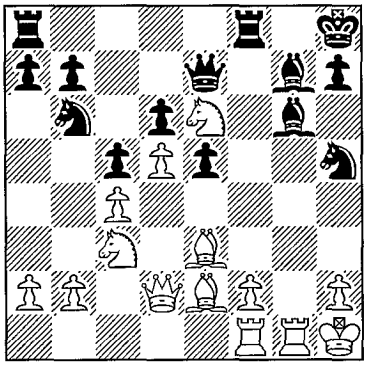

Diagram 43 (B)
The knight arrives with aplomb

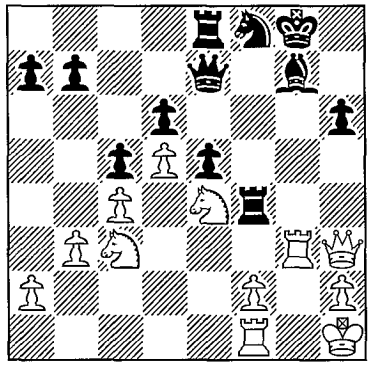

Diagram 44 (B)
The knight continues to dominate

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20...Rf7 21 b3 Nd7

21...Nf4 was essential according to Knaak, although White is clearly better after 22 Bxf4 exf4 23 Bd3.

22 Bd3 Nf8 23 Ng5 Bxd3 24 Qxd3!

White's strategy has triumphed.

24...Rf6 25 Qe2 Nf4 26 Bxf4 Rxf4 27 Qh5 h6 28 Qh3 Re8 29 Rg3 Kg8 30 Nge4 (Diagram 44) 30...Kh7 31 Rfg1 Bf6 32 Ne2 1-0

Black resigned in view of 32...Rxe4 33 Qf5+ Kh8 34 Rg8 mate. Kramnik was only seventeen at the time of this game, which was one of the classical positional demolitions of experienced grandmasters which led Kasparov to predict early on that this was a world champion to be.

Game 4

☐ **A.Shariyazdanov** ■ **M.Cebalo**

Croatian Team Championship 2004

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 Bg4 7 Be3 Nfd7 8 Rc1 a6 9 d5 c5 (Diagram 45)

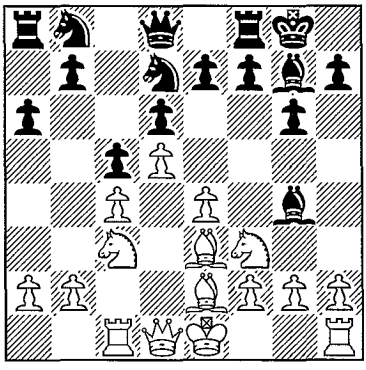

Diagram 45 (W)

Black angles for ...b5

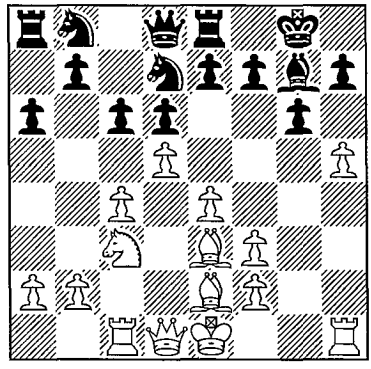

Diagram 46 (B)

Exploiting the extra space

The alternative is 9...Bxf3 which is perhaps the critical line in this variation at a high level. In reply, 10 gxf3 is a challenging modern notion after which10...c6 11 h4 Re8 12 h5 **(Diagram 46)** 12...cxd5 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 cxd5 Nf8 15 f4 Nbd7 16 f5 Rc8 17 fxg6 fxg6 18 Bd4 Nf6 is a continuation which illustrates White's aims fairly clearly and has occurred twice in Cebalo's games as Black. Clearly he thinks it's not as bad as it looks, but it's hard not to believe White stands better here.

10 a4 b5

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A sacrifice in the style of the Benko Gambit.

NOTE: Black can play other moves, of course, and often does, but if he plays quietly then he has made a classic Benoni positional error of playing ...a6 while neglecting to provide a home for his b8-knight, and must expect to be a little worse.

11 cxb5 axb5 12 axb5! (Diagram 47)

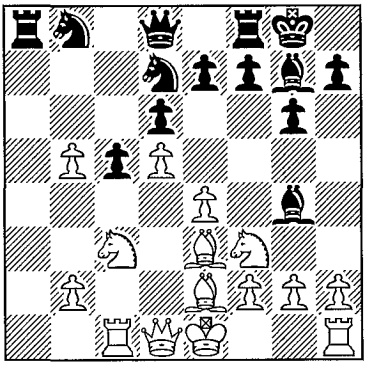

Diagram 47 (B)
Preventing b-file pressure

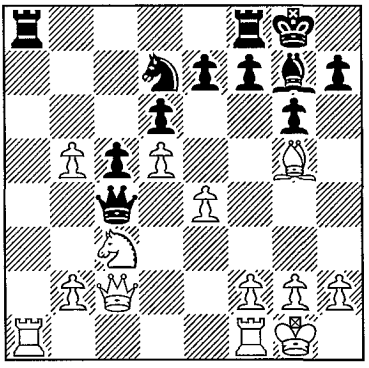

Diagram 48 (B)
White has control

12...Bxf3

Instead 12...Nb6 13 0-0 Bxf3 14 gxf3 N8d7 15 f4 Ra5 16 Kh1 Qa8 17 Rc2 Rc8 18 h4 Rc7 19 h5 Rca7 worked out well for White in Z.Izoria-A.Romero Holmes, French League 2003, although clearly 14 Bxf3 is calmer. There's a lot of merit in the pawn capture, though: quite apart from keeping the bishop well placed on e2 it's handy to have two f-pawns, one for f4-f5 and the other to carry on covering e4 afterwards, and in the short term White's king isn't suffering by the exposure. Indeed Black's idea with the text move might well have been to discourage gxf3 by ensuring that in that event he has the knight ready to go to f6 rather than denuding the kingside.

TIP: As usual in these Benko-style games White needs to play actively on the centre and kingside rather than just assume his extra pawn is going to win the game by itself.

13 Bxf3 Qa5 14 0-0 Qb4 15 Qc2 Nb6 16 Ra1 N8d7 17 Be2

Black has put his pieces into active places but his compensation just doesn't seem to be enough.

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17...Nc4

This doesn't work, but 17...e6 is refuted by 18 Ra6 exd5 19 Nxd5 and 17...Bd4 18 Bd2 c4 19 Bg5 also hits at the Achilles heel of Black's position, and forces concessions; either 19...Rxa1 or 19...e6 20 Rad1! e5 21 Bg4.

18 Bxc4 Qxc4 19 Bg5 (Diagram 48) 19...Bf6

Hopeless, but 19...Nf6 20 b3 Qb4 21 Ra4 forces 21...Rxa4 22 bxa4 when White is in complete control.

20 Bxf6 exf6 21 b3 Qd4 22 Ra6 Qe5 23 f4 Qd4+ 24 Kh1 c4 25 Ne2

Decisive; the rest is simple for White.

25...cxb3 26 Nxd4 bxc2 27 Nxc2 Nc5 28 Rxd6 Ra2 29 Ne3 Nxe4 30 Rc6 Re8 31 b6 Nd2 32 Rd1 Rb2 33 Ng4 Ne4 34 d6 h5 35 d7 Rd8 36 Rc8 1-0

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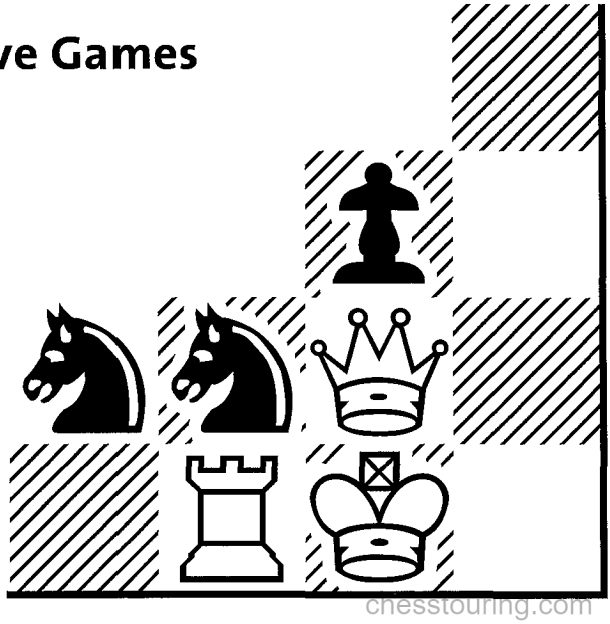
Chapter Two

The Grünfeld

- Introduction
- Black Swipes the a-pawn
- Black Develops with ...Nc6
- Black's Alternative Plans
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 (Diagram 1)

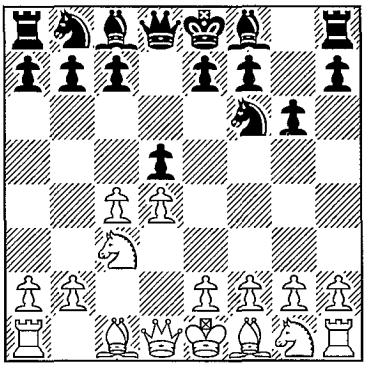

Diagram 1 (W)
The Grünfeld

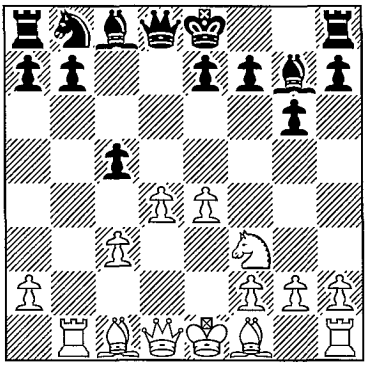

Diagram 2 (B)
A crafty rook shift

The Grünfeld is another defence where there is a clear consensus among GMs what is White's most challenging approach. Perhaps the chief attraction of the Grünfeld from Black's point of view is that none of White's main options against it is for the faint-hearted. The line I am covering is no exception: it involves a pawn sacrifice. It's only fair to say that this variation has been exceptionally well analysed and tested. As early as 1984 White's innovation on the 36th move in I.Novikov-V.Tukmakov had pundits shaking their heads and predicting the imminent death of chess (little did they know in that innocent pre-computer age), but White's compensation is fairly positional and it isn't really the sort of thing you need to know oodles of theory to play: if you develop all the pieces naturally and then razz White's d-pawn down the board you won't go too far wrong.

4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3

Curiously enough, for decades this natural move was condemned. Hartston's 1971 Batsford classic on the opening doesn't mention the move 7 Nf3 at all, not even in the paragraph beginning 'Other feeble tries are ...'. It was considered that Black got too much play against the White centre too easily with ...Bg4, and that White had to play Bc4 and Ne2 so as to be ready to meet ...Bg4 with f3. Garry Kasparov was one of the first to challenge this dogma in the 1980's, although with a slightly different line to the one I am covering.

7...c5 8 Rb1 (Diagram 2)

This is the magic move. Credit for its popularity of today belongs most of all to Boris Gelfand, Alexander Khalifman and, like most other things in the 1 d4 world

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in the 1990's, Vladimir Kramnik. To see why 7 Nf3 was formerly so lowly regarded, consider:

a) 8 Bc4 Nc6 9 Be3 0-0 10 h3 (10 0-0 cxd4 11 cxd4 Bg4 12 Rb1 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 Qxd4 15 Bd5 is also thoroughly uninspiring) 10...Qa5 11 Qd2 cxd4 12 cxd4 Qxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Rd8 14 Bd5 (M.Vidmar-A.Alekhine, Nottingham 1936), and now Euwe's 14...e6.

b) 8 Be2 Nc6 9 Be3 (9 d5 Bxc3+ 10 Bd2 Bxa1 11 Qxa1 Nd4 12 Nxd4 cxd4 13 Qxd4 0-0 gives inadequate compensation for the exchange since 14 Bh6 fails to 14...Qa5+) 9...Bg4 10 e5 (the computer is so disgusted with White's position it wants to play 10 Ng1 Bc8 11 Nf3 and forget the whole thing) 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 0-0 12 0-0 Qd7 13 Qd2 Rfd8 14 Rfd1 Rac8 (Rowson). Sometimes this e5 move is OK for White in this structure, blotting out the g7-bishop (especially if Black has developed with ...b6 and ...Bb7), but not here.

In both lines Black is already for choice with his pressure on the centre.

So why is 8 Rb1 so good? Basically it's extremely simple. One can look at it in two ways. The first is that Rb1 fights against both Black's natural developing moves: it enables White to meet ...Nc6 with d5 without losing a rook to ...Bxc3+, and it means that ...Bg4 leaves b7 hanging. The second is that the rook is the piece which knows where it wants to be, and neither of the other candidates for development at this stage, the bishops, quite does: the king's bishop may yet go to b5 or e2, and the queen's may fancy d2, e3 or g5. But nothing is for free, of course. Rb1 does leave a2 en prise, and sure enough in the commonest line, White has to give up that pawn.

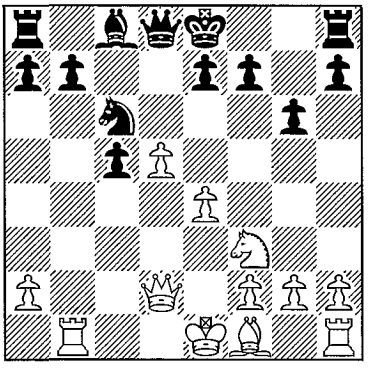

Diagram 3 (B)
The benefits of Rb1 become clear

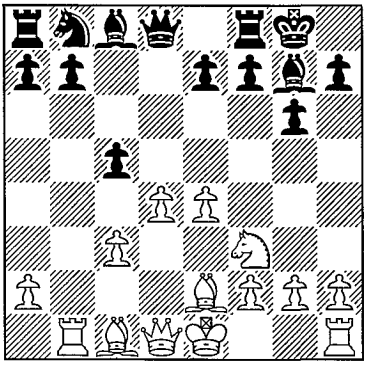

Diagram 4 (B)
Black has several plans

8...0-0

Black has to delay his counterplay for a move: 8...Bg4 just loses b7; 8...Qa5 9 Rb5

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Qxa2 (9...Qxc3+ 10 Bd2 Qa3 11 Qc2 wins the c-pawn back with a big advantage) 10 Rxc5 has been played a bit but really should favour White now that the pressure is off his centre; and 8...Nc6 is just bad because 9 d5 Bxc3+ 10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Qxd2 **(Diagram 3)** 11...Nd4 12 Nxd4 cxd4 13 Bb5+ Bd7 14 Qxd4 0-0 (14...Qa5+ loses material to 15 Kd1) 15 0-0 Bxb5 16 Rxb5 is much better for White.

9 Be2 (Diagram 4)

The main line is now 9...cxd4, drawing attention to the downside of Rb1 in the most brutal fashion, 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 (a necessary pawn sacrifice: 11 Qd2 is feeble) 11...Qxa2 and we will consider that before the alternatives of 9...Nc6 and 9...b6.

Black Swipes the a-pawn

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 (Diagram 5)

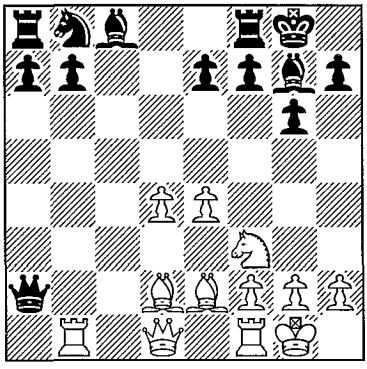

Diagram 5 (B)
White has good compensation

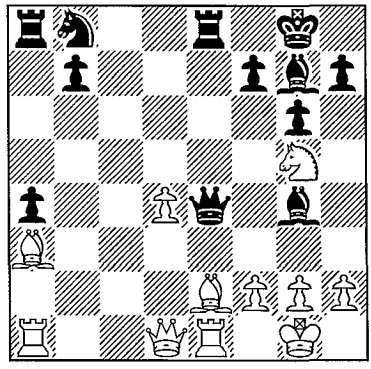

Diagram 6 (B)
White enjoys a strong initiative

A modern tabiya: many hundreds of grandmaster games have started from this position.

12...Bg4

Probably the most highly regarded, but Black has tried many moves:

a) 12...a5 is the scariest since Black declares that his minor pieces are fine where they are stopping the d-pawn getting over d7, and he'll just go ahead and queen his a-pawn. At the moment this approach is not highly thought of if White simply gets on with the job: 13 Bg5 a4 (13...h6 14 Bxe7 Re8 15 Bd6 Rxe4 16 Rc1 leaves Black in trouble) 14 Re1 is White's front-runner just now, and Black hasn't found a

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good move, for example 14...Bg4 15 Bxe7 Re8 16 Ra1 Qe6 17 Ba3 Qxe4 18 Ng5 **(Diagram 6)** yields White a furious attack since 18...Qf4 19 Bc4 Be5 20 Bxf7+ Kg7 21 dxe5 seems to be winning. More cautious souls however might like to try the bovine 13 Ra1, just collecting the a-pawn, as 13...Qb2 14 Bxa5 Nc6 15 Rb1 Qa2 looks better for White to me after either 16 Bb6 or 16 Bc3, and the oft-recommended 13...Qe6 14 Qc2 Qc6 still leaves White very decent prospects after Dearing's 15 Qb1.

b) 12...b6 aims to meet 13 Bg5 by 13...Bb7, which has proven fine for Black. Instead 13 Qc1 is thought to be best, preparing Bc4, and 13...Qe6 (13...Bb7 is the alternative when 14 Bc4 Qa4 15 Bb5 Qa2 16 Re1 Rc8 17 Qd1 e6 18 h4 h5 19 Qe2 Nc6 20 Bc4 Qa3 is the present state of the art, with an unclear position) 14 Re1 **(Diagram 7)** has replaced 14 Bc4 Qxe4 15 Re1 Qb7 16 Bb4 when Black defends with 16...Be6!. The point of 14 Re1 is that 14...Qxe4? 15 Ng5 and Bf3 wins the a8 rook, so White retains his central pawn duo. Then 14...Bb7 15 Bb5 Na6 16 Bf4! kept the black knight out of play and left White in control in A.Chernin-C.Horvath, Hungarian Ch., Lillafured 1999.

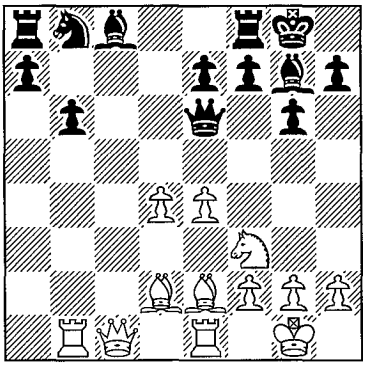

Diagram 7 (B)
White's strong centre is key

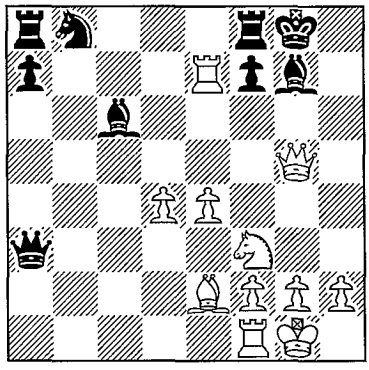

Diagram 8 (B)
Blowing open the black kingside

c) 12...Nd7 is the last of Black's respectable defences, developing a piece and intending to meet 13 Bg5 with 13...Nf6 and 13 Qc1 with 13...Nb6, covering c4. So White needs a slightly different idea, and I advocate 13 Re1!? (Anand's recent choice) when V.Anand-P.Leko, Linares 2000 continued 13...Nb6 14 Ra1 Qb2 15 h3 (...Bg4 was coming) 15...f5 (15...Bd7 16 Bd3 Rfc8 17 Re2 Bb5 is critical according to Stohl after which White can try a number of bishop moves, including 18 Be1 Qxa1 19 Qxa1 Bxd3 20 Re3) and now it seems that Anand ought to have played 16 Bd3 fxe4 17 Bxe4 Qb5 when either 18 Ra5 or 18 Qc2 give White ample play for his pawn.

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d) 12...Qe6 13 Qc2 Qc6 14 Qd3 Qd6 15 Bb4 Qd8 16 d5 can't be the way to play for Black although it has been tried a lot with consistently poor results.

e) 12...Bd7 demands courageous action: 13 Rxb7 Bc6 14 Rxe7 Qa3 15 Bg5 h6 (15...f6 16 Bc4+ Kh8 17 Rxg7 Kxg7 18 Bc1 is also very strong) 16 Qc1 Qb4 17 Qd2 Qa3 18 Bh4 g5 19 Bxg5! hxg5 20 Qxg5 **(Diagram 8)** with a devastating attack in A.Chernin-J.Fernandez Garcia, Pamplona 1991.

f) 12...Nc6 should allow White a sizeable advantage after 13 d5 Ne5 (13...Nd4 14 Nxd4 Bxd4 15 Bh6 Bg7 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Qd4+ f6 is also dangerous for Black) 14 Nd4 Bg4 15 Rxb7.

Returning to 12...Bg4:

13 Be3 (Diagram 9)

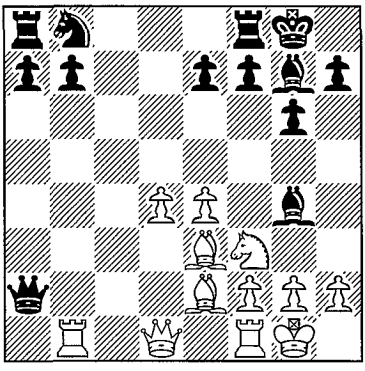

Diagram 9 (B)
Not rushing to regain the pawn on b7

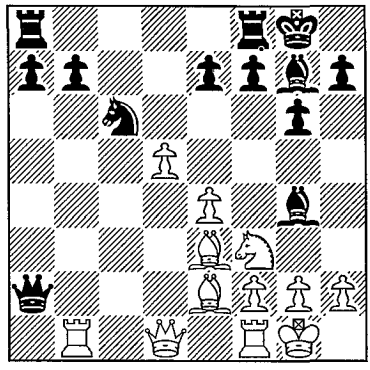

Diagram 10 (B)
The centre begins to roll

The naive 13 Rxb7 has long been regarded as feeble in view of 13...Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Bxd4 as 15 e5 can be met with 15...Na6.

TIP: Recently, however, this line has been revived with 15 Bb4 because the established recipe 15...Rd8 16 Qc1 e5 actually loses outright to 17 Be7 Re8 18 Qh6: for example, 18...Qe6 19 Bg4 Qc6 20 Rc7 Qb6 21 Bg5 Rf8 22 Rfc1 Bxf2+ 23 Kh1 wins.

Thus Black must instead submit to losing the e-pawn, and probably the a-pawn too in the long run, and hence a thankless grovel for the half-point. The more technically inclined might prefer this to Kramnik's choice.

13...Nc6

The obvious move, pressing on the centre in true Grünfeld style, and logical in conjunction with ...Bg4. Instead 13...Rc8 14 Rxb7 Bd7 15 Bd3 (against the threat of

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...Bc6) doesn't challenge White much, but the main alternative is 13...b6, although I must say this looks downright wrong to me after ...Bg4. A logical reply is 14 Ra1 (switching to the a-file now the b-file is darned, although 14 Qd3 is also played) 14...Qb2 (14...Qe6 15 h3 Bxf3 16 Bxf3 Nd7 17 e5 Rad8 18 Qa4 a5 19 Qb5 is very good for White too) 15 h3 Bxf3 16 Bxf3 e5 and now worth considering is the move 17 Rb1, based on the variation 17...Qa3 18 dxe5 Qe7 19 e6 Qxe6 20 e5 Nc6 21 Bd5 Qd7 22 Rc1 Nxe5 23 Bxa8 Rxa8 24 Qxd7 Nxd7 25 Rc7, followed by Rfc1 and Rc8. Black might prefer 17...Qa2 18 d5 Nd7 19 Qd3, but this should also favour White after an exchange on c5, followed by targeting the vulnerable black queenside pawns.

14 d5 (Diagram 10)

We will now see Kramnik handle the immediate exchange on f3 in Game 5. The main alternative is 14...Na5 which is probably destined to become fashionable after the clash B.Gelfand-P.Svidler, World Team Championship, Beersheba 2005, which saw two great experts in this line meet. That went 15 Bg5 (in the light of the annoying Gelfand-Svidler, White might want another move after 14...Na5 and in the other main line 15 Bc5 Bf6, White might very well try 16 Rb4 when 16...Rfc8 is the only move, but after 17 Ra4 Qb3 18 Rxa5 Qxd1 19 Rxd1 b6 20 Bxe7 Bxe7 21 Ra2 White might be able to claim some advantage) 15...Qa3 (15...Bxf3 did less well in Kramnik-Svidler, Linares 1999 after 16 Bxf3 Rfe8 17 e5! Nc4 18 d6 Nxe5 19 Bd5 Qa3 20 Bxe7 Bf8 21 Bxb7, winning material, and the critical 17...Bxe5 allows a devastating initiative after 18 d6! exd6 19 Bd5) 16 Re1 Rfd8 **(Diagram 11)**

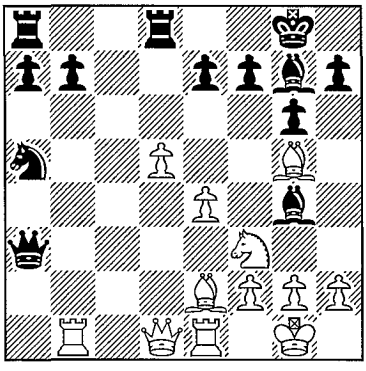

Diagram 11 (W)
Black halts the white advance

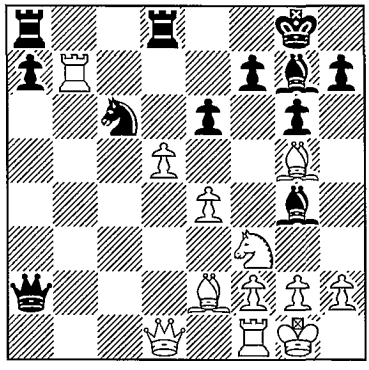

Diagram 12 (B)
White's initiative is very useful

(this was the big novelty: previously 16...Bxf3 17 Bxf3 Qd6 18 Qe2 Be5 19 g3 b6 20 Bg4 Nb7 21 f4 had been played, with White's initiative probably slightly overcompensating for the missing pawn) 17 e5 (how much difference Black's extra

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...Rfd8 makes after 17 h3 Bxf3 18 Bxf3 remains to be seen: it is not an unconditional benefit; one can see that having f7 defended might prove quite useful at some moment, and the x-ray on the h4-d8 diagonal might also lend force to d6) 17...h6 18 Bf4 Bf5 19 Rc1 Qb3 20 d6 exd6 21 exd6 Qxd1 22 Rexd1 Nc6 and Black was already close to winning.

Finally, Black has tried 14...Rfd8 15 Rxb7 e6, but this seems to be rather well met by 16 Bg5 **(Diagram 12)** 16...Rd6 (16...f6 17 Qc1 is devastating as shown by Dearing's17...exd5 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Qxc6) 17 Bf4 Rdd8 18 Rc7 Bxf3 19 Bxf3 Ne5 20 Bg5.

Black Develops with ...Nc6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 Nc6 (Diagram 13)

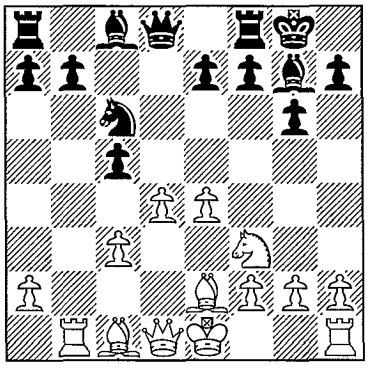

Diagram 13 (W)
Black pressurizes d4

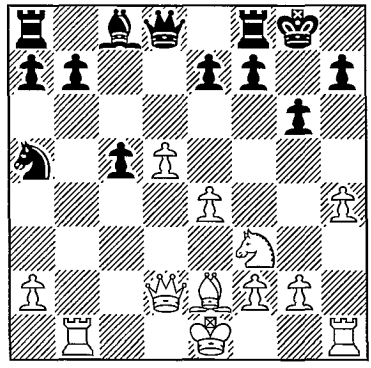

Diagram 14 (B)
Another brave grab from Black

This natural developing move is one which White's system was designed to meet, but is nonetheless popular.

10 d5

Of course. The point of Rb1 was to allow this.

10...Ne5

Instead 10...Na5 doesn't look right; after 11 c4 Bg4 12 Nd2 Bxe2 13 Qxe2 Qd7 14 Bb2 e5?! 15 Bc3 b6 16 Bxa5 bxa5 White was already winning in D.Yevseev-A.Koster, Groningen 1998, but 10...Bxc3+ is consequential and critical, and may be coming back into fashion. After 11 Bd2 Bxd2+ 12 Qxd2 Na5 (provocative as hell, but 12...Nd4 13 Nxd4 cxd4 14 Qxd4 Qa5+ 15 Qd2 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 Rd8 17 Ke3 is a tolerably unpleasant endgame for Black: the game G.Kasparov-T.Natsis, Malta Olympiad 1980, being a model for White) 13 h4 **(Diagram 14)** White has given up a

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pawn to weaken Black's king and needs to continue very directly. Then 13...f6 14 h5 g5 was tried for a time, but after the more or less forced 15 Nxg5 fxg5 16 Qxg5+ Kh8 17 h6 Rf7 18 Bh5 Qg8, White has 19 Qe5+ Rf6 20 Qxe7 Rxh6 21 Rh4 with a winning attack as far as I can see (Bf7 is in the air).

It must be better to try to weaken the attack with 13...Bg4 and after 14 Ng5 (to my mind it is logical to keep this very dangerous knight) 14...Bxe2 15 Kxe2, Black is set to be over-run on the kingside and must make an important choice:

a) 15...e6 16 h5 Nc4 (16...h6? 17 Nh7 winning on the spot is White's basic trick in this line) 17 Qc1 exd5 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 Rxh7 Qf6 20 f4 yields an extremely complicated position which has had a couple of tests recently: White proceeds with Rb3-h3 and on present evidence seems to be well-nigh winning.

b) 15...h6 is a controversial move when 16 Nf3 Kh7 17 Qc3 b6 18 Ng5+ Kg8 19 h5 hxg5 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 Rh8+ Kf7 22 Rh7+ Ke8 23 Qg7 Kd7 24 d6 is a much-quoted game A.Chernin-I.Stohl, Austrian League 1993, and White is supposed to be winning here. However, a British Championship game at Douglas 2005 between Andrew Greet and Simon Knott saw Black, a very well-briefed Grünfeld specialist, play 15...h6 and Greet, who cannot have been taken by surprise, played 16 h5. So I think we can assume there are other opinions out there. Fritz too has an idea: it reckons it can defend with 24...Re8, followed by keeping the rook on that square instead of the queen, and as usual I can't prove it wrong. So maybe something quieter is called for, such as 17 h5 g5 18 Kf1.

11 Nxe5 Bxe5 12 Qd2 (Diagram 15)

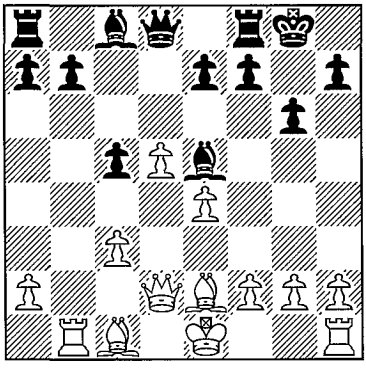

Diagram 15 (B)
Fighting for the dark squares

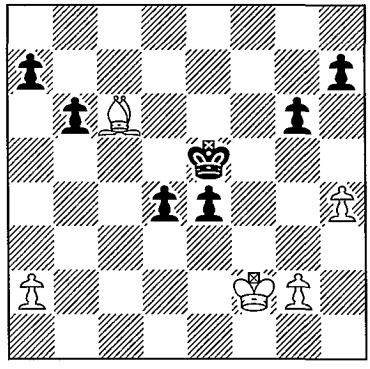

Diagram 16 (B)
A famous novelty

An important move: White both defends c3 and prevents any blockade of the f4-square. Another recent try is 12 Rb3, keeping the bishop unblocked and preparing a possible rook swing to the kingside after c4.

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12...e6

Black doesn't achieve much with 12...Qa5 13 Rb3 since White is happy enough to trade queens after c4. He may also aim to erect a blockade on e5 after 12...Bg7 13 f4 e5 14 0-0 exf4 15 Qxf4, but with vigorous play White can break it down: 15...Qe7 16 Bc4 Be5 17 Qg5 Qd6 18 Bf4 f6 19 Bxe5 fxe5 20 h4 was much better for White in P.Wells-J.Rowson, London 1997.

13 f4

Black must now decide where to retreat his bishop:

a) 13...Bc7 is a pretty unnatural move to my mind – a positive eyesore in fact – but currently fashionable. Black hopes to put pressure on the White centre and the laggard c-pawn with this bishop from a5. Timid souls might worry about being mated on g7, but Black figures it's not going to happen, although we will see White try to prove him wrong in Game 6.

b) 13...Bg7 is obviously the natural move and was once a very main line 14 c4 Re8 (14...exd5 15 cxd5 Bd4 16 Bb2 leads to a tactical sequence: 16...Qb6 17 Bd3 c4 18 Bxc4 Re8 19 Qxd4 Qxd4 20 Bxd4 Rxe4+ 21 Kd2 Rxd4+ 22 Kc3 Rxf4 23 d6 with an ending which seems to be much better for White; there's also 14...b6 15 Bb2 Bxb2 16 Rxb2 Ba6, reaching another critical position where White has tried 17 0-0 without showing much, and more recently 17 e5!? and 17 Rb3!?) 15 e5 f6 16 d6 fxe5 17 Bb2 was endlessly tested in the early 1980's. Black's shaky king and the d-pawn seemed to outweigh the odd pawn and White's own centralized king, with 17...exf4 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 0-0 Rf8 20 Rxf4 Rxf4 21 Qxf4 Qf6 22 Qe4 Rb8 23 Rf1 Qd4+ 24 Qxd4+ cxd4 25 Rb1 Bd7 26 Bf3 b6 27 c5 Rc8 28 c6 Bxc6 29 Rc1 Bd7 30 Rxc8 Bxc8 31 Bc6 Kf6 32 d7 Bxd7 33 Bxd7 e5 34 Kf2 e4 35 Bc6 Ke5 36 h4 **(Diagram 16)** being the novelty played in the aforementioned I.Novikov-V.Tukmakov, Lvov 1984, although whether simply demonstrating correct technique in an endgame like this is a 'novelty' exactly is another matter. White wins this position by threatening to bring his king to c4 and by running Black out of moves. Freezing the kingside pawns, starting with 36 h4, is a link in the necessary chain so that White can eventually force Black into having to advance a central pawn.

c) 13...Bh8 was a bizarre attempt to improve over the last line by ensuring that at some moment in some now long-forgotten variation Black could recapture with the king on h8 and not lose a tempo to some check on b7. Fortunately for aesthetes, 14 c4 Re8 15 e5 f6 16 f5!! seems to launch a more or less crushing attack: Rb3-g3 is a handy resource which shows that the king can be checked from more than one direction.

Black's Alternative Plans

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5

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This is the natural Grünfeld move and by far the commonest, but there's no law about it. The trouble with other moves is that Black can't really get by forever without ...c5, and if he doesn't play it now White will never need to play Rb1 and will just save a bit of time over normal lines: for example, 7...0-0 8 Be2 b6 9 0-0 Bb7 10 Qd3 Qd7 11 Bf4 Nc6 12 Rad1 gives White a very comfortable game.

8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 b6 (Diagram 17)

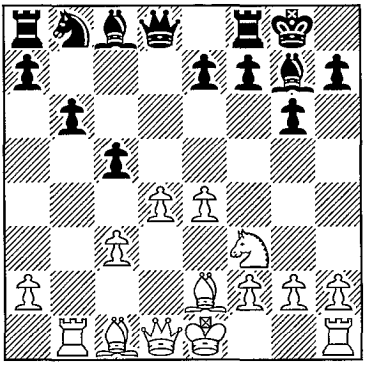

Diagram 17 (W)
Activating Black's light-squared bishop

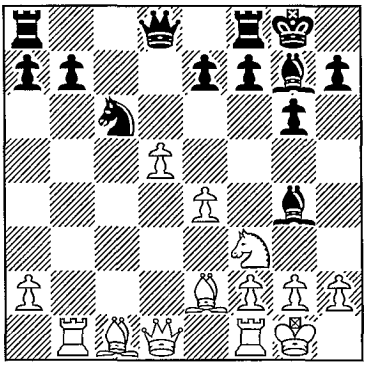

Diagram 18 (B)
Making good use of the white centre

A much calmer move than we saw in the previous two sections. Black intends to develop his bishop at b7 first of all. In this way he neutralizes the effect of White's b1 rook, but at the same time he accepts that White's set-up has forced him to abandon his usual Grünfeld approach. This is also a good moment to round up Black's less popular options:

a) 9...Qa5 10 0-0 Qxc3 is a bold pawn grab which gives White a lot of ways to play. One promising approach is 11 Bd2 Qa3 12 Qc2 Bd7 (12...cxd4 13 Bb4 wins the queen, as does 12...Nc6 13 d5 Nd4 14 Nxd4 Bxd4 15 Rb3 Qa4 16 Bb5) 13 Rxb7 cxd4 14 Rc1, when White's active pieces give him more than adequate compensation for the pawn.

NOTE: Instead 10...Qxa2 11 Bg5 is simply an inferior version of 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+; Black is going to have to play ...cxd4 sooner or later and when he does he will just reach a position with the white bishop on g5 which he could have had with it on d2.

b) 9...Bg4 10 Rxb7 is actually not so clear as all that – your computer won't believe me, but try carrying on and you'll see what I mean. White should prefer 10 0-0 cxd4 (10...Nc6 11 d5 Na5 12 Nd2 is an enterprising pawn sacrifice which gives good compensation after 12...Bxe2 13 Qxe2 Bxc3 14 Nc4 b6 15 Nxa5 Bxa5 16 Bh6

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Re8 17 Qb2) 11 cxd4 Nc6 12 d5 **(Diagram 18)** 12...Na5 when his central control leaves him clearly better after 13 Qa4 or 13 Be3.

10 0-0 Bb7 11 Qd3 (Diagram 19)

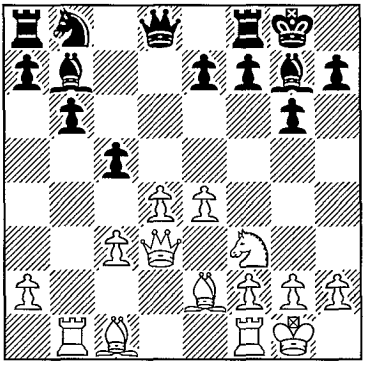

Diagram 19 (B)
The best way to defend e4

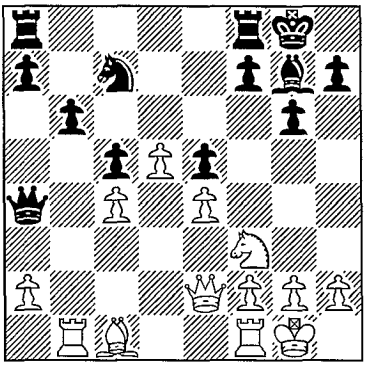

Diagram 20 (W)
Black tries to block it up

11...e6

11...Ba6 is commoner than this when 12 Qe3 gives Black a choice:

a) 12...Qd7 13 Bxa6 Nxa6 14 d5 Qa4 15 Qe2 Nc7 16 c4 e5 **(Diagram 20)** leaves White with plenty of ideas, and for my money he stands better. One plan is Rb3, Bb2, Nd2 and, after some preparation, f4. If the queen were not on a4 a simple plan with a4-a5 would secure White a very comfortable edge, and perhaps Rb3-a3, Bd2, Rb1 and an advance on the queenside could also be considered.

b) 12...Qc8 is a different and much sharper idea with 13 d5 e6 14 c4 exd5 15 cxd5 Bxe2 16 Qxe2 Qa6 17 Qc2 Nd7 18 Bg5 leading to a very unbalanced position where White's chances in the centre and against the enemy king perhaps outweigh Black's queenside play.

12 Bg5

WARNING: 12 dxc5 Qxd3 13 Bxd3 Nd7 14 cxb6 axb6 wins a pawn only in the very short term. This kind of pawn sacrifice is common in the Grünfeld and it's almost always a very bad idea for White to accept: it's a bit like a Benko Gambit, except that White's poor pawns are split as well as exposed on the open files.

12...Qc7

12...Qd6 should be met the same way rather than with the premature 13 e5?! Qd5.

13 Qe3 (Diagram 21)

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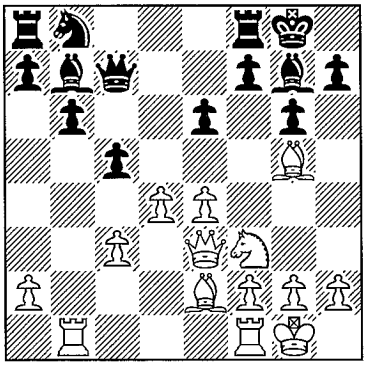

Diagram 21 (B)
White is fairly well coordinated

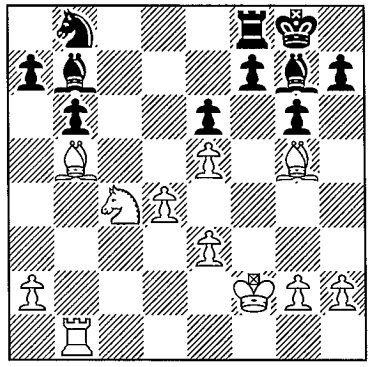

Diagram 22 (B)
White possesses a very useful bind

Ruling out the ...Ba6 option and preparing a possible Bh6 at some later stage to take control of the kingside dark squares. We will consider 13...Rc8 in Game 7, but 13...Nd7 is an alternative when, as Dearing points out, a beautifully thematic demonstration of a very different plan from that game was A.Yusupov-B.Brinck Claussen, European Team Ch., Plovdiv 1983. That went 14 e5 Rac8 15 Nd2 (15 h4 is Game 7, but with the black rook on f8 not a8, which may make a difference or it may not) 15...cxd4 16 cxd4 Qc3 17 Bb5 Qxe3 18 fxe3 Rc2 19 Rf2 Nb8 20 Nc4 Rxf2 21 Kxf2 **(Diagram 22)** 21...f6 22 exf6 Bxf6 23 Bxf6 Rxf6+ 24 Kg3 Bc6 25 a4 Bxb5 26 axb5 Rf7 27 Ne5 Rc7 28 Ra1 Kf8 29 Kf4 Ke7 30 h4 Kd6 31 Ra4 Nd7 32 Nc6 e5+ 33 dxe5+ Ke6 34 Kg5 Nc5 35 Rf4 1-0. Notice how miserable a piece the black knight was in this game which explains why White often aims for e5. Bb5 was also directed against the knight, and even raised the spectre of taking the pitiful creature, before trading the dark-squared bishops and sinking a unchallengeable knight into d6.

Illustrative Games

Game 5
☐ **V.Kramnik** ■ **V.Topalov**
Linares 1998

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2 12 0-0 Bg4 13 Be3 Nc6 14 d5 Bxf3 15 Bxf3 (Diagram 23) 15...Ne5 16 Be2

White prepares a number of attacking options: perhaps Ra1, or f4, or even Bb5.

16...Nc4 17 Bg5 Nd6

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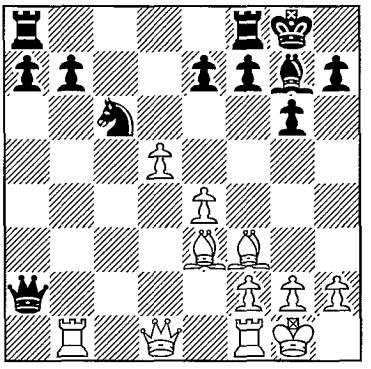

Diagram 23 (B)
Who has the better minor pieces?

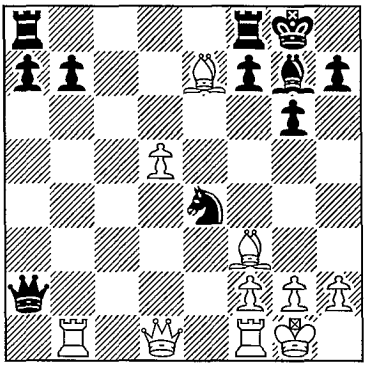

Diagram 24 (B)
19...Nc3 20 Qb3 is Kramnik's idea

This doesn't turn out so well, and probably one of the alternatives was better. Black has tried 17...Rfe8, although White has to be better after 18 Rxb7 Nd6 19 Rb4 a5 20 Ra4 Qb2 when the a-pawn is most definitely a weakness and not a strength, and 21 Bg4, threatening Bd7-c6, might be one way to start. More challenging by far is Luke McShane's 17...Rfb8, aiming to give the e-pawn rather than the b-pawn and preserve chances for counterplay.

WARNING: After 18 Bxe7? Nd2 White has none of the tricks he does in the game and just loses.

White needs to preserve his king's bishop if he can, and 18 Rc1 Nd6 (18...b5 19 Bxe7 a5 20 Bxc4 bxc4 21 d6 is worse) 19 Bxe7 Nxe4 20 Rc2 Qa5 21 Bf3 looks like the critical try to me.

18 Bxe7

This was new. Previously White had defended the e-pawn, but Kramnik shows that the knight forks threatened on d2 and c3 after Black's next can be dealt with.

18...Nxe4 19 Bf3 (Diagram 24)

19 Bxf8? Nc3 would have lost, but now White is in control and is going to recover the b-pawn and be left with the mighty d-pawn against the comparatively sluggish a-pawn.

19...Nd2 20 Qe2 Rfe8

20...Rfb8 has been suggested and leads to a position typical for this variation: a specimen continuation might be 21 Rfd1 Nxf3+ 22 Qxf3 b6 23 Rb3 Qa4 24 d6 Qd7 25 Qd5 b5 26 Rf3 Kh8 27 Rxf7 Rb7 28 h4 Rg8 29 h5 gxh5 30 Rd3 with a crushing attack. This wasn't best play, but does show the way White might seek to exploit his central control in this sort of position.

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21 d6 Nxf3+ 22 Qxf3 Bf8 23 Rxb7 a5

White is better of course but his next move is noteworthy. The computer is sure 24 Bxf8 is just winning but it's not – the position with the pawn on d7 against the running a-pawn and heavy pieces only is a draw. White needs his bishop to control the queening square and the purpose of his next two moves is to withdraw the bishop and win material with d7.

24 h4 (Diagram 25)

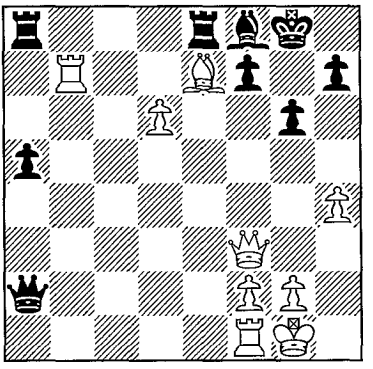

Diagram 25 (B)
A very useful advance

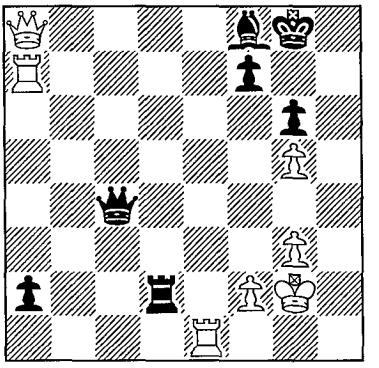

Diagram 26 (W)
Can White breakthrough?

24...a4 25 Rd1 Qe6 26 Bg5 h6 27 d7 hxg5 28 dxe8Q Rxe8 29 hxg5 a3

White should win this position but Kramnik uncharacteristically goes wrong after playing brilliantly up to here. The play over the next few moves deserves study but this is not a book about middlegames so I have merely indicated some moves which various authorities consider winning for White.

30 g3 a2 31 Kg2 Rd8 32 Re1

32 Ra7 (Curt Hansen) might be better since if 32...Rxd1 33 Qxd1 Bg7 34 Ra8+ Kh7 35 Qh1+.

32...Qc4 33 Ra7 Rd3 34 Qa8 Rd2 35 Qf3 Rd3 36 Qa8 Rd2 (Diagram 26) 37 Ra4

The cold-blooded 37 Re4 was the way, going to f4 when Ra6xg6 becomes a threat.

37...Qc5 38 Rf1 Qc2 39 Ra7 Qb3 40 Qf3

Even now 40 Rc7-c8 seems to win and it is surprising that Kramnik should make such a committal decision as the text on the 40th move.

TIP: An elementary feature of the approach to such positions is to understand what endgames one is aiming for, and the text allows an immediate positional draw.

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40...Qxf3+ 41 Kxf3 Bc5 42 Ra8+ Kg7 43 Ra1 Rxf2+

This is the trouble: if White could exchange g5 for a2 he would be winning, but he can't and losing f2 is fatal to his winning prospects.

44 Kg4 Rd2 45 Ra4 Bb6 46 R1xa2 Rd5 47 Kh4 Bd8 48 Rg4

And that's why – with his rook stuck on g4 White can do nothing (not that he'd really be any better off with one on a5 as defending the g-pawn is just too much of a burden).

48...Rd1 49 Rh2 Kg8 50 Re4 Rd5 51 Re8+ Kg7 52 Kg4 Bxg5 53 Rb2 Rd4+ ½-½

Game 6

☐ **A.Shabalov** ■ **A.Areshchenko**

Port Erin 2005

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 Nc6 10 d5 Ne5 11 Nxe5 Bxe5 12 Qd2 e6 13 f4 Bc7 14 0-0 exd5 15 exd5 Ba5 (Diagram 27)

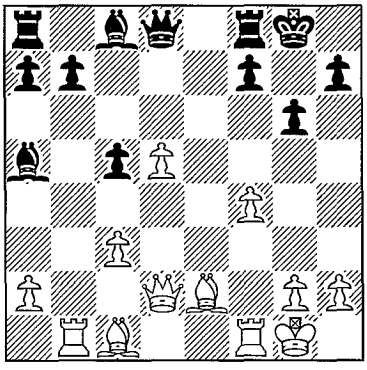

Diagram 27 (W)

Black completes his manoeuvre

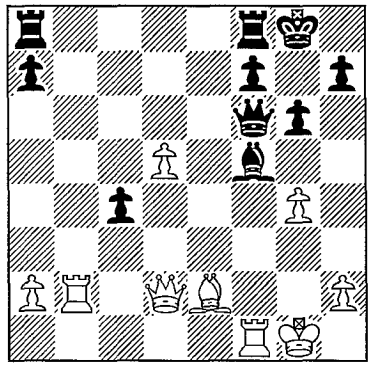

Diagram 28 (W)

Black saves his piece

16 f5

Theory's main line instead runs 16 d6 b6 17 Bf3 Bf5 18 Bxa8 Bxb1 19 Bc6 (a very good move to restrict both black major pieces) 19...Bf5 20 Re1 Qf6 21 Bb2 Rd8 22 Re8+ Rxe8 23 Bxe8 a6 24 a4 (24 d7?! b5 25 c4? Qe7 26 Qxa5 Qe3+ 27 Kh1 Qe2 sees White ignominiously mated on g2) 24...Qd4+, leading to an ending which Black can probably draw, although he didn't in A.Khalifman-V.Mikhalevski, St Petersburg 1999. The text had been tried before, but Shabalov has a new idea in mind.

16...Bxf5 17 Rxb7 Qf6 18 g4

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I watched this game live and so far less than a minute of the session had elapsed: the traditional method of launching such an innovation by approaching the critical position with hesitation and head-scratching obviously held no appeal for Shabalov.

18...Bxc3 19 Bb2 Bxb2

19...Bxd2 20 Bxf6 is evidently the other critical defence: it is obvious that Black will then have his work cut out preventing himself losing an exchange or so to the d-pawn and thereafter drifting into an unpleasant ending.

20 Rxb2 c4 (Diagram 28) 21 Bxc4 Qh4 22 Rf4 Bxg4

Shabalov was still blitzing, and the courageous text is necessary since 22...Bd7 23 Qf2 Qxf2+ 24 Kxf2 is a grim ending for Black.

23 Qd4 h5 24 d6 (Diagram 29)

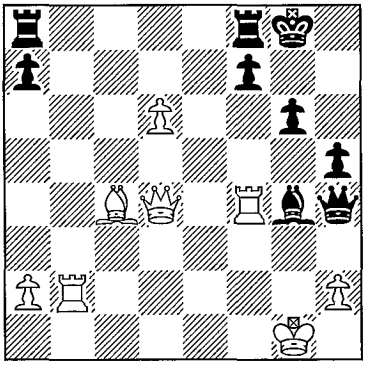

Diagram 29 (B)
Black is under some pressure

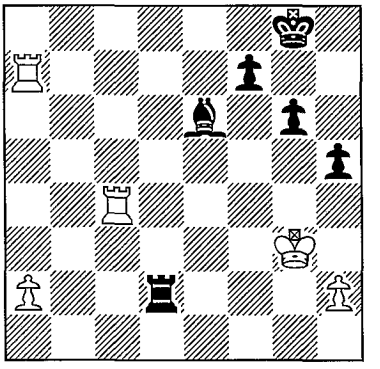

Diagram 30 (W)
Remarkable defence from Black

24...Rac8

Resourcefulness in difficult positions is the outstanding feature of the young Ukrainian's style and here he finds the only chance, preparing to eliminate the dangerous c4 bishop.

25 Qe5

Both players judge that 25 Rxf7 Rxf7 26 Bxf7+ Kxf7 27 Rb7+ Ke6 28 Re7+ Qxe7 29 dxe7 Kxe7 30 Qxa7+ is only a draw: Black gives up his bishop for the a-pawn in due course and establishes a fortress with the rook on f5 and the two pawns against the queen and h-pawn (as every Russian schoolboy no doubt knows).

25...Qd8

Again the only move: Rb7 was threatened and, with e1 covered, the exchange sac-

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rifice on c4 will not yet work.

26 Rb7 Bf5 27 Qe7 Rxc4 28 Rxc4 Qa5 29 d7 Qd2 30 d8Q

Accepting the draw, but White has no prospect of making progress otherwise with his king so exposed.

30...Qxd8 31 Qxd8 Rxd8 32 Rxa7 Rd1+ 33 Kf2 Rd2+ 34 Kg3 Be6 (Diagram 30) 35 Rca4 Kg7 36 h4 Rd3+ 37 Kf2 Rd2+ 38 Kf3 Rd3+ 39 Kf2

If I'd been White I'd have carried on with something like 39 Ke4 Bf5+ 40 Ke5 Be6 41 Rd4 Re3+ 42 Re4 Rh3, but then I'd quite probably have lost. Shabalov is wiser.

39...Rd2+ ½-½

Game 7

□ P.Wells ■ S.Ernst

Amsterdam 2005

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 b6 10 0-0 Bb7 11 Qd3 e6 12 Bg5 Qc7 13 Qe3 Rc8 14 h4 (Diagram 31)

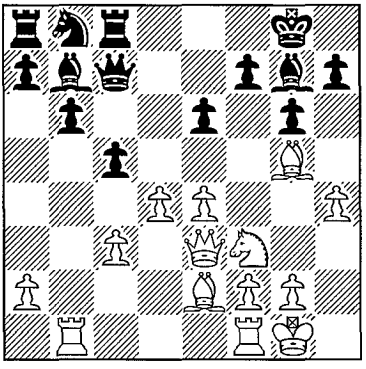

Diagram 31 (B)

Launching a logical attack

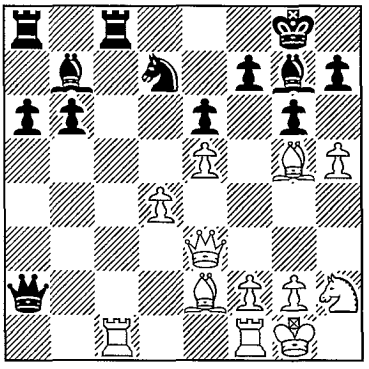

Diagram 32 (B)

The attack grows in strength

This was Peter Wells' novelty as far as I know, although it is a very logical and common idea in this type of position.

14...Nd7 15 e5

NOTE: This is generally the answer to ...Nd7: it looks a little weakening, but it does block out the g7-bishop and prevent the d7-knight from reaching its best square on f6, where it would help defend the king and be ready to jump to d5 after e5 by White.

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15...a6

This move has a good idea – to prevent Bb5 – but it turns out to be too slow. Probably Black had to get to his counterplay on the c-file right away.

16 h5 cxd4 17 cxd4 Qc2 18 Rbc1

Excellent: White commits himself and rules out ...Qe4, extinguishing his attack. There was nothing wrong with 18 Ra1, followed by Rfc1, but Wells plays for more.

18...Qxa2

Sidelining the queen like this is obviously rather brave, although 18...Qe4 19 Qxe4 Bxe4 20 h6 Bf8 21 Rxc8 Rxc8 22 Bxa6 just drops a pawn.

19 Nh2! (Diagram 32)

The only move worth considering as this knight is Black's most dangerous enemy in this structure, and Black may already have been regretting not removing it earlier. Notice the timing – if White hadn't had a pawn on h5 Black might have been able to shut the knight out by playing ...h5 himself.

19...b5

It looks as if Black is taking the view he can't stop mate and might as well see if his lone space invader can land first, but actually this move is a link in a chain of defensive moves which only a brilliant coup can foil.

20 Ng4 b4 21 Bf6 Qa3

Black brings his queen nearer f8 with gain of tempo, which at least stops the straight mate on g7 that was looming. Carrying on with the space-invader game by 21...Rxc1 22 Rxc1 b3 does indeed get an alien down to earth, but Black only wins a rook, while White's attack proves stronger than that: 23 Bxg7 b2 (23...Kxg7 24 Qh6+ Kh8 25 hxg6 fxg6 26 Nf6 Nxf6 27 exf6 Rg8 28 Rc7 is also devastating) 24 Bf6 Nxf6 25 exf6 bxc1Q+ 26 Qxc1 Qd5 27 Bf3.

22 Bd3 b3 23 Bxg7 Kxg7

Thanks to the a3-queen Black has 24 Qh6+ Kg8 25 Nf6+ Nxf6 26 exf6 covered by 26...Qf8, but White has a winner...

24 Rc5!! (Diagram 33)

Blocking the queen's route to f8, although 24 Qh6+ Kg8 25 Rc5 was perhaps still more conclusive; after the text Black manages to run for it with his king and at least prolong the game until the time control – almost.

24...Kf8 25 Qh6+ Ke8 26 Qxh7 Rxc5 27 hxg6 fxg6 28 dxc5 Qxc5 29 Nf6+ Nxf6 30 exf6 Kd8 31 Qxb7 Ra7 32 Qb8+ Kd7 33 Rd1 e5 34 Bb5+ Ke6 35 Qe8+ (Diagram 34) 35...Kf5 36 Bd3+ e4 37 Qxe4+ Kxf6 38 Qxg6+ Ke5 39 Qg5+ Kd4 0-1

And White's flag fell with one move to go in a position where he has mate in two; perhaps the most suboptimal piece of clock handling even in Peter Wells' long career, notably adventurous as it has been in that regard. Nevertheless, a brilliant

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game and a real model for handling the attack against the castled king in this structure.

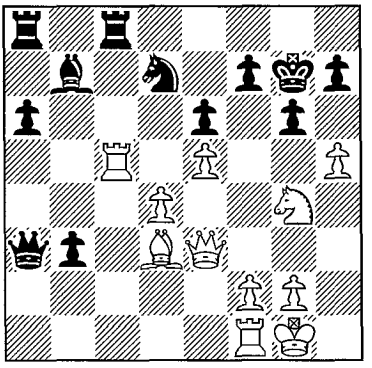

Diagram 33 (B)
Cutting off the black queen

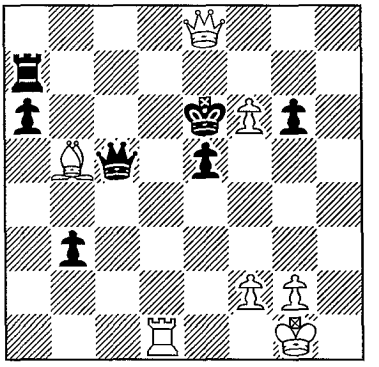

Diagram 34 (B)
Hunting down the black monarch

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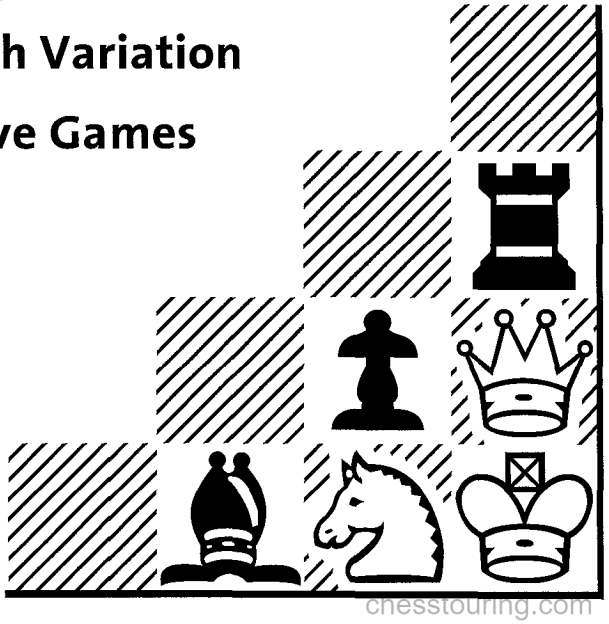
Chapter Three

The Nimzo-Indian

- Introduction
- Black Plays 4...d5
- Black Plays 4...0-0
- Black Plays 4...c5
- The Zürich Variation
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3

This is the most important choice any d4 player has to make. With the text White allows the Nimzo-Indian Defence instead of 3 Nf3 b6, the Queen's Indian Defence. White has been beating his head against these two openings since Aaron Nimzowitsch brought them to prominence in the 1920's, and probably will go on doing so as long as chess is played. The reasons for White's third move choice, however, go beyond deciding between the Nimzo and the QID, and cover also what line he is going to take against the Queen's Gambit Declined, which would be reached now after 3...d5 (more on that in Chapter Five).

3...Bb4 (Diagram 1)

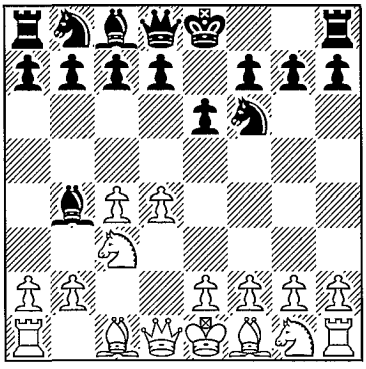

Diagram 1 (W)
The Nimzo-Indian

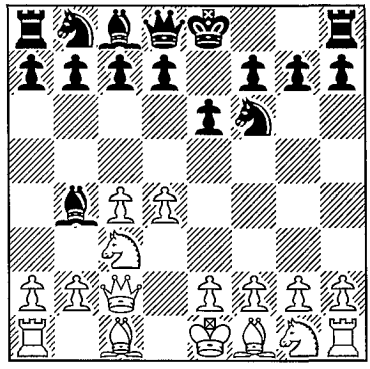

Diagram 2 (B)
The Classical Variation

The Nimzowitsch-Indian Defence. When the great day comes when the World's grandmasters are challenged to a consultation game by the grandmasters of some as yet undiscovered world, and the Other World send over 1 d4 as their first move, you can be fairly sure that the World's grandmasters will select in reply either this or the Tartakower variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined. Black's aim, in a nutshell, is to control the centre, and in particular e4, while avoiding the lack of flexibility to his structure which 3...d5 would impose upon him. White, on the other hand, can now be hopeful of securing the bishop pair out of the opening, which by itself is not going to win him any prizes, but does ensure a certain asymmetry and something to play for.

4 Qc2 (Diagram 2)

A move with a long history – it was recommended in his day by Capablanca, but

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from his time until the mid-1980's 4 e3 was regarded as the main move. Over the last 20 years, however, 4 Qc2 has been by far the most popular. White aims to gain the bishop pair without conceding the damage to his structure inherent in the exchange ...Bxc3, bxc3 and is prepared to lose a little time in doing so.

We will now explore 4...d5, the classical and also the sharpest reply, although possibly not the best; 4...0-0, the main line; 4...c5, another popular move; and 4...Nc6, the Zürich or Milner-Barry variation which lags behind the others in popularity, although this position is quite often reached these days as an offshoot of the Black Knights' Tango (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 Nc6) and it is really quite respectable for Black.

Black Plays 4...d5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5

Black claims that his ...Bb4 does him more good in a Queen's Gambit than White's slightly early Qc2, and also follows the dictum that says that where an opponent spends time to win positional advantages (here Qc2, a3 and Qxc3 do little for White's development but do secure the two bishops) then he must be engaged immediately in hand-to-hand fighting if possible.

5 a3

5 cxd5 is a very popular alternative, also with an enormous body of theory.

5...Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 (Diagram 3)

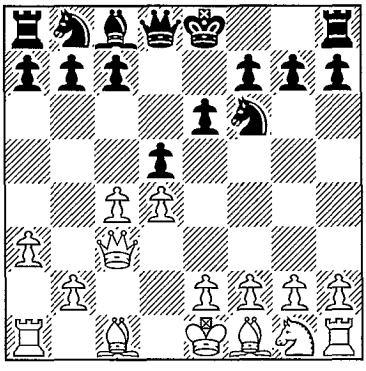

Diagram 3 (B)
Can Black gain enough counterplay?

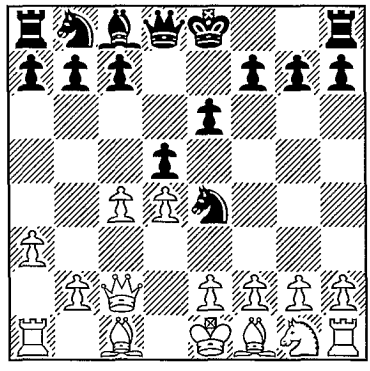

Diagram 4 (B)
Black must make a committal decision

White has scored a very decent 57% from this position, which is a lot better than he does against the Nimzo as a whole.

6...Ne4

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Active, but not the only idea:

a) 6...0-0 is a natural move, but allows the pin 7 Bg5, which is very hard to break now that Black has castled, and ought to enable White to demonstrate a small edge.

b) 6...c5 is a (fortunately) rare but very interesting gambit. As usual in the Qc2 Nimzo White does best to reply 7 dxc5, and now Black's idea is 7...d4. White's most testing reply is 8 Qg3 Nc6 (this offer of a second pawn seems to be necessary since 8...0-0 9 Bh6 Ne8 10 0-0-0 f6 11 Bd2 is good for White who has e3 and b4 in reserve) 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qh6 Rg6 11 Qd2 Ne4 12 Qc2 when White has a decided edge after 12...Nxc5 (better is 12...Qa5+ 13 Bd2 Nxd2 14 Qxd2 Qxc5, when White can reasonably continue with Rc1 and then g3, but Black retains definite compensation, although only practice can show whether it is enough) 13 b4 d3 14 Qb2 (Lalic).

NOTE: Observe how comfortable the white queen is on b2, which often happens in the Qc2 Nimzo.

c) 6...dxc4 7 Qxc4 b6, aiming to control the centre through piece play, is an idea of Nigel Short's, based on a pawn sacrifice after 8 Bf4 (8 Nf3 0-0 9 Bg5 Ba6 10 Qc2 Nbd7 11 e4 Qc8 is the main method when White normally continues 12 0-0-0, although why he wouldn't play 12 Bd3, preserving the option of castling kingside, is a bit of a mystery to me) 8...Ba6 9 Qxc7 Qxc7 10 Bxc7 Nc6 11 Nf3 Rc8. Grandmaster opinion is solid that Black has adequate compensation for the pawn here with his ideas of ...Na5, ...Ne4 and ...Rc2. As you would expect computers are of a different mind; they maintain that White is much better after 12 Bf4, meeting 12...Na5 with 13 b4 and 12...0-0 with 13 e3. Of course computers have no clue about this sort of long-term compensation, I thought, and embarked upon a confident attempt to prove mine wrong. I failed rather miserably several times, and I would suggest that even grandmasters will have to play rather well to prove Black's compensation.

7 Qc2 (Diagram 4) 7...c5

The main move, and one recommended by Eddie Dearing in his recent *Play the Nimzo-Indian*, but there are again important alternatives:

a) 7...Nc6 8 e3 e5 was long considered the critical continuation and can lead to a long and complicated line which has been debated since the thirties: White sacrifices an exchange and ends up with his king on g3 in return for a crushing attack. Black has recently discovered a miracle defence and current opinion is that an unclear ending is the outcome, but it is evident from the white GMs who have recently been willing to play this line that there are other opinions out there.

Anyway, I don't understand what White has against Sokolov's old recommendation of 9 f3 Nf6 (9...Qh4+ is tricky but I think ultimately good for White after 10 g3 Nxg3 11 Qf2! Nf5 12 cxd5 Na5 13 Rb1!) 10 dxe5 (10 cxd5 Qxd5 11 Bc4 Qd6 12 dxe5

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Nxe5 was a great deal less effective in the old classic M.Vidmar-A.Alekhine, San Remo 1930) 10...Nxe5 11 cxd5 Qxd5 (11...Nxd5? 12 Qe4 wins) 12 e4 Qe6 13 Nh3 **(Diagram 5)**,

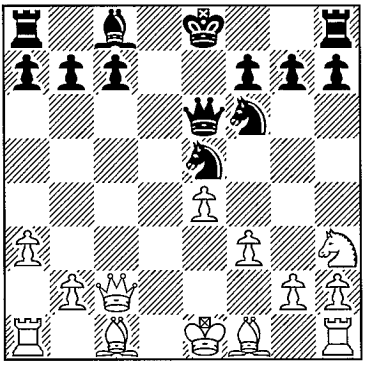

Diagram 5 (B)
An under-rated option for White

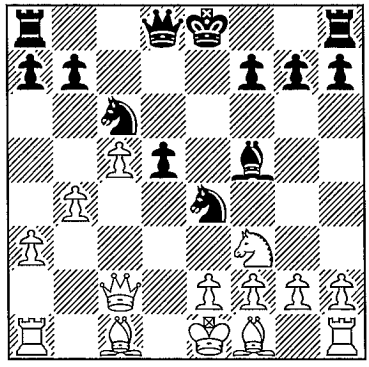

Diagram 6 (B)
White calmly ignores the discovery

which, so far as I can see, just gives White a pretty pleasant position: he follows with Be2, Be3, 0-0 and so on, and seems to have good development, the bishop pair and a good centre.

b) 7...e5 is an unpopular alternative favoured by Michael Adams. I would have thought that if there were a refutation of this move it should be sought in the labyrinth entered by 8 dxe5 Bf5 9 Qb3, but top players seem to favour 8 cxd5 Qxd5 9 f3 and 9...Nd6 (9...Nf6 had been Kasparov's own choice in this position in his blitz match against Kramnik, but 10 Qxc7 may be possible) 10 dxe5 Qxe5 11 e4 Nc6 12 Ne2! (Kasparov's new idea in this line, improving on the older 12 Bd3 Be6 13 Ne2 when 13...Qa5+ is annoying) 12...Be6 13 Bf4 Qa5+ 14 Nc3 0-0-0 15 0-0-0 f5 16 Bxd6 Rxd6 17 Rxd6 cxd6 18 Bb5 favoured White in G.Kasparov-M.Adams, Linares 2005.

c) 7...0-0 doesn't challenge White quickly enough, and simple development after 8 e3 b6 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 Nf3 c5 11 0-0 Nd7 12 b4! leaves him better.

8 dxc5

This is usually White's reply to ...c5 in the Qc2 Nimzo; having moved his queen he is seldom able to reply Nf3 and Nxd4 as the knight floats rather awkwardly, and e3 and exd4, leaving an isolated queen's pawn, is not usually desirable either.

8...Nc6 9 cxd5

9 Nf3 is a major alternative but the text is commonest.

9...exd5 10 Nf3 Bf5

10...Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxc5 12 Qxc5 (it was so as to have this queen swap available that

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White exchanged pawns on move nine) 12...Nxc5 is a bit miserable for Black; sometimes he draws, and sometimes he doesn't.

11 b4! (Diagram 6)

If White had to move his queen then his position would simply be bad, but luckily he doesn't and instead can get on with developing and keeping his extra pawn. We will consider 11...0-0 in Game 8, but that isn't Black's only option:

a) 11...Ng3 is tempting but loses to a long forced line: 12 Qb2 Nxh1 13 Qxg7 Rf8 14 Bh6 Qe7 15 Qxf8+ Qxf8 16 Bxf8 Kxf8 17 g3 Be4 18 Bg2 a5 19 b5 Nd4 20 Nxd4 Bxg2 21 c6 **(Diagram 7)** with a winning advantage as White is a piece up in the north-west where it counts, despite his problems in the south-east corner.

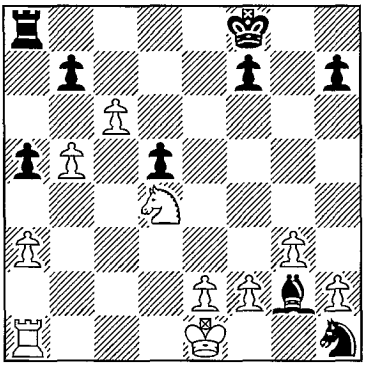

Diagram 7 (B)
Black's pieces are badly offside

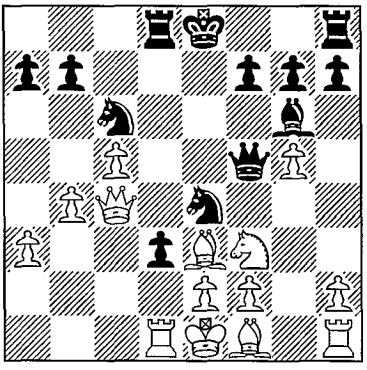

Diagram 8 (W)
Typically modern chess

b) 11...d4 was recently revitalized by Anand and is in fact what Dearing's book recommends. Most GMs seem to feel White should take the tempo on offer with 12 g4 (12 Qc4 0-0 13 Bb2 looks pretty good for White to me after something like 13...Re8 14 Rd1 Qf6 15 Bxd4 Nxd4 16 Qxd4 Qe7 17 e3 b6 18 cxb6 axb6 19 Qb2, although clearly there are many other moves that could be tried) 12...Bg6 and then move his queen to avoid the discovered attack and take control of d5 with 13 Qc4. Then 13...d3 was Anand's new idea in V.Topalov-V.Anand, Bastia (rapid) 2003 which proceeded 14 Be3 Qf6 15 Rd1 Rd8 16 g5 Qf5 **(Diagram 8)**, in place of 16...Qc3+ 17 Qxc3 Nxc3 18 Rxd3 Bxd3 19 exd3 which gives White a fair bit for his exchange. After 16...Qf5, Topalov proceeded 17 Bg2 d2+ 18 Nxd2 Nxd2 19 Bxd2 0-0 20 Qf4 when it seems to me like White still has some chances, although the game was fairly shortly drawn.

I don't suppose either of these two fine gentlemen had exactly overlooked 17 Rxd3, but they must have had some reason for rejecting it. I and my computer are, however, hanged if we can see it and we think White is simply some material up,

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and so the reader will have to choose between the world's current top two and me. Well, it was only a rapid game...

Black Plays 4...0-0

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 (Diagram 9)

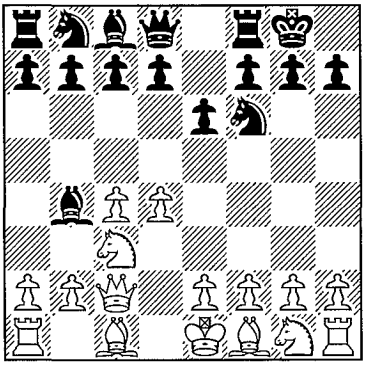

Diagram 9 (W)
Black keeps his options open

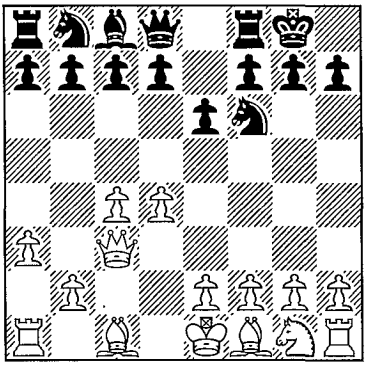

Diagram 10 (B)
Black has several plans

As I said, this is the main line and usually regarded as Black's best chance to equalize.

5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 (Diagram 10) 6...b6

Much the most popular move, thematically aiming at e4 and declining unnecessarily to commit to any particular pawn formation just yet, but Black has tried some other set-ups:

a) 6...c5 7 dxc5 is not a good idea for Black: if he wanted to play ...c5 he should either have done it while he still had his bishop to take back on c5 with or wait until he has a pawn on b6.

b) 6...d5 allows White to develop with either 7 Bg5, perhaps followed by cxd5 with a favourable QGD Exchange structure.

c) 6...b5 is a pretty cheeky gambit, although it has a certain thematic force – having conceded the bishop pair Black might reason that he needs to play actively on the white squares. Simplest is the minimalist approach employed in Y.Seirawan-A.Shabalov, US Ch., Seattle 2000: 7 cxb5 c6 8 Bg5 cxb5 9 e3 Bb7 10 Nf3 h6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Be2 a6 (12...Rc8 is considered better when I suspect 13 Qb4 was the idea) 13 Rc1 which yielded White a nice position.

d) 6...Ne4 is the main alternative. If White isn't careful some bad things can hap-

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pen to him really quite quickly in this variation, along the lines of an old-style Dutch with ...Bb4, as Alekhine used to play. White must set about removing the knight as soon as possible with 7 Qc2 f5 8 Nh3! d6 9 f3 Nf6 (if 9...Nd6 the bishop can be developed strongly on f4) 10 e3 e5 11 Be2, and after 11...c5 either 12 dxe5 (B.Gelfand-N.De Firmian, Malmö 1999) or 12 d5 (V.Anand-L.Psakhis, Haifa rapid 2000) ought to preserve an edge.

e) 6...Qe8 avoids the pin but is well met with 7 f3 d6 8 e4 e5 9 Be3 Nc6 10 Ne2 a5 11 d5 Ne7, as in B.Gulko-M.Adams, Hastings 1989/90, and now 12 b3 with advantage to White (I.Sokolov).

7 Bg5 (Diagram 11)

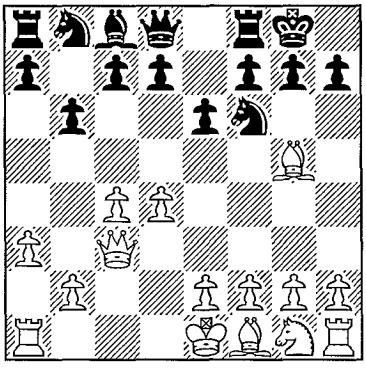

Diagram 11 (B)
An awkward pin

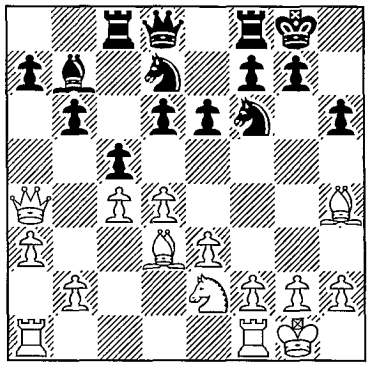

Diagram 12 (B)
The bishop pair should prove useful

White almost always plays this: the pin is irritating since it can't readily be broken with ...h6 and ...g5 once Black has castled.

WARNING: One other way of breaking the pin which is fundamental to this variation is the trick ...Ne4 at some moment.

White originally fell for this in a cave during the Jurassic era, first made it into the databases in H.Nielsen-M.Euwe, Copenhagen 1949 (7...Bb7 8 f3 Nc6 9 e4? Nxe4, winning material) and has been falling for it ever since in one way or another in games up to super-grandmaster level.

7...Bb7

Retaining central flexibility, but Black can also commit:

a) 7...c5 should be met, as usual in the Qc2 Nimzo, by 8 dxc5 bxc5. A masterly demonstration of White's possibilities after that was K.Sasikiran-H.Kallio, Copenhagen 2003: 9 e3 a5 10 f3 d6 11 Rd1 Ra6 12 Qc2 Nbd7 13 Ne2 Rb6 14 Nc3 h6 15 Bh4

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Ba6 16 Be2 Qc7 17 a4! and White was much better. Notice White's f3, blunting the b7-bishop; Qc2 and Ne2-c3, fighting for the white squares, an idea mirrored in the main game; and precise calculation with 17 a4, which blocked out half Black's army which was set up to go places down the b-file.

b) 7...d6 keeps Black's options open both about how he will recapture on c5 if he plays ...c5, and where he might place the c8-bishop. A logical reply is 8 f3 (usually the reply ...d5 is the Achilles heel of this move, but now Black would need to lose a tempo to achieve that) 8...Nbd7 9 Nh3 c5 10 e4 h6 11 Be3 Ba6 12 dxc5! (Black had been hoping to achieve counterplay with ...cxd4 and ...Rc8) 12...Nxc5 13 Rd1 which favoured White in M.Gurevich-J.Emms, Esbjerg 2000.

c) 7...Ba6 sees Black not afraid to show his hand: he intends ...d6, ...Nbd7, ...c5 and ...Rc8 to gain counterplay against the c4-pawn. White's most usual counter is 8 e3 d6 9 Bd3 Nbd7 10 Ne2 c5 11 Qc2 h6 12 Bh4 Rc8 13 Qa4 Bb7 14 0-0 **(Diagram 12)** when Black has tried many moves, but White has scored very well and intends to regroup with Nc3, Rfc1 and Qd1.

8 e3

White has tried alternatives here: notably 8 Nf3 d6 9 Nd2, 8 Nh3, and, perhaps the most popular, 8 f3.

8...d6 9 Ne2 (Diagram 13)

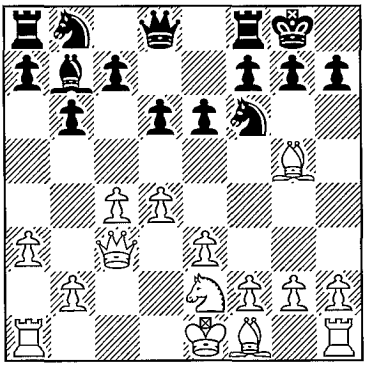

Diagram 13 (B)
The knight heads for c3

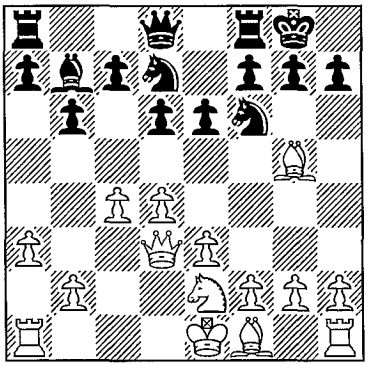

Diagram 14 (B)
Black must gain some counterplay

Again 9 f3 and 9 Nf3 have been popular. The idea of the text is to bring the knight to c3 and fight for the central light squares without committing to the weakening f3.

9...Nbd7

9...c5 was preferred in the dramatic last-round game V.Kramnik-V.Bologan,

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Dortmund 2003. White replied as usual with 10 dxc5 dxc5 (10...bxc5 11 Rd1 is supposed to be annoying in this particular position, although 11...Nbd7 12 Rxd6 Qb8 introduces complications which are not obviously bad for Black) 11 Qc2 h6 12 Bh4 Qe7 13 0-0-0 (a common procedure in this line but usually a little double-edged: here, with the b-file closed, White has nothing to fear and putting his king in this quarter makes gaining space on the kingside, or even an attack using the 'hook' at h6, easier) 13...Rd8 14 Rxd8+ Qxd8 15 Nc3. White is better here with his bishops in a stable structure, and you'd expect a technician like Kramnik to give Black a very hard time, but it was Bologan's day and Bologan's tournament, and the amiable Moldavian went on to draw the game and win Dortmund on his super-tournament debut.

10 Qd3 (Diagram 14)

This is the plan: if left alone White is going to be able to play Nc3 and e4 in peace and Black needs to devise some way to fight back.

10...Ba6!?

Black's plan is to aim for ...d5 as we will see in Game 9. The alternative plans come down to playing for ...e5 or for ...c5, and 10...c5!? was tested in M.Gurevich-M.Mchedlishvili, Istanbul 2003, which went on 11 Nc3 Qe7 12 Rd1 (the possibility of pressure on the d-file like this is why Qd3 has supplanted the older Qc2 in this line) 12...Rfd8 13 d5 Ne5 14 Qc2 h6 15 Bh4 Ng6 16 Bg3 Nh5 17 Be2 Nxg3 18 hxg3 exd5 19 Nxd5 Bxd5 20 Rxd5 with an edge to White, who won a fine game by the amazingly logical method of advancing on the kingside and exchanging pawns until his extra pawn there (compared to Black's perpetually crippled majority), and the exposed Black king, decided matters in his favour.

Black Plays 4...c5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 (Diagram 15) 5...0-0

Not hurrying to regain the pawn, whereas 5...Bxc5 more or less wastes a tempo in comparison with the text unless Black intends to follow up with 6 Nf3 (and not 6 Bg5?? Bxf2+) 6...Qb6, forcing White to shut in the bishop with 7 e3. Play normally continues 7...Qc7 8 b3 b6 9 Bb2 a6 10 Be2 (not Bd3: White is defending the knight on f3 in readiness for g4) 10...Bb7 when nothing stops White continuing quietly with Rd1, 0-0, and next possibly Ng5 with threats on the kingside. More dynamic and successful by far though has been the plan with 11 g4 as White works for his b2-bishop and simply grabs space. It looks as though White is crazily opening up his own king, but Black is going to have to castle long, and White may do the same, in which case his kingside advances work a bit like a Keres Attack in the Sicilian, just forcing Black's pieces back into passive positions.

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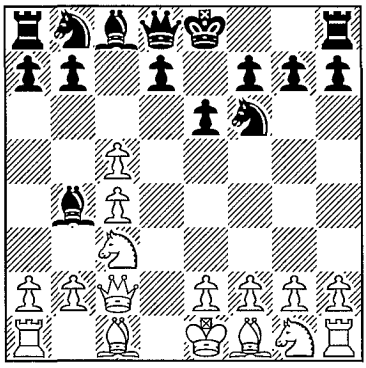

Diagram 15 (B)
White correctly doesn't defend d4

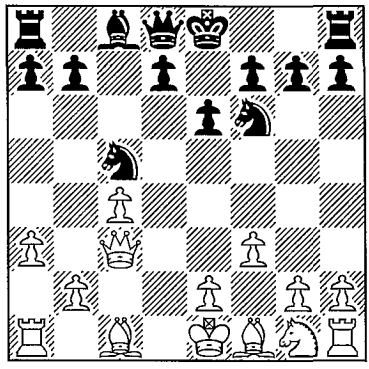

Diagram 16 (B)
Taking control of e4

The traditional main alternative is 5...Na6; a sharp move aiming to recapture on c5 with the knight and come in on e4. White has various replies but a good approach is 6 a3 Bxc3+ (6...Qa5 7 Bd2 Nxc5 is another line where either 8 Rc1 or 8 f3 ought to maintain some edge) 7 Qxc3 Nxc5 8 f3 **(Diagram 16)**, aiming to keep Black's knights at bay and complete development in peace. Black has usually put his faith in the gambit 8...d5 9 cxd5 b6!? (9...Qxd5 10 e4 is clearly better for White, as Rubinstein showed in his day), but 10 b4 Na4 11 Qc2 b5 12 e4 a6 13 Bd3, with the idea of 13...exd5 14 e5, while 13...0-0 14 e5 Nxd5 15 Bxh7+ Kh8 16 Be4 is good for White, left Black struggling in S.Shipov-R.Scherbakov, Russian Ch., Krasnoyarsk 2003.

Finally, Black has 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 Bxc5, but 7 Bg5 is good when 7...Nd4 8 Nxd4 Bxd4 9 e3 Qa5 10 exd4 Qxg5 11 Qd2 Qxd2+ 12 Kxd2 produces an endgame which has been played many times: White definitely retains an edge with his plan of Be2, b4, a4, Rhb1 and massive pressure on the queenside.

6 a3

An important move, whereas 6 Nf3 Na6 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Qxc3 Nxc5 is not so good, since, in contrast to 5...Na6, White is no longer able to take control of e4 with f3.

6...Bxc5 7 Nf3 (Diagram 17) 7...b6

7...d5 is badly timed: Black aims for the Bf4 system of the Queen's Gambit Declined, but White doesn't have to oblige and 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Bg5 leaves Black's isolated queen's pawn as a significant weakness.

8 Bf4

We will now consider the harassing 8...Nh5 in Game 10, but 8...Bb7 is actually commoner. White continues with 9 Rd1 Nc6 10 e3 **(Diagram 18)** and now Black can more reasonably try 10...Nh5 (instead 10...Rc8 11 Be2 Be7 12 Nb5 d5 13 Qb1 a6

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14 Nc3 Na5 15 cxd5 exd5 favours White and in E.Dearing-Ki.Georgiev, Coventry 2005 the Scottish solicitor was able to torture the seasoned Bulgarian super-GM for many moves before agreeing a draw from a position of strength) 11 Bg3 (11 Bg5 is another reasonable try) 11...f5 12 Be2, but White should be able to emerge with the advantage: 12...a6 13 Bh4 Be7 14 Bxe7 Nxe7 15 Nd4 Qe8 16 Bf3 gave him an edge in K.Sasikiran-D.Palo, Skanderborg 2003, while 12...Rc8 13 Nb5 f4 14 exf4 Nxf4 15 0-0 a5 16 Nd6 Rb8 17 Bd3 (Dearing) also leaves White better.

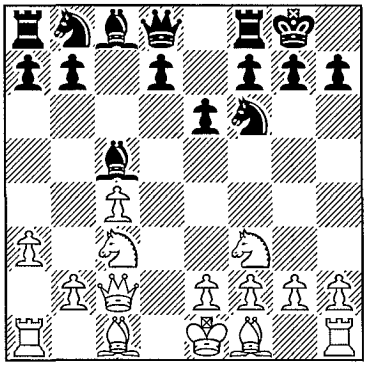

Diagram 17 (B)
White develops quickly

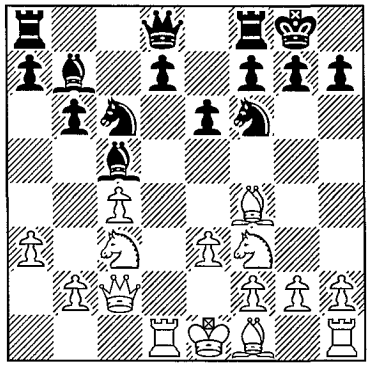

Diagram 18 (B)
White has good chances for an edge

The Zürich Variation

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 Nc6 (Diagram 19)

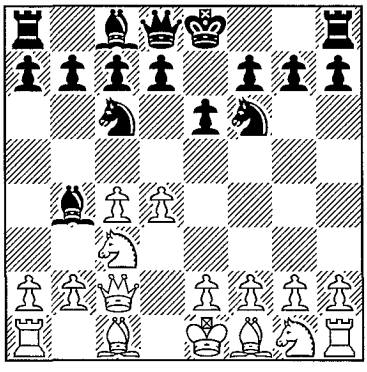

Diagram 19 (W)
A solid approach from Black

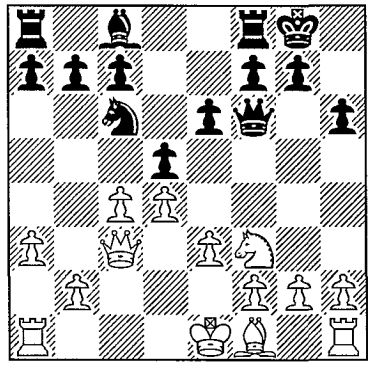

Diagram 20 (B)
The c6-knight is misplaced

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5 Nf3 d6

Playing for ...e5, whereas 5...d5 transposes to a branch of the Ragozin Defence to the Queen's Gambit, now unfashionable although Smyslov, Keres, Fine, Flohr and Botvinnik all played this move in their time. White has many lines which are considered to be slightly advantageous, but the easiest perhaps is 6 Bg5 h6 (6...dxc4 7 e3 Qd5 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 Nd2 Bxc3 10 bxc3 Na5 11 Ne4 Ke7 is sharper but White should be better after either 12 f3 or 12 Be2) 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 e3 0-0 9 a3 Bxc3+ 10 Qxc3 **(Diagram 20)** 10...Re8 11 Rc1 Bd7 12 cxd5 exd5 13 Be2 Nd8 14 Ne5 Bf5 (A.Dreev-V.Zviaginsev, Groningen 1997), and now 15 0-0 (Finkel), rather than the game's 15 g4, gives a minority attack position where White must have slightly the better chances.

6 Bd2

White can also continue with 6 a3 straightaway and then develop the bishop to b2. There's not much in it but I marginally prefer the text – the effective difference is whether the queen is on c3 or c2, and I think it has a little bit more influence on c2.

NOTE: In particular the queen controls e4 from c2 and so allows White to advance with e4 and d5, whereas after Qxc3 White is usually reduced to the less uncompromising dxe5.

6...0-0 7 a3 Bxc3 8 Bxc3 (Diagram 21)

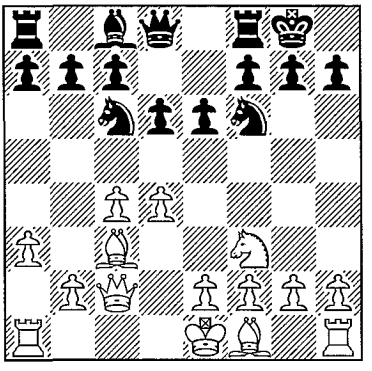

Diagram 21 (B)
Black will break with ...e5

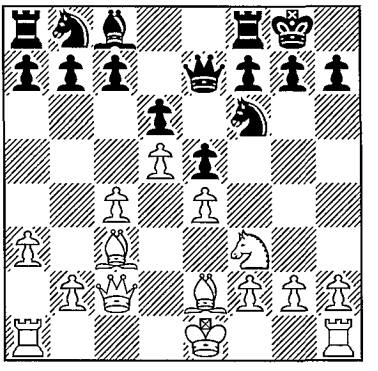

Diagram 22 (B)
Threatening 12 c5

After 8 Bxc3, Black needs to arrange ...e5 and must do so with 8...Re8, the subject of Game 11, or with 8...Qe7, because after 8...a5 White is in time for 9 e4 Qe7 10 e5 with advantage – Palliser. Following 8...Qe7 9 e4 e5 10 d5 Nb8 11 Be2 **(Diagram 22)** Black doesn't have time now for 11 ...a5, since 12 c5 (C.Ward-R.Palliser, Scarborough 2001) just gives White a strong initiative on the queenside: he follows up

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with cxd6, b4, and Nd2-c4, exploiting the weakness of d6 and b6.

Richard Palliser thus suggests either 11...Bg4 'intending ...Nh5' or 11...Nh5. The move 11...Nh5 is well timed in a way since White cannot well play 12 g3 allowing 12...Bh3, but he does have the tempting 12 Nxe5 Nf4 13 Nf3 Nxg2+ 14 Kd2 Nf4 15 Rae1, when he can tuck the king away with Kc1 and play for f4 and e5. With the opposite-coloured bishops this plan sweeps away the last barriers to an attack on g7 and I think is quite dangerous for Black. After 11...Bg4 12 0-0 the immediate 12...Nh5 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nf4 15 Kh2 followed by g3 surely favours White, so Black would need to proceed more slowly, perhaps 12...Nbd7 with a position very similar to Game 11, although I still think White's chances are favourable.

Illustrative Games

Game 8

☐ **E.Bareev ■ Zhang Zhong**

World Team Championship, Beersheba 2005

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 c5 8 dxc5 Nc6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Nf3 Bf5 11 b4 0-0 12 Bb2 (Diagram 23)

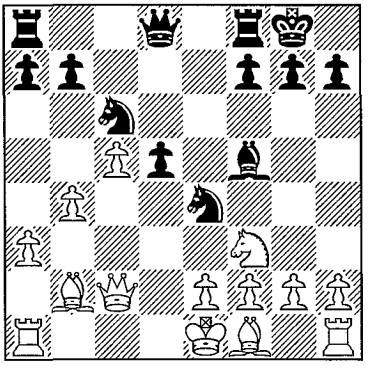

Diagram 23 (B)

Continuing to provoke ...Ng3

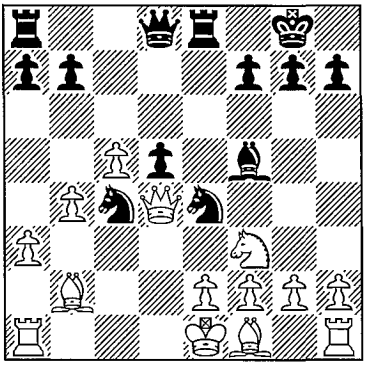

Diagram 24 (B)

Black is struggling a little

12...Re8

White still has 12...Ng3 covered; this time with 13 Qc3 d4 14 Nxd4 Nxd4 15 fxg3! (the key move) 15...Nc2+ 16 Kf2 Qg5 17 h4 Qh6 18 Rc1 winning. Instead 12...b6 is the overture to a hotly debated piece sacrifice after 13 b5 bxc5 14 bxc6 Rb8, but 13

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Qa4 Qc7 14 cxb6 axb6 15 Qd1 looks like a very sensible way to tackle this line to me when I don't really see Black's compensation.

13 Qb3

A novelty. Previously White had been getting nowhere after the more natural 13 Rd1 b6 14 e3 (14 cxb6 Qxb6 15 e3 Nxb4! is the problem: the purpose of Bareev's move is quite simply to avoid this trick and ask Black what he's got to justify his missing pawn) 14...bxc5 15 Bb5 Rc8 16 Qa4 and now the clunky-looking but surprisingly effective 16...Re6.

13...Na5

Instead 13...b6 14 cxb6 axb6 15 e3 just leaves Black struggling to show compensation. There are many other moves Black might consider but the text is certainly a critical try.

14 Qd1

Computers are tempted by 14 Qa2, but Bareev has a computer too; the problem is that 14...Nc4 15 e3 Nxc5 16 bxc5 Qa5+ 17 Kd1 Qa4+ is an immediate draw. This, by the way, was the last round of the competition; the Russians were trailing the Chinese and victory by three points in this four board match was essential, so Bareev could hardly have had a better opportunity to make a difference with his novelty.

14...Nc4 15 Qd4 (Diagram 24) 15...Nf6

15...Nxb2 16 Qxb2 b6 is the most obvious alternative; since 17 cxb6?! Qxb6 18 e3? Nxf2! is devastating White has to continue with 17 c6, after which only time will tell whether Black can organize a strike before White consolidates with Nd4 (this knight is frequently a tremendous piece on this square in this line), e3, Be2 or somewhere, and castling. On the face of it I don't see how he can, and Zhang must have been pretty sure he couldn't either before settling for the text.

16 e3 Re4 17 Qc3 b6 18 Nd4

18 Bd3 Nxb2 19 Qxb2 Rxe3+ 20 fxe3 Bxd3 might be good too, but it's rather unclear and you can understand Bareev settling for the safe superiority offered by the text (in fact in *New in Chess* Bareev said that this was what he ought to have played).

18...Bg6 19 Bxc4

19 c6 was better according to Bareev.

19...dxc4 20 0-0 bxc5 21 bxc5 (Diagram 25)

White has survived with his extra pawn intact and his terrific knight on d4 will prevent any attempt to win it back. Zhang makes a valiant effort on the kingside, but comes up short.

21...Qd5?

The punctuation is Bareev's, who says that Black should instead have played

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21...Qc7, when one of his variations is 22 Qxc4 Rb8 23 Ra2 Ng4 24 g3 Qe5 25 c6 Qh5 26 h4 Ne5 27 Qe2 Rg4 28 Rd1 'when White is two pawns up and has defended against the immediate threats, but things won't be easy for him.'

22 Rfc1 Rg4 23 f3 Rh4 24 g3 Rxd4

This was the idea; the knight has to go and 24...Rh6 25 Qxc4 Qh5 26 Qe2 Bd3 27 Qf2 doesn't get anywhere.

25 Qxd4 Qxf3 26 Rf1 Qe4 27 Rf4 Qe6 28 Qe5 (Diagram 26) 28...Qc6?

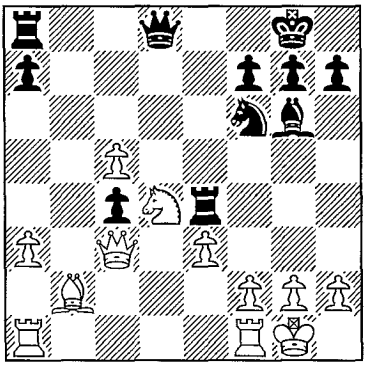

Diagram 25 (B)
White has consolidated

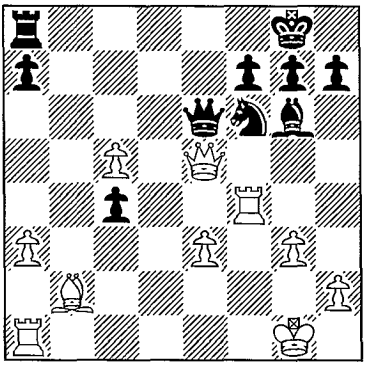

Diagram 26 (B)
White retains sufficient control

'Throwing in the towel', according to Bareev, who gives the long and difficult variation 28...Qxe5 29 Bxe5 Ne4 30 Rc1 f6 31 Bb2 Nd2 32 Rf2 Ne4 33 Rfc2 c3 34 Ba1 h5 35 c6 Rc8 36 Bxc3 Ng5 37 Bd4 Bxc2 38 Rxc2 and observes with characteristic modesty that 'White retains winning chances', although I suspect Capablanca would have put it more strongly than that.

29 Rxc4 Rd8 30 Rd4 Re8 31 Qd6 Qb5 32 Rb4 Qe2 33 Qf4 Nh5 34 Qf2 Qa6 35 Qf3 Qc8 36 c6 a5 37 Rh4 Nf6 38 Bxf6 gxf6 39 Rc1 Qc7 40 Qxf6 Re6 41 Qf4 Qc8 42 c7 Re8 43 Qg4 Re6 44 Qxe6 1-0

Zhang resigned because 44...fxe6 45 Rd4 wins easily. An efficient game by Bareev, and one which leaves the ball very much in Black's court so far as 12...Re8 is concerned.

Game 9

□ G.Kasparov ■ A.Grischuk

European Club Cup, Rethymnon 2003

Kasparov called this one of the best games of his career, partly because of its ten-

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sion, and he's not wrong. I was lucky enough to watch the game live. Kasparov needed to win it to save the match for his team. The event was played with some absurd FIDE increment-based time limit, and both players were continuously pressed for time from move 35 or so on. I doubt if Kasparov had played in such conditions since 1980 or so: the other players in the event were crowded ten deep around the table – I saw van Wely standing on a chair holding his mobile telephone aloft to get a look, and other spectators jumped on the table of a nearby match to get a better look and knocked some of Rublevsky's pieces over in his time scramble. It was also hot as hell: Linares it wasn't, and it's not surprising in the circumstances if the computer can do better than the players in the later stages, although whether it would have found Kasparov's amazing double-pawn sacrifice deep in the ending I'm less sure.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 7 Bg5 Bb7 8 e3 d6 9 Ne2 Nbd7 10 Qd3 Ba6 11 b4!? (Diagram 27)

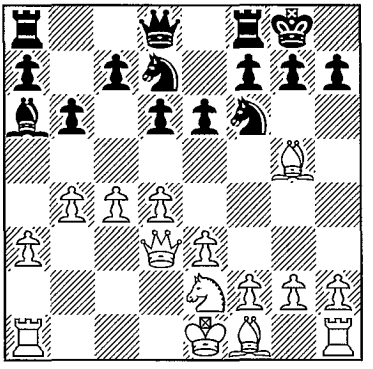

Diagram 27 (B)
Seizing space

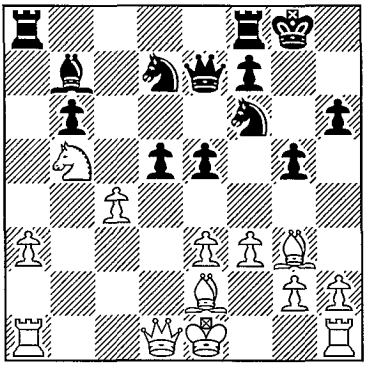

Diagram 28 (W)
The position opens up

A bold plan directed against the threat of ...d5. Kasparov has not in fact found so many followers, and two days later Ivanchuk tried 11 Nc3 against Kasparov himself, although he got nowhere.

11...c5

Black can also stick to his idea with 11...d5 when 12 b5 dxc4 13 Qxc4 Bb7 14 Rc1 Rc8 15 Qa4 e5 16 Qxa7 Bd5 17 Qa4 gave a sharp game in which Black probably didn't quite have value for his pawn in K.Sasikiran-A.Beliavsky, Pune 2004.

12 b5 Bb7 13 Nc3 a6

A controversial move, since in the later play the possibility of White moving his knight to b5 always seems to outweigh the activation of Black's a8-rook. In this position, critical for Kasparov's 11 b4 idea, Black has tried three other continua-

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tions: 13...Qe7 14 f3 h6 15 Bh4 cxd4 16 Qxd4 Nc5 17 Rd1 Rfd8; 13...Rc8 14 d5 exd5 15 cxd5 Re8 16 Be2 h6 17 Bh4 c4; and 13...h6 14 Bh4 Rc8 15 d5 Ne5 16 Qd1. They all lead to sharp play in typical positions for this still very fresh variation; only time will tell though which is best.

14 f3

White needs to develop the f1-bishop and in the process takes space and restricts Black's bishop.

14...h6 15 Bh4 Qe7

After 15...axb5 16 Nxb5 d5 17 cxd5 exd5 18 Be2 White has a slight edge according to Kasparov.

16 Be2 cxd4 17 Qxd4

17 exd4?! axb5 18 cxb5 g5 19 Bf2 Nh5 20 g3 Rfc8 21 0-0 is not so good (Golod): d5 is more important than c5.

17...e5

Kasparov explains that White is better after 17...Nc5 18 Rd1 Rfd8 19 e4 e5 20 Qe3, especially since 20...Ng4? loses to 21 Qxh6.

18 Qd1!

The exclamation mark is Kasparov's: the queen is better on d1 than d2 because it means ...Nc5 doesn't come with tempo.

18...g5

18...Nc5 19 Nd5 leaves White with a stable advantage.

19 Bg3 axb5 20 Nxb5 d5 (Diagram 28)

Kasparov says that at this point both players were quite satisfied with their positions. Black has carried out his plan, begun with ...a6 (which deflected the knight from c3), of forcing through ...d5 and activating the a8-rook where it stands, but meanwhile White has the two bishops and has been able to extract the concession ...g5 as payment for the ...d5 break.

21 0-0 Rac8 22 Qb3 Qe6 23 Qb4

Kasparov suggests that 23 cxd5 Bxd5 (23...Nxd5 24 Bc4 Qc6 25 Rac1 Nc5 26 Qb1 Nxe3 27 Na7 Qf6 28 Rfe1 Nxc4 29 Nxc8 Bxc8 30 Rxc4 is very good for White) 24 Qb2 Bc4 25 Rfd1 was perhaps a preferable option, and also mentions 23 Rfd1.

23...Rc5

Kasparov's notes also give the characteristically dynamic line 23...dxc4 24 e4 (24 Rfd1 runs into 24...e4) 24...Ba6 25 Nd6 Rc5 26 Rfd1 c3 27 Bxa6 c2 28 Bc4 cxd1Q+ 29 Rxd1 when Black has to return the exchange or be subjected to a crushing attack after 29...Qe7 30 Nf5.

24 a4 Rfc8 25 Rfd1 Ba8

According to the man himself, this was the critical moment of the game and Black

ought to have played 25...Ba6! 26 Bf2 (26 cxd5 Nxd5 27 Qd2 looks more natural to me and also looks like it maintains White's edge, but I strongly suggest you believe Kasparov rather than me) 26...Bxb5 27 axb5 e4 when 'Black maintains a dynamic balance'.

26 Ra3 g4

A reasonable move: Black's kingside isn't much weaker after this than it was already, and meanwhile Black is working for the a8-bishop.

27 cxd5 Rxd5 28 e4

White has to block the bishop out and obtain control of d5.

28...Rxd1+ 29 Bxd1 gxf3 30 gxf3 Nc5 31 Qb2! (Diagram 29)

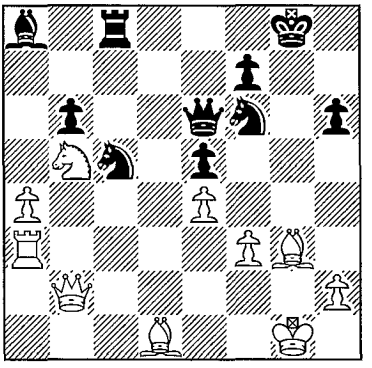

Diagram 29 (B)
White has a pull

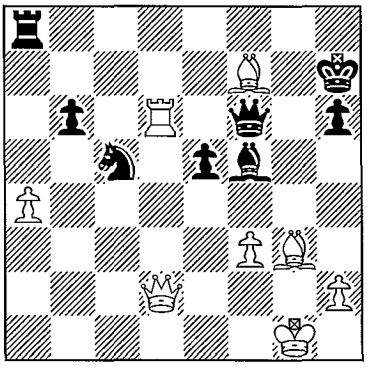

Diagram 30 (B)
Exposing the black king

Beginning a manoeuvre to upset the harmony of Black's pieces.

31...Nfd7 32 Qd2! Bc6

It's not easy to play like Kasparov: and the variation 32...Kh7 33 Nd6 Rd8 34 Nf5 Bxe4 35 fxe4 Nxe4 36 Qb4 Qxf5 37 Rf3 with a winning attack had to be calculated in advance.

33 Nd6 Ra8 34 Be2! Qf6

34...Nb3? 35 Rxb3! Qxb3 36 Bc4 Qb1+ (36...Qxf3 37 Nxf7 is no better) 37 Kg2 is another typical Kasparov variation which gives White a winning attack.

35 Nf5 Kh7 36 Bc4 Ne6

36...Rxa4? 37 Rxa4 Bxa4 38 Bxf7 Qxf7 39 Qxh6+ Kg8 40 Bh4 winning illustrates the typical helplessness on the black squares which can always suddenly overwhelm Black after giving up his dark-squared bishop the way he did in the opening, but 36...Ra7 37 Bxf7 Bxe4 38 fxe4 Nxe4 was the best defence. Kasparov calls this 'ma-

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chine-like', although overprotecting the second rank like this looks a natural enough idea.

37 Rd3 Ndc5 38 Rd6 Bxe4 39 Bxe6

Kasparov gives 39 fxe4! Nxe4 40 Rxe6 fxe6 41 Qd7+ Kh8 as the way to victory but explains that in time trouble he missed 42 Qc6! Rg8 43 Bxe6 Nxg3 44 hxg3 Rd8 45 Kh2 with a position he assesses as winning, although you or I might think it looks like there's a bit of play left just yet.

39...Bxf5 40 Bxf7! (Diagram 30) 40...Qg5

40...Qg7! 41 Kh1! Qg5 42 Qxg5 hxg5 43 Bxe5 is the game but with White's king less well placed on h1, and was critical according to Kasparov.

41 Qxg5 hxg5 42 Bxe5 Nd7 43 Bc3! Nc5 (Diagram 31)

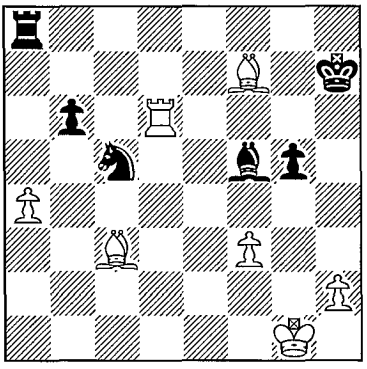

Diagram 31 (W)
How to exploit the bishop pair?

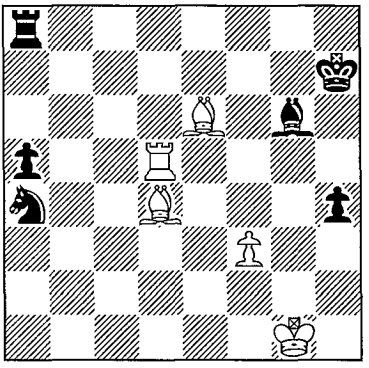

Diagram 32 (B)
Superb play from Kasparov

Instead 43...Rxa4 loses to 44 Be8! Ra7 45 Rd5 Be6 46 Rxg5: once White has the material advantage and the sort of attack he gets in the game, it's all over.

44 h4?

The question mark is Kasparov's, who explains that the right order was 44 a5!! bxa5 45 h4! when 45...gxh4 is the game, while 45...g4 46 Rd5! Na4 47 Bd4 Bg6 48 Be6 wins.

44...gxh4 45 a5 bxa5?

45...Na4 46 Bd4 Ra7 was the only defence according to Kasparov, who gives many long variations to prove it.

46 Rd5 Na4

This is the point: the knight is driven to this terrible square, where it is vulnerable and from where it is extremely difficult to rescue it: in fact it never moves again.

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47 Bd4 Bg6 48 Be6 (Diagram 32)

White is winning here with the threat of f4-f5, the exposed black king and the terrible knight on a4. From now on the play was not perfect, although White never let the game get away from him, and Kasparov gives many beautiful variations, but in view of the space constraints I just give the moves:

48...Bc2 49 f4 Rb8 50 Rh5+ Kg6 51 Rg5+ Kh6 52 Bf7 Bd1 53 Kh2 Rd8 54 Bf6 Rc8 55 Be6 Rc6 56 Bg7+ Kh7 57 Bf5+ Kg8 58 Be4 Rc5 59 Bd5+ Kh7 60 Bd4 Rc2+ 61 Kh3 Rc7 62 Be4+ Kh6 63 Rg8 1-0

Game 10

☐ **G.Kasparov** ■ **V.Chuchelov**

European Club Cup, Rethymnon 2003

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 0-0 6 a3 Bxc5 7 Nf3 b6 8 Bf4 Nh5 9 Bg5 (Diagram 33)

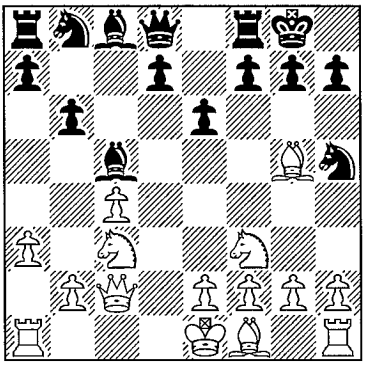

Diagram 33 (B)

Typical aggression from Kasparov

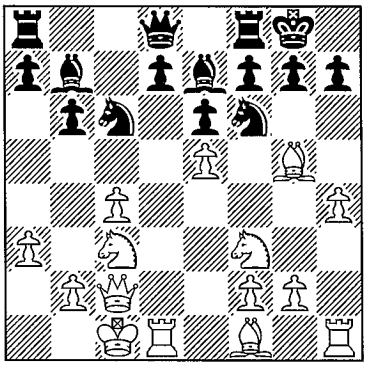

Diagram 34 (B)

Powerful and effective

Before this game the less incisive 9 Bg3 had been more frequent.

9...Be7 10 h4!? Bb7

Both 10...f6 11 Bd2 f5 12 0-0-0 Bb7 13 e4 and 10...f5 11 0-0-0 Bb7 12 e4 are also good for White who can develop easily and pin down the central pawns, while Black has difficulty in demonstrating any counterplay. Black would like to play ...Nc6, ...d6, ...e5 and ...Bg4, but I'm sure that Kasparov would have met 10...Nc6 with 11 0-0-0, when 11...Bb7 is the game and Black doesn't have the time for ...d6 and ...e5, since 11...d6 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 Ng5 g6 14 Nge4 is extremely good for White.

11 0-0-0

Kasparov says that White is already significantly better here: there is pressure on

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the d-file, the White king is difficult to reach and White is preparing to make threats on the kingside.

11...Nc6 12 e4!

White has many ideas: Nb5 among them, and as Kasparov says it's not easy for Black to find a move.

12...Nf6 13 e5 (Diagram 34) 13...Ng4

13...Ne8 was an alternative: Kasparov says 14 Qd3 is very strong, but after 14...f6 15 exf6 Nxf6 I'm not sure White has a knockout blow, and I wonder if the restrained 14 Kb1 didn't have something to recommend it.

14 Bf4 Rc8 15 Kb1 f5!?

Something had to be done about White's threat of Ng5, meeting ...g6 with f3, ...Nh6, Nxe6.

16 exf6 Nxf6

Even worse would have been 16...Bxf6 17 Ng5 Bxg5 18 Bxg5 Qe8 19 f3 Nge5 20 Nb5 Nf7 21 Bd3.

17 Ng5 Qe8 18 Nb5 e5 19 Bd3!? (Diagram 35)

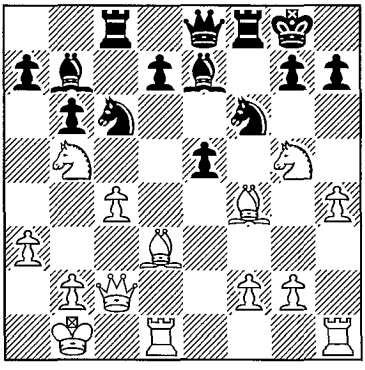

Diagram 35 (B)
A tempting sacrifice

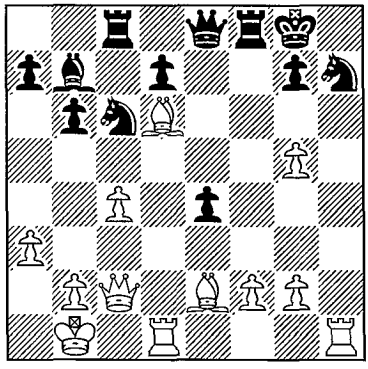

Diagram 36 (W)
Spot the win!

Typical Kasparov, although afterwards he thought it would probably have been better to continue 19 Be3!?, keeping all the advantages of White's position.

19...e4!?

19...exf4 does seem to lose after the brilliant variation 20 Bxh7+ Kh8 21 Bg6 Qd8 22 Rhe1! f3 (22...a6 23 Nd6 Bxd6 24 Rxd6 Qc7 25 Qd1 f3 26 Nxf3 is also hopeless when Black has no defence to Ng5-h7; the point of Rhe1 was to prevent ...Ne7: the resulting paralysis of the defence is very striking) 23 gxf3 a6 24 Bf7! axb5 25 Qg6 when Black cannot prevent h4-h5-h6, breaking his defence (notice again how Rfe1

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prevents the defence ...Ne5), but Black did have a chance to hang on with 19...g6! 20 Nxh7!? Kxh7 21 h5, according to Kasparov.

20 Be2

20 Bxe4 Nxe4 21 Qxe4 Bxg5 22 Qxe8 Rcxe8 23 Bxg5 Rxf2 24 Rxd7 Bc8 would be unwise, giving Black more counterplay than he deserves.

20...h6 21 Nd6 Bxd6 22 Bxd6 hxg5?

This loses at once and 22...Ne7 23 Nh3 was better, although White obviously holds a big advantage.

23 hxg5 Nh7 (Diagram 36) 24 Rxh7!

I can't resist quoting Gazza's observation on *www.chessrating.ru* (presumably by way of *Babelfish*): 'The contender has yawned this a little bit not obvious move'.

24...Kxh7 25 Bxf8 Qxf8 26 Qxe4+ Kg8 27 Qd5+! 1-0

Game 11

☐ **V.Chuchelov** ■ **L.Winants**

Belgian League 2005

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 Nc6 5 Nf3 d6 6 Bd2 0-0 7 a3 Bxc3 8 Bxc3 Re8 9 Rd1 (Diagram 37)

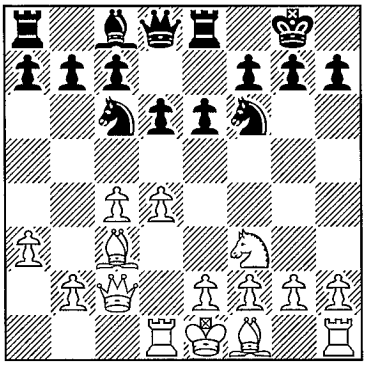

Diagram 37 (B)

Holding up ...e5

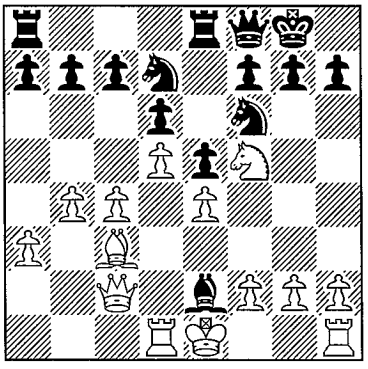

Diagram 38 (W)

How to recapture?

Holding up ...e5 for a move longer. White calculates that the Rd1/Qe7 trade-off will favour him once he closes the centre with d5.

9...Qe7 10 b4 e5 11 d5 Nb8

This is almost always the right square to retreat to in these positions, rather than d8 – where's the knight going to go from there?

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NOTE: It was largely to entice the queen to block the e7 retreat square that White went Rd1.

12 e4 Bg4

An immediate ...Nh5 is not so good now as in the note to 8...Re8, as Black has to waste a tempo with his rook going back to f8, since 12...Nh5 13 g3 Rf8 14 Be2 f5? runs into 15 Nh4. There are other ways to develop but White is well advanced on the queenside and has the dark-squared bishop for when the game opens up.

13 Be2 c6

This was a new move. Black chooses to play on the queenside, rather than the kingside-oriented plan seen in E.Bareev-J.Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2004, which went 13...Nbd7 14 Nh4 Bxe2 15 Nf5 Qf8 **(Diagram 38)** when 16 Kxe2 was a controversial decision, albeit one which allowed White to meet 16...g6 with 17 Ne3. Timman gained practical chances with his kingside attack, and even later won after a complex struggle, but the impression remains that White ought to be better here.

14 dxc6

14 0-0 was conceivable, but it's natural to open the position a little and expose d6.

14...Nxc6

14...bxc6 15 0-0 Nbd7 is the alternative, when White has two reasonable plans: either Rd2 and Rfd1, or Rfe1 followed by Nh4-f5.

15 0-0 Qc7 16 Nh4 Bxe2 17 Qxe2 Ne7 18 Bd2 Rac8 19 Rc1 Qc6 20 Rfe1 Nd7 21 Rc3 Nf8 22 Rd1 Ne6 23 Qd3 b6 24 h3 (Diagram 39)

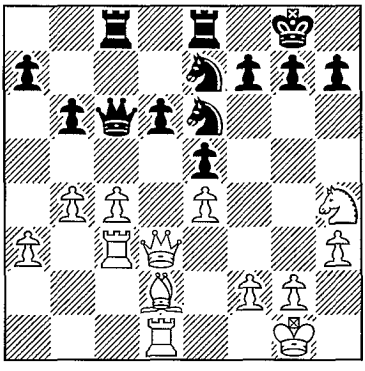

Diagram 39 (B)
White enjoys a useful space advantage

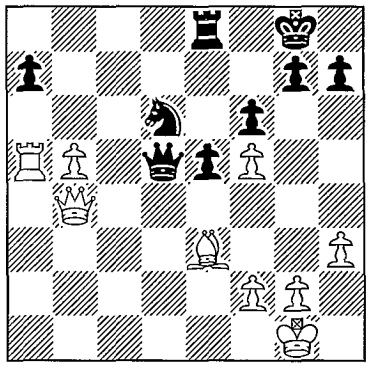

Diagram 40 (B)
White's nibble persists

24...f6

These last moves have all been very natural, but White definitely holds some advantage here. He does have troubles of his own as c4 is tender, and it's not quite

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clear what he's doing with his h4-knight, but still he has d6 to balance c4, and his bishop is the best minor piece on the board.

TIP: In this system White has chances of using his bishop to pressurize Black's queenside pawns as indeed Chuchelov does.

25 Nf5

I must say I don't understand this move: it seems more sensible to me to play 25 Be3 first to stop the knight coming to d4, but that depends on the note to move 26.

25...Nxf5 26 exf5 Nd8

Black envisages using this piece from f7 to defend d6 and free up the rest of his pieces, but why he rejected the more active and natural 26...Nd4 is beyond me. Then 27 Be3 d5 28 Bxd4 gives White nothing after the intermezzo 28...dxc4, but otherwise I don't see what White's doing.

27 Be3 Nf7 28 b5

From a pawn structure view point this move doesn't look so clever, but Black's knight is a good long way from the c5 outpost, and White has a concrete plan in mind. On the other hand it does seem that Black could have defended after the text, and possibly White was objectively better off keeping the tension for the moment: it isn't clear how Black was threatening to improve his position, while White's forces could certainly be better disposed.

28...Qb7 29 a4 Rc7 30 a5

And here it is. Black can hardly sit still and allow axb6 followed by an infiltration on the a-file, so he feels obliged to capture. This at least distracts White's forces from the centre long enough to let him get ...d5 in.

30...bxa5 31 Ra1 d5 32 cxd5 Rxc3 33 Qxc3 Qxd5 34 Rxa5 Nd6

The knight has re-emerged, but the question is: can it cope with the b-pawn?

35 Qb4 (Diagram 40) 35...Nxf5

White retains some pressure, albeit possibly not decisive, after 35...Rb8 36 Rxa7 Rxb5 (36...Nxb5 37 Bh6!? may have been what alarmed Black, although in fact he does have a defence in 37...Qd1+ 38 Kh2 gxh6 when White has nothing better than winning his piece back with rough equality after 39 Qc4+ Kh8 40 Rb7) 37 Qg4 Ne8.

36 Bxa7 Nd4?

The losing move. 37 b6 wasn't a serious threat since it just sidelines the bishop after 37...Qb7, and Black needed to play something cooler like 36...Rc8, when he certainly ought to be able to hold on.

37 Bxd4 Qxd4 38 Qb3+ Kh8 39 b6 Qd2

Threatening a perpetual after ...Qc1+ which is easily refuted, but there was no defence. After 39...Rb8 40 b7 Qd8 the best is the ruthless 41 Rc5, threatening Qe6 and meeting 41...Qd7 with the decisive 42 Rc8+ Rxc8 43 b8Q.

40 Ra1 Qd4 41 Rd1 Qc5 42 Qf7 Rg8 43 b7 1-0

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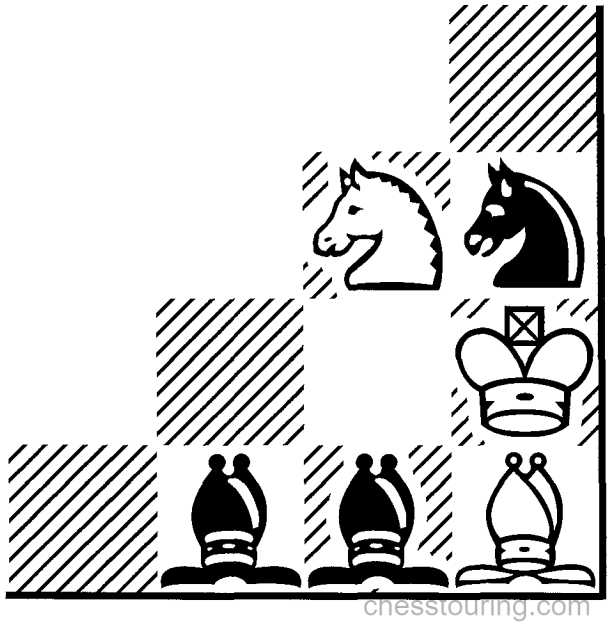
Chapter Four

The Benoni and Benko

- Introduction
- The Modern Benoni
- The Benko Gambit
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 (Diagram 1)

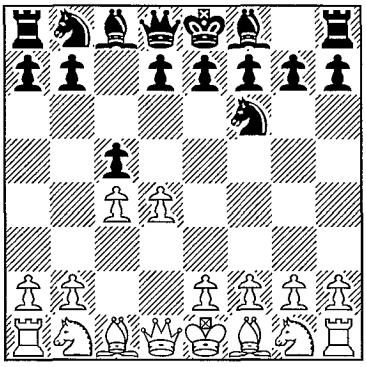

Diagram 1 (W)
Black strikes out on the dark squares

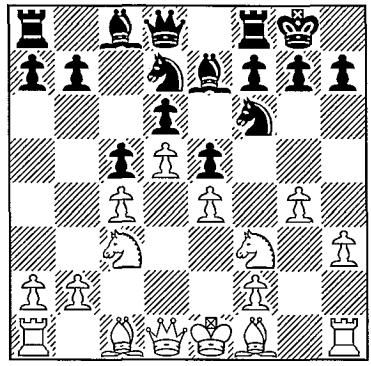

Diagram 2 (B)
Preventing ...f5

This move introduces the Benoni, which comes in various forms. After 3 d5, 3...e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 is the Modern Benoni and 3...b5, the Benko Gambit. There's also 3...e5 which is the Czech Benoni with which Black plans a slow game with action on the wings: despite its stodgy look the opening very often produces exciting games. It's not really something you need to prepare for: there are no variations as such to know. It's a question of plans and themes, but White should begin with 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Be7 6 h3 0-0 7 Nf3 Nbd7 8 g4 **(Diagram 2)**. This is the set-up usually believed to be the most challenging as White makes it clear that he isn't going to allow ...f5. Deprived of that natural break, Black is in some danger of being strangled, since without the bishop at g7 a ...b5-break is both difficult to arrange and less effective than in a similar King's Indian game. Thus Black will normally still play for ...f5, although he does need to do quite a bit of woodshifting first as we will see in Game 12.

The Modern Benoni

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5

The Modern Benoni is as sharp and controversial today as it was when Tal first made it respectable in the late 1950's. Most top GMs feel it is perhaps just a little dodgy and the only super-GM who employs it regularly is Veselin Topalov. As well as 5...d6 now, there's also 5...Bd6; a rare creature known as the Snake Benoni.

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It's surprising that the opening doesn't see a little more action, although 6 Nc3 Bc7 7 Bg5 d6 8 e3 0-0 9 Nd2 h6 10 Bh4 Nbd7 11 Be2 a6 12 a4 Re8 13 0-0 is a sensible way for White to develop, followed by Rb1 and b4 or by arranging a push in the centre.

5...d6 (Diagram 3)

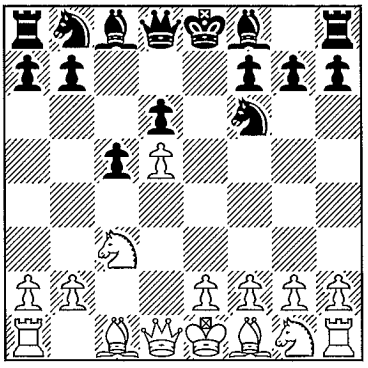

Diagram 3 (W)
An unbalanced position

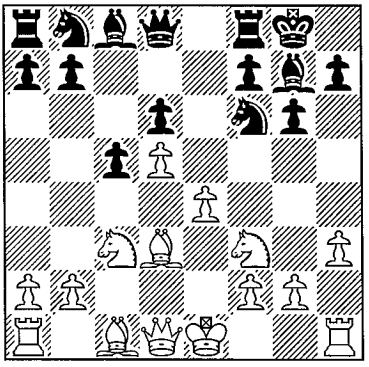

Diagram 4 (B)
The so-called Modern Main Line

Looking at the position, it is easy to see what pawn breaks both sides would like to make. White would like to mass his pieces in the centre and blow Black away with e4-e5, while Black would like to play ...b5 and power his queenside majority to victory supported by the bishop he is going to play to g7. Of course nothing is ever quite that simple. For one thing, both sides can normally post enough forces to cover e5 and b5 and prevent the other's thematic break from occurring. Secondly, both sides have other strategic approaches (otherwise the opening would be a bit dull): sometimes White arranges a b4-break, which may have the effect of removing the c-pawn's defence of d4 and with it some of Black's influence in the centre, while sometimes Black plays on the kingside either with ...f5, or even ...g5 to control f4 and mount a black-square blockade.

Another important feature of the position, though, is space. White has more than Black. If you try to arrange the black minor pieces comfortably, it can't really be done: bishop on g7, knight on f6 and knight on d7 are obvious, but what then? The queen's bishop has no good square. And if you try bishop on d7, then the queen's knight – well, let's say you move it via a6 to c7. White meanwhile will meanly play Bf4, and you will have to defend the d-pawn with ...Qe7, and then e5 will come: if you take that d6 forks knight and queen. This is all very abstract of course, but Black's queen's bishop is a real problem piece. It's no coincidence that the sequence which came to assume pride of place for Black in the former main

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line was 6 e4 g6 7 Nf3 Bg7 8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0 and now 9...Bg4. After relieving himself of this bishop Black's whole position starts to cohere much better.

White's system in this book, which is a nasty modern invention dating from the 1980's, is designed precisely to avoid this and leave Black with the queen's bishop. Indeed many Benoni players these days will only introduce their pet system via 2...e6 3 Nf3 (we would play 3 Nc3 when 3...Bb4 is the Nimzo and 3...c5 4 d5 takes play back into our favoured type of Modern Benoni) 3...c5 4 d5 e6 5 Nc3 exd5 6 cxd5 d6, and now either 7 h3 Qe7, preventing e4, or 7 e4 a6 8 a4 Bg4 followed by getting rid of the bishop.

6 e4 g6 7 Bd3

There is nothing absolutely wrong with 7 Be2, but since he will be going to play h3, White puts the bishop to d3 to give e4 some extra cover and not to obstruct the rook from e1.

7...Bg7 8 h3

NOTE: White's move-order is very accurate as he doesn't give Black the chance to unload the bishop with 8 Nf3 Bg4.

8...0-0 9 Nf3 (Diagram 4)

The starting position of White's system and Black has tried most of the standard Benoni plans here, but as yet none of them has worked terribly well with the exception of the tactical 9...b5. The alternatives showcase the merits of White's set-up more vividly:

a) 9...b6 aims to trade off the problem light-squared bishop, but costs time and in any case the d3-bishop wasn't White's best piece either. Then 10 0-0 Ba6 11 Re1 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nbd7 13 Bf4 Ne8 14 a4 a6 15 Rad1 f6 16 Rb1 **(Diagram 5)**

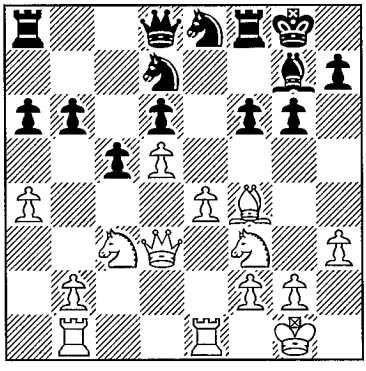

Diagram 5 (B)
Preparing b4

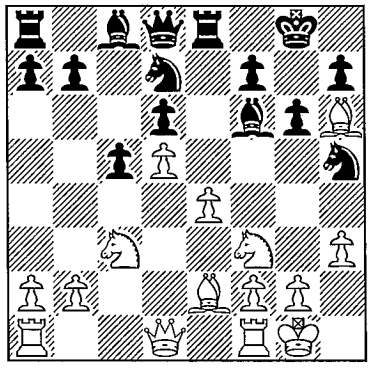

Diagram 6 (B)
Taking aim at h5

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was E.Bacrot-J.Sikora Lerch, Rethymnon 2003 and the plan with b4 becomes more attractive once ...f6 is played: the premium for winning d4 for a knight is greater with e6 gaping.

b) 9...Na6 aims for ...b5, but loses control of e5 which White exploited with 10 0-0 Nc7 11 Re1 a6 12 a4 Rb8 13 Bf1 b5 14 e5 in M.Krasenkow-V.Moskalenko, Moscow 1992.

c) 9...Nh5 10 0-0 Nd7 was strongly advocated by John Watson in his fine Benoni book, but 11 Bg5 Bf6 12 Bh6 Re8 13 Be2 **(Diagram 6)** was a recent powerful innovation in V.Ikonnikov-H.Van der Poel, Dieren 2004. Black then allowed Ikonnikov to demonstrate the point of his last move with 13...a6 14 a4 b6 15 Nd2 Ng7 (Black cannot let this knight be driven here without g4 being played) 16 Nc4 which favoured White. The only way to contradict White's play was the very bold pawn grab 13...Bxc3, although I think the remedy might be worse than the disease after something like 14 bxc3 Nhf6 15 Bd3 Nxe4 16 c4 Nef6 17 Qb3 Ne5 18 Nxe5 dxe5 19 Rae1 Qd6 20 Qc3 when White follows with f4.

d) 9...Re8 maintains some flexibility, but doesn't really challenge White's edge as we'll see in Game 13.

Returning to the position after 9 Bd3:

9...b5 (Diagram 7)

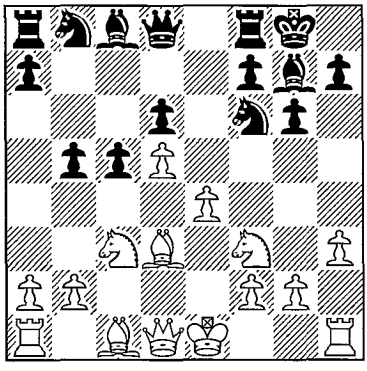

Diagram 7 (W)
Immediately seeking counterplay

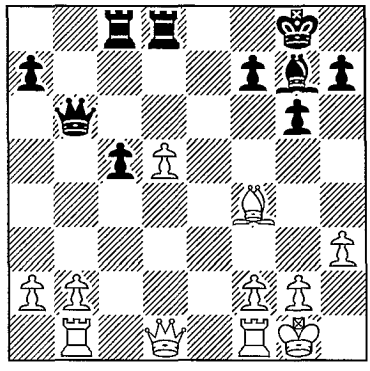

Diagram 8 (B)
Black is still to equalize

As we have seen, the tactical operation implied by the text is usually thought to be Black's best option.

10 Bxb5

10 Nxb5 is the main alternative, although 10...Re8 (10...Nxe4? 11 Bxe4 Re8 12 Ng5 is not so good) 11 Nc3 Nxe4 or 11 Nd2 Nxe4 12 Bxe4 Ba6 13 a4 Qa5 sees Black recovering his material with an active position.

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10...Nxe4

This is the point: Black can recover his material.

11 Nxe4 Qa5+ 12 Nfd2

12 Nc3 is tempting to force Black to part with his fianchettoed bishop, but 12...Bxc3+ 13 bxc3 Qxb5 sees White's king rather embarrassingly stranded.

WARNING: ...Bxc3 is actually a much commoner move in the Benoni than White players tend to imagine, and a common feature in a number of typical traps.

12...Qxb5 13 Nxd6 Qa6

13...Qd3 14 N2c4 Qxd1+ 15 Kxd1 gives White better prospects than the text of converting his advantage.

14 N2c4 Rd8

When played in Game 14, this was a new move, although the normal 14...Nd7 15 0-0 Nb6 16 Nxb6 Qxb6 17 Nxc8 Raxc8 18 Rb1 Rfd8 19 Bf4 leads to the same position.

15 Bf4 Nd7 16 0-0 Nb6 17 Nxb6 Qxb6

17...axb6 does not attack the knight on d6 and so gives White a moment's respite which is probably best used not by trying to defend his extra pawn but by 18 Qf3 b5 19 Ne4 which gave him a definite edge after 19...Bxb2 20 Nxc5 Qa3 21 Qxa3 Bxa3 22 Ne4 in M.Grabarczyk-Z.Pakleza, Polanczyk 2000.

18 Nxc8 Raxc8 19 Rb1 (Diagram 8)

In this particular position 19 d6 is well worth considering, but usually White players have stuck to the line they know and which more often arises via a 14...Nd7 move-order. After 19 Rb1, Black is still to regain the sacrificed pawn and we will examine his methods of aiming to do so in Game 14.

The Benko Gambit

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 (Diagram 9)

WARNING: The Benko Gambit is a gambit like no other. The usual strategy against a gambit is to exchange pieces – any pieces, more or less – and aim to win in the ending. Against the Benko, that simply won't work.

To be sure, there will be games where White wins in the ending, but as a general rule White needs to combine dealing with his opponent's queenside play with play in the centre and on the kingside. It is normally Black, not White, who would like to exchange queens and if we wind the play on for a few moves, we can see

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why this might be.

4 cxb5

4 Nf3 is also a respected system, but, as they say, the way to refute a gambit is to accept it.

4...a6 5 bxa6

Again 5 b6, 5 f3 and 5 e3 are all major systems, but it's hard to believe that the text isn't objectively best.

5...g6 6 Nc3 Bxa6 7 g3

7 e4 is also possible – the king can be brought to h2 after recapturing on f1 – but most grandmasters believe in the text.

7...d6 8 Bg2 Nbd7 9 Nf3 Bg7 (Diagram 10)

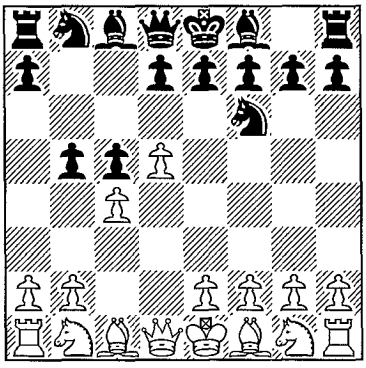

Diagram 9 (W)
Pal Benko's creation

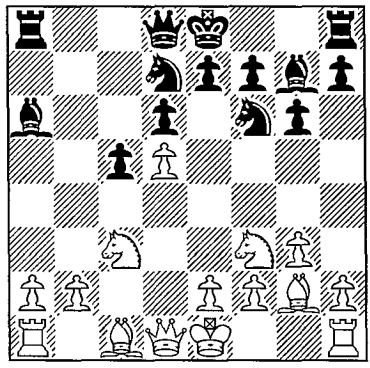

Diagram 10 (W)
The Fianchetto Benko

Both sides have developed the pieces in the natural way, and it's time to see what Black's up to. His next few moves will typically be ...0-0, ...Qa5 and ...Rfb8, and the first thing we notice is that all his pieces have good prospects. The rooks are straf-ing White's queenside along with the g7-bishop, the a6-bishop is staring into White's vitals, the d7-knight can look at b6-c4 or e5, and the f6-knight has ...Ng4-e5 in mind, or perhaps ...Ne8-c7-b5 to trade White's crucial knight on c3. The queen is actively enough placed, but perhaps lacks comparable prospects, which may be why Black is usually so eager to exchange her.

Moreover, White has a number of weak pawns: b2 and a2 are obvious. At the moment e2 is under attack and so is d5, and if White were to play e4 then in the ending the unpleasant thrust ...f5 often comes, leaving the d5-pawn isolated. By contrast the only faint weakness in Black's structure is on e7, and White's pieces are a long way from that. So that's Black's compensation – now what about White? Well, first and foremost White needs to get his men out without finding

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them blocked in on the queenside, and his next move, brought to prominence by Epishin, is the modern way to do that.

10 Rb1 (Diagram 11)

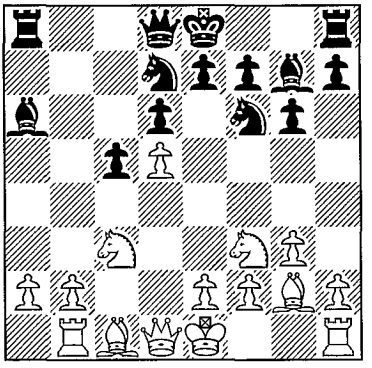

Diagram 11 (B)
Facilitating b3

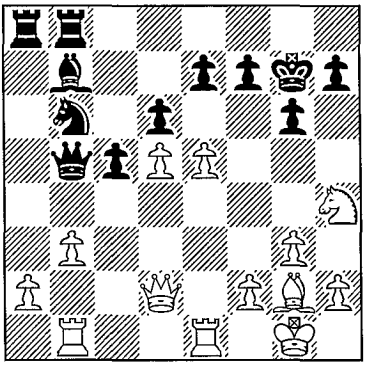

Diagram 12 (B)
The standard Benoni breakthrough

The proverbial magic move, while it is striking already in this book how many of the modern approved systems have a single recently discovered move like this one which has powered a whole variation. The point of playing this now rather than castling is that 10 0-0 Nb6 has been found to give Black rather annoying play – White's basic problem is that he'd like to meet ...Nb6 with b3 but 11 b3? allows 11...Nfxd5, so he simply moves the rook first.

10...0-0

10...Nb6 11 b3 now is rather more convenient for White, especially since Black's queen finds it hard to find a natural square. A thematic and crushing White win was J.Rowson-G.Jones, British Championship, Scarborough 2004: 11...Bb7 12 Nh4! (and not 12 e4 Ba6) 12...0-0 13 0-0 Ne8 14 Bb2 Nc7 15 Qd2 Qd7 16 e4 Rfb8 17 Rfe1 Nb5 18 Nxb5 Qxb5 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 20 e5 **(Diagram 12)** 20...Qd7 21 e6 Qe8 22 a4 f6 23 a5 Nc8 24 b4 cxb4 25 Rxb4 Ba6 26 Rg4, and it would be kinder to draw a veil over the rest; White has a overwhelming position on both sides of the board, and indeed in the centre as well.

11 0-0 Qa5 12 Bd2 Rfb8

This is the commonest move, but a different plan altogether is 12...Bb7. Black then intends ...Qa6, ...e6 and perhaps ...Nb6; a plan which might become more popular after it was recommended in *Starting Out: Benoni Systems*. So far play has continued 13 Qc2 Qa6 14 e4 e6 15 dxe6 fxe6 with a complicated position. I am not sure how relevant Qc2 is in this set-up, though, and I wonder whether 13 Re1 would not be better: at any rate 13...Qa6 14 e4 e6 15 dxe6 fxe6 16 Ng5 Rfe8 17 Bh3 is good

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for White thanks to the rook on e1, so Black would have to find a slightly different way to conduct his game.

Instead 12...Nb6 13 b3 Qa3 allows the rather effective manoeuvre 14 Ne1 Bb7 15 Nc2 Qa6. The knight on c2 may become very useful, as Dautov showed in R.Dautov-R.Felgaer, Port Erin 2002, by 16 e4 Nfd7 17 a4 Qa7 18 Nb5 Qb8 19 Nca3 **(Diagram 13)**,

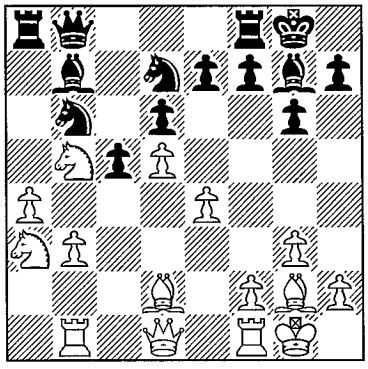

Diagram 13 (B)
Blocking the queenside files

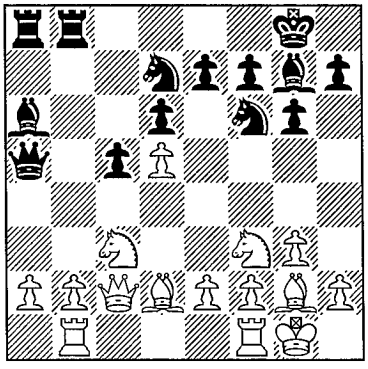

Diagram 14 (B)
White completes his development

firmly blockading Black's queenside play.

13 Qc2 (Diagram 14)

This is White's programmed way of developing his pieces in this system. He's not going to play any pawn moves on the queenside until he has to. 13 b3 Qa3 14 Bc1 Qa5 15 Bd2 with a draw has ended a few games, but otherwise it's not so easy to remove the queen from a3. It's better to develop all the pieces first and leave the onus on Black to show where his counterplay is coming from as we'll see in Game 15.

Illustrative Games

Game 12
☐ **V.Ivanchuk** ■ **Y.Seirawan**
Reykjavik 1990

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e5 4 Nc3 d6 5 e4 Be7 6 h3 0-0 7 Nf3 Nbd7 8 g4 Ne8 9 Bd3 g6 10 Be3

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Usually White plays this bishop to h6, and Black then evicts it with ...Kh8 and ...Nf6-g8. Ivanchuk reasons that those are quite useful moves anyway and he doesn't see the point in forcing Black to make them.

10...Ng7 11 Rg1 (Diagram 15)

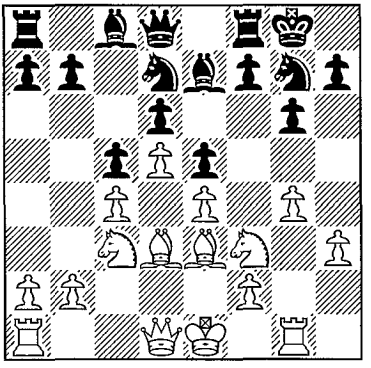

Diagram 15 (B)
Can Black break the bind?

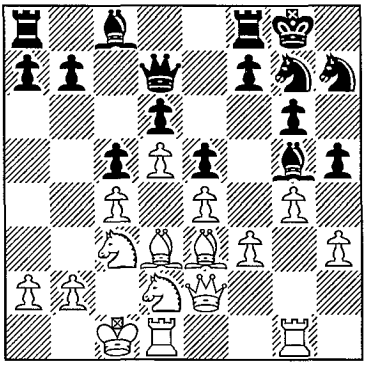

Diagram 16 (W)
Exchanges may free Black's cramp

11...Nf6

Seirawan has a plan to fight on the kingside, but Ivanchuk is able to keep control over there.

12 Qe2 h5 13 Nd2 Qd7 14 f3 Nh7 15 0-0-0 Bg5 (Diagram 16)

NOTE: This is a typical manoeuvre in the Czech Benoni as Black rids himself of his rather ineffective dark-squared bishop.

16 Bxg5

16 h4 Bxh4 17 f4 hxg4 18 Qh2 was an interesting adventure, but Ivanchuk prefers to continue systematically.

16...Nxg5 17 Qg2 Qe7

After 17...h4 White can give up the exchange with 18 Qf2 Nxh3 19 Qxh4 Nxg1 20 Rxg1 with a crushing attack when, for example, 20...f6 21 Rh1 Kf7 22 Qh7 Qe7 23 Rh6 Ke8 24 Rxg6 breaks through.

18 h4 Nh7 19 Qg3 a6 20 g5 (Diagram 17) 20...f6

Black's problem is that his pieces are not well placed and he can't cover the central squares to prevent an f4 and e5 breakthrough.

21 gxf6 Rxf6 22 Rdf1 Bd7 23 f4 exf4 24 Rxf4 Rxf4 25 Qxf4

Unfortunately for Seirawan this flurry of activity has left Black unable to defend

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on the kingside.

25...Rf8 26 Qh6 Be8 27 e5 (Diagram 18)

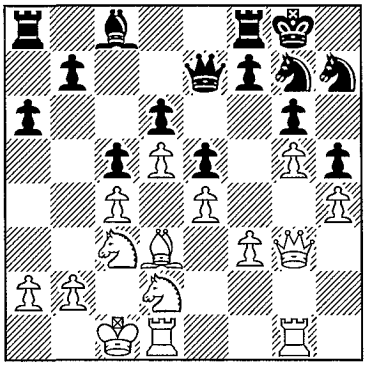

Diagram 17 (B)
Black remains hopelessly passive

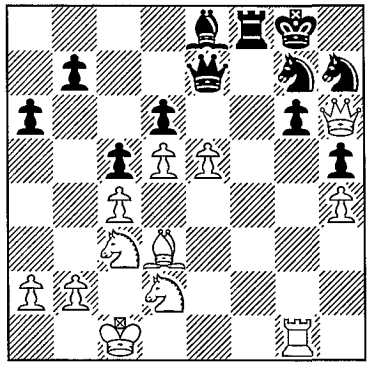

Diagram 18 (B)
Highlighting Black's passivity

The thematic break, which simultaneously releases all White's minor pieces.

27...Qxe5 28 Bxg6 Bxg6 29 Qxg6 Kh8 30 Nce4 Nf5 31 Qxh5 Nd4 32 Qxe5+ dxe5 33 Rg6

The rest is simple: White is a pawn up with much the more active pieces.

33...Rf4 34 Rb6 Rxh4 35 b3 Rh1+ 36 Kb2 Rh2 37 Rxb7 Ng5 38 Ka3 Nxe4 39 Nxe4 1-0

Game 13
☐ **V.Borovikov** ■ **D.Kononenko**
Pardubice 2003

---

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 d5 e6 4 c4 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 h3 0-0 9 Nc3 Re8 10 0-0 (Diagram 19) 10...a6

10...c4 can be met either with 11 Bxc4 Nxe4 12 Nxe4 Rxe4 13 Bg5 with an initiative, or by 11 Bc2.

11 a4 Nbd7 12 Bf4 Qc7 13 Re1

Black has made a very natural series of Benoni moves but is definitely struggling to demonstrate any sort of counterplay from here, largely because White's set-up has worked to perfection in denying the c8-bishop any role in the game, so Black cannot connect his rooks and effectively cannot get going at all.

13...Nh5

13...Rb8 14 Bc4 (or 14 Qd2) 14...Nb6 15 Bf1 Nfd7 16 Rc1 has also been tried in a few

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games without showing any signs of giving Black relief.

14 Bh2 Rb8 15 Qd2 (Diagram 20)

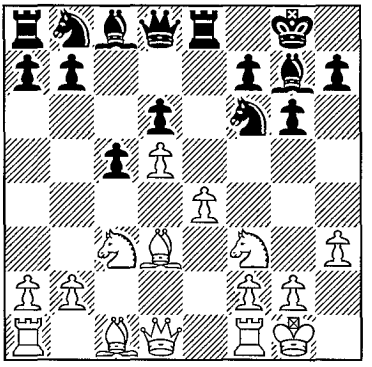

Diagram 19 (B)
White has a useful grip

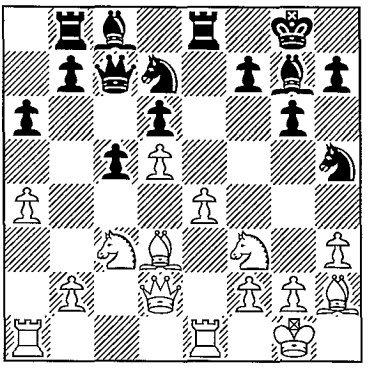

Diagram 20 (B)
Black is struggling

15...Ne5 16 Be2 Nxf3+ 17 Bxf3 Nf6 18 e5 (Diagram 21)

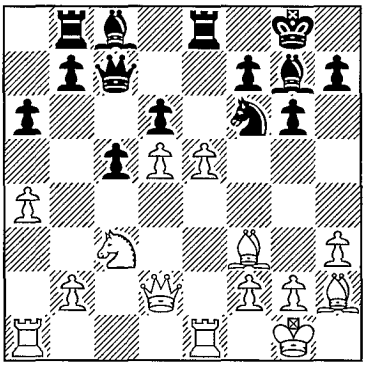

Diagram 21 (B)
Model play from Borovikov

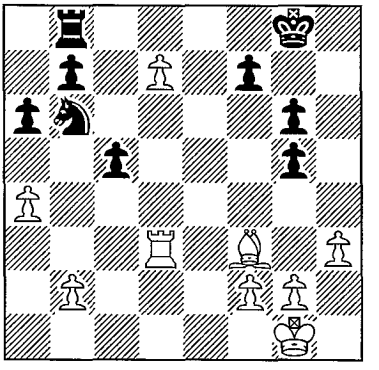

Diagram 22 (B)
Delroy decides

NOTE: This is the classical breakthrough in this variation. A theme of White's whole set-up is that he doesn't need to weaken himself with the vainglorious f4 and aim to recapture with the f-pawn in order to make this break very dangerous: the increased activity of his pieces when Black has not been able to develop his properly is quite sufficient.

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18...dxe5 19 Rxe5!

19 d6 Qa5 20 Rxe5 Bd7 is also possible but is not quite so effective.

19...Rxe5 20 d6 Qd8 21 Bxe5 Be6 22 Rd1 Nd7 23 Bxg7 Kxg7 24 Ne4

This is the sort of thing White is aiming for with the e5 breakthrough. Black has pawn weaknesses and a shaky king, and in addition White's pieces are far more active. White's advantage is already probably decisive.

24...Qb6 25 Ng5 Bb3 26 Qc3+ Kg8 27 Rd3 h6

Acquiescing to a lost ending. Instead 27...c4 would cut the bishop off from play decisively even if White couldn't win at once with 28 Nxf7! Kxf7 29 Bd5+, but 27...Qd8 was the last chance.

28 Qxb3 hxg5 29 Qxb6 Nxb6 30 d7 (Diagram 22) 30...Rd8 31 Bxb7 Nxa4 32 Bc6 Nb6 33 Re3 Kg7 34 Re8 Rxd7 35 Bxd7 Nxd7 36 Ra8 1-0

Game 14

☐ **A.Karpov** ■ **J.Polgar**

3rd matchgame, Budapest (rapid) 1998

---

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 h3 0-0 9 Nf3 b5 10 Bxb5 Nxe4 11 Nxe4 Qa5+ 12 Nfd2 Qxb5 13 Nxd6 Qa6 14 N2c4 Rd8 15 Bf4 Nd7 16 0-0 Nb6 17 Nxb6 Qxb6 18 Nxc8 Raxc8 19 Rb1 Qb7

This move had been introduced by Topalov and is probably Black's only chance: before that Black had lost quite a few games along the lines of D.Rogozenko-M.Marin, Bucharest 1995: 19...Qa6 20 d6 Rd7 21 Qd5 c4 22 Rbd1 Bxb2 23 Rfe1 Bf6 24 Be5 Bxe5 25 Rxe5 Rf8 26 Re7 Rdd8 27 d7 Qxa2 28 Rde1 Qa4 29 Kh2! a6 30 Rxf7 1-0.

20 d6 Bf8 21 Qd3 (Diagram 23)

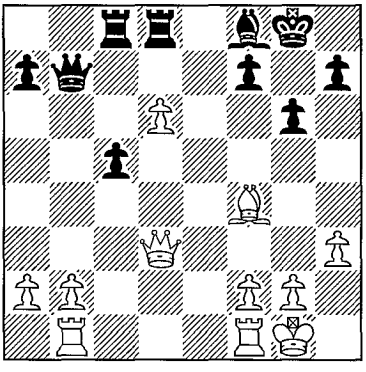

Diagram 23 (B)

Black must grovel in an ending

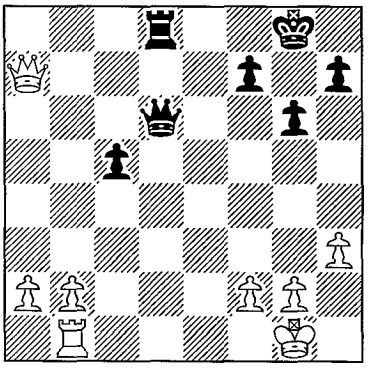

Diagram 24 (B)

Equally unpleasant for Black

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The best square for the queen for the reason shown in the note to Black's 23rd.

21...Bxd6 22 Bxd6 Rc6 23 Rfd1 Rcxd6

Black has a choice between two unpleasant endings: the other one is reached after 23...Qd7 24 Qa3 (this is why the queen is on the third rank) 24...Rxd6 25 Rxd6 Qxd6 26 Qxa7 **(Diagram 24)**.

24 Qxd6 Rxd6 25 Rxd6 c4

Trying to exchange the c-pawn before White can coordinate and win it must be right, but still this ending is a grim defensive task for Black.

26 Rd2 c3 27 Rc2 Qe4 28 Rbc1 cxb2 29 Rxb2 a5 30 Rbc2 h5 31 Rc4 Qd5 32 a4

Karpov handles this ending in his customary superb fashion. The immediate object is to prevent ...h4, which would greatly increase Black's chances of giving perpetual or at least exchanging a few pawns.

32...Qd2 33 h4 Kg7 34 g3 Qb2 35 Rc5 Qd2

The next stage of the plan is to take the rooks to f4 and f3, forcing Black to expose her king with ...f5.

36 Kg2 Qb4 37 R1c4 Qb7+ 38 Kh2 Qb6 39 Kg1 Qb1+ 40 Rc1 Qb4 41 R5c4 Qd2 42 R1c3 Qd1+ 43 Kh2 Qd2 44 Rf3 Qd5 45 Rcf4 (Diagram 25)

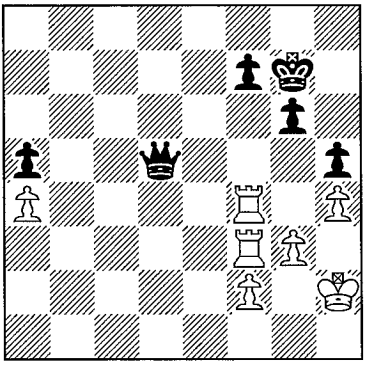

Diagram 25 (B)
Fine technique from Karpov

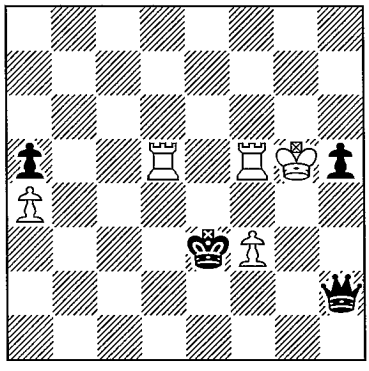

Diagram 26 (B)
A zeitnot tragedy

45...f5

Now Karpov moves his rooks back to the centre to combine threats against the black king, the new-found g6 weakness and of course the a-pawn.

46 Rc3 Qd2 47 Rc5 Qd8 48 Rfc4 Qd2 49 Kg2 Qd3 50 Rf4 Qd8 51 Kh2 Qd2 52 Rcc4 Qe1 53 Kg2 Qe7 54 Rfd4 Qb7+ 55 Kg1 Qb1+ 56 Kh2 Qb2 57 Rd7+

Seizing a moment when there is no check on the long diagonal and so driving the king out to the centre.

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57...Kf6

57...Kh6 loses to 58 Kg2 Qb6 59 Rc8 Qf6 60 Rcc7 Qh8 61 Rb7 Qg8 62 Ra7.

58 Rc6+ Ke5 59 Kg2 f4 60 gxf4+ Kxf4

White is probably already winning...

61 Rdc7 Qb3 62 Rc4+ Ke5 63 Re7+ Kd5 64 Rce4 Kd6 65 R7e5 Qd3 66 Re6+ Kd7 67 Re3 Qd5+ 68 R6e4 g5 69 hxg5 Qxg5+ 70 Kh2 Qf5 71 f3 Kd6 72 Rd3+ Kc5 73 Kg3 Qg6+ 74 Kh4 Qf5 75 Rde3 Qg6 76 Re5+ Kb4 77 R3e4+ Kc3 78 Rc5+ Kd3 79 Rf4 Qg1 80 Rd5+ Ke3 81 Rff5 Qh2+ 82 Kg5 (Diagram 26) 0-1

...and by now he definitely is (82...h4 83 Rfe5+ Kxf3 84 Rd3+ and Rd2+ wins the queen: Black can't deal with this threat without dropping the h-pawn and leaving White a purely technical task) but there are still many moves to make and this was a rapidplay game, and at this point Polgar's move-order finesse in the opening came into its own as Karpov sadly lost on time. Nonetheless this was a superb demonstration of White's possibilities in this endgame by the old champion. This sort of line which moves into the endgame from the opening will always be controversial: it's not everyone's cup of tea to play this way with either colour, although most players find it more agreeable to be the side pressing in this kind of ending. If this is all the Benoni has to offer for Black then it's never going to catch on, which is why Black players below GM level will perhaps usually prefer something other than 9...b5.

Game 15

☐ **V.Kramnik** ■ **V.Topalov**

Wijk aan Zee 2003

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 Nc3 Bxa6 7 g3 d6 8 Bg2 Nbd7 9 Nf3 Bg7 10 Rb1 0-0 11 0-0 Qa5 12 Bd2 Rfb8 13 Qc2 Ne8 (Diagram 27)

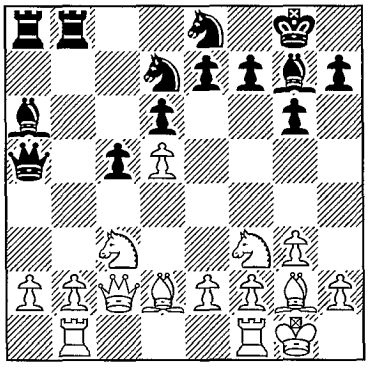

Diagram 27 (W)

Preparing ...Nc7-b5

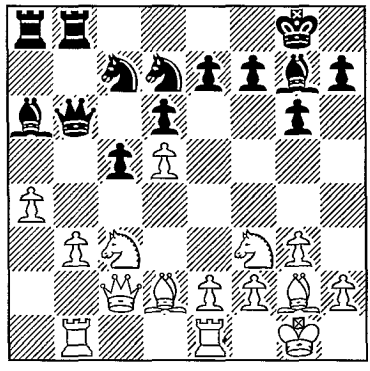

Diagram 28 (B)

b3 is a key square

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As I hinted earlier, the pieces which Black tends to move next are the knights, and he has also tried 13...Ng4. Then Kramnik again showed how to do it with 14 a4 (to prevent ...Qa3 after b3) 14...Nge5 15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 b3 Qd8 17 Rfe1 Ra7 18 h3 Rab7 19 Na2 Qc8 20 f4 (20 b4 Nc4 21 b5 Na3 22 Qd3 Nxb1 23 Rxb1 was perhaps a better try) 20...Nd7 (20...Nc4 throws much the same spanner in the works as occurred in the game) in V.Kramnik-L.Van Wely, Monaco (blindfold) 2003, only to demonstrate that chess is harder in your head by 21 Kh2 (21 b4 virtually wins) 21...Nb6 22 e4? Nxa4.

Instead 13...Qc7 can be met with 14 b3 now the queen has gone away. In A.Barsov-S.Kasparov, Cairo 2001 White demonstrated the normal plan with 14...Nb6 15 Ng5 Bb7 16 e4 Ba6 17 Rfd1 Ng4 18 Nf3 Nd7 19 Be1 Nge5 20 a4 Rb7 21 h3 Rab8 22 Nxe5 Nxe5 23 f4 Nd7 24 Kh2 Rc8 and now the systematic continuation would have been 25 Na2, followed by Bc3, with a comfortable advantage for White.

14 Rfe1

14 b3 Qa3 is still annoying; instead White carries on developing. 14 a4 is the main alternative but as I said there's a lot to be said for developing all the pieces before committing to a particular pawn structure on the queenside, and this rook is clearly the piece which needs developing and clearly it needs to be on e1 – in the fullness of time e4-e5 is on White's agenda, while on d1 the rook could only defend d5.

14...Nc7

Black continues with his typical Benko plan to remove the c3-knight and force concessions on the queenside, but just in time...

15 a4

...stops that idea.

15...Qb6 16 b3! (Diagram 28)

NOTE: Without this move White's previous play would have been mistimed, for example 16 e4 Qb3! is fine for Black – remember I said Black wants to trade queens? White can seldom afford to lose control of b3 like this in the Benko.

16...Bxc3

Black doesn't have to do this but if he doesn't he's gone wrong already. After 16...Bb7 17 e4 Na6 18 Na2 Rc8 19 Qc4 Ne5 20 Nxe5 Bxe5 21 Bh3 Ra7 22 a5 White was much better in I.Smiryov-A.Evdokimov, Alushta 1995. Notice the move Na2 which is often useful both, as here, to prevent ...Nb4 but also to assist in playing b4: trading away the c5-pawn and with it opening up the possibility of Nd4-c6 or an invasion down the c-file is often a big gain for White, as long as he has enough control on the queenside.

17 Bxc3 Nxd5

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This pawn grab was the point, but Kramnik has a trick.

18 Ne5 Nxe5

The only move, but now Black has a nasty choice between a technically worse, possibly lost, semi-ending, and allowing a very dangerous attack.

19 Bxd5 Bb7

19...Nc6 20 Qe4 Bb7 21 Qf4 Nd8 22 a5 (Stohl) was the 'dangerous attack' version.

20 Bxb7 Rxb7 21 Bxe5 dxe5 22 Rec1 (Diagram 29)

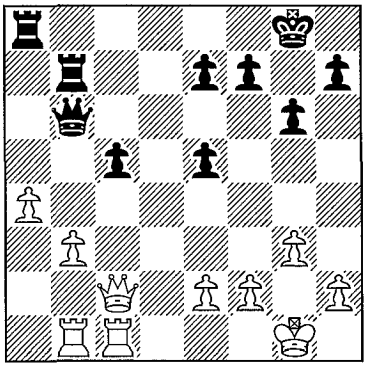

Diagram 29 (B)
Black faces a long defence

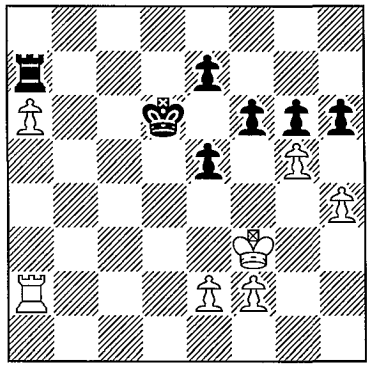

Diagram 30 (B)
Noteworthy technique

White is considerably better here, and Kramnik is probably the last player in the world you would want to be Black against.

22...f6

22...Ra5 is supposed to be an improvement which enables Black to equalize with accurate play, according to various Benko fans, but I'd prefer to see them try it as Black against Kramnik before I agree. Then 23 Qe4 Rb8 24 Rc4 leaves Black passively defending: I'm sure he can draw if he plays very well for the rest of the game, but so what?

23 Qe4

23 Qxc5? Qxc5 24 Rxc5 Rxa4 25 Rc7 Rxc7 26 bxa4 is a complete draw since the Black rook has time to garner the e-pawn before stopping the pawn: 26...Rc2 27 Ra1 (27 Kf1 Ra2 28 Rb4 is also a draw) 27...Rxe2 28 a5 Rd2 29 a6 Rd8 30 a7 Ra8 31 Kg2 Kf7 32 Ra6 Ke8 and so on.

23...Kg7 24 Rc3 Rab8 25 Qc2 Qe6 26 a5 Kf7 27 Ra1 Rxb3 28 Rxb3 Qxb3 29 Qxc5 Qb2 30 Qc4+ Kg7 31 Qa2 Qxa2 32 Rxa2 Ra8 33 a6 Ra7

It was always going to come to an endgame of this kind. According to Kramnik's

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notes for *Informator* White is probably winning now, although certainty would take a colossal analytical effort even for a Kramnik.

34 Kg2 Kf7 35 Kf3 Ke6 36 g4 Kd6 37 h4 h6

37...h5 was necessary and gave saving chances, according to Kramnik. This is good for basically the same reason as 38 h5 (see next note) would be wrong.

38 g5 (Diagram 30)

A fine, fine move, whereas 38 h5 gxh5 39 gxh5 is much less effective, basically because in a continuation like the game it leaves White with split pawns and the harder-to-promote rook's pawn. However, it's one thing to make such a glib observation and another to play the right move over the board, and I think most of us would have found our fingers making the move 38 h5.

38...hxg5 39 hxg5 f5 40 e4 e6 41 Ra5 Kc7 42 Ke3 Kb8 43 Rxe5

Now White is clearly winning, again according to Kramnik.

43...Rxa6 44 Rc5 Kb7 45 Kf4 Kb6 46 Rc8 fxe4 47 Kxe4 Kb7 48 Rg8 Kc6 49 Rxg6 Kd6 50 f4?

50 Rg7 Ra4+ 51 Kf3 e5 52 Rf7 Ke6 53 Rf6+ Ke7 54 Kg3 Rb4 55 Kh3 Ra4 56 Rf3 Rb4 57 g6 Rb6 58 g7 Rb8 59 Rg3 Kf7 60 g8Q+, transposing to a winning pawn ending (Kramnik), was the way to do it – a fabulous line, although the initial move does correspond to a well-known rule, that the most dangerous way for a king to be cut off in a rook ending is along a rank.

50...Ra4+ 51 Kf3 Ke7 52 Rg7+ Kf8 53 Rb7 Rc4

53...Ra1 holds the draw.

54 g6 Rc1 55 Kg4 Rc5 56 Rf7+ Ke8 57 f5 exf5+ 58 Rxf5 Rxf5

Alternatively 58...Rc1 59 Kg5 Rh1 60 g7 Ke7 61 Kg6 Rg1+ 62 Kh7 Rh1+ 63 Kg8, followed by taking the rook to the fourth rank and building the famous 'bridge', was also winning.

59 Kxf5 Ke7 60 Ke5 Ke8 61 Ke6 Kf8 62 Kf6 1-0

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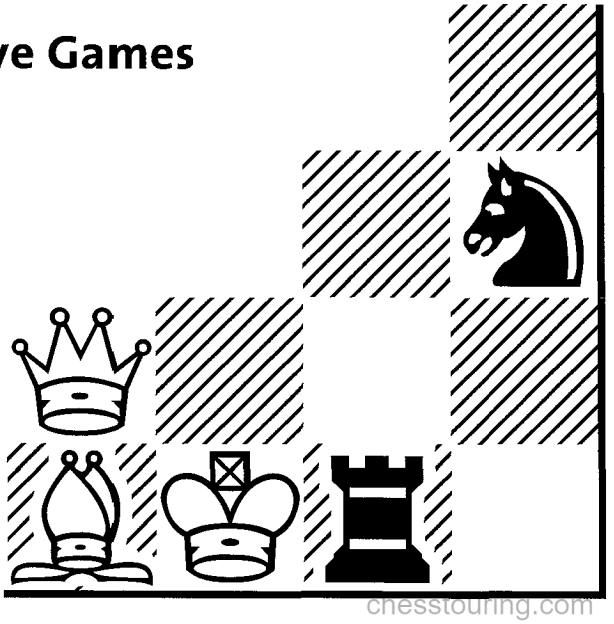
Chapter Five

The Queen's Gambit Declined

- Introduction
- The Exchange Variation with Nge2
- Black Deviates from the Main Line
- The Tarrasch Defence
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 d5 2 c4 (Diagram 1)

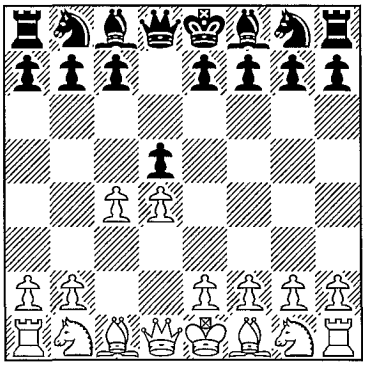

Diagram 1 (B)
Very old, but still good

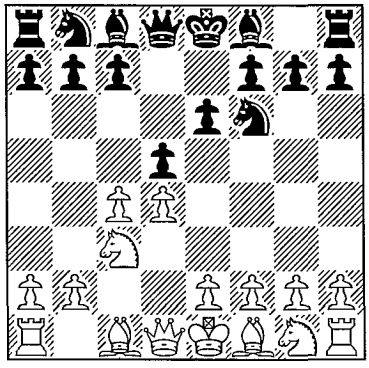

Diagram 2 (W)
The Queen's Gambit Declined

The Gambit of Aleppo, or the Queen's Gambit as modern vulgarians call it, is indeed the queen of chess openings. Its origins lie beyond chess history itself, yet every world championship match in our century or the last has featured the opening.

2...e6

The Queen's Gambit Declined. Black has of course many ways to play: 2...dxc4, the gambit accepted, is Chapter Six; 2...c6, the Slav defence, is Chapter Seven; while its cousin the Semi-Slav (where Black plays quickly both ...e6 and ...c6) is Chapter Eight. Finally, Chapter Nine covers Black's 'other' defences. The text, however, has long been considered the acme of correctness, and every world champion has played this position from both sides.

3 Nc3

Natural and obvious enough, but some Black players approach this position cunningly by 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 and only then 3...d5. If White wants the system advocated here against the QGD then against this cunning order he has to play 3 Nc3, since after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Black may play 3 ...d5 and the king's knight is on f3 when we wanted it on e2. In fact the matter goes wider than that: any true Exchange variation requires the king's knight to stay at home for a while, for a reason we'll see later on.

3...Nf6 (Diagram 2)

This natural move introduces the Orthodox defence. The present chapter is at

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once the easiest and perhaps the most important in the book. The most fundamental opening to understand when playing **1** d4 is the QGD: other openings come and go in fashionability and reputation, but the QGD's unbending correctness means that it never does. On the other hand, it is not a matter of variations. The theory you need to know to play White successfully in the Orthodox variation is negligible, and even the key ideas are not that elusive, but somehow acquiring a sense of their correct timing is another matter. I have therefore arranged this chapter slightly differently: first I'm going to walk through the opening to the main branching point after move 11 (a time-honoured sequence which occurs with surprising frequency even at fairly non-theoretical levels of the game), and then I'm going to round up the theory of the first eleven moves and various deviations in a section of its own – the importance of these in my experience is more theoretical than real at sub-GM levels.

The Exchange Variation with Nge2

4 cxd5

A crucial moment. 4 Bg5 is the main line, while 4 Nf3 Be7 5 Bf4 0-0 6 e3 is an intermittently fashionable and high-scoring alternative (presently 'in' under the patronage of Veselin Topalov). Other texts sometimes sneer at this Exchange (or 'Karlsbad'; no-one knows why) variation as 'a typical repertoire book choice'. I won't deny that it cuts down the work involved, but I think the best answer is the statistics. White has scored 69% from the position after his eleventh. From the position after 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 h6 6 Bh4 0-0 7 Nf3 b6 (the Tartakower Defence which is today considered the solidest way of all for Black to play against the 'main line' of the QGD) he has scored 54%. I won't deny either that I'm not remaining true to my publicity material, since 2600 GMs actually choose 4 Bg5 slightly more often than 4 cxd5, but Garry Kasparov almost always played this way, and Karpov too has a massive score for White. And it might even be that in the end 4 cxd5 is a better move. This, by the way, is the only good moment for the exchange: 3 cxd5 exd5 4 Nc3 c6 leaves White unable to prevent ...Bf5 satisfactorily, while 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 cxd5 Nxd5 is generally considered to ease Black's defence.

4...exd5 5 Bg5 (Diagram 3)

A good point to stop and have a look at the pawn structure White has created with his exchange.

NOTE: White's advantage is basically this: he has two realistic pawn breaks to Black's none. He might play b4-b5xc6, the famous minority attack, to create a weak pawn on c6, or he might play e4, perhaps without, but more likely with f3 to create a mobile pawn duo on d4 and e4.

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Black's equivalent ideas would be ...c5 and ...f4. These, however, are almost never practicable, since the first involves creating either an isolated queen's pawn or hanging pawns on c5 and d5 in a position where White's pieces are already very conveniently placed to attack them, and the latter will expose Black's king terribly. This power to change the structure at the moment of his choice is what gives White his enduring edge in this line. That is the positive side; on the negative it looks as though White has crazily released Black's queen's bishop and freed his entire position. Chess is never just about structure, and it turns out that for tactical reasons White is able to prevent this piece going anywhere sensible (which basically means f5). We'll see how and why as we go through.

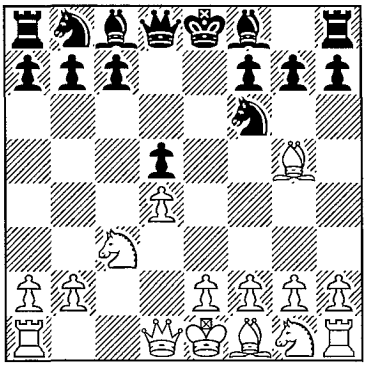

Diagram 3 (B)
Simple, but effective play

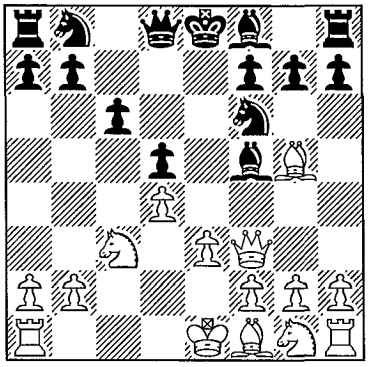

Diagram 4 (B)
A key point behind 4 cxd5

5...Be7

5...c6 6 e3 (6 Qc2 Na6 has problems of its own) 6...Bf5 is a logical way to try and develop the bishop, but White has the answer with 7 Qf3 **(Diagram 4)** 7...Bg6 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Qxf6 gxf6, creating a semi-ending where Black's mangled pawns have always been thought to give White the advantage. We'll talk about this position later. Meanwhile, notice that this tactical nuance is the whole justification for White's system: without it the whole Exchange variation wouldn't exist. If White didn't have f3 for the queen – say if he had foolishly played 6 Nf3 instead of e3, then Black would gaily develop his bishop on f5 without reprisals, and this would be sufficient to castrate White's entire position. You will never see the position after 6 Nf3 (which could be reached by many routes) in grandmaster chess unless the players want a day off. The significance of this little variation cannot be overstressed. Many GMs base their whole repertoire as Black on the Nimzo-Indian, and revert to the QGD only if White's third move is 3 Nf3. The whole reason for this is to prevent White playing the system I am recommending in this chapter.

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6 e3 0-0

This was the last moment at which Black could contemplate 6...Bf5, but 7 Bxf6 Bxf6 8 Qb3 wins a pawn.

7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nge2

The key move as White declares that he wants to set up the possibility of f3 and e4. 8 Nf3 c6 9 Qc2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 is a more ancient system but a great favourite of Karpov's: White may then play the traditional 11 Rab1 and proceed on the queenside; or the slightly odd 11 Rae1 with the idea of a quick e4, trebling on the e-file and punting a knight up to e5; or Karpov's favourite, the subtle and prophylactic 11 h3.

8...Re8 9 0-0 c6

Black occasionally tries to do without this, but the immediate 9...Nf8 allows 10 b4 (**Diagram 5**), since 10...Bxb4? 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Nxd5! Qxd5 13 Qa4 regains the piece and leaves Black with a disgusting structure.

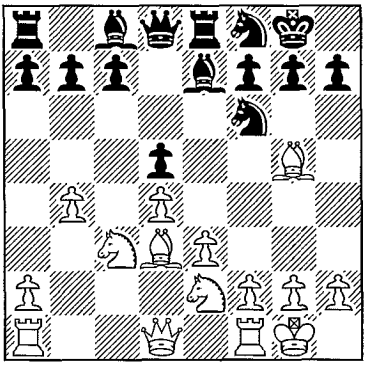

Diagram 5 (B)
Accelerating the minority attack

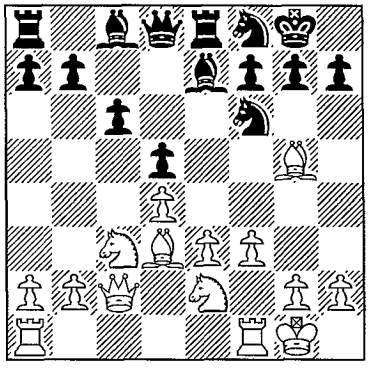

Diagram 6 (B)
Preparing the e4-advance

10 Qc2 Nf8

Black has to do this unless he wants to play 10...h6 11 Bh4, but even after that it isn't clear that this knight has a better square. From f8 it can go to g6 and help hassle the g5 bishop with ...h6, or perhaps to ...e6, where it may help deter e4 by pressing on some dark squares like d4.

11 f3 (Diagram 6)

Setting up the structure White wants. Usually White doesn't play with b4-b5 quickly (not that there's any law about it; 11 a3 with this plan was a possible alternative), but a3 and b4 to restrain ...c5, along with putting the rooks somewhere useful, is normally a desirable way to prepare e4.

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WARNING: White doesn't necessarily want to play e4 right away, though. Black basically has two ways to answer e4 which need to be dealt with before committing to the pawn push: ...dxe4, fxe4 c5, and ...dxe4, fxe4 Ng4. If neither of those is annoying then probably e4 is a good idea.

Black Deviates from the Main Line

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6

This isn't forced: 3...c5, the Tarrasch Defence, is the subject of our next section, while 3...Be7 is Kasparov's usual choice as Black, aiming to stop White getting a 'real' Exchange variation. After 4 cxd5 exd5 White evidently can't develop his bishop to g5, and he isn't going to be able to either since Black has handy moves like ...c6 and ...Bf5 (if necessary prepared by ...g6) which he can get in before needing to play ...Nf6. Nothing is free however in this game, and now White has 5 Bf4 **(Diagram 7)**

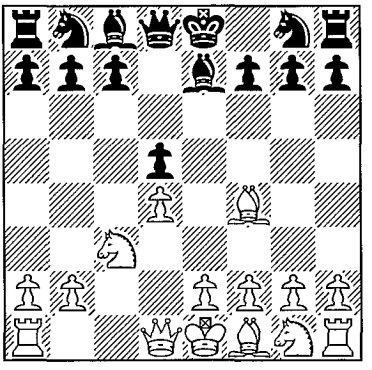

Diagram 7 (B)
...Bd6 would cost Black a tempo

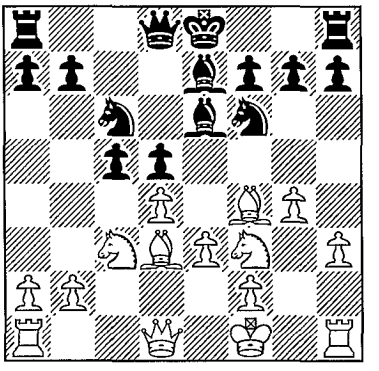

Diagram 8 (B)
g2-g4 gained some useful space

when Black has two plans:

a) 5...c6 6 e3 Bf5 7 g4 (as usual in the Exchange the immediate play is all about Black's queen's bishop) 7...Be6 (7...Bg6 allows 8 h4, and if 8...Bxh4 9 Qb3 b6 10 Rxh4 Qxh4 11 Nxd5 cxd5 12 Qxd5) 8 h3 (Botvinnik's sharp 8 h4 is also possible) 8...Nf6 9 Bd3 c5 10 Nf3 Nc6 11 Kf1 **(Diagram 8)** 11...0-0 12 Kg2 cxd4 13 Nxd4 Nxd4 14 exd4, and White went on to win a classic game in M.Botvinnik-T.Petrosian, World Championship (Game 14), Moscow 1963.

b) 5...Nf6 6 e3 Bf5 is a very critical alternative championed by Kasparov when

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White needs to go in for the sharp 7 Qb3 Nc6 8 Qxb7 (8 a3 is a quieter alternative) 8...Nb4 9 Rc1 (rarely played but 9 Bb5+ Kf8 only draws after 10 Rd1 Bd6 11 Bxd6+ cxd6 followed by ...Rb8-a8-b8, unless White fancies 10 Kd2!?) 9...0-0 10 Bxc7 Qc8 11 Qxc8 Rfxc8 12 Bg3 Ne4 13 a3 Nxc3 and now 14 Rxc3 Na2! equalized in R.Djurhuus-H.Olafsson, Reykjavik 1998. However, why White didn't play the more obvious 14 bxc3 I don't know: he seems to be better after 14...Nc2+ (14...Na2 15 Ra1 Nxc3 16 Ba6 and 14...Nd3+ 15 Bxd3 Bxd3 16 Kd2 Bf5 17 Ne2 don't seem quite to give adequate compensation either) 15 Kd2 Nxa3 16 Ba6.

4 cxd5 exd5

4...Nxd5, the Semi-Tarrasch or, as the Russians rather cheekily call it, the Improved Tarrasch, is a strange opening in one regard: basically all White needs to do is memorize a single game which took place thirty-five years ago, which is either a great tribute to the tireless analytical ability of Lev Polugaevsky, or a comment on the limited nature of the variation, depending on the charity of the observer. That game, Polugaevsky-Tal, USSR Ch., Moscow 1969 went as follows: 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 c5 7 Nf3 cxd4 (Black has to simplify to try and nullify the effect of the centre) 8 cxd4 Bb4+ 9 Bd2 Bxd2+ 10 Qxd2 0-0 11 Bc4 (this is White's basic idea; develop and then break with d5; for this purpose the bishop needs to be here) 11...Nc6 12 0-0 b6 13 Rad1 Bb7 14 Rfe1 (now all is ready for d5) 14...Rc8 15 d5 **(Diagram 9)**

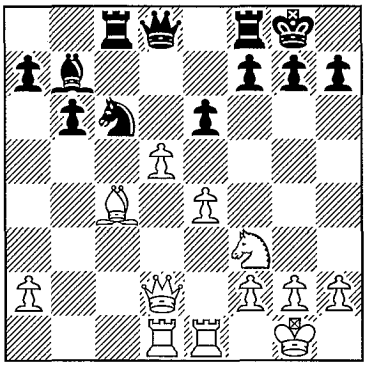

Diagram 9 (B)
A dangerous breakthrough

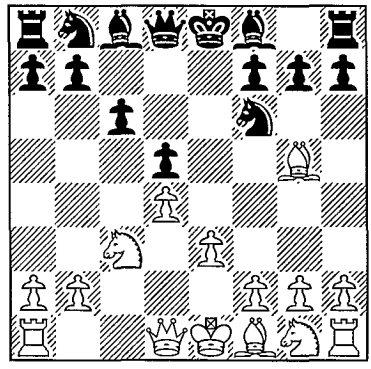

Diagram 10 (B)
The pin is pretty useful

15...Na5 16 Bd3 exd5 17 e5 (the typical pawn sacrifice). Black has many possibilities now but in all cases White's plan of Qf4, Nd4-f5, perhaps h4 and a rook lift to the kingside, has proven to give him very dangerous attacking chances. Polugaevsky-Tal itself followed the natural course 17...Nc4 18 Qf4 Nb2 19 Bxh7+! Kxh7 20 Ng5+ Kg6 21 h4 (threatening to mate after 22 h5+) 21...Rc4 22 h5+ Kh6 23

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Nxf7+ Kh7 24 Qf5+ Kg8 25 e6: the game is hardly over here but White retains very good chances for victory (probably there is no 25 move-deep piece of theory known by heart to more GMs than this game).

5 Bg5 c6 6 e3 (Diagram 10) 6...Be7

Probably best, although there's also:

a) 6...Bf5 7 Qf3 Bg6 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Qxf6 gxf6 is the critical ending I mentioned which Black has recently been experimenting with: the big discovery being how effective a knight is on d6, covering the f5 outpost and enabling counterplay on the queenside against b2/b3. Nonetheless Nigel Short, the strongest exponent of this method, was recently crushed in a textbook game: 10 Nf3 Nd7 11 Nh4 Be7 12 g3 Nb6 13 f3 a5 14 Kf2 **(Diagram 11)**

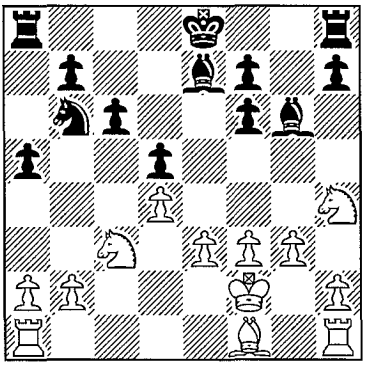

Diagram 11 (B)
White has an edge

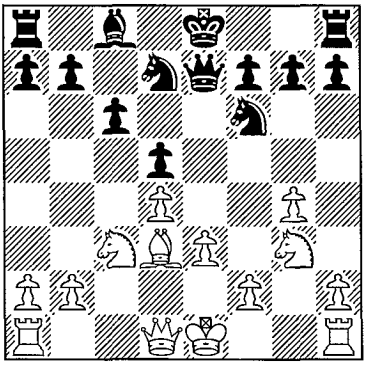

Diagram 12 (B)
g2-g4 is again useful

14...a4 15 Rc1 Nc8 16 Be2 Nd6 17 Rhd1 0-0 18 Bd3 Rfe8 19 g4 Bf8 20 Ne2 Bh6 21 f4 Bxd3 22 Rxd3 Bf8 23 Ng3 with a clear advantage to White in L.Van Wely-N.Short, Wijk aan Zee 2005, and this simple plan to sink a knight on to f5 seems to put Black under lasting pressure.

b) 6...Bd6 is very frequent below grandmaster levels: White can continue more or less as in our main set-up, although he needs to take a little care of Black's extra play down the e-file: 7 Bd3 0-0 8 Nge2 Nbd7 9 Qc2 h6 10 Bh4 Re8 11 0-0 Nf8 12 Kh1 with much the same sort of game, although at some point Black is going to find that the threat of e5 gains a shade of tempo for White.

7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nge2

Now 8...0-0 9 0-0 Re8 10 Qc2 Nf8 11 f3 is our main line which we've already discussed, and which is the subject of Games 16 and 17. Instead 8...Nh5 is a plan Black frequently uses when White has played 6 Qc2, although here too very

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strong players sometimes use it, but White does have a more critical reply: 9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 g4 (this is the difference: if White had Qc2 in instead of Nge2 then Black would have 10...Nf4 here, so White has to wait one tempo and Black uses that time to play ...g6 and route the knight via g7, avoiding what happens next here) 10...Nhf6 11 Ng3 **(Diagram 12)** when both players are going to castle on the queenside and White's pawn advances on the kingside give him a space advantage.

The Tarrasch Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 (Diagram 13)

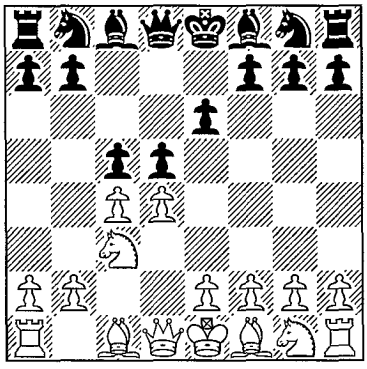

Diagram 13 (W)
Active pawn play from Black

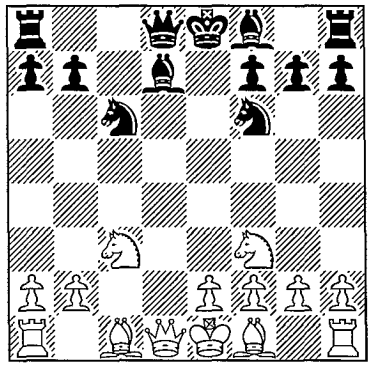

Diagram 14 (B)
Black shouldn't have enough

The uncompromising Tarrasch Defence with which Black doesn't defend solidly, like in the lines above, but concedes an isolated central pawn in return for free development. The doctor famously concluded the contemporary debate about it with the proud words that the future would judge who had erred in evaluating this defence – he or the chess world. A hundred years later it would be fair to call it a score draw: no-one thinks the defence is refuted, but White has a number of tries which call for very accurate defence from Black.

4 cxd5 exd5

4...cxd4, the von Hennig-Schara gambit, is a useful weapon in internet bullet games, but that's about the best you can say for it: 5 Qa4+ Bd7 (5...b5 is trappy but 6 Qxd4 Nc6 7 Qd1 exd5 8 e4 is good for White) 6 Qxd4 exd5 7 Qxd5 Nc6 8 Nf3 Nf6 9 Qd1 **(Diagram 14)** 9...Bc5 10 e3 Qe7 11 Be2 0-0-0 12 0-0 g5, and here White has many good moves, but perhaps practical players will prefer to recover the initiative with 13 b4 Bxb4 14 Bb2, when Black has the more exposed king and his kingside pawn advance is a weakness rather than a source of counterplay.

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5 Nf3 Nc6

5...Nf6 gives White an unnecessary opportunity in the form of 6 Bg5 Be6 7 e3 Nc6 8 Bb5, which is probably better for him than the main line.

6 g3 (Diagram 15)

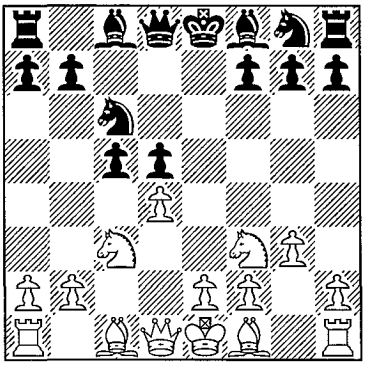

Diagram 15 (B)
Beginning to target d5

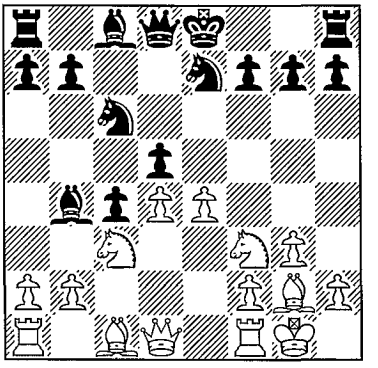

Diagram 16 (B)
Opening up the position

This has been the main move ever since its introduction by Rubinstein and is the well-nigh invariable choice of strong players. The fianchetto at once presses on d5 and helps protect White's kingside.

6...Nf6

6...c4 is the Swedish Variation, an unfashionable yet quite tough nut. White should play for e4; the most usual continuation is 7 Bg2 Bb4 8 0-0 Nge7 9 e4 **(Diagram 16)**, and now 9...dxe4 (also played is 9...0-0 10 exd5 Nxd5 when 11 Bg5 f6 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 13 Be3 Qf7 14 a3 Ba5 15 d5 Rd8 16 Nd4 favours White according to Adorjan as does 14...Bd6 15 Nd2) 10 Nxe4 Bf5 (10...0-0 is more usual, but 11 Qc2 Qd5 12 Be3 Bf5 13 Nh4 Nxd4 14 Bxd4 Qxd4 15 a3 Ba5 16 Nxf5 Nxf5 17 Rad1 also sees White getting on top in view of the trick 17...Qe5?? 18 Rd5!) 11 Nh4! Be6 (11...Qxd4 12 Nxf5 Nxf5 13 Qg4 is very dangerous) 12 a3 Ba5 13 Nc5 Qxd4 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Qh5+ g6 16 Qe2 was terrible for Black in W.Arencibia-L.Bruzon Bautista, Cuban Championship, Santa Clara 2005.

7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bg5 (Diagram 17) 9...cxd4

The main move, but by no means forced:

a) 9...Be6 leads directly to a miserable semi-ending after 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 Bxf6 (11 Rc1 is another good move, keeping the pieces on) 11...Qxf6 12 Nxd5 Qxb2 13 Nc7 Rad8 14 Qc1 Qxc1 15 Raxc1 Be7 16 Nxe6 fxe6 and now Artur Yusupov started off with 17 Rc4 (this rook is very strong on e4) 17...Bf6 18 e3 and won a fine game in

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A.Yusupov-K.Spraggett, 3rd matchgame, Quebec 1989.

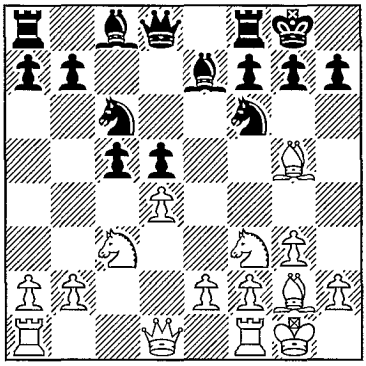

Diagram 17 (B)
Increasing the pressure

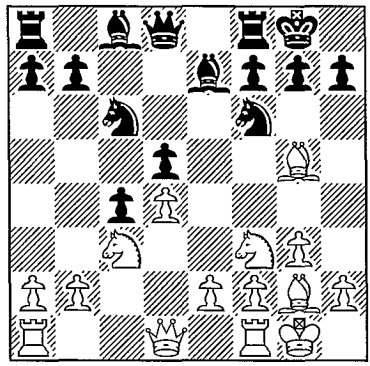

Diagram 18 (W)
A fairly popular idea

b) 9...c4 **(Diagram 18)** is rather a challenging move which moreover stands quite well just now theoretically. White has lots of ways to try for a quiet positional edge but I'm afraid that if Black is well prepared and White wants to try for an advantage then in my opinion it's necessary to play very critically. Black's idea is evidently to avoid the isolated pawn and – if allowed – eventually win the game on the queenside. White needs to play in the centre and break up the black pawns with b3 and/or e4, hopefully leaving pawn weaknesses, but in fact in the main line this simple plan is obscured by some tactics.

After 10 Ne5 Be6 11 Nxc6 (11 Rc1 is a simpler alternative although I think 11...Nd7 is very solid for Black, while 11 e3 is another more technical approach) 11...bxc6 12 b3 (a sharp move, but others don't make a lot of sense positionally: now 12...cxb3 13 axb3 just leaves Black slightly worse with two pawn weaknesses against White's one; perhaps he can hold but that wasn't why he played the line) 12...Qa5 13 Na4 (the knight is not bad here, controlling c5) 13...Rfd8 14 e3 Rac8 (14...c5 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 dxc5 Bxc5 17 Qh5 Rac8 transposes) 15 Bxf6 gxf6 16 Qh5 c5 (this is Black's idea, to use his massed forces in the centre) 17 dxc5 Bxc5 18 Rfd1 **(Diagram 19)** we reach a very critical position with several options, but 18...c3 19 Rac1 Bb4 20 Rd4 c2 is Aagaard and Lund's main line. Now 21 Rh4 is in my opinion is good for White because 21...Kf8 (21...d4 22 Qxh7+ Kf8 is the alternative when White should avoid the trick 23 Rxc2? Bf5! and instead play 23 exd4 Qf5 24 Qh6+ Ke7 25 Be4 Qg5 26 Rxc2 when he must be better, although it isn't going to be easy) 22 Qxh7 Ke7 23 Rxc2 f5 24 Re2! Bc3 (Y.Pelletier-E.Weinzettl, Pula 2000), can be met by 25 Rd4! which virtually wins – the black bishop is cut off from its king, while after 25...Bxd4 26 exd4 Black is lost either in the middlegame with his exposed king or the ending with his weak pawns and the knight coming to the superb c5-square.

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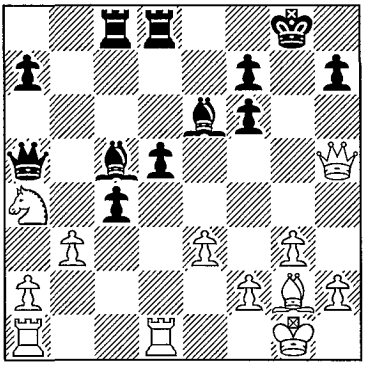

Diagram 19 (B)
Can White exploit the weaknesses?

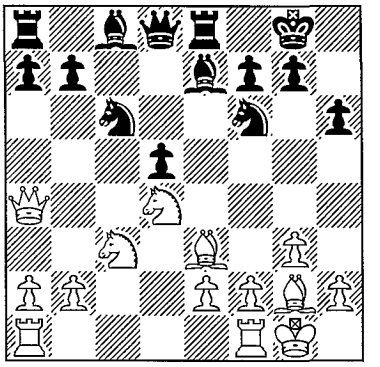

Diagram 20 (B)
Maintaining the tension

10 Nxd4 h6

This is by far the most popular; Black takes advantage of a moment when Bxf6 is not good to drive the bishop away.

11 Be3 Re8

TIP: If 11...Bg4 then 12 Qa4 is a good move: the point is that 12...Qd7?! leaves the d-pawn en prise because of the queen's x-ray on the g4 bishop: 13 Bxd5 Nxd5 14 Nxd5 Qxd5 15 Nxc6 wins a pawn.

So instead Black normally plays 12...Na5, but now White tucks the bishop away neatly with 13 Rad1 Nc4 14 Bc1 and stands definitely better, so the more flexible text has taken over.

12 Qa4 (Diagram 20)

Most texts recommend 12 Rc1 Bf8 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Na4 (or some variant on this plan of Rubinstein's, which to be sure has scored well over many years), but in my view White hasn't shown a good reply either to Ivanchuk's 14...Re6 or to a deep line beginning with 14...Bd7.

12...Bd7

12...Na5 is probably also best met by 13 Rfd1.

13 Rfd1! (Diagram 21) 13...Na5

Black has also tried:

a) 13...Nb4 14 Qb3 a5 15 a4 slightly favours White according to Lautier because of 15...Bg4 16 h3 Be6 17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 Bd4. The alternative is 15 Nxd5!? Nfxd5 16 Bxd5 Nxd5 17 Qxd5 Ba4 18 Qxd8 Raxd8 19 b3, giving an ending which White isn't

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going to lose but he's going to find very hard work to win too; still there is no denying that one would rather play White.

b) 13...Bc5 is an interesting try, because 14 Ne6 fxe6 15 Bxc5 b6 doesn't seem actually to be very good and 14 Nxd5 leads nowhere either. Perhaps White's best is the quiet 14 Qc2 when natural play like 14...Qb6 15 Qd2 Rc8 16 Nc2 seems to be rather good for White, and so I imagine Black's idea is 14...Rxe3!? 15 fxe3 when evidently Black has compensation but White is well developed and I suspect objectively better.

14 Qc2

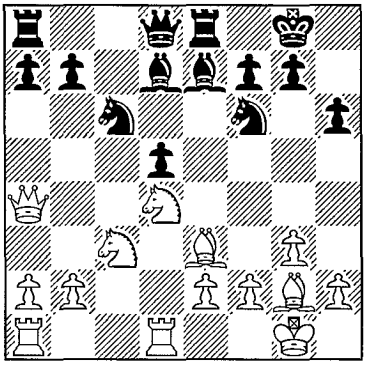

Diagram 21 (B)
White is ready for the discoveries

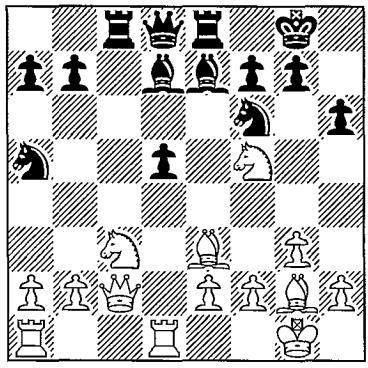

Diagram 22 (B)
Preparing to seize d5

Now 14...Nc4 is the subject of Game 18, and 14...Rc8 15 Nf5 **(Diagram 22)** favours White. Chess is all about tactics, and if Black keeps his bishops by 15...Bf8 (15...Bb4 16 Bxd5 is also brave and strong), White should be brave and go for 16 Bxd5 Re5 17 Nxh6+ gxh6 18 Qg6+ Kh8 19 Bxf7 when Black is pretty much forced into 19...Rxe3, but then the neat 20 Nd5! Bg7 21 Nxe3 should be better for White.

Illustrative Games

Game 16
☐ **K.Sasikiran** ■ **Cu.Hansen**
Malmö 2005

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 Nge2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 11 f3 Ng6 (Diagram 23)

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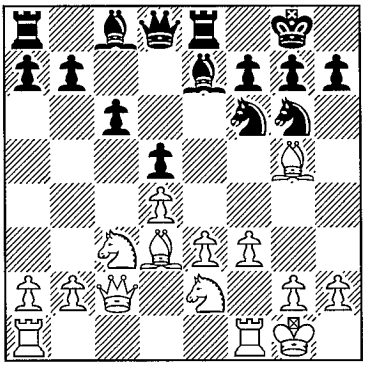

Diagram 23 (W)
Blocking the b1-h7 diagonal

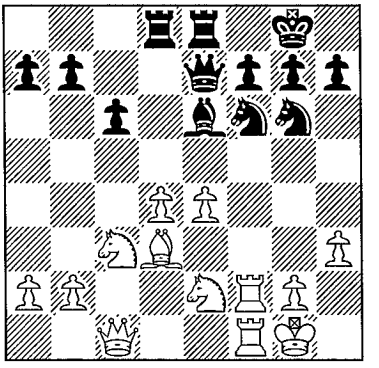

Diagram 24 (B)
A fine queen shift

11...Be6 is a major alternative which can lead to the same position and is seen in the next game, while another critical alternative is 11...Nh5. This forces White's centre to lurch forward before it was necessarily ready, but at the cost of displacing the knight, and 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 e4 is usually said to be nice for White: for example, 13...dxe4 14 fxe4 Nf6 (or 14...Bg4 15 e5, shutting out the h5-knight) 15 h3 Ng6 16 Rf2 Be6 17 Raf1 Rad8 18 Qc1! **(Diagram 24)** 18...c5 19 d5 Ne5?! (a very instructive mistake; the knight is pretty on e5 but it doesn't in fact have much scope; it was better to wait with 19...Bd7 and stay flexible about which piece to use on e5) 20 Bb1 Bc8 21 Ng3 c4? (and this is flat-out horrible: giving away d4, missing the threat and losing at once into the bargain) 22 Qe3 a6 23 Rxf6! gxf6 24 Nh5 Rd6 25 Qh6 Qf8 26 Nxf6+ Rxf6 27 Qxf6 Qg7 28 Qxg7+ Kxg7 29 Kf2 saw White win quickly in S.Conquest-D.Shaw, Coventry 2005. The star move in this game was Stuart's 18th, which he showed me triumphantly after the game ('I improved on Bareev, improved on Vaisser') and it certainly is one of those moves which you can see is right as soon as it's put on a board, but isn't quite so obvious beforehand.

NOTE: As the game showed, Qc1 widened the queen's scope of action on the kingside, took control of some central black squares (where White can easily be a little undergunned in this line after the trade of black-squared bishops) and provided the d3 bishop with a handy retreat.

12 Rad1

White is definitely right to prepare e4 carefully: his whole advantage is that he can choose his moment for this, and he has many more moves to prepare usefully for it than Black does. Instead an example of how things can go wrong for White is 12 e4 dxe4 13 fxe4 Be6 14 Rad1 Ng4 15 Bc1 c5 **(Diagram 25)**

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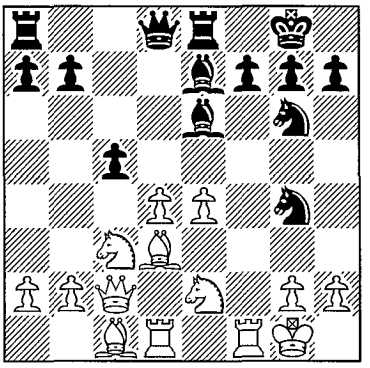

Diagram 25 (W)
Punishing a premature e4-advance

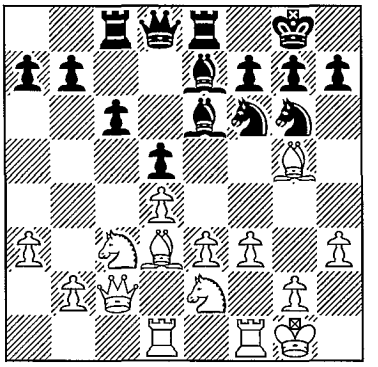

Diagram 26 (B)
Correctly not hurrying with e4

16 d5 Bd7 with the better prospects for Black.

12...Be6 13 h3

This prepares e4 by cutting out ...Ng4, although 13 Kh1 and 13 a3 are alternatives.

13...Rc8 14 a3 (Diagram 26)

Getting ready for b4, not so much to launch a minority attack as to restrain the other typical response of ...c5.

14...b6

Trying to set up ...c5, while 14...Nh5 was the obvious and perhaps preferable alternative.

15 e4

Sasikiran decides he has run out of preparatory moves, although 15 b4, 15 Rhe1 and perhaps 15 Kh1 all came into consideration.

15...dxe4

It's too late for 15...Nh5 since 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Ba6! Rcd8 18 f4 Bc8 19 Bxc8 Rxc8 20 e5 is very good for White.

16 fxe4 Qc7 17 e5 Nd5 18 Bxe7 Qxe7

18...Ne3 loses to 19 Bd6.

19 Nxd5 cxd5

A difficult decision, but probably Black is right to cover e4 and make sure that Ne4-d6 cannot occur. His bishop may not look much good but it has a strong defensive presence, and its possible trade for White's knight after 19...Bxd5 20 Nc3 wasn't terribly desirable for Black. White has achieved his goals in the opening though and stands clearly better.

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20 Qd2 Rf8 21 Qe3 Qh4 22 Rf3 (Diagram 27)

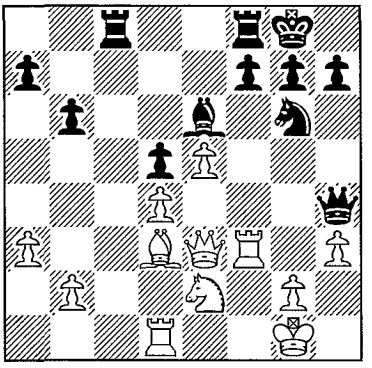

Diagram 27 (B)
Increasing the pressure

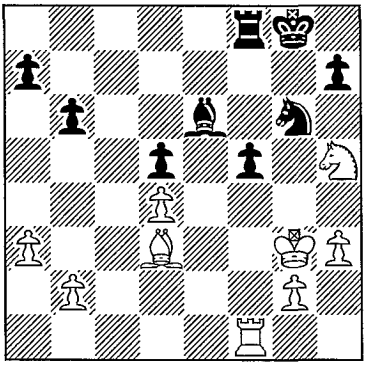

Diagram 28 (B)
Activating the king decides

22...Rce8

Black digs in: there wasn't anything to be done on the c-file, and he needs to take measures against White's coming assault on the f-file. Notice how Sasikiran was able to use his rook on the f-file after all, so avoiding the plausible Rfe1 has worked well.

23 Rdf1 f6

Obviously a very big decision, since the pawn weaknesses it creates are not going to go away, but if Black just sat still then clearly White had much the better position.

24 exf6

24 Bxg6 hxg6 25 Nf4 Kh7 26 Nxe6 Rxe6 27 Rf4 Qg5 28 Qf3 is a sequence proposed by the computer, and I must say I don't entirely understand why Sasikiran rejected it: it seems to win a pawn or so by force.

24...Rxf6 25 Rxf6 gxf6 26 Qg3 Qg5 27 Kh2 Qxg3+

It's not clear why Black thought it was helpful to 'lure' the king to h2, but even grandmasters can change their mind.

28 Nxg3 Rf8 29 Nh5!

Forcing further dark-squared weaknesses.

29...f5 30 Kg3 (Diagram 28)

White is technically winning now and the rest is simple for players of this calibre.

30...Ne7 31 Rc1 Rc8 32 Rxc8+ Bxc8 33 Kf4 Kf7 34 Ke5 Nc6+ 35 Kxd5 Bb7 36 Nf4 Kf6 37 Kc4 Kg5 38 g3 h5 39 d5 Na5+ 40 Kd4 h4 41 Ne2! hxg3 42 Nxg3 Kf4 43 Ne2+ Kf3

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44 Nc1 Bc8 45 b4 Nb7 46 Ke5 f4 47 Ne2

Forcing an exchange of the kingside pawns, after which you or I could win the ending.

47...Bxh3 48 Nxf4 Bd7 49 Ne6 1-0

A rather typical game for this variation, showing exactly the kind of advantage White is aiming for with e4. The way even a player of Curt Hansen's strength succumbs so thematically, though, demonstrates how difficult it is to stop White getting what he wants.

Game 17

☐ **G.Kasparov** ■ **U.Andersson**

Belfort 1988

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 c6 6 Qc2 Be7 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 Nge2 Re8 10 0-0 Nf8 11 f3 Be6 (Diagram 29)

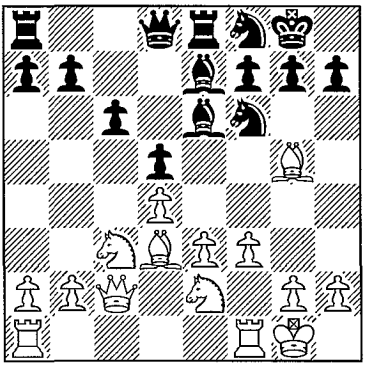

Diagram 29 (W)

White has several useful moves

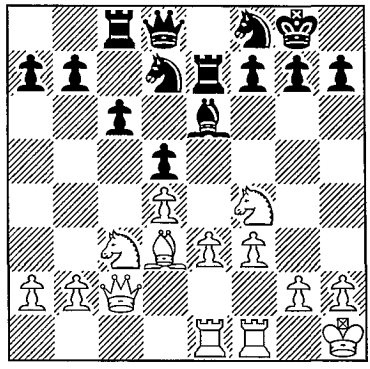

Diagram 30 (B)

Again not hurrying with e4

This is the main alternative to 11...Ng6, although it can transpose into the last game. Black prioritizes the plan of ...c5 in reply to e4 by bringing a rook to the c-file.

12 Rae1

12 Rad1 is also played – it is very difficult to say whether the rook is better on the d-file or the e-file – and so are 12 Kh1, taking the king away from a sensitive diagonal, and 12 Bh4, getting ready to bring the bishop back to f2 after e4.

12...Rc8 13 Kh1 N6d7

13...c5 is a logical move, of course, but the set-up after 14 dxc5 Rxc5 15 Nd4

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slightly favours White according to Kasparov.

14 Bxe7 Rxe7

14...Qxe7 holds up e4 rather more effectively and is probably best met by Bareev's 15 Ng3 when one idea of having the knight on g3 is that after 15...Nb6 16 Qf2 Rcd8 17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 White doesn't have to worry about 18...Bc4, as he does in the note below, since the knight is poised for 19 Nf5 with advantage.

15 Nf4 (Diagram 30) 15...Rc7

A characteristic Andersson move, digging in and preparing to combat the d4 and e4 duo with rooks on d7 and e7, but Kasparov disapproves of it and prefers 15...Nf6, when he intended to prepare e4 with 16 Qd2 Rd7 17 b4, restraining ...c5 and keeping the advantage.

16 Qf2

TIP: This is a common place for the queen, eyeing f7 and even a7, defending d4 and readying itself to spring into action on the kingside.

16...Nf6

Kasparov mentions the alternative 16...Nb6, when he intended to continue with 17 Bb1 preserving the bishop, rather than 17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 Bc4! allowing its removal with counterplay for Black.

17 e4 dxe4 18 fxe4 Rcd7

This logical continuation of Andersson's plan meets with a breakthrough, but the alternatives 18...Bc8 19 e5 and 18...Ng6 19 Nxe6 both favour White also.

19 d5 (Diagram 31)

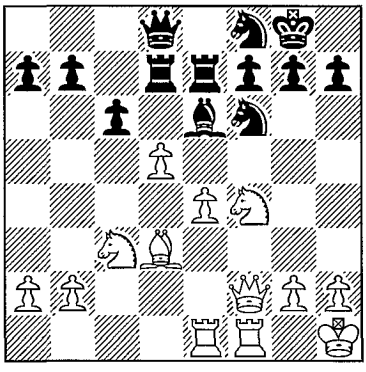

Diagram 31 (B)
A powerful breakthrough

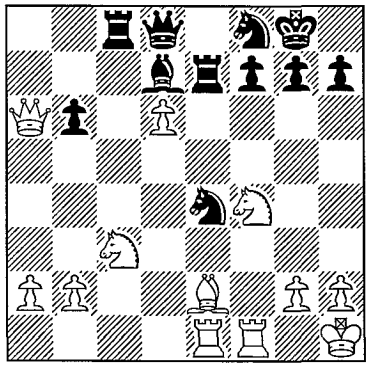

Diagram 32 (B)
Vintage Kasparov

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19...cxd5 20 Bb5

Always a possibility, although usually it is the e8-rook which is fingered.

20...Rc7

One might have expected 20...dxe4 from Andersson (a man with an unusually keen eye for an exchange sacrifice), but really 21 Bxd7 Qxd7 22 Nxe4 Nxe4 23 Rxe4 Bxa2 24 Rxe7 Qxe7 25 Qxa7 Bc4 26 Rc1 Qe4 27 Qc5 leaves White with a purely technical task.

21 exd5 Bd7

21...Nxd5? loses at once to 22 Nfxd5 Bxd5 23 Rd1 Re5 24 Qd4, although 21...Bf5 was appealing. However, Kasparov seldom plays a game without a vicious tactic somewhere, and here it was 22 d6!? Rxe1 23 dxc7 Rxf1+ 24 Qxf1 Qxc7? (24...Qd6 hangs on for the time being) 25 Nfd5 Nxd5 26 Nxd5 Qe5 27 Qxf5!.

22 Be2

22 d6? Rxe1 23 Rxe1 Rxc3 didn't work, but after this calm retreat White's threats of d6 and Qxa7 win him a pawn.

22...Rc8 23 Qxa7 b6 24 Qa6 Ne4

24...Re3 gave better chances to hang on according to Kasparov.

25 d6 (Diagram 32)

Typically Kasparov goes for maximum activation of his forces rather than consolidation as a way of exploiting his advantage.

25...Nxd6 26 Nfd5 Re5 27 Qxb6 Nf5 28 Qxd8 Rxd8 29 Bd3 Rxe1 30 Rxe1 Ng6 31 a4 Nd4 32 a5 Kf8 33 Bxg6 hxg6 34 Rd1 Ne6

34...Re8 35 h3 Nc6 36 b4 is the same as the pawns will touch down.

35 Nb6 Bc6 36 Rxd8+ Nxd8 37 b4 Ne6 38 b5 1-0

Game 18

☐ **J.Lautier** ■ **A.Grischuk**

Enghien les Bains 2001

---

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bg5 cxd4 10 Nxd4 h6 11 Be3 Re8 12 Qa4 Bd7 13 Rfd1 Na5 14 Qc2 Nc4 15 Nxd5!

A good decision and the point of using the f-rook on move 13, while practice has shown that the hideous doubled e-pawns arising after the text are not serious.

15...Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Nxe3 17 fxe3 (Diagram 33) 17...Bf6?!

17...Qb6 18 Qb3 Qxb3 19 axb3 is better for White: true enough his pawns aren't very pretty but his minor pieces make up for this; Black is going to have to exchange one of them and when he does White's duckling on e3 will become a protected passed swan.

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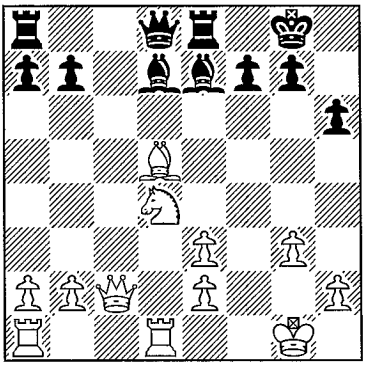

Diagram 33 (B)
The d5-bishop is rather powerful

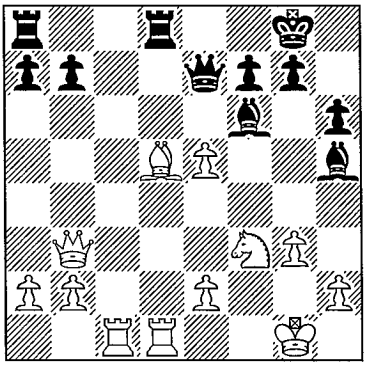

Diagram 34 (B)
Simplifying

18 Qb3?!

A practical choice although probably 18 Bxb7! was stronger: since 18...Rb8? loses to 19 Nc6, 18...Rxe3 was necessary but then 19 Bxa8 Qxa8 20 Rac1 Re8 (20...Bh3 is well met by 21 Qc6) 21 Nf3 Bh3 22 Rd6 is objectively better for White, although a little bit uncomfortable to play.

18...Qe7 19 e4 Bg4 20 Rac1 Red8

Lautier gives a lot of variations to suggest that 20...Rac8 was the best move and gave Black enough counterplay, but I think it's already clear that Black is under pressure to justify his missing pawn.

21 Nf3!

A strong move intending e5, although 21 Nf5 was also tempting.

21...Bh5?!

21...Be6 22 Bxe6 Qxe6 23 Qxe6 fxe6 24 e5 Be7 25 Kf1 (Lautier) with an edge to White was necessary, whereas now White is almost winning.

22 e5! (Diagram 34) 22...Bxe5

22...Bg5 23 Rc3! was strong, threatening h4.

23 Qxb7 Qxb7 24 Bxb7 Rxd1+ 25 Rxd1 Rb8 26 Nxe5 Rxb7 27 Rd2

The smoke has cleared and White has good chances to win this ending. The rest is not relevant to our theme although according to Lautier there were a few exchanges of courtesies by the players.

27...f6 28 Nc4 Rc7 29 b3 Kf8 30 Kf2 Bf7 31 Nd6 a5 32 Rd4

32 Nxf7 Kxf7 33 Rd5 a4 34 bxa4 Rc4 35 a3 Rxa4 36 Rd3 Ke6 is an ending which curiously enough I spent an evening analysing with a team mate after it occurred in a match in Rethymnon in the European Club Cup. We concluded it was a draw

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and I am glad to see Lautier seems to agree with us.

32...Rc5 33 Ra4 Bd5 34 Ke3 (Diagram 35)

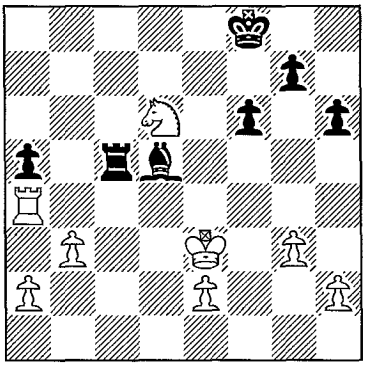

Diagram 35 (B)
The extra pawn remains

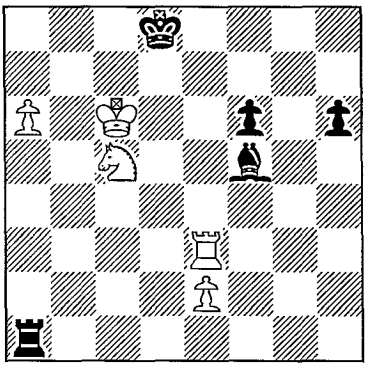

Diagram 36 (B)
The a-pawn decides

34 e4 first was more accurate, forcing the bishop to e6 since 34 ...Bc6 35 Rc4 simplifies to a fairly easy win.

34...Bc6 35 Rc4 Re5+ 36 Kd3 Bd7 37 Rd4 Ke7 38 Nc4 Rf5 39 Rf4 Rh5 40 h4 Rd5+ 41 Rd4 Rf5 42 Re4+ Kd8 43 a4 g5? 44 Ne3? Rf2 45 Rd4 Kc7 46 Rc4+ Kd6 47 Rd4+ Kc7 48 Nd5+ Kc6 49 Ke3 Rf1 50 b4 axb4 51 Nxb4+ Kc7 52 Na6+?!

52 a5 was right.

52...Kc8 53 Rc4+ Kd8 54 Nc5 Ke7 55 Rb4?! Rc1 56 Re4+ Kd8?

56...Kd6! should have held since an exchange of minor pieces leads into the rook endgame I mentioned before and 57 Nd3 Rc3 is passive.

57 Kd4!

Back on track.

57...Bf5 58 Re3 gxh4 59 gxh4 Rh1?! 60 Kd5 Rxh4 61 a5 Rh1 62 a6 Ra1 63 Kc6 (Diagram 36) 63...Bg6

63...Bc8 64 Nb7+ Bxb7+ 65 axb7 Rc1+ 66 Kb6 Rb1+ 67 Ka7 Ra1+ 68 Kb8 wins since White can just collect the pawns, as if the king comes to the e-file to protect them then rook to the fourth and building a 'bridge' for the king wins.

64 Kb7 Rb1+ 65 Rb3 Rxb3+ 66 Nxb3 Be4+ 67 Kb8 h5 68 Nc5 Bd5 69 Nb7+ 1-0

Rather a typical game for the Tarrasch and White needs to be prepared to grind it out. If I may offer my own compromise answer to the good doctor's question, probably in the end Black can keep his fingers in all the holes in the dyke, but there's a lot of them, and Black has to expect to lose a few games in each line before the answer is discovered.

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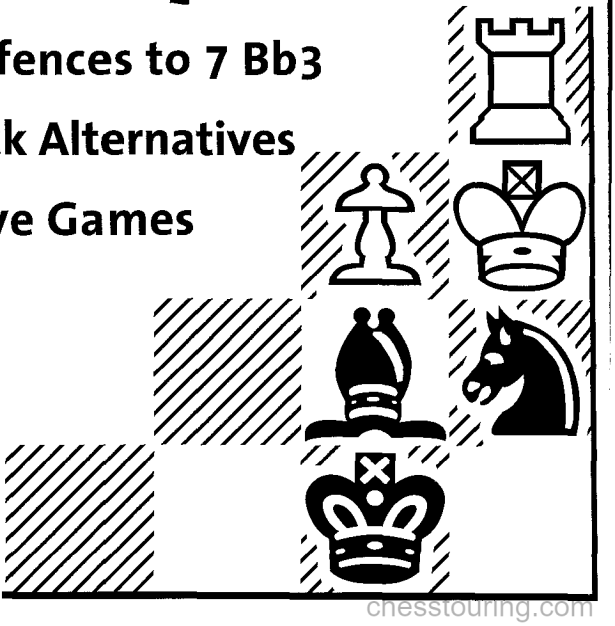
Chapter Six

The Queen's Gambit Accepted

- Introduction
- Black Plays 7...b5
- Black Forces an IQP
- Other Defences to 7 Bb3
- Early Black Alternatives
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 (Diagram 1)

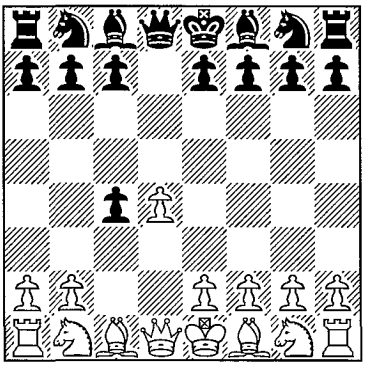

Diagram 1 (W)
Accepting the gambit

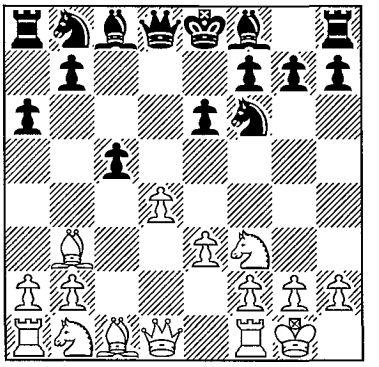

Diagram 2 (B)
Modern prophylaxis

The Queen's Gambit Accepted has always been a little bit of a Cinderella opening. Petrosian's seven draws with it against Botvinnik in the 1963 title match didn't shake the general opinion that it tended to leave White with a slight advantage and Black with unpleasantly passive positions, although some might say that's never stopped Black playing the Queen's Gambit Declined. In spite of a very sound theoretical status, therefore, the QGA has never quite had the popularity its solidity merits, either at GM level or in the amateur ranks. Until recent times that is: just lately Anand's successes with it, the untiring devotion of Rublevsky and even the intermittent patronage of Kasparov, have brought it into the spotlight to the point where it has even perhaps overtaken the QGD and lags behind only the Slav complex in popularity as a defence to the Queen's Gambit.

Black's problem in defending the Queen's Gambit is essentially how to develop his light-squared bishop: solve that and everything else falls into place. In the QGA Black's idea is to develop this on b7 after ...a6 and ...b5. If he wants to do that he can't really also maintain ...d5, and anyway he doesn't want to: 2...dxc4 clears a nice long diagonal for the bishop in advance. As to 'giving up the centre', he reckons White can't stop him hitting back with either ...e5 or ...c5.

3 Nf3 e6 4 e3 c5 5 Bxc4 a6

Rublevsky always employs this cunning order, delaying ...Nf6, in place of the standard 3...Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5. Its objective is to avoid the Furman variation, which would be reached after 3...Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 Qe2 a6. The main idea of this dangerous system is to play dxc5 and e4-e5: with no knight on f6 this is natu-

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rally not so effective.

6 0-0 Nf6

This is the starting point for the classical main lines of the QGA, although Black does have some alternatives both here and back at move three as we will discover.

7 Bb3 (Diagram 2)

A modern notion, popularized like so many other things after 1 d4 by Kramnik. Historically White's main moves here have been Botvinnik's favourite 7 a4, restricting ...b5 and agreeing to play an isolated queen's pawn (IQP) position where White's hole on b4 gives Black added defensive resources, and 7 Qe2 b5 8 Bb3 Bb7 9 Rd1 Nbd7 10 Nc3. Unfortunately Black started to do rather too well in both those lines.

The idea of the text may be shortly summarized as follows; White wants to play the IQP positions, if he has to, with Bb3 in instead of a4. He reckons that will help him in various ways. First, it will stop Black's knight entrenching itself on b4 (the main defensive methods to 7 a4 involve ...cxd4, exd4, ...Nc6-b4 and then ...Bd7-c6) and, second, the bishop itself is less exposed on b3; it is not en prise after d5, ...exd5, and a Bc2/Qd3 line-up is easier to achieve. We shall see these ideas in action, but the crux of White's idea is how he can meet 7...b5.

Black Plays 7...b5

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 b5 8 a4 (Diagram 3)

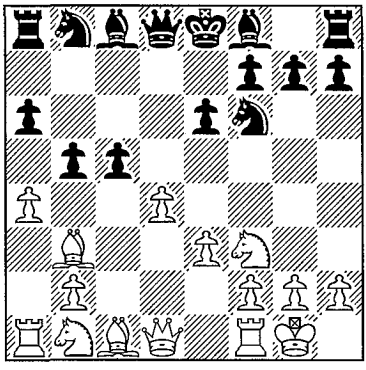

Diagram 3 (B)
A key idea behind 7 Bb3

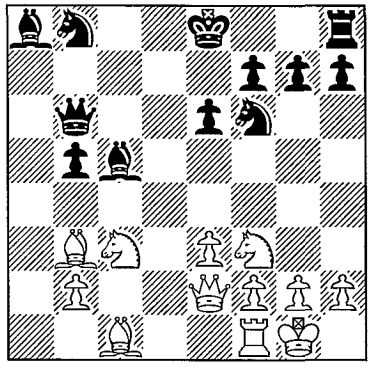

Diagram 4 (B)
b5 is a little tender

8 Qe2 would go back to the main classical line, but this is White's idea: he wants either to create a target on b5 or to gain c4 for a knight. It's helpful to compare this

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to another older main line 7 Qe2 b5 8 Bb3 Bb7 9 a4. The present line is more potent and the main reason is in the next note.

8...b4

8...Bb7 is much less common and is dangerous for Black after 9 axb5 axb5 10 Rxa8 Bxa8 11 Qe2 (the difference from the older line with 9 a4 I mentioned above is that there Black has time to meet 9 a4 with 9 ...Nbd7, and then 10 axb5 axb5 11 Rxa8 Qxa8) 11...Qb6 (11...b4 12 Ba4+ Nbd7 13 Ne5 is annoying) 12 dxc5 Bxc5 13 Nc3 **(Diagram 4)**. Black's best now is surely to enter a full-scale grovel with 13...Nbd7 14 Qxb5 Qxb5 15 Nxb5 Ke7, which to be fair does offer reasonable chances of hanging on, while Sakaev and Semkov give the entertaining line 13...Bc6 14 Ne5 Ne4 15 Nxf7 Nxc3 16 Qh5 with a very strong attack.

NOTE: 8...bxa4 is not good. Often this is the best way to neutralize an a4 thrust in the QGA, but Black has to be organized enough not to suffer an accident along the a4-e8 diagonal, and here he isn't: 9 Bxa4+ Nbd7 10 e4 is already rather good for White as the pressure along the diagonal is difficult to shake off.

9 Nbd2 Be7

Rublevsky prefers to start on the kingside: the major alternative is to play ...Bb7 either now or on the next move. After 9...Bb7 White continues undaunted with 10 e4 **(Diagram 5)**.

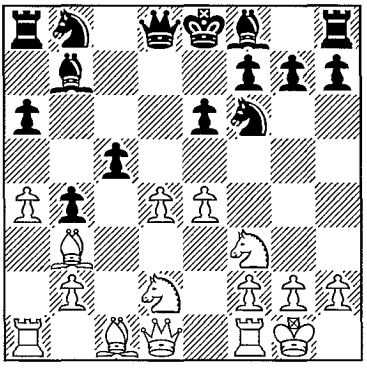

Diagram 5 (B)
Aggressive and effective

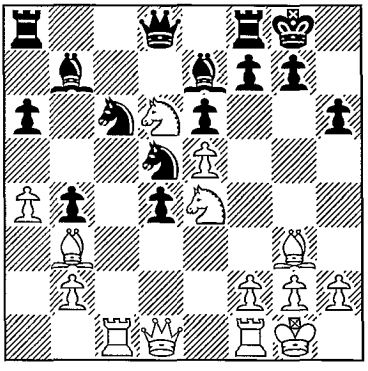

Diagram 6 (B)
A colossal white knight

TIP: This type of pseudo-pawn sacrifice is very common in the QGA, and this is rather a good version for White if the pawn is captured: 10...Nxe4 11 Nxe4 Bxe4 12 Re1 Bb7 13 d5 is definitely better for White.

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Black thus prefers 10...cxd4 when 11 e5 forces a major decision, which is always a difficult one in these positions with open c- and d-files when White pushes e5, whether to reply with ...Nd5 or ...Nd7. The former has a pleasingly solid appearance and may allow a ...Nf4 raid at some point but can be a little passive, while the latter sometimes restricts White a bit by the pressure on e5, and may also permit a useful ...Nc5 to harass the White king's bishop and eye the tender d3 spot and the critical e4 terminus. It also leaves the b7-bishop unmasked to help control e4 and perhaps destroy a key attacking piece with ...Bxf3 or ...Bxe4 at some moment. Here the latter is definitely preferable:

a) Kasparov showed how to deal with 11...Nd5 in his customary inimitable style: 12 Nc4 Nc6 13 Bg5 Qd7 14 Rc1 h6 15 Bh4 Bc5 16 Nfd2 0-0 17 Ne4 Be7 18 Bg3 Qd8 19 Ncd6 **(Diagram 6)** and he soon broke through on the kingside in G.Kasparov-J.Piket, Tilburg 1997. This game shows the fundamental problem with this line for Black quite clearly: with the knights on e4 and c4 Black cannot stop the devastating Nd6; his problem is that the 'well-placed' knight on d5 gets in his way and stops him meeting the Nf3-d2-e4 trip by capturing the knight when it reaches e4.

b) 11...Nfd7 12 Nc4 Nc5 (this is likely to become popular after being recommended by Rizzitano; instead 12...Nc6 13 Bg5 Qc7 14 Rc1 Bc5 15 Re1 gives White good compensation along the lines of Kasparov-Piket and 12...Be7 13 Nxd4 Nc5 14 Qg4 is good for White since Black has to weaken himself with ...g6 or else play ...Kf8 and carry on the game without his king's rook) 13 Bg5 Qc7 **(Diagram 7)**

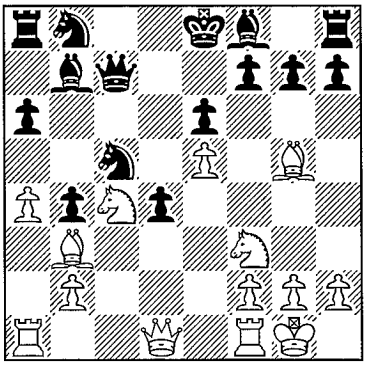

Diagram 7 (W)
Ruslan Scherbakov's move

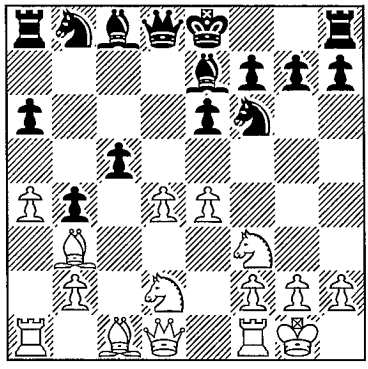

Diagram 8 (B)
The key central advance

is Rizzitano's recommendation (the alternative 13...f6? virtually loses in view of 14 exf6 gxf6 15 Nxd4! when 15...fxg5 16 Qh5+ followed by Rad1 is crushing) and then the position after 14 Rc1 is critical and I predict further tests soon. Rizzitano only gives 14...d3 (14...h6 15 Bh4 Nc6 16 Re1 Nxb3 17 Qxb3 Bc5 18 Nfd2 0-0 19 Ne4 Be7

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20 Bf6, demonstrated White's themes and gave him an overwhelming attack in the line's only test so far, M.Cebalo-R.Salvador, Bratto 2005) when the position is sharp and unclear: White's searchings might be associated with 15 a5 Nbd7 16 Nd4, when his ideas of Ba4 and Nb6 enable him at the least to keep Black on his toes for some to come.

10 e4 (Diagram 8) 10...cxd4

Ruslan Ponomariov's move, 10...Bb7, is the alternative when White should proceed in the same way as always with 11 e5. After 11...Nfd7 12 Nc4 0-0 (by delaying ...cxd4 Black has cut out the Qg4 idea which was giving him grief in the previous note), Krishnan Sasikiran's move 13 Bf4 **(Diagram 9)**

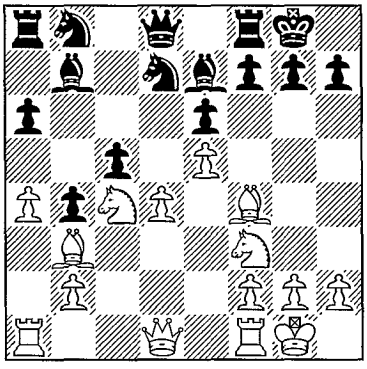

Diagram 9 (B)
Supporting Nd6

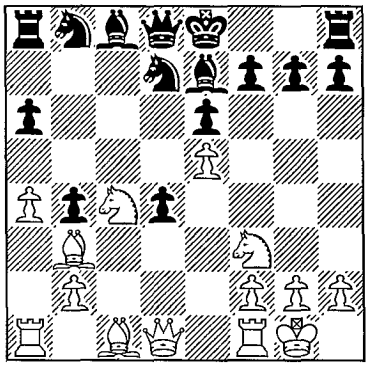

Diagram 10 (B)
White has good compensation

is the way to go. The idea is simply to come in on d6 and play in the centre. K.Sasikiran-V.Ivanchuk, Skanderborg 2003 showcased White's assets: 13...Nc6 (13...cxd4 14 Nxd4 Nc5 15 Bc2 Bxg2 16 Kxg2 Qd5+ 17 Qf3 Qxc4 18 Rfd1 Ra7 19 Rac1 Qa2 20 Nb3 is the critical tactical line White must be confident about when embarking on 13 Bf4, since he has no way of turning back) 14 Bc2 Nxd4 15 Nxd4 cxd4 16 Qxd4 Qc7 (Scherbakov proposed the typical strike 16...b3 here; undoubtedly Black has some compensation after 17 Bxb3 Nc5 18 Qc3 but I still think White is the team to bet on) 17 Nd6 Bxd6 18 Qd3 g6 19 exd6 Qc6 20 f3 with a position-type which arises frequently in this line: White is definitely better in this version.

11 e5 Nfd7 12 Nc4 (Diagram 10) 12...Nc6

12...Nc5 doesn't make so much sense as in the Rizzitano version, since Black is a move behind developing his queenside: White replies 13 Nxd4 Nxb3 14 Nxb3 Qxd1 15 Rxd1 when Black is struggling to develop satisfactorily.

13 Nxd4

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This bold pawn sacrifice is rather typical for QGA positions with this structure, and seems to be White's best chance at the moment to make progress. We will examine 13...Ncxe5 in Game 19 and 13...Ndxe5 14 Nxc6 Qxd1 15 Rxd1 Nxc6 16 Bf4 Bb7 17 Rac1 gives White plenty of compensation for his pawn: 17...0-0 18 Rd7 Bc8 19 Rc7 Nd4 20 Rxe7 Ne2+ (20...Nxb3 21 Rd1 is very good for White) 21 Kf1 Nxf4 22 Na5 may be the critical line, but White still has very decent compensation.

Black Forces an IQP

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6

Black's two alternatives here if he wants to approach an IQP position are 6 ...Nc6 and 6...cxd4: each has its pros and cons.

a) With 6...Nc6 Black stays flexible for the moment, although in truth after committing this piece to c6 instead of d7 he is no longer likely to try for an ...a6, ...b5 and ...Bb7 plan. After 7 Qe2 cxd4 8 Rd1 Be7 9 exd4 0-0 White has 10 a3 **(Diagram 11)**;

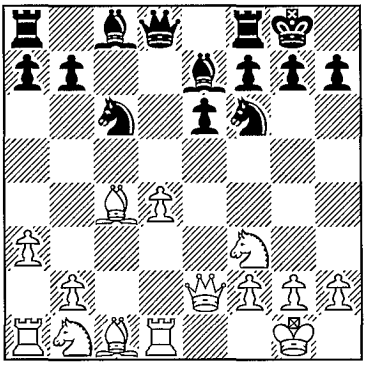

Diagram 11 (B)
Useful prophylaxis against ...Nb4

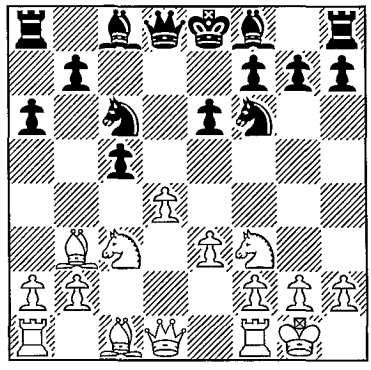

Diagram 12 (B)
Black can again inflict an IQP

a modern move which has replaced the traditional 10 Nc3 Na5. 10 a3 both prevents ...Nb4 and deprives ...Na5 of much sense, and means that Black will find it very hard to prevent a d5-breakthrough at some moment, as occurred with 10...a6 11 Nc3 b5 12 d5 exd5 13 Nxd5 Bd7 14 Ba2 Nxd5 15 Bxd5 Qc7 16 Qe4 Rae8 17 Bf4 Qc8 18 Rac1 Bd6 19 Bxd6 Rxe4 20 Bxe4 and White won material in P.H.Nielsen-D.Sadvakasov, Bled Olympiad 2002.

b) 6...cxd4 7 exd4 Nc6 aims to prevent the Qe2 and Rd1 set-up, and in so doing ensures that Black will manage to get through the opening without being spread-

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eagled by d5! at some moment. However, it does mean that White can aim for a different set-up which he otherwise couldn't achieve: 8 Nc3 Be7 9 Re1 0-0 10 a3 a6 11 Ba2 Qd6 12 Be3 b5 and now either 13 d5 or 13 Rc1 is better for White.

7 Bb3 Nc6 8 Nc3 (Diagram 12)

White plays this at once to alarm Black with the prospect of d5 and try to force the variation in the game.

8...cxd4

This is a critical moment since Black has various methods of refusing to co-operate, and if he doesn't then White hasn't got any more waiting moves which leave open the possibility of reaching the set-up in this game:

a) 8...Be7 is perhaps the most flexible of these if Black is intending to defend an IQP position. Now 9 dxc5 is one try which is more annoying than it looks, but unless the presence of queens really offends White it makes sense to be more ambitious with 9 Qe2. Black too is eventually going to run out of waiting moves which are effective in an IQP position: 9...0-0 10 Rd1 Qc7 (10...cxd4 is the last opportunity to revert to IQP positions with Black's most natural set-up) 11 Bd2 **(Diagram 13)**

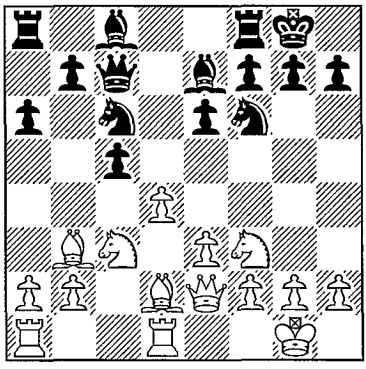

Diagram 13 (B)

Can the tension be maintained?

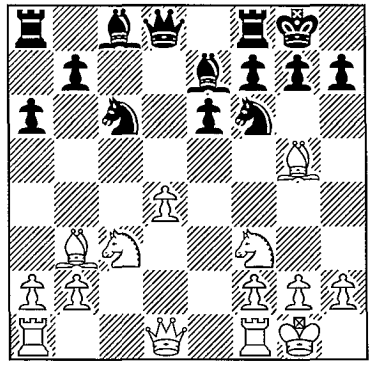

Diagram 14 (W)

A typical IQP scenario

11...b6 (11...cxd4 12 exd4 Na5 13 Bc2 Nc4 14 Bg5! began a strong attack in V.Tkachiev-M.Lupu, Cannes 2000) 12 Rac1 Bb7 13 dxc5 gives White an edge after either 13...bxc5, when the c-pawn is an obvious target, or 13...Bxc5 14 Bc2 Ne5 15 Na4 Nxf3+ 16 gxf3 when his bishops will outweigh the weakened kingside (the pawn on f3 has its merits in allowing e4 easily, which simultaneously stymies the b7-bishop and keeps the knight off d5).

b) 8...b5 is quite an annoying move-order championed by Semkov and Sakaev: 9

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Qe2 (9 dxc5 Qxd1 10 Rxd1 Bxc5 11 Bd2 Bb7 12 Rac1 is an endgame in which White might retain a little something) 9...Bb7 10 Rd1 Na5 is the idea, and at the moment the IQP version after 11 Bc2 cxd4 12 exd4 Be7 13 Bg5 0-0 is proving difficult to make much progress in.

9 exd4 Be7 10 Bg5 0-0 (Diagram 14)

White is no longer in a position to develop with Qe2 and Rfd1 in the way he does in the classical IQPs arising out of the Furman variation or the old main line of the QGA, but his next move, first played it seems by Tkachiev and tested in the 2001 Kramnik-Anand match, has proved amazingly effective. White's ideal attacking set-up in an IQP position is to have rooks on e1 and d1 and the queen on the kingside somewhere. Manoeuvring the queen to h4 by way of f4 looks terribly slow, but as yet Black hasn't quite showed the way to defend against it.

11 Qd2 b5

11...h6 12 Bf4 raises the spectre of Bxh6: Black needs to defend against that, but that means playing some passive moves, and after 12...Re8 13 Rad1 Bf8 14 Ne5 Ne7 15 Qd3 Ned5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Bc2 f5 18 Qg3 White stood much better in A.Barsov-A.Lesiege, Montreal 2002.

NOTE: Sometimes it's not too bad to be forced to play ...f5 as Black in an IQP position, but when, as here, Black hasn't managed to liberate his queen's bishop it's not so good.

12 Rad1

Now 12...Na5 is the subject of Game 20. That looks like a rash decentralization, but in fact Black needs to do this if he's going to get control of d5. The fundamental object of the defender in an IQP position is always to avoid getting blown away by d5, and here the natural 12...Bb7 allows 13 d5, not that this blows Black away exactly, but after 13...exd5 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bxd5 White has a dangerous initiative.

Other Defences to 7 Bb3

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 (Diagram 15) 7...Nbd7

Another idea is 7...b6 which aims to avoid creating a weakness, as 7...b5 does, when 8 e4 is a sharp reply:

a) 8...Nxe4 9 d5 is better for White: in an analogous position without Bb3 and ...b6 Black defends with ...b5 or ...Nd6 gaining tempo on the bishop, but here this is impossible and White is much better in the endgame after 9...Be7 10 Re1 Nf6 11 dxe6 Bxe6 12 Qxd8+ Bxd8 13 Ng5.

b) 8...Bb7 is often suggested but never played, possibly because 9 d5 exd5 10 Nc3!? c4 (11 e5 was threatened and 10...Nxe4 11 Bxd5 Bxd5 12 Nxd5 is very strong for White) 11 exd5! cxb3 12 Re1+ Be7 13 d6 gives White a very powerful initiative.

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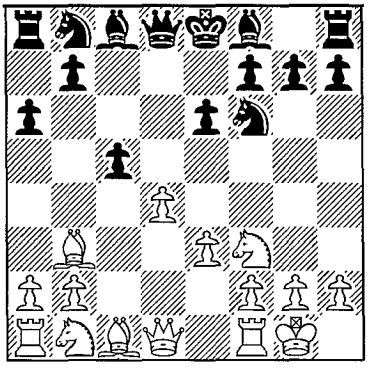

Diagram 15 (B)
Black can try to remain flexible

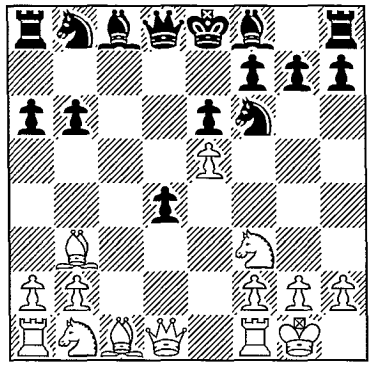

Diagram 16 (B)
Seizing the initiative

c) 8...cxd4 9 e5 **(Diagram 16)** 9...Nfd7 (9...Nd5 is met similarly, but best is 9...Ne4 10 Nxd4 Bb7 which prevents White's queen getting to the kingside quite so easily and leaves White only slightly better according to Shipov) 10 Qxd4 Bb7 11 Qf4 Nc5 12 Nc3 Nxb3 (12...Qd3 13 Rd1 Qg6 14 Nh4 Qh5 is a critical line in a sense, but not after White's next: I won't spoil the fun by pointing it out) 13 axb3 Be7 14 Qg3 Kf8 15 Rd1 Nd7 16 Ra4 (watch this guy go) 16...Qe8 17 Rg4 g6 18 Bh6+ Kg8 19 Ng5 Bf8 20 Bxf8 Kxf8 21 Rgd4 Bc6 22 Rf4 f5 23 exf6 e5 24 Qd3 1-0 was a crushing demonstration of White's ideas in S.Shipov-A.Miles, Hastings 1996.

8 e4 (Diagram 17)

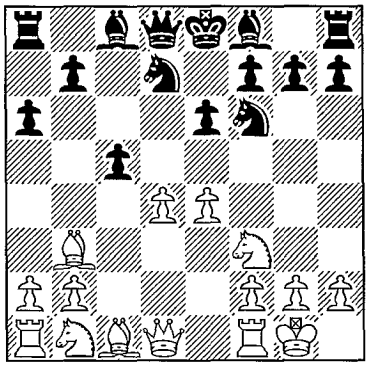

Diagram 17 (B)
Another promising gambit

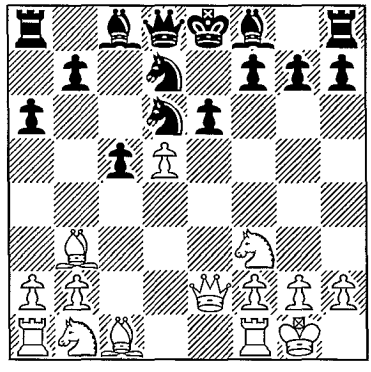

Diagram 18 (B)
Black is in trouble on e6

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8...Nxe4

Here this is very much the main move since e5 cannot really be allowed once Black has blocked the f6-knight's natural retreat square on d7.

9 Qe2

More exciting and maybe stronger too than the older 9 Re1 and Black now has:

a) 9...Nd6 10 d5 **(Diagram 18)** is Game 21.

b) 9...Nef6 10 d5 Nb6 11 dxe6 Bxe6 12 Bxe6 fxe6 13 Qxe6+ Be7 favours White somewhat since even once Black manages to exchange the queen it will be replaced by a very strong knight.

c) 9...Ndf6 yields White a strong initiative after 10 Bc2 Qd5 11 Re1 Nd6 12 Nc3 Qh5 when he has a number of tempting possibilities of which perhaps 13 Na4 is best of all.

Early Black Alternatives

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6

The normal choice, but Black does have other very important moves (apart from Rublevsky's transpositional 3...e6):

a) 3...c5 is quite a major variation which cannot be met by simply transposing to the last two games with 4 e3 cxd4 5 exd4 since here 5 ...Be6 defends the c-pawn annoyingly, although 5 Bxc4 Qc7 6 Bb3 is a dangerous option. Instead White should push ahead with 4 d5 **(Diagram 19)**

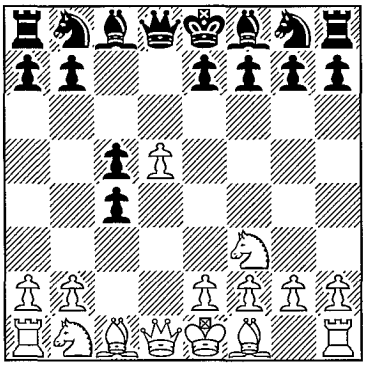

Diagram 19 (B)
Claiming the space on offer

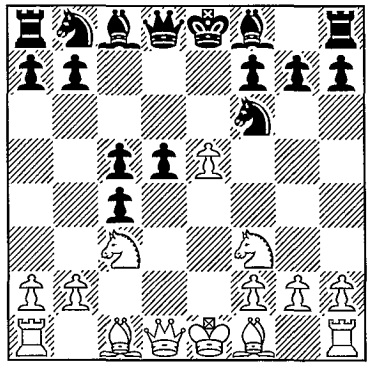

Diagram 20 (B)
Striding forwards

when 4...Nf6 (4...e6 5 Nc3 exd5 6 Qxd5 Qxd5 7 Nxd5 Bd6 is an important alterna-

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tive, but 8 Nd2 offers White good chances of an edge) 5 Nc3 e6 6 e4 exd5 (6...b5 7 Nxb5 Qa5+ 8 Nc3 Nxe4 9 Bd2 and 6...Nxe4 7 Nxe4 exd5 8 Nc3 Be6 9 Ng5 Nc6 10 Nxe6 fxe6 11 g3 have both proved better for White) 7 e5 **(Diagram 20)** 7...Nfd7 (7...Ne4 8 Qxd5 Nxc3 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 bxc3 ought to allow White to retain a slight initiative, while 7...d4 8 Bxc4 Ng4 9 h3 Nc6! 10 hxg4 dxc3 is panned by theory, although it isn't particularly clear or explored) gives White a choice between the usual 8 Bg5 and Kasparov's 8 Qxd5. The latter hasn't caught on, but 8...Nb6 9 Qxd8+ Kxd8 10 Be3 Be6 11 0-0-0+ Ke8 looks to me to give White a number of tempting possibilities, including in particular 12 Nb5 Na6 13 Nd2 followed by Ne4-d6.

b) Don't assume your opponent has gone mad if he tries 3...b5 as White can't rely on more than a modest advantage after 4 a4 c6 5 e3 as we will see, by transposition, in our next chapter.

c) 3...a6 4 e3 is usually a transpositional device but Black does have two independent options:

c1) 4...Bg4 is the Alekhine variation (the idea of combining ...a6 and ...Bg4 is to allow ...b5 in reply to Qb3) when any book will tell you that White's best set-up is that of G.Kasparov-T.Petrosian, Tilburg 1981: 5 Bxc4 e6 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 h3 Bh5 8 g4 Bg6 9 Ne5 Nbd7 10 Nxg6 hxg6 11 Bf1! **(Diagram 21)**

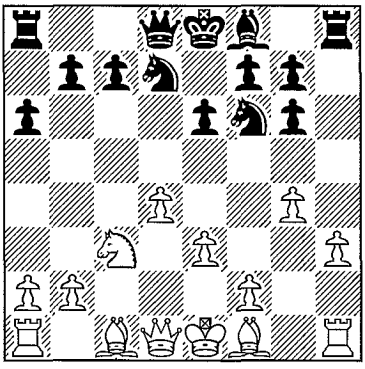

Diagram 21 (B)
Re-routing the light-squared bishop

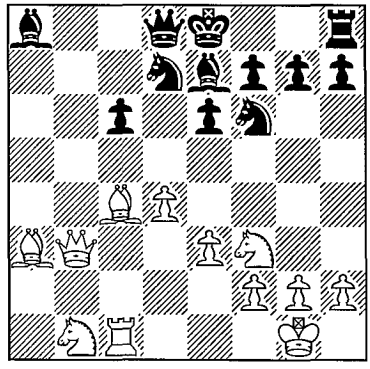

Diagram 22 (B)
Black has equalizing chances

11...c6 (11...c5 and 11...e5, both met by 12 Bg2 rather than capturing, open up the position a bit unwisely and leave the g2-bishop very powerful) 12 Bg2 Qc7 13 0-0 Be7 14 f4 Nb6 15 g5 Nfd7 and White now played 16 Qg4, which was perhaps designed to force queenside castling, but he had some other ideas in 16 a4 or 16 Qe2. In fact this line hasn't proved that popular, probably because it is committal and Kasparov actually lost from a winning position after a legendary defence by Petrosian.

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c2) 4...b5 5 a4 Bb7 is the Haberditz variation, which is quite highly spoken of by Semkov and Sakaev. Then 6 b3 cxb3 7 axb5 axb5 8 Rxa8 Bxa8 9 Bxb5+ c6 10 Bc4 e6 11 0-0 Nd7 12 Qxb3 Be7 13 Ba3 Ngf6 14 Rc1 **(Diagram 22)** 14...Qa5 is their main line. I mention this largely because as far as I can see 15 Bxe6 fxe6 16 Qxe6 Ng8 17 d5 gives White a winning attack. That, however, is the end of the good news, if Black proceeds more cautiously then their other line is 14...0-0 15 Be2 c5 16 dxc5 Ne4 17 c6 Ndc5 18 Qc4 Bxc6 19 Nd4 when they think Black's pieces are hanging awkwardly, but as far as I can see White can't take advantage of this after 19...Bd5.

There is no doubt the Haberditz is a real problem for White, since it forces excruciatingly dull play and if White does have a sequence which nails down ...c5 and gives him a small edge then (i) he certainly hasn't found it yet and (ii) even if he does Black can probably still hold. It is possible to play 4 e4, but this leads at Black's choice to very sharp play where White has to give up material, or a similarly dull position.

TIP: The only advice I have to offer is that if you suspect your opponent of harbouring such miserable ambitions you can play 2 Nf3 and 3 c4.

The trouble with this is that, for the reasons I gave in the last chapter, it means you can't get a proper Exchange QGD, and that in turn means you will have to play the main lines with either Bf4 or Bg5. Life is not easy, I am afraid.

Returning to 3...Nf6:

4 e3

Now, apart from 4...e6, Black can try:

a) 4...Bg4 **(Diagram 23)**

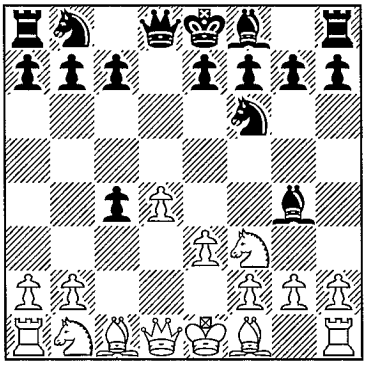

Diagram 23 (W)
Black simply develops

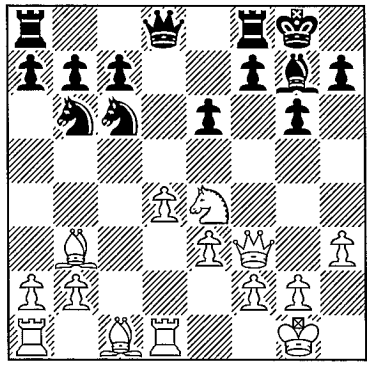

Diagram 24 (B)
White has a clamp on c5

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is a respectable line, although White can meet it with straightforward development followed by taking over the centre, and it is usually thought that he found the answer to it in the early 1980's, since when the line has been less popular. 5 Bxc4 e6 6 Nc3 Nbd7 h3 Bh5 8 0-0 Bd6 9 e4 e5 and now the brave 10 g4 Bg6 (10...exd4 seems to lose a piece for nothing much after 11 e5, while 10...Nxg4 11 hxg4 Bxg4 12 Be2 also comes up well short after the likes of 12...exd4 13 Nb5 Qf6 14 Nxd6+ cxd6 15 Qxd4) 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 f4 Qd4+ 14 Qxd4 Bxd4+ 15 Kh2 Bxc3 16 bxc3 Bxe4 17 g5 Bd5 has been shown to favour White in a number of games: maybe 18 Bd3 is best now.

b) 4...g6 is Smyslov's curious and unfashionable mix of QGA and Grünfeld. White can play simply with 5 Bxc4 Bg7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Nc3 and now 7...Nfd7 is Black's usual idea: White does best to hold back e4 and follow Todd Southam in the 1985 Canadian U-18 Championship: 8 Qe2 Nb6 9 Bb3 Nc6 10 Rd1 Bg4 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 e6 13 Ne4 **(Diagram 24)** when he has defended his centre and the strong knight on c5 guarantees him a slight edge (it may give the reader more confidence if I mention that Kramnik later repeated Master Southam's play up to this point).

Illustrative Games

Game 19
☐ **A.Grischuk** ■ **S.Rublevsky**
Poikovsky 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 e6 4 e3 c5 5 Bxc4 a6 6 0-0 Nf6 7 Bb3 b5 8 a4 b4 9 Nbd2 Be7 10 e4 cxd4 11 e5 Nfd7 12 Nc4 Nc6 13 Nxd4 Ncxe5 14 Bf4 Nxc4 15 Nc6 (Diagram 25)

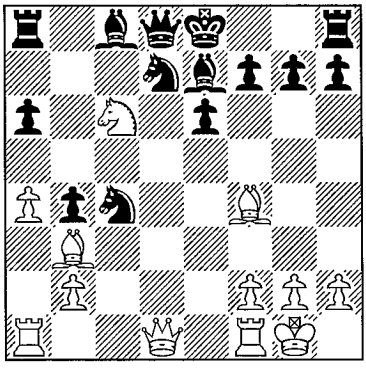

Diagram 25 (B)
Taking control of the dark squares

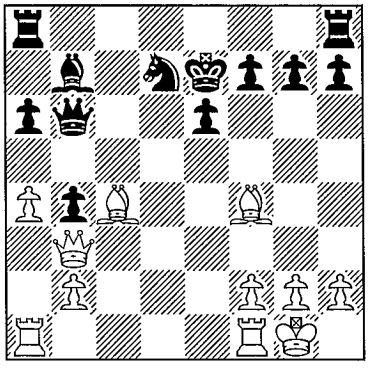

Diagram 26 (B)
Black is under pressure

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The critical intermezzo: White gains the bishop pair and traps the black king in the centre.

15...Qb6

15...Nxb2 is rash because White can get the bishop to d6: 16 Qd2 Qb6 17 Nxe7 Kxe7 18 a5 Qb5 19 Bd6+ with very strong compensation.

16 Nxe7 Kxe7 17 Bxc4 Bb7 18 Qb3 (Diagram 26)

This move was Alexander Grischuk's novelty: the combination of pressure on the b-pawn and the possibilities opened for the queen along the third rank makes Black's defence very difficult.

18...Nc5 19 Qe3 Qc6 20 f3 Rhd8 21 Rfc1 Rac8

21...Kf8 22 Bxe6 would win at least a pawn back while maintaining the initiative, but if Black had foreseen White's next few moves that's what he would have played.

22 Qe1!

Hitting b4 and also threatening Qh4+ winning the h-pawn.

22...Ke8 23 Bg5 (Diagram 27)

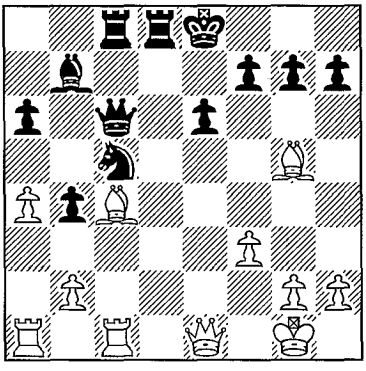

Diagram 27 (B)
The pressure mounts

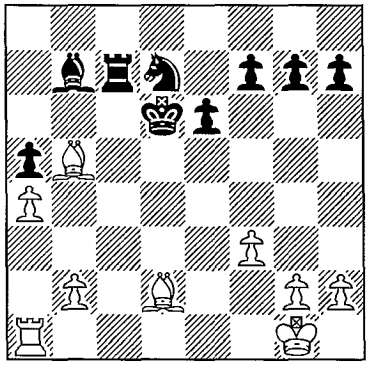

Diagram 28 (B)
White's a-pawn will decide

23 Qxb4? Rd4 24 Be3 Nd3 (Scherbakov) would have spoiled White's advantage, but 23 Be3 Qd7 24 Rd1 Qe7 25 Qxb4 was certainly a powerful alternative.

23...Rd4

An immediate 23...Rd7 might have been better but Black's defence is terribly difficult in any event, and it's abundantly clear that White has won the opening battle.

24 Be3 Rd7 25 Qxb4 Qd6 26 Bf1 a5

26...Rdc7? loses at once to 27 Rxc5 Rxc5 28 Qxb7, so the text is the only move, but

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now the a5-pawn is doomed in any endgame.

27 Qa3 Rdc7 28 Bb5+ Ke7 29 Rc3 Nd7 30 Rxc7 Rxc7 31 Qxd6+ Kxd6 32 Bd2 (Diagram 28) 32...Rc2 33 Bxa5 Rxb2 34 Rc1 Nf6 35 Bc7+ Kd5 36 Rd1+ Kc5 37 Be5 Ra2

Dropping the rook, but Black was gone anyway: 37...Rc2 38 Bd4+ Kb4 39 Bd3 Rc7 40 Rb1+ Ka3 41 Bb2+ Kxa4 42 Be5 wins the bishop since if 42...Rd7 43 Bb5+.

38 Bd4+ Kb4 39 Rb1+ 1-0

A nice game by Grischuk, and I suspect Black is going to need to look again at 9...Bb7 or 10...Bb7 to rehabilitate this line.

Game 20

☐ **M.Cebalo** ■ **H.Stevic**

Croatian Championship, Zagreb 2004

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 Nc6 8 Nc3 cxd4 9 exd4 Be7 10 Bg5 0-0 11 Qd2 b5 12 Rad1 Na5 13 Bc2 Bb7

13...Ra7 14 Qf4 Bb7 (this can't be right after ...Ra7; either 14...Nc4 or 14...Rc7 are sensible, but White's breakthrough with his next move shows the ideas of the line perfectly) 15 d5 **(Diagram 29)**

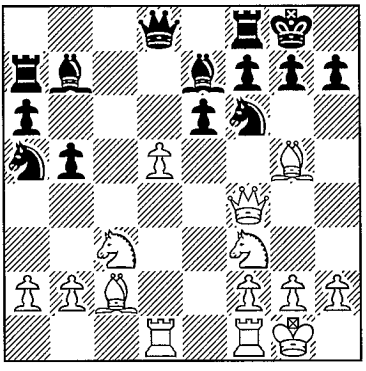

Diagram 29 (B)

The key advance

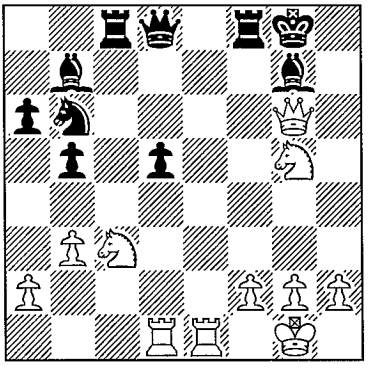

Diagram 30 (B)

A strong attack

15...Bxd5 (both 15...exd5 16 Qh4 g6 17 Ne4 and 15...Nxd5 16 Nxd5 Bxd5 17 Rxd5 exd5 18 Bxh7+ Kxh7 19 Qh4+ Kg8 20 Bxe7 Qxe7 21 Ng5 – an important trick – win for White) 16 Nxd5 exd5 17 Qh4 h5 18 Rfe1 was very strong for White in V.Kramnik-V.Anand, Dortmund 2001.

14 d5!?

This move was Cebalo's new idea. 14 Qf4 had been played many times, but Black

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was beginning to get the hang of it, and in particular 14...Nh5!? 15 Qh4 Bxg5 16 Qxh5 h6 wasn't giving White much.

14...b4

Black also has:

a) 14...Nxd5? 15 Bxe7 Nxe7 16 Bxh7+! leaves White much better.

b) 14...exd5 15 Qf4 Nc4 (15...h6 16 Bxh6 gxh6 17 Qxh6 gives White a very strong attack) 16 Qh4 h5 has also been tried and now Sakaev and Semkov give the very long line 17 b3 Nb6 18 Rfe1 Rc8 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Qxh5 g6 21 Bxg6 fxg6 22 Qxg6+ Bg7 23 Ng5 **(Diagram 30)** 23...Rf6 24 Qh7+ Kf8 25 Qh5 Kg8 26 Rd3 Qd7 27 Qh7+ Kf8 28 Rde3 Rxc3 29 Rxc3 d4 30 Rg3 with an ongoing heavy attack.

c) 14...Nc4 15 Qf4 Nxb2 is evidently very risky, but I haven't managed to refute it.

15 Qd3!? (Diagram 31)

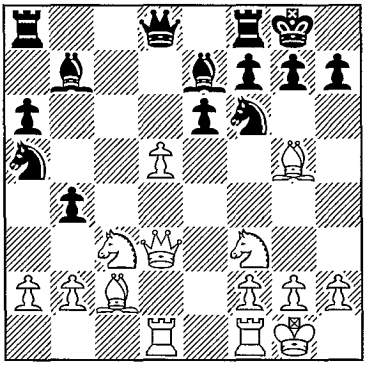

Diagram 31 (B)
Winning material

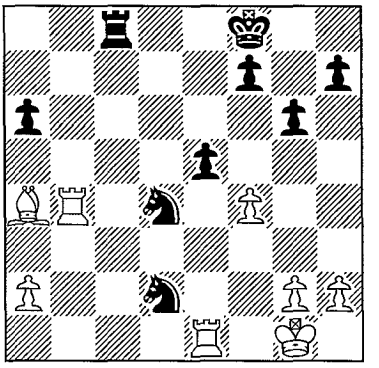

Diagram 32 (B)
White must be alert

This possibility was the whole point of 14 d5.

15...g6 16 d6 Bxd6 17 Qxd6 Qxd6 18 Rxd6 Ne8 19 Rb6

Winning the exchange and reducing the remainder to a technical task.

19...bxc3 20 Be7 cxb2 21 Nd2 Nc7 22 Bxf8 Kxf8 23 Rxb2 Rd8 24 Nc4 Nxc4 25 Rxb7 Nb5 26 Rd1 Nd2

Black cannot allow the trade of rooks.

27 Re1 Nd4 28 Ba4 Rc8 29 Rb4 e5 30 f4 (Diagram 32)

TIP: In such an endgame the superior side always needs to strike a balance between opening lines for the rook and thus depriving the knights of strongpoints, and exchanging too many pawns.

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In this game Cebalo gets it just about right for a long time.

30...a5 31 Rb2 Nc4 32 Rf2 Nb6 33 Bd1 exf4 34 Rxf4 Rd8 35 g4 h6 36 Kf2 Rd7 37 Rf6

It's a terribly difficult position to play in time trouble. I don't say the text is necessarily bad, but a methodical alternative was 37 Bf3, threatening Rd1 and more or less forcing the exchange of the strong d4-knight for the bishop it is presently dominating.

37...Nd5 38 Ra6 Nb4 39 Ra8+ Kg7 40 Ba4! Rd6 41 Rd1 Rf6+

41...Nxa2 42 Ke3 Nb5 43 Rxd6 Nxd6 44 Kd4 just about wins, I think: if Black could retrieve his knight and stabilize his position he could draw, but I don't think he can.

42 Kg2?

White had to try 42 Ke3 when he still has decent winning chances.

42...Ne6?!

42...Nd5! draws at once since 43 Rxd4 Ne3+ 44 Kg3 Nf1+ 45 Kg2 Ne3+ is perpetual check.

43 Rxa5 Nf4+ 44 Kh1 Nxa2 45 Rf1 Nc3 46 Bb3 g5 47 Ra7 Ne4 48 Ba2 Nc3 49 Bc4 ½-½

Game 21

□ R.Dautov ■ A.Mista

European Championship, Warsaw 2005

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 Nbd7 8 e4 Nxe4 9 Qe2 Nd6 10 d5 e5 (Diagram 33)

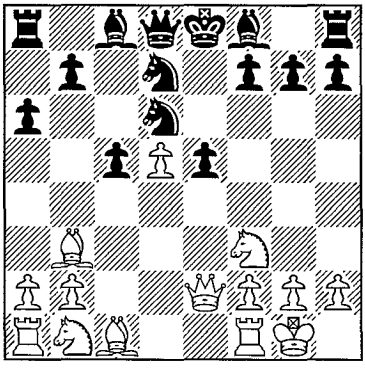

Diagram 33 (W)

Black must return the pawn

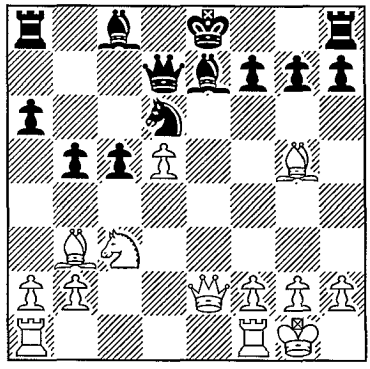

Diagram 34 (B)

Black is struggling to castle

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The only move since 10...Nb6 11 dxe6 fxe6 12 Bxe6 Qe7 13 Ng5 is very strong, and so it is necessary to give the pawn this way to keep the knight off e6. It looks like Black ought to be fine now – he just castles, the knight on d6 is great, bishop on f6 is strong, etc. However, White has a couple of sneaky tactical points.

11 Nxe5 Be7 12 Nxd7 Qxd7

Tactical point one: this is necessary if Black ever wants to castle, since 12...Bxd7 13 Re1 0-0 14 Qxe7 is obviously winning a piece, whereas after 12 ...Qxd7 13 Re1 0-0 14 Qxe7?? Re8 wins, since 15 Qxd7 doesn't pin the rook!

13 Nc3 b5

13...0-0 is met by tactical point number two: 14 Na4 Qc7 15 Nxc5 wins a pawn for inadequate compensation – without this trick White's whole opening idea would have few teeth.

14 Bg5 (Diagram 34) 14...f6

An unpleasant concession indeed, but 14...h6 15 Bh4 Nf5 16 d6! leaves Black scrabbling to defend after 16...Nxh4 (or 16...Qxd6 17 Bxe7 Qxe7 18 Qf3 Qa7 19 Bd5 Rb8 20 Rfe1+ Kf8) 17 Rfe1 c4 18 Rad1 Nxg2 19 Qxe7+ Qxe7 20 Rxe7+ Kd8 21 Bxc4 bxc4 22 Kxg2.

15 Bf4 0-0 16 Rfe1 Rf7 17 a4 c4 18 Bc2 Bb7 19 Qe6

A simple solution: an alternative was 19 axb5, when 19...axb5 20 Rxa8+ Bxa8 21 Qe6 is very strong, so Black might have to allow his pawns to be broken with 19...Nxb5.

19...Qxe6 20 dxe6 Rff8 21 Rad1 Rfd8 22 Nd5 Bxd5 23 Rxd5 Rab8 24 Red1 Rb6 25 a5 Rc6 26 Be4 (Diagram 35)

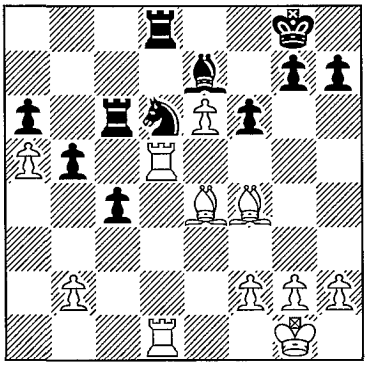

Diagram 35 (B)
Black is in a mess

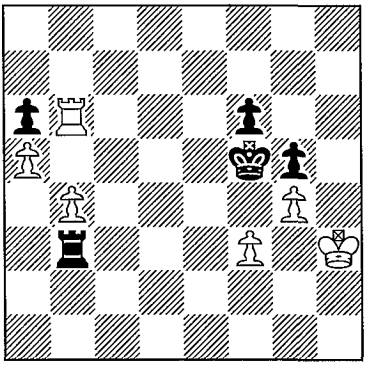

Diagram 36 (B)
Can Black hold?

26...c3

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Black has got himself into difficulties and maybe he shouldn't have allowed the d-file pin to occur. White was threatening the quiet 27 R5d2 winning a piece, and 26...g5 27 Bg3 g4 *28* R5d4 Nxe4 29 Rxd8+ Kg7 30 Rb8 Rxe6 31 Rb6 is hopeless. I don't think the text is any more than a desperate trap, but it half-works in the game, although the patient dies.

27 bxc3 g5 28 Bg3 b4 29 cxb4

I think Dautov perhaps fell slightly from his usual high standards here: 29 R5d4 wins decisive material at once after some simple but elusively calm variations: 29...Rxc3 (or 29...Nxe4 30 Rxd8+ Kg7 31 R8d7 Rxe6 32 cxb4) 30 Kf1.

29...Nxe4 30 Rxd8+ Bxd8 31 Rxd8+ Kg7

Black has managed to find a way not to lose the exchange, and indeed escape into a rook ending with some drawing chances.

32 Rd7+ Kg6 33 Rc7 Rxe6 34 f3 Nxg3 35 hxg3 Re2 36 g4 Rb2 37 Rb7 h5 38 gxh5+ Kxh5 39 Kh2 Kg6 40 Rb6 Kf5 41 Kh3 Kg6 42 Kg3 Kf5 43 Kh2 Ke5 44 Kh3 Kf5 45 g3 Rb3 46 g4+ (Diagram 36) 46...Ke5

This definitely loses since White is able to take play into a position where he just parks his rook in front of the a-pawn and the defending king can't get back in time to meet a7 with ...Kg7, so it has to wander over to the queenside and then White just wins on the kingside. However, could White have won after 46...Kg6 47 Kg3 Rb2? What I don't know about rook endgames would fill many volumes on the subject, so I'll just say that this isn't a book about endgames, and observe that it looks like a classically drawn position to me, and leave it at that. Maybe 47 Kg2 Rb2+ 48 Kf1, freeing the king, is a better try.

47 Kg3 Rb2 48 Rxa6 Rxb4 49 Ra8 Rb1 50 Re8+ Kd6 51 a6 Rg1+ 52 Kf2 Ra1 53 Ra8 Ra2+

53...Kc7 54 a7 Kb7 55 Rf8 Kxa7 56 Rxf6 illustrates the winning method.

54 Ke3 f5 55 gxf5 Ra3+ 56 Kd2 Kc7 57 f6 1-0

Despite the question marks over the finish, probably due to the fact the players were being forced to operate on some ridiculous FIDE semi-blitz time limit, a fine game by Dautov: his opening idea is studded with nice tactical points. Time will tell whether Black comes up with answers, but at the moment 7 Bb3 is looking very good.

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Chapter Seven

The Slav

- Introduction
- The Bishop Sacrifice
- Black Plays 6 Ne5 Nbd7
- Black Avoids 5...Bf5
- The ...a6 Slav
- Illustrative Games

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Introduction

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 (Diagram 1)

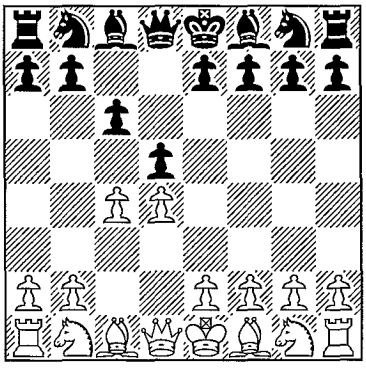

Diagram 1 (W)
The solid Slav

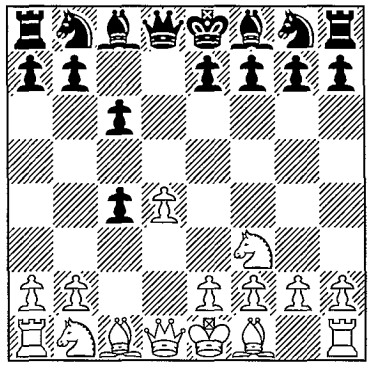

Diagram 2 (W)
Better than it looks!

The Slav defence to the Queen's Gambit is immensely popular at all levels at the moment. Black's idea is fairly simple: he just wants to hold the d5 point and give no ground in the centre, but he doesn't see any reason to block his light-squared bishop in with 2...e6. It's true that his queen's knight probably isn't too thrilled at seeing the c6 square taken away from it, but Black reckons that he usually needs the c-pawn to help in the centre one way or another in the Queen's Gambit, so he doesn't want to go ...Nc6 and block the pawn.

3 Nf3 Nf6

Instead 3...e6 leads to the Abrahams variation of the Semi-Slav and is dealt with in our next chapter. There's also 3...dxc4 **(Diagram 2)** which is a curious and fashionable hybrid with ideas borrowed from the Slav, the Abrahams and the QGA. White's most principled counter is 4 e3 and then:

a) 4...b5 isn't highly recommended due to 5 a4 e6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3 Bb4+ (7...Nf6 8 bxc4 bxc4 9 Bxc4 will always be at least a little better for White with the a7-target, especially after 9...Be7?! 10 Ne5 followed by Qf3) 8 Bd2 Bxd2+ 9 Nbxd2 a5 10 bxc4 b4 11 Ne5!, intending 11...Nf6 12 Qa4+, as White takes advantage of his lead in development at once: otherwise this Abrahams-type position with a pair of pieces exchanged can easily turn in Black's favour.

b) 4...Be6 is the vogue after which 5 a4 (and certainly not 5 Ng5 Qa5+ which has received a surprising amount of grandmaster action as White, but you'll have to search your databases for the names...) 5...Nf6 6 Nc3 is correct when White should

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be able to obtain a decent position with a slight edge by moving his f3 knight somewhere sensible and going f3 and e4, for example 6...h6 7 Ne5 Nbd7 8 Nxc4 Bf5 9 f3 (Topalov).

4 Nc3

4 e3 is another system, which avoids the difficulty White runs into on his next move but is rather too well met by 4...Bf5 or 4...Bg4.

4...dxc4

Didn't I just say Black didn't see why he should give up the centre? So what's he doing now? The answer is that he sees his idea to develop the queen's bishop doesn't work at the moment: 4...Bf5 5 cxd5 cxd5 (5...Nxd5 really does give up the centre for nothing and White is better after, among others, 6 Nd2 followed by e4) 6 Qb3 **(Diagram 3)**

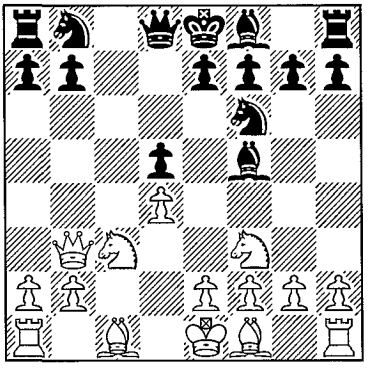

Diagram 3 (B)
...Bf5 was premature

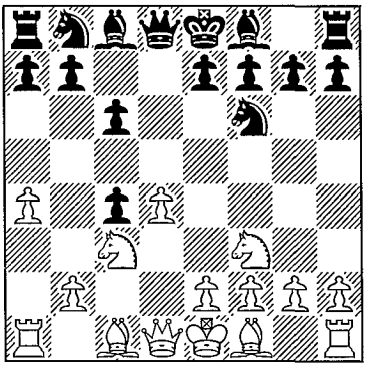

Diagram 4 (B)
White will now regain his pawn

is very strong since 6...b6 7 e4 dxe4 8 Ne5 is just about winning for White, 6...Qb6 7 Nxd5 wins a pawn and 6 ...Bc8, while forced, clearly isn't what Black was after.

4...Bg4? 5 Ne5 is obviously a mistake too, but meanwhile Black is a bit short of ways to prepare the bishop development. Giving up on the whole idea and playing 4...e6 is another entire opening complex called the Semi-Slav and is the subject of the next chapter, while 4...g6 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 Bf4 is a little better for White: the bishop doesn't belong on g7 in this structure for a number of reasons, chief among them that Black is bound to have to play ...e6 anyway at some stage and thus leave himself with a complex of weakened dark squares, and also he makes it harder for himself to play ...Bf5 since this piece will no longer be able to retreat along the b1-h7 diagonal.

In fact modern theory has unearthed the clever waiting move 4...a6, the Che-

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banenko system, which keeps the dream of bishop development alive and is dealt with below, but 4...dxc4 is the historical main line of the Slav. Black is 'giving up' the centre in a sense, but in return he gets to develop his bishop (and thus all his minor pieces) conveniently, and also extracts an important concession.

5 a4 (Diagram 4)

And here it is. If White wants to retrieve his pawn conveniently he had to do this. After 5 e4 another point of ...c6 reveals itself as Black continues with 5 ...b5. This is a genuine gambit: White no longer has any way to recover the pawn by force: he can play this way but theory holds that Black's chances are as good as White's. The text has always been the main line and White can now get his pawn back in peace, but he has lost a development tempo and also created a ghastly hole at b4. Slav endgames have a definite tendency to favour Black and really the whole reason for that is the structural damage White has had to do to himself to win his pawn back.

After 5 a4, Black can develop the bishop comfortably and can retain control of e4 for a while with 5...Bf5 which we will consider before exploring the alternatives.

The Bishop Sacrifice

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 (Diagram 5)

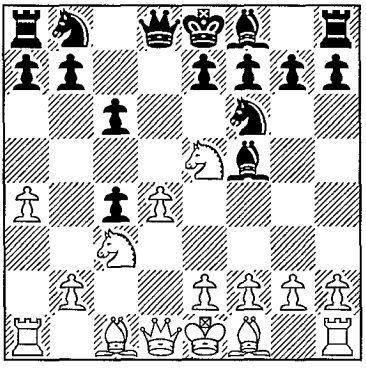

Diagram 5 (B)
More critical than 6 e3

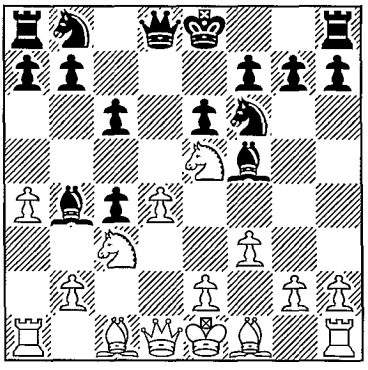

Diagram 6 (W)
Preparing to sacrifice on e4

Major alternatives are 6 Nh4 and 6 e3 but the text is very much the once and future king of White's tries against the Slav: it was all the rage in the thirties, when Capablanca, Euwe and Alekhine played both sides of this position, and has regained its position on top of the heap after a impressive string of victories by

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Kramnik during the nineties in the games played in the following variation. With the text move White wants everything: he's going to take the pawn back with his knight if he has to and grab the centre with f3 and e4.

6...e6

6...Nbd7 is a major alternative, probably stronger and certainly more fashionable at all levels than the text, which Kramnik seems to have driven underground. For that move see the next section.

7 f3 Bb4 (Diagram 6)

Black needs to take some pretty drastic measures against the White centre. 7...c5 is the main alternative but White generally manages to retain an edge after a bit of a flurry: 8 e4 cxd4 (8...Bg6 9 Be3 is a comfortable edge for White) 9 exf5 Bb4 (9...Nc6 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 fxe6 fxe6 is a speculative and very little tested piece sacrifice, but White can retain a slight but statistically very productive two-bishops pull in an ending after 12 Bxc4 dxc3 13 Qe2 followed by taking on e6) 10 Bxc4 dxc3 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 and now White has a number of ideas, but one good one seems to be Gretarsson's 12 Ke2 cxb2 13 Bxb2 Ke7 14 Rhb1! when White seems to be a fair bit better.

8 e4 Bxe4

Morally forced. If Black retreats White has everything he wants, while 8...Nxe4 9 fxe4 Qh4+ 10 Ke2 Bxe4 11 Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12 Kf2 is nonsense.

9 fxe4 Nxe4 10 Bd2

10 Qf3 Qxd4 11 Qxf7+ Kd8 12 Bg5+ Nxg5 13 Qxg7 Bxc3+ 14 bxc3 Qxc3+ 15 Ke2 Qc2+ 16 Ke1 Qc3+ is a forced draw according to theory, but we'll take their word for it: meanwhile if White wants to play the text move is the only sensible one for all the terrifying appearance of Black's next...

10...Qxd4

10...Qh4+ forces White to give up an exchange with 11 g3 Nxg3 12 hxg3 Qxh1 13 Qg4 but the resulting position is very good for White with his active pieces.

11 Nxe4 Qxe4+

11...Bxd2+ 12 Nxd2 Qxe5+ is similar but a worse version for Black and either 13 Be2 b5 14 axb5 cxb5 15 Ra5 or the untried 13 Qe2 ought to retain an advantage.

12 Qe2 Bxd2+

This is the point of course: this way Black gets to chase the White king around.

13 Kxd2 Qd5+ 14 Kc2 (Diagram 7) 14...Na6

A good moment to take stock. White's a piece up and is going to win back c4, so Black will have three pawns for the piece, while White's king still looks a little shaky. That's true, but equally if there is an endgame it will become rather well placed, and practice has shown that it isn't all that easy to collar it before then. The pawns are not that far advanced, and if White does manage to consolidate and

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exchange queens quickly into an endgame then the winning chances are probably going to be his.

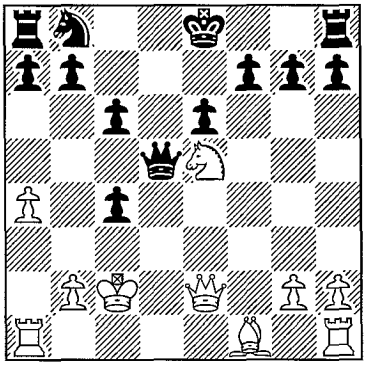

Diagram 7 (B)
An unbalanced position

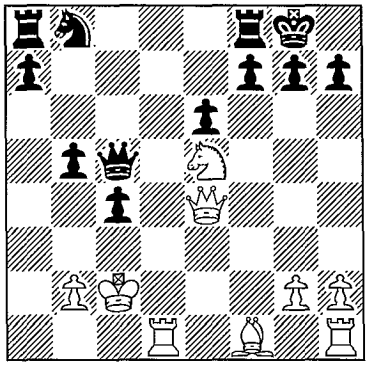

Diagram 8 (W)
Why hasn't this been tested?

The text is very much the main line since 14...0-0 15 Nxc4 is similar to the main lines but rather better for White (15...b5 16 Nd2, and certainly not 16 axb5? opening the c-file). I said White will win the c-pawn back: well, any self-respecting Slav book will tell you that 14...b5 is just bad because of 15 Rd1 Qc5 16 axb5, and certainly out of 300 odd games which have reached the position after 14 Kc2 an impressive zero have continued this way, presumably because 16...cxb5 17 Qe4 wins a rook. There's no doubt that's true, but when my computer still says the position is equal, I get intrigued, and if I carry on with 17...0-0 **(Diagram 8)** 18 Qxa8 Qxe5 19 Qf3 Na6, it soon becomes clear that Black has sufficient counterplay. Don't throw out your Slav monographs just yet, though, because I think 18 Be2 really does enable White to win material and consolidate. Now 18...Na6 19 Nd7 still wins the rook while saving time and staying centralized: after 19...Nb4+ 20 Kb1 Qc7 21 Nxf8 Rxf8 22 Qf3 (to meet 22...Qa5 by 23 Qa3) I think White can beat off the attack and win, but it's still not simple.

15 Nxc4 b5

Definitely the most frightening move, threatening to expose the White king still further. Instead 15...0-0-0 forces White to play rather differently from other lines.

NOTE: In general, if White wins the ending in this variation he does it on the queenside. With the black king over there, this won't be so easy.

So 16 Qe5 f6 17 Qxd5 cxd5 is not a good approach for White, but Kramnik showed the way: 16 Qe3 Nc5 (16...Nb4+ 17 Kb3 c5 18 Rc1 also favours White, who can hide his king on a3 and set about exploiting his active pieces, as does 16...Kb8 17 Be2

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Ka8 18 g4: this last is an important move to take f5 from the Black queen and simply remove the pawn from attack, preparing a rook to the d-file and/or Qf3 with advantage) 17 Be2 Qxg2 18 Rhg1 Qxh2 19 Rxg7 Rd3 20 Rh1! (this was the star move: previously it had been thought that White's best in this position was to resign) 20...Qxh1 21 Bxd3 **(Diagram 9)**

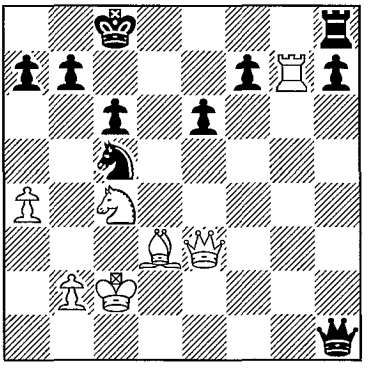

Diagram 9 (B)
The tactics have favoured White

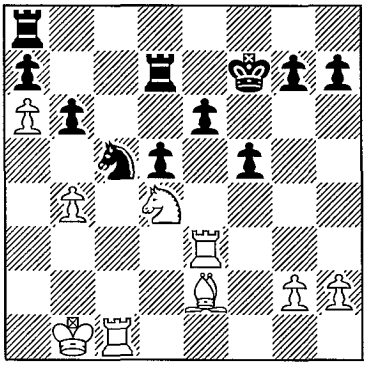

Diagram 10 (B)
Black is struggling for any play

with a very probably winning position for White.

There's also 15...0-0, but this leaves Black a bit less well placed for an ending, although on the other hand keeps his king much safer than after 15...0-0-0, so White naturally now prefers to insist upon the exchange of queens following 16 Qe5. After many games from this position Black hit upon 16...Rab8 17 a5 f6 as the best method, after which 18 Qxd5 cxd5 19 Ne3 Rbc8+ 20 Kb1 Nc5 21 Ra3 f5 22 Be2 Ne4 23 Rd1 Rc7 24 Nc2 Kf7 25 Nd4 Nd6 26 a6 b6 27 Re3 Re8 28 Re1 Ne4 29 Nb5 Rd7 30 Rc1 Nc5 31 Nd4 Ra8 32 b4 **(Diagram 10)** saw White maintain control and go on to win on the queenside in V.Anand-A.Khalifman, FIDE World Ch., New Delhi 2000. That was only one of a number of an unpleasant super-grandmaster defeats Black suffered around this time in the ending, which has on the whole caused it to fall in popularity. The ending is extremely difficult to play and very tactical, so it is hard to give general advice, but the plan in this game of restraining the pawns as much as possible while angling to come in down the c-file and win a queenside pawn is basically what White is after.

16 axb5

Quite right. It's tempting to avoid the text because it opens the c-file, but White must make use of the knight's good position on c4 while he can. Now 16...Nb4+ is the subject of Game 22, whereas 16...cxb5 17 Rxa6 Rc8 18 Qf3 is dire for Black since the exchange of queens is forced with White's pieces very active.

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Black Plays 6 Ne5 Nbd7

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 (Diagram 11)

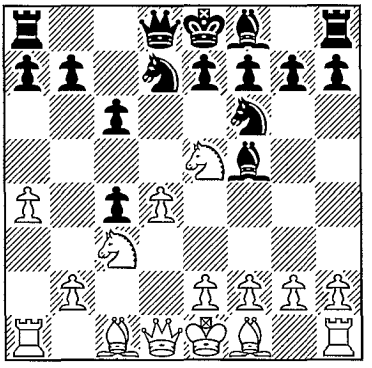

Diagram 11 (W)
Fighting for control of e5

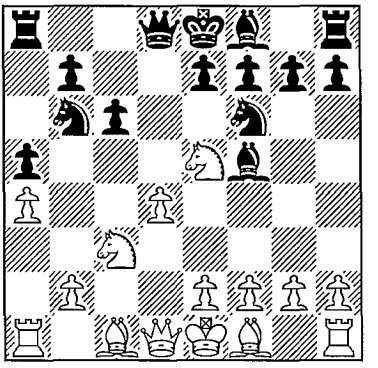

Diagram 12 (W)
A very solid approach

Instead 6...Na6 7 e3 Nb4 8 Bxc4 e6 9 0-0 gives White an edge: normally when White plays with 6 e3 Black puts his bishop and not his knight on b4 which gives him control of e4 a bit longer. Here White can just continue Qe2 and e4 with a pleasant plus. Meanwhile 6...c5 is critical since White only has one good move and it isn't obvious: nothing but 7 e4 will do when 7...Bg6 (forced since 7...Bxe4 8 Nxe4 Nxe4 9 Bxc4 e6 10 Qf3, 7...Nxe4 8 Bxc4 e6 9 Bb5+ and 7...Qxd4 8 Qxd4 cxd4 9 exf5 dxc3 10 Bxc4 range from grim to losing for Black) 8 Nxg6 hxg6 9 d5 leaves White comfortably better.

7 Nxc4 Qc7

The traditional and best move, aiming for a quick ...e5, but there are alternatives:

a) 7...Nd5 is another move boosted by a Morozevich victory, also at Wijk 2001, against Kramnik. However, White really does seem to be better after the obvious 8 f3 e5 9 e4 Nxc3 10 bxc3 Be6 and now 11 Ne3 when 11...f6 12 Bc4 and 11...cxd4 12 exd4 Bb4+ 13 Bd2 Bxd2+ 14 Qxd2 both seem to favour White.

b) 7...Nb6 is a very tough nut to crack: notice how this move is now well-timed when White cannot just reply e4. Then 8 Ne5 a5 **(Diagram 12)** is a good solid move, securing the knight on b6 and fixing the b4 hole after which 9 f3 Nfd7 10 Nxd7 Nxd7 (invariably played, although Black might very reasonably try 10...Bxd7 11 e4 e6 12 Be3 Bb4 13 Be2 0-0 14 0-0 Rc8, intending ...c5 with a pretty solid game) 11 e4 Bg6 gives a popular position in which it looks to my eye as though White ought to be a little better, although he has actually scored misera-

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bly. A model for White, however, not only for this position but for the Slav in general, was I.Rogers-E.Torre, Kuala Lumpur 2005: 12 Be3 e6 13 Bc4 Bd6 14 Qd2 Qc7 15 Qf2 0-0 16 g3 Kh8 17 0-0 Rae8 18 Rac1 Qb8 19 Rfd1 f6 20 Bf1 Bf7 21 Bh3 Rd8 22 Kh1 **(Diagram 13)**

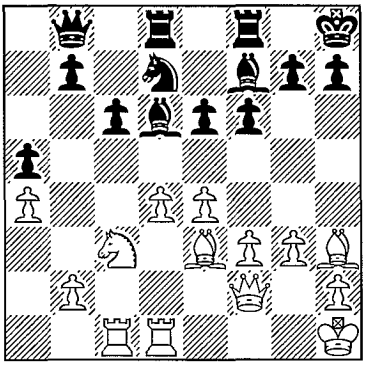

Diagram 13 (B)
White sensibly takes his time

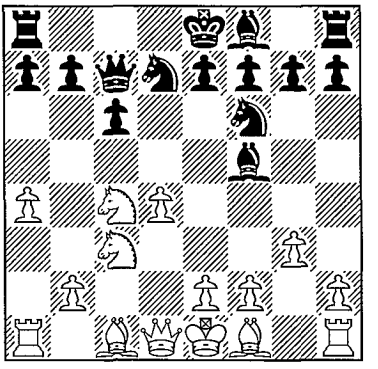

Diagram 14 (B)
Assisting both white bishops

22...Rfe8 23 Bg2 Bc7 24 f4 Bh5 25 Rd2 Bb6 26 g4 Bf7 27 e5 Qa7 28 Ne4 fxe5 29 fxe5 Bg6 30 Qg3 Rf8 31 Ng5 Rde8 32 h4 Qb8 33 h5 Bf7 34 Be4 Bg8 35 Nh3 Nf6 36 Bg6 Rc8 37 Bg5 Nd5 38 Be4 Bd8 39 Bxd8 Rfxd8 40 Bxd5 cxd5 41 Rf1 Qc7 42 Nf4 Bf7 43 Rdf2 Qc4 44 Ng6+ hxg6 45 Rxf7 Qxd4 46 R7f4 1-0.

NOTE: White devoted himself first to restraining ...c5 or ...e5; only once that was done did he turn his attention to placing all his pieces optimally (20 Bf1, 22 Kh1) before slowly and carefully expanding (24 f4, 26 g4 and 27 e5).

8 g3 (Diagram 14)

White needs to change his plan, since he can't drive the bishop out of play to g6: 8 f3 e5 9 e4 exd4 is already very satisfactory for Black. Instead White aims to make something of the line-up on the h2-b8 diagonal.

8...e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 Nfd7

10...Rd8 11 Qc1 Bd6 (11...Nfd7? drops a piece to 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 13 Qf4 Bd6 14 Qxf5 Nxc4 15 Qe4+ Ne5 16 f4) 12 Nxd6+ Qxd6 13 Bg2 is an old line which leaves White a little better with his bishops.

11 Bg2 (Diagram 15)

A hugely fashionable position in the 1930's and again today, thanks to Morozevich's stunning efforts on the Black side.

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11...g5 (Diagram 16)

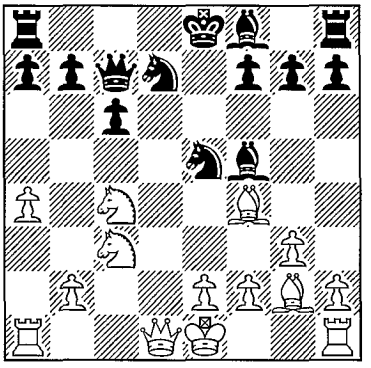

Diagram 15 (B)
How will Black deal with the pin?

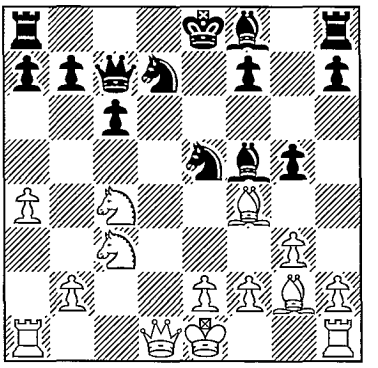

Diagram 16 (W)
Wowsers!

And this is one of Morozevich's ideas. Black had struggled after 11 Bg2 (both 11...Be6 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 0-0 Be7 14 Qc2 and 11...f6 12 0-0 Be6 13 Nxe5 fxe5 14 Bg5 favour White) from the Alekhine-Euwe matches until Morozevich came along in 1997 and thought – well, why do I need to worry about forcing any exchanges? What happens if I just activate my knight? And he first played 11...f6 12 0-0 Nc5 **(Diagram 17)**

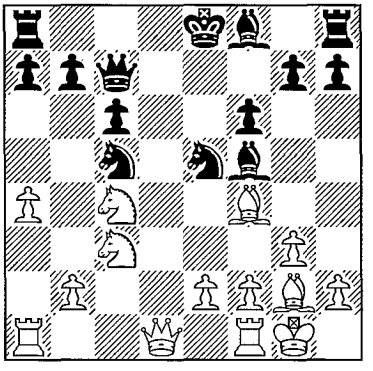

Diagram 17 (W)
Black prepares ...Rd8 and ...Nb3

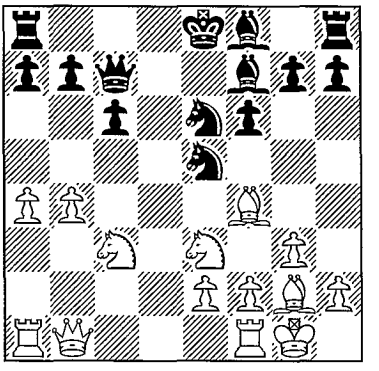

Diagram 18 (B)
The queen is well placed on the b-file

and all of a sudden everyone was playing it. The best reply is 13 Ne3 Bg6 (13...Rd8 allows the crucial trick 14 Ncd5, although 13...Be6 is playable when White should

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still continue 14 b4 Rd8 15 Qb1) 14 b4 Ne6 (keeping this square free for the knight was the point of 13...Bg6) and now 15 b5 Rd8 16 Qb3 Bf7 17 Bxe5 fxe5 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 Rab1 has been played quite a lot, possibly with a slight advantage for White. A fresh idea is Levon Aronian's 15 Qb3 Bf7 16 Qb1 **(Diagram 18)** 16...Nxf4 17 gxf4 Ng6 18 b5 Qxf4 19 Rd1 which saw him gain a powerful initiative after 19...Bd6 20 Rxd6! Qxd6 21 bxc6 in L.Aronian-I.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

By 2000, though, Morozevich had another idea, and typically he chose to reveal it against none other than Kasparov himself. 11...g5 looks like a rather unprincipled thrash fatally weakening squares like f5 around the king, but Black intends to give effect to an idea which must surely have crossed the thoughts of Alekhine and Euwe in their day as they played ...Rd8 and then suffered with their king two moves away from castling and the queen on c7 unprotected, and that is to castle queenside. It's only fair to warn you: grandmasters all over the globe are looking for a refutation of this cheeky move and have been for six years, and no consensus has emerged yet.

12 Bxe5

12 Ne3 and 12 Nxe5 are the other two lines, both with plenty of games and theory. The text hasn't been so common but has a certain logic to it: White wants to play against the light squares which were weakened by ...g5, so trading his dark-squared bishop for a knight which could defend them isn't such a bad idea, and in addition he loses no time and indeed can gain further time with his next move. By dragging the d7-knight away from the d-file he can also ensure that Black can't castle queenside and thus has to keep his king in the weakened sector of the board. So 12 Bxe5 is quite a principled move, albeit that in comparison with Ne3 it yields the two bishops fairly readily, and unlike Nxe5 doesn't win a pawn.

12...Nxe5 13 Qd4 f6

13...Ng6 14 0-0 is just good for White as Ne4 is coming, and 13...Bg7 is impossible in view of Nd6+, so Black is forced into this further time-wasting weakening of the light squares. True, 13...Nxc4 is tempting, but after 14 Qxh8 0-0-0 15 0-0 Nd2 16 Rfd1 comes up short: the queen always has one square too many.

14 0-0-0 (Diagram 19)

A very aggressive move indeed. White's plans will include trying to trade the light-squared bishops and/or to blow Black away with f4 or h4, and to develop as rapidly as possible for this plan he's prepared to put his king in a fairly dangerous sector of the board, trusting in his own initiative to keep Black too busy to attack it.

TIP: Exchanging the light-squared bishops is desirable for several reasons: it weakens the enemy light-squares, dilutes Black's bishop pair, and gets rid of a piece which is always rather hamstrung in these positions by the solid c6 and b7 pawn barrier restricting it.

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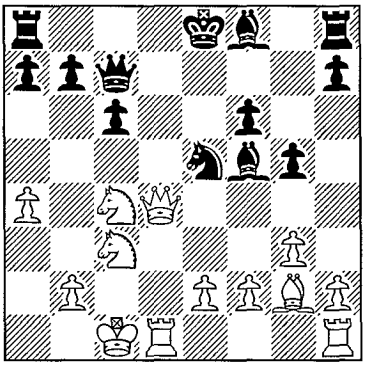

Diagram 19 (B)
White strives for the initiative

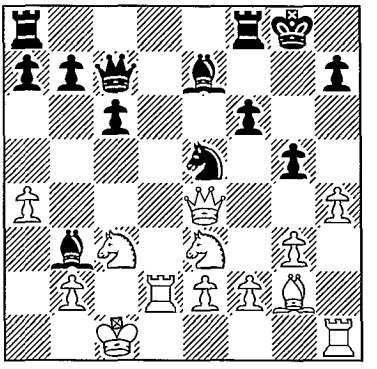

Diagram 20 (B)
Levering open the kingside

The Georgian Baadur Jobava has a reputation for lethal opening preparation in these sharp lines and this is his plan which has helped turn 12 Bxe5 perhaps into the front runner against 11...g5 at the moment. We will now see 14...Be6, Morozevich's own solution to Jobava's pet variation, in Game 23. The other moves that have been tried show what White's about pretty well:

a) 14...Nxc4 15 Qxc4 Bd6 was Kulaots' reaction when the plan was first unveiled: and now, as Scherbakov pointed out, White should preface Be4 with 16 h4, when he has achieved everything 12 Bxe5 set out to do and stands better.

b) 14...Be7 makes sense, but Jobava made it all look like a forced win as he simply brought all his pieces to their best squares and obtained a crushing attack on the kingside light squares in B.Jobava-A.Grischuk, Calvia Olympiad 2004: 15 Ne3 Be6 (after 15...Bg6 probably White is best off promoting his initiative with the other plan: 16 Ne4 0-0 17 f4) 16 Qe4 Bb3 17 Rd2 0-0 18 h4 **(Diagram 20)** 18...gxh4 (18...Bc5 19 hxg5 fxg5 20 Rh5 Rae8 21 Rxg5+ Ng6 was widely suggested, although I reckon White is better here too) 19 Qxh4 Rf7 20 Nf5 Kh8 21 Be4 Raf8 22 f4 Nc4 23 Ng7 Rxg7 24 Bxh7 f5 25 Qh5 Bh4 26 Bxf5+ 1-0.

Black Avoids 5...Bf5

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4

The following are the most important alternatives to 5...Bf5; anything else can pretty much be dealt with by playing e4 and Bxc4:

a) 5...c5 6 d5 e6 7 e4 **(Diagram 21)** is a position from the Queen's Gambit Accepted where the unusually stately progress of Black's c-pawn has enabled White to slip

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in a4 for free, which isn't likely to hurt White: 7...exd5 8 e5 Nfd7 (8...Ne4 9 Qxd5 Nxc3 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 bxc3 is considered a little better for White in the QGA line and with ...b5 ruled out shouldn't be any worse) 9 Qxd5 should be the way to do it since the move played in the analogous QGA position is 9...Nb6, which now fails horribly to 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 a5, so it is very hard to move the centralized queen and White ought to retain a definite initiative.

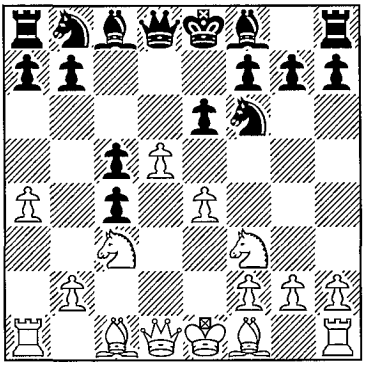

Diagram 21 (B)
QGA-like

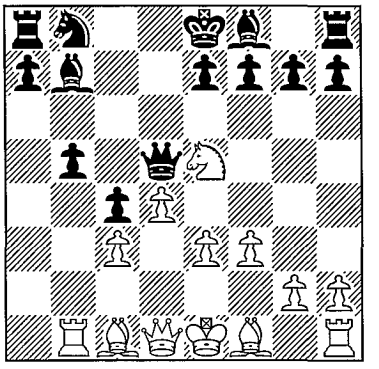

Diagram 22 (B)
Extreme greed from Black

Instead Black has tried 6...Bf5 which, like so many moves in the Slav, gained popularity after a spectacular Morozevich victory as Black, this one against Van Wely at Wijk aan Zee 2001. 7 e3 e6 8 Bxc4 exd5 9 Nxd5 Nc6 10 0-0 (10 Qb3 Qd7 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 was the Van Wely-Morozevich game, where you might think White is just better, but he didn't last another ten moves) 10...Bd6 has occurred in a few games. This is a QGA position with the extra a4 in, and borrowing from the (a4-less) game S.Ivanov-A.Suetin, Berlin 1993, 11 Nxf6+ Qxf6 12 e4 Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 Qxf3 15 gxf3 ought to give White a certain initiative.

b) 5...Nd5 is a dubious move which attempts to hold the pawn, and offers hours of fun for those who enjoy analytical hackery: one way is 6 e3 b5 7 axb5 Nxc3 8 bxc3 cxb5 9 Ne5 Bb7 10 Rb1 Qd5 (10...a6 allows 11 Bxc4) 11 f3 **(Diagram 22)** and now 11...Bc6 is well met with 12 Be2 intending Nxc6, f4 and Bf3. Instead 11...f5 is a crazy-looking move which I can't resist showing and 12 Qc2 e6 13 Qb2 Ba6 was hot theory in 1912 although it hasn't been quite so popular since: 14 Be2 is simple and good but a lot more fun is 14 Bxc4 bxc4 15 Qxb8+ Rxb8 16 Rxb8+ Ke7 17 e4 fxe4 and now the silicon-powered 18 0-0, when I rather suspect Black is lost.

c) After that gratuitous digression it's a pleasure to return to saner territory and 5...Na6 is often named after the seventh world champion Vassily Smyslov. It leads to typical Slav positions with a slight advantage for White, for example 6 e4 Bg4 7

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Bxc4 Bxf3 (or 7...e6 8 Be3 Nb4 9 0-0 Be7 and now White has many set-ups, including the simple one of Leonid Stein: 10 Rc1 0-0 11 h3 Bh5 12 Qe2 followed by Rfd1, g4 and Bf4 when White has a definite advantage although Black is solid and nothing is decided yet) 8 gxf3 when White is probably best advised to castle short and he can still play Kh1 and Rg1 if he wishes, and should stand better. A breezy display of his possibilities was V.Chuchelov-N.Eliet, Belgian League 2003: 8...e6 9 Be3 Nb4 10 0-0 a5 11 Kh1 g6 12 f4 Bg7 13 Qf3 0-0 14 Rad1 Qd7 15 Rg1 **(Diagram 23)**.

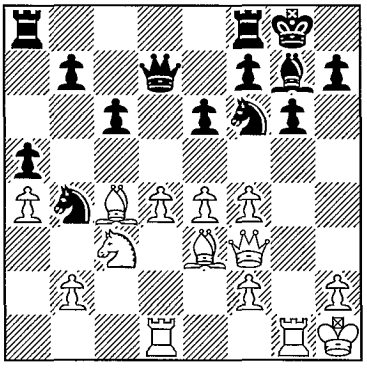

Diagram 23 (B)
A model set-up for White

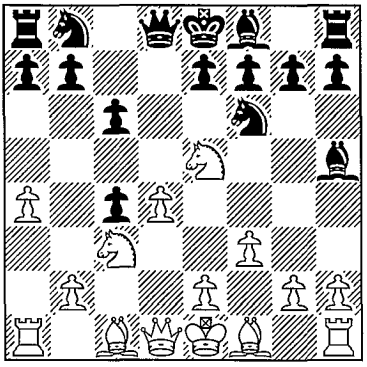

Diagram 24 (B)
The critical test of 5...Bg4

d) 5...Bg4, an intermittently popular move which nonetheless hovers constantly on the brink of refutation, is the Steiner variation (Lajos Steiner, not the Herman Steiner after whom a line in the Marshall is called), and was a favourite of Smyslov's antipode Bronstein. White doesn't have to respond critically, but the main and most critical line is 6 Ne5 Bh5 (6...Nbd7?! 7 Nxg4 Nxg4 8 e4?! e5 with complications is a vicious trap which for practical purposes White should avoid with 8 e3, when he has a clear edge) 7 f3 **(Diagram 24)** and now:

d1) 7...e6 is a real challenge: if White wants anything he has to go 8 g4 Nd5 (8...Nfd7 9 Nxd7 Qh4+ 10 Kd2 Nxd7 11 gxh5 Nc5 12 Kc2 0-0-0 13 e3 e5 14 Qe1!, and White emerges with two minor pieces against rook and pawn) 9 e4 Qh4+ 10 Ke2 Nxc3+ 11 bxc3 Bg6 **(Diagram 25)** when Sosonko and Khalifman say White is better, but Hübner and Burgess say its unclear. At first sight it doesn't look very nice for White, but once he's got organized it does tend to start to. White's next few moves ought to be something like 12 Bf4 followed by Qd2, removing the black queen from its post on h4, and then Kf2-g2, with Nxc4 as convenient, after which the plusses of his position do start to show.

d2) 7...Nfd7 8 Nxc4 e5 can be met by the simple and good is 9 g3 **(Diagram 26)**, just cutting out the check. Probably best now is 9...f6 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12

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Nxe5 fxe5 with an ending where White is undeniably a bit better, although how much is an open question.

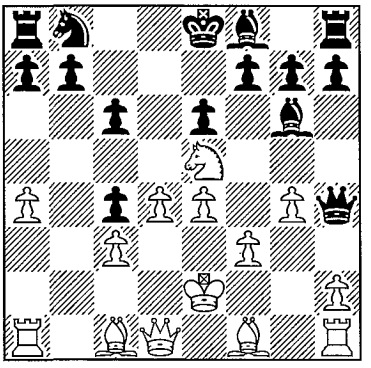

Diagram 25 (W)
A controversial position

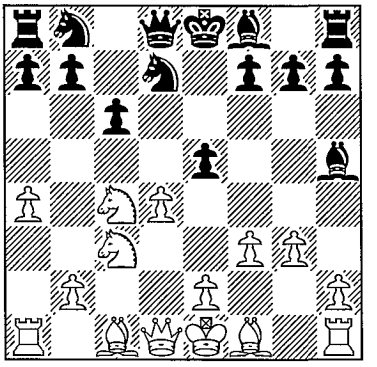

Diagram 26 (B)
Reducing Black's counterplay

WARNING: He should certainly play 13 Bh3 now and not the popular but inept 13 Bg5+ Kc7, driving Black's king to its best square while placing his own bishop on one of its worst.

Instead 9...exd4?! 10 Qxd4, with the threat of Ne4-d6+ is no good, but Black has two more critical tries:

d21) 9...Bb4 10 dxe5 0-0 11 Bh3 Qe7 12 f4 Rd8 13 Qc2 f6 (not the only move, but it's difficult for Black to develop counterplay if he doesn't break like this), and now it's hard to argue with Hübner's judgement that after 14 e6 Nc5 15 f5 Rd4 16 Nd2 White just stands to win after a bit of untangling.

d22) 9...Qe7 is the other move but is very well met by 10 Bh3 Bg6 (White wasn't afraid of 10...exd4 11 Qxd4 Bxf3 when 12 Rf1, followed by Ne4, gives him a crushing attack) 11 0-0 exd4 12 Qxd4 Nc5 (A.Khalifman-I.Rogers, Biel Interzonal 1993) and now either Rogers' 13 Rd1 or 13 Bf4 is very strong.

The ...a6 Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 (Diagram 27)

The Chebanenko variation, named after a legendary Moldovan chess trainer who seems to have been the inventor of this move. The Chebanenko belongs to that small group of openings – the Sveshnikov, the Benko Gambit and the Leningrad Dutch are the other obvious ones – which have been taken by a tenacious group of

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enthusiasts far below the world's elite from a position where the world thinks them unplayable because they seem to contravene obvious positional principles, to the point where they even reach the 2700 stratosphere, although not everyone has given up their opinions – Korchnoi famously said that the a6 Slav 'would not survive a world championship match'.

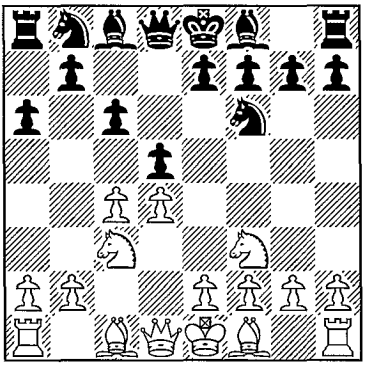

Diagram 27 (W)
The highly fashionable 4...a6

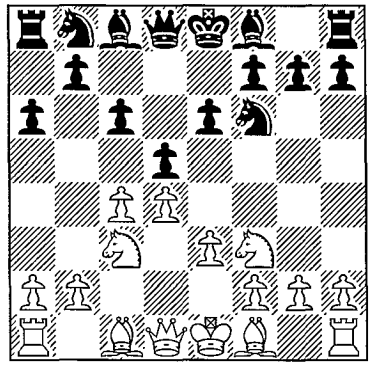

Diagram 28 (W)
An unusual but not unfashionable Meran

Perhaps the Chebanenko is the move that holds truest to the original idea of the Slav to hold the centre and develop Black's queen's bishop actively. We've seen why Black can't just play 4...Bf5: the motivation of 4...a6 is half to 'threaten' ...Bg4 or ...Bf5 and half as a waiting move, while on the positive side, of course, it supports ...b5. It prepares bishop moves in two ways: first it takes control of b5 and so cuts out ideas with e4 and Bb5+, and second it allows for meeting Qb3 with the cool ...Ra7.

As for a waiting move, one of the themes of the Slav is that Bg5 is ineffective because of ...Ne4. Just as after 4...e6, White has to choose now between abandoning the idea of developing his queen's bishop actively (as with 5 e3) or playing Bg5 at a time when it has drawbacks (here allowing ...Ne4 with tempo), although in this particular case he does have other options such as 5 c5 or 5 a4. The system introduced by the text move, however, has come to the fore recently as the only way White has discovered to really challenge 4...a6.

5 e3 b5

Black has also the option to switch to a form of Meran by 5...e6 **(Diagram 28)**.

The difference is that he has ...a6 in instead of ...Nbd7. Black reckons this might even do him good if the game proceeds as in a Meran, since he gets in ...b5 that one move quicker, for example 6 Bd3?! dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 c5 9 0-0 is actually a QGA where both sides have lost a move and White has played the unusual 7 Nc3

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in the main line instead of the 7 Bb3 I advocated in Chapter Six. Hence White's normal move here is 6 b3 when 6...Bb4 (the idea of the text move is to misplace White's queen's bishop before retreating) 7 Bd2 Nbd7 8 Bd3 0-0 9 0-0 Bd6 (9...Qe7 10 Ne5 Nxe5 11 dxe5 Nd7 12 f4 is quite dangerous for Black too) 10 e4 dxc4 11 bxc4 e5 12 c5 Bc7 13 Na4 **(Diagram 29)**

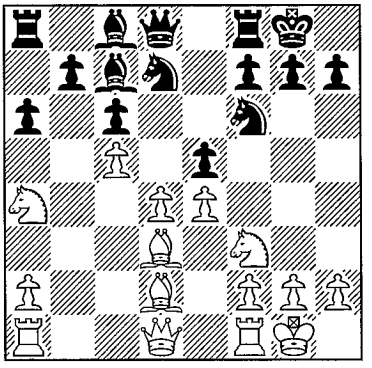

Diagram 29 (B)
White will gain a useful grip

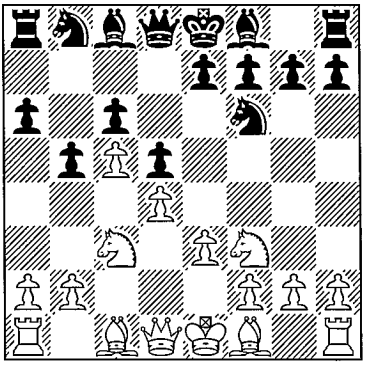

Diagram 30 (B)
A recent idea

is a pawn sacrifice originally introduced by Kasparov which gives White pretty good compensation in my opinion and, if my editor will forgive me mentioning it, produced a magnificent game in R.Palliser-V.Malakhatko, Port Erin 2005: 13...exd4 14 h3 Re8 15 Re1 h6 16 Rb1 Nf8 17 Qc1 Rb8 18 Rb4 (a splendid manoeuvre) 18...Ne6 19 Rc4 Ba5 20 Bxa5 Qxa5 21 Nxd4 Nxd4 22 Rxd4 Qc7 23 Rd6 (this rook is doomed, but White obtains tremendous compensation) 23...Be6 24 Nb6 Red8 25 e5 Ne8 26 Qf4 Qe7 27 Re3 Nxd6 28 cxd6 Qg5 29 Qe4 g6 30 Rg3 Bf5 31 Qf3 Qc1+ 32 Kh2 Bxd3 33 e6! Qc5 34 Qxf7+ Kh8 35 Qf6+ Kh7 36 Rxd3 Qxb6 37 Qf7+ Kh8 38 Qxg6 Qxf2 39 Qxh6+ Kg8 40 e7 Rd7 1-0. White's compensation is vividly shown here: his queenside unit keeps Black's greater forces over there out of the game, d4 is weak, and on the kingside the 4 versus 3 majority gives the constant options either of piece play or using the e- and f-pawns to cramp Black's pieces or advance to open the king's shell.

An alternative which gives effect to the other main idea of the Chebanenko is 5...Bf5 when Kramnik's recipe against Morozevich at Dortmund 2001 seems to retain an edge: 6 Bd3 Bxd3 7 Qxd3 e6 8 0-0 Be7 9 e4 0-0 10 Rd1 b5 (10...dxe4 11 Nxe4 Nxe4 12 Qxe4 Nd7 13 Bf4 is also a little better for White) 11 c5 dxe4 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Qxe4 Qd5 14 Qxd5 cxd5 and White retained a definite pull in the ending.

6 c5 (Diagram 30)

This move is the modern method: previously 6 b3 had been the main line, while if

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White wanted to go c5 he usually did so before ...b5. Recently it has been realized though that waiting for ...b5, apart from leaving White a tempo better off, may give him the opportunity to get in down the a-file using his extra space, and that the c6-pawn is every bit as weak as b7 ever was in the other lines.

6...Nbd7

Challenging for the e5-square, but Black has other possibilities:

a) White has demonstrated a good plan against 6...Bg4: 7 Qb3 Nbd7 8 a4 Bxf3 9 gxf3 e5 10 Qa3 Rc8 11 axb5 axb5 12 Bh3 exd4 13 exd4 Be7 14 Qa5 0-0 15 Qxd8 Rfxd8 16 Ra6 **(Diagram 31)**

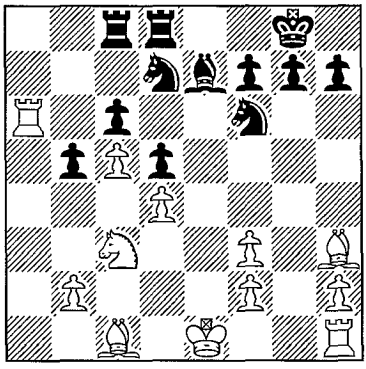

Diagram 31 (B)
Successfully exploiting the a-file

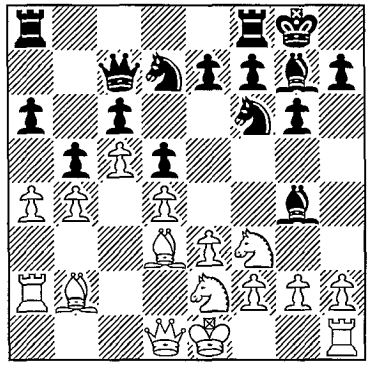

Diagram 32 (B)
White has an edge

with strong pressure for White, was T.Hillarp-Persson-E.Arlandi, Calvia Olympiad 2004 (one of a number of games Black lost along these lines about this time). White's plan to infiltrate down the a-file was well seen in this game: the knight will come to b4, Bf4 and Re1 can add to the pressure, and it is very hard for Black to defend c6.

b) 6...Bf5 was met by 7 Ne5 in A.Dreev-Ni Hua, Moscow 2004, which was one of the first games where White's plan of infiltrating quickly along the a-file was shown: 7...h5 8 Qb3 Ng4 9 Nxg4 (9 e4 would have been an enterprising shot) 9...hxg4 10 a4 Nd7 11 Na2 Qc8 (here 11...g3 12 fxg3 Qc7 was a spirited try) 12 Nb4 Qb7 13 Qa3 Rc8 14 axb5 axb5 15 Qa6 Qxa6 16 Rxa6 Nb8 17 Ra8 Kd7 18 e4 Bxe4 19 Bf4 and Black was lost.

NOTE: Black would like to close the queenside with 8...a5, instead of 8...Ng4, but 9 Nxb5 cxb5 10 Bxb5+ Bd7 11 Nxd7 Nbxd7 12 c6 wins on the spot.

c) 6...g6 is popular and gives White a wide choice of options: a model White per-

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formance was L.Aronian-S.Volkov, Russian Team Ch. 2005: 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 b4 Bg4 9 Bb2 Nbd7 10 Ne2 (preventing ...e5) 10...Qc7 11 a4 0-0 12 Ra2 **(Diagram 32)** 12...Ra7 (12...Bxf3 13 gxf3 e5 14 dxe5 Nxe5 15 Bxe5 Qxe5 16 Nd4 leaves Black unable to hold the a-file) 13 h3 Bxf3 14 gxf3 (White welcomes this doubling since he can use one f-pawn to clamp down on ...e5 and one to guard e4 if needs be) 14...Rfa8 15 f4 e6 16 0-0 Ne8 17 Qc2 Qb7 18 Rfa1 Bf6 19 Qb3! Bd8 20 Qa3 when Black couldn't defend a7 any more, so he had to allow the a4 pawn and b5 pawns to disappear, leaving his a-pawn horribly weak.

7 b4

This move took over after 7 Qb3 a5! proved to enable Black to lock the queenside satisfactorily.

7...a5 8 bxa5 Qxa5

8...e5 9 Bd2 e4 10 Ng1 isn't as much of an achievement for Black as you might think, since by closing the centre he might gain a lot of space but he also cuts off his own counterplay. Now 10...Rxa5 11 a4 bxa4 12 Rxa4 Rxa4 13 Qxa4 Qc7 14 Na2 favoured White in A.Dreev-A.Korotylev, Russian Ch., Moscow 2004; another game in which Black succumbed fairly simply to White's plan of coming down the a-file, turning right and taking c6.

9 Bd2 b4 10 Nb1! (Diagram 33)

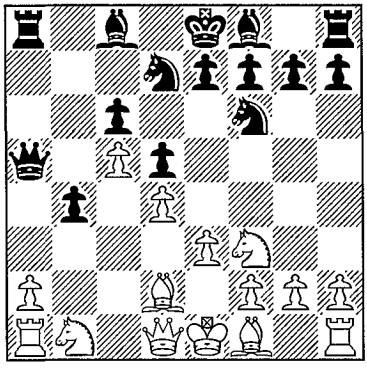

Diagram 33 (B)
Preparing a3

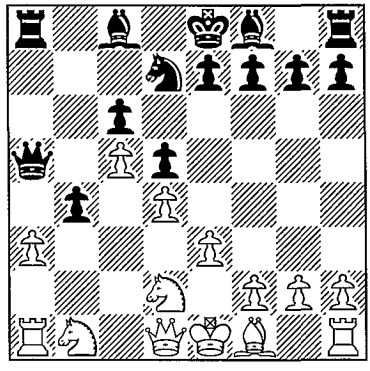

Diagram 34 (B)
The queenside is the main focus

WARNING: 10 Ne2 Ne4 is worse since White can't develop his bishop and nor can he break with a3.

10...Ne4 11 a3!?

In a couple of games Dreev had used the plan of Be2, 0-0 and Ne1-c2, forcing an exchange on d2, and had achieved a slight advantage, but the text is more direct.

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11...Nxd2 12 Nfxd2 (Diagram 34)

Now 12...Rb8 is seen in Game 24, while after 12...b3, I suspect we might see some developments involving not taking the pawn at once, and here particularly 13 Bd3 is appealing.

Illustrative Games

Game 22

☐ **V.Kramnik** ■ **A.Shirov**

Linares 2000

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 7 f3 Bb4 8 e4 Bxe4 9 fxe4 Nxe4 10 Bd2 Qxd4 11 Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12 Qe2 Bxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Qd5+ 14 Kc2 Na6 15 Nxc4 b5 16 axb5 Nb4+ 17 Kc3 cxb5 (Diagram 35)

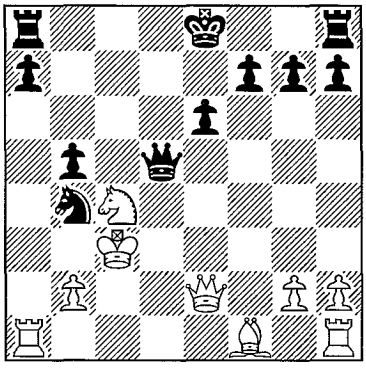

Diagram 35 (W)

White can save himself

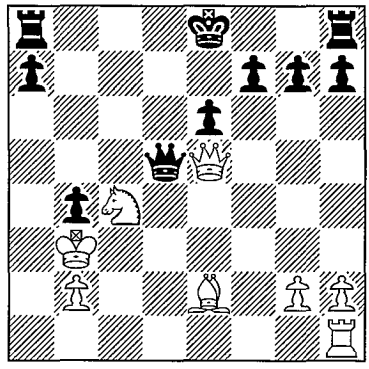

Diagram 36 (B)

Two very useful minor pieces

18 Rd1 Qc5

18...bxc4 19 Rxd5 Nxd5+ was the scene of a bizarre theoretical debate for a while: maybe White can win and maybe he can't, but he's certainly a lot less likely to lose than he was in the initial position and it beggars belief that anyone would deliberately play this way as Black. Anyway, 20 Kd2 followed by taking on c4 seems to be the way for White to start off.

19 Qe5 Nd5+ 20 Rxd5 b4+

20...Qxd5 21 Nd6+ Kf8 22 Qxd5 exd5 23 Nxb5 is pretty good for White too.

21 Kb3 Qxd5 22 Be2 (Diagram 36) 22...0-0

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22...Qxe5 23 Nxe5 is worse since White can fairly easily win the queenside pawns.

23 Qxd5 exd5 24 Na5

NOTE: Kramnik would have had to see (or prepare) up to here in advance, but assessing this position as favourable for White must have been the real trick. In fact though White's active king gives him a big advantage despite the ostensibly unfavourable material balance.

24...Rfe8 25 Bf3

White's advantage resides quite largely in the fact that his minor pieces can obtain secure squares like this one, where the bishop is superbly placed.

25...Rac8 26 Rd1 Re3+ 27 Ka4 (Diagram 37)

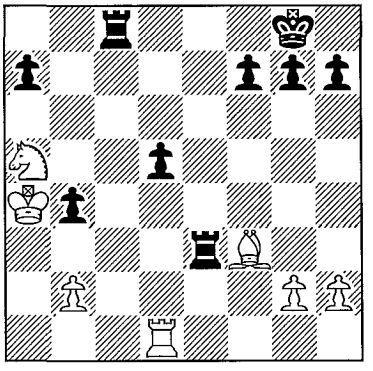

Diagram 37 (B)
The white king is actively placed

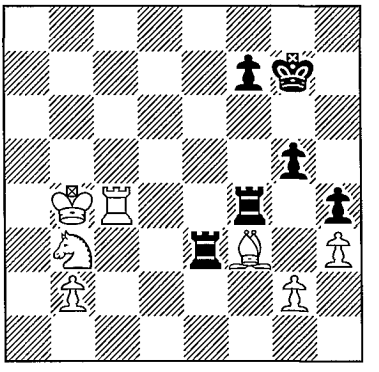

Diagram 38 (B)
Relying on the b-pawn

27...b3

Shirov tries to preserve some play against the b-pawn, but Kramnik suggests that it was time to get desperate with 27...Rc2 28 b3 Rxf3 29 gxf3 Rxh2 when White's technical task is really quite tricky, although no doubt in a few years' time the thirteen-man tablebase will show that he's winning.

28 Rxd5 g6 29 Rd7 Rc2 30 Ka3 Kg7 31 Rxa7 h5 32 h3 h4 33 Rb7 Rc5 34 Kb4 Rf5

34...Rc2 35 Nc4 co-ordinates and wins easily.

35 Rc7 g5 36 Nxb3 Rf4+ 37 Rc4 (Diagram 38) 37...Rxc4+

Even now eliminating the bishop with 37...Rexf3 38 gxf3 Rxf3 was a try, although 39 Rc3 ought to win for White.

38 Kxc4 f5 39 Nd4 Kf6 40 b4 Re1 41 b5 Ke5 42 Nc6+ Kd6 43 b6 Rc1+ 44 Kb5 g4 45 b7 Rb1+ 46 Nb4 Kc7 47 hxg4 fxg4 48 Be4 1-0

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The variation 48...Rb2 49 Kc4 h3 50 g3 h2 51 Na6+ makes the bishop's powers cruelly clear. A superb game by Kramnik who co-ordinated his pieces against the rook magically.

Game 23

☐ **B.Jobava** ■ **M.Carlsen**

European Championship, Warsaw 2005

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Qc7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 Nfd7 11 Bg2 g5 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 13 Qd4 f6 14 0-0-0 Be6 15 f4 gxf4 16 gxf4 Nxc4

Black could transpose to a worse ending with good drawing chances by 16...Rd8 17 Qxd8+ Qxd8 18 Rxd8+ Kxd8 19 fxe5 Bxc4 20 exf6, but 16...Nd7? allows White to realize his dreams as 17 Qe3 Kf7 18 Bh3 is very strong.

17 Qxf6

White wins the exchange, but his king becomes exposed.

17...Bf7 18 Qxh8 Qxf4+ 19 Kb1 Bg6+ 20 Ka1 (Diagram 39)

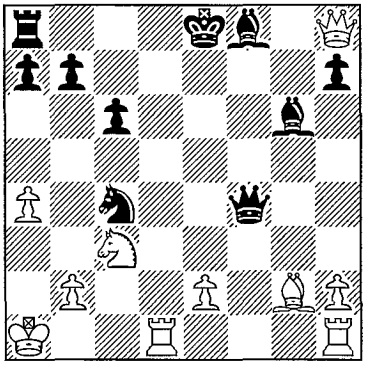

Diagram 39 (B)

A strong Jobava novelty

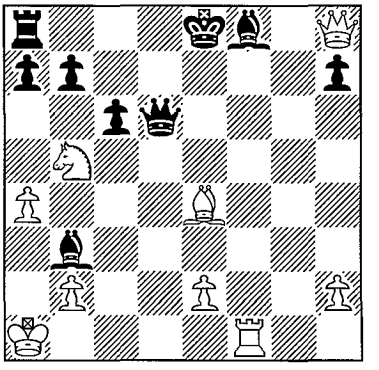

Diagram 40 (B)

A crushing tactic

A previous game between Gelfand and Morozevich had continued with 20 Ka2 here, but Jobava's opening preparation is legendary, and no doubt the text was the fruit of a lot of study.

20...Ne3 21 Rd2

A line which had flown around the world's chess sources after Gelfand-Morozevich was 21 Rhf1 Nc2+ 22 Ka2 Qc4+ 23 b3 Qc5 24 Ne4 Qa3+ 25 Kb1 Ne3 (happily pinning the knight, and not 25...Qxb3+ 26 Kc1 when Black is lost) and

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now 26 Qe5+ Be7 27 Qh8+ Bf8 with a draw. No doubt many computers had been set to work on the matter, but Jobava deserves credit for being the one who came up with the answer. After all Carlsen is no mean preparer himself, and he presumably hadn't.

21...Nc2+?

This loses fairly tamely, but it is possible Black is already lost. White's idea is 21...Nxg2 22 Rd4 Qf5 23 h4 – an amazing line, calmly giving up a whole piece just to get on with the game. I won't trouble you with the variations, but once the bishop is driven from g6 Black's defence is extremely difficult.

22 Rxc2 Bxc2 23 Rf1 Qd6 24 Be4!

The leitmotif of White's opening idea – once he gets rid of his own fairly poor bishop for Black's best piece, his remaining pieces tear Black apart, while if Black leaves the key diagonal...

24...Bb3 25 Nb5! (Diagram 40)

...then White can do this.

25...cxb5 26 Bxb7 Rb8 27 Bc6+ Kd8 28 Qxf8+ Kc7 29 Qg7+ Kxc6 30 Qc3+ Kb6 31 Qxb3 Ka5 32 Qc3+ Qb4 33 Qc7+ Rb6 34 Qxa7+ Ra6 35 Qc7+ Rb6 36 Rf4 Qb3 37 Qa7+ Ra6 38 Qc5 Rg6 39 axb5 1-0

A very modern game. I would imagine White had it up to move 31 on his computer before he sat down. Of course not everyone thinks that kind of thing is such a wonderful idea, but this sort of preparation is more of a creative effort than people sometimes give credit for, and there's also something aesthetic in the glimpse of the truth it gives. It's an easy mistake to think this kind of game is random tactics: it's not – the responsibilities Black took on with ...g5, and the decision White took on move 12 as to how to punish him, shaped the whole of the rest of the game – look how control of the diagonal weakened by ...g5 governs the whole play between moves 21 and 25.

Few can remember this sort of deep theory, but as long as you know what White's trying to do you won't go too far astray. In any case this line is one of the most fashionable and fast-developing in the book: I've just showed a beautiful game which is presently the last word, but by the time you read this the elite may well have their attention turned elsewhere in their quest to bust the Morozevich Variation – and I expect the man himself is already one step ahead, with a new system to unveil elsewhere in the opening.

Game 24

☐ **Ki.Georgiev** ■ **S.Erenburg**

Gibraltar 2005

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 e3 b5 6 c5 Nbd7 7 b4 a5 8 bxa5 Qxa5 9 Bd2 b4

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10 Nb1 Ne4 11 a3 Nxd2 12 Nfxd2 Rb8 13 Be2 e5 14 0-0 Be7

As Scherbakov points out Black might well have thought about getting rid of the queenside pawns with 14...bxa3!? 15 Rxa3 Qc7, although after 16 Nc3 Be7 17 Qc2 0-0 18 Rfa1 White has the typical play on the queenside he is looking for in this set-up.

15 Nb3 Qc7 16 a4 (Diagram 41)

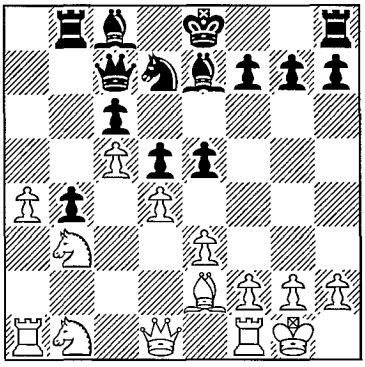

Diagram 41 (B)
The a-pawn begins its advance

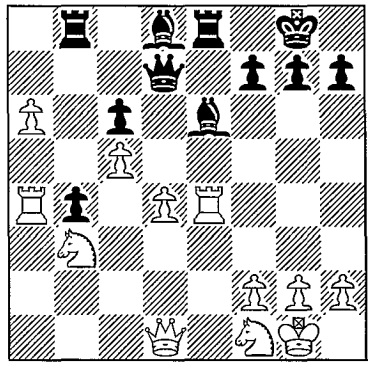

Diagram 42 (W)
Black tries to mix it up

NOTE: Black's passed b-pawn is well blockaded, whereas it's much harder to fight against White's since the pawn chain makes it harder for Black to bring pieces to the relevant theatre of war.

16...0-0 17 a5 Nf6 18 Ra4 Bf5 19 N1d2 Rfe8 20 a6 exd4 21 exd4 Bd8 22 Re1 Qe7 23 Nf1 Ne4

Already envisaging the coming positional pawn sacrifice. Otherwise White simply had a clear advantage.

24 Bd3 Be6 25 Bxe4 dxe4 26 Rxe4 Qd7 (Diagram 42)

Black has some activity for his pawn – his queen's bishop in particular is a new man – but White should be able to retain the advantage.

27 h3 Bf6 28 Nfd2 Ra8 29 Qf1 Reb8 30 Nc4 Bd8?!

30...Qd5 (Scherbakov) would have forced White to retract his last move. The position is in a curious kind of equilibrium: White finds it hard to make progress.

31 Re3 g6 32 Nca5 Bc7 33 Qe2 Ra7

33...Qd5 (Scherbakov again) would have stopped what White now does and challenged White to find a new way of arranging his pieces and showing how he could progress.

34 Nc4 Qd5 35 Nb6!? Bxb6 36 cxb6 Rxb6 37 Nc5 Qxd4 38 Nxe6 fxe6 39 Rxe6

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White's operation has transformed his advantage, which now consists of Black's shaky king, while Black is handicapped by having also to defend his pawns and keep the a-pawn quiet. While I suspect there was an element of time trouble opportunism about it this is also so typical of the ways really strong players find to keep the rest of us under pressure: just when Erenburg probably thought he was doing all right keeping White at bay with his bishops and minus pawn, he finds himself having to confront a whole different set of problems.

39...Rb8?

Pretty much losing a pawn for nothing: 39...Qc5! held on for the moment at least.

40 Rxc6

40 Re8+ Rxe8 41 Qxe8+ Kg7 42 Qb8 with the threat of Rxb4 seems to win at once, but the text is fine also.

40...Qd5 41 Rc4 b3 42 Rab4 Rba8 43 Rb6! Rd8

Now the b-pawn just goes, but 43...Rd7 44 Rxb3 Qd1+ 45 Qxd1 Rxd1+ 46 Kh2 Rxa6 47 Rb7 Rd8 48 Rcc7 was grim too.

44 Rcb4 Qd1+ 45 Qxd1 Rxd1+ 46 Kh2 Rf7 47 Ra4 Rd8 48 Rxb3 Rxf2 49 a7 Rff8 50 Rb7 Rc8 51 Rab4 Ra8 52 Rc7 1-0

A technical game which is rather typical of this method of handling the ...a6 Slav: White's plan is a fairly simple one of using the a-file and his queenside space advantage to keep Black under pressure. It isn't usually possible to knock respectable openings over with a single simple plan and I'm sure Black will come back with answers, but maybe Korchnoi's sour prediction is coming true?

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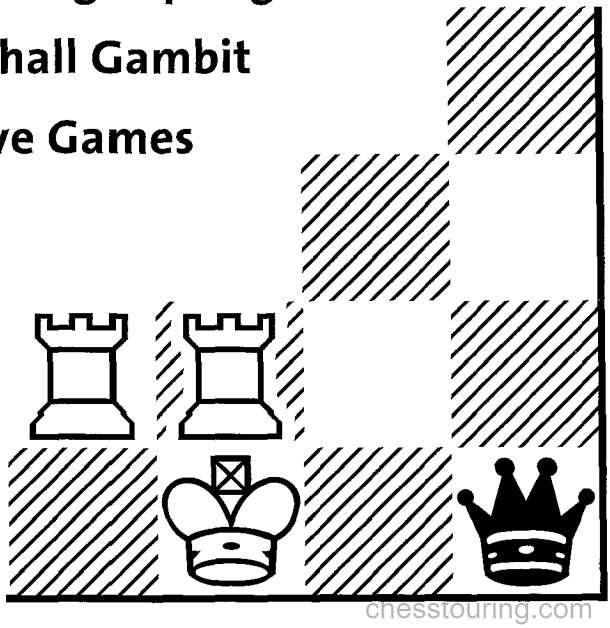
Chapter Eight

The Semi-Slav

- Introduction
- The Botvinnik Variation
- The Anti-Moscow Gambit
- The Cambridge Springs
- The Marshall Gambit
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 (Diagram 1)

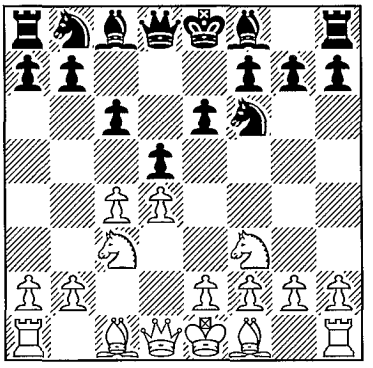

Diagram 1 (W)
Much sharper than it first appears

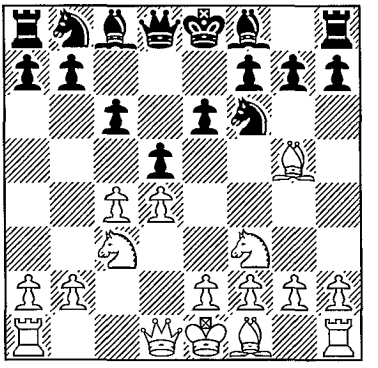

Diagram 2 (B)
Preparing to sacrifice the c-pawn

This is the Semi-Slav, one of Rubinstein's inventions. At first sight it looks like a passive system, which restricts Black's queen's bishop and gives up on the whole idea of the Slav, but Black's timing is sharp: White hasn't quite developed his queen's bishop yet, and just before he can do so Black has everything in place to threaten ...dxc4 in earnest. White can perfectly well – and more frequently does – play 5 e3 to defend the pawn, but then he loses the chance to develop the queen's bishop actively in the short term, while Black plans via a well-timed ...dxc4, ...a6, ...b5, ...Bb7 and ...c5 to liberate his own queen's bishop. 5 e3 is the Meran system and will be an important opening as long as chess is played, but nonetheless if White wants to pose a fundamental challenge to the Semi-Slav's right to exist, I think he has to play 5 Bg5. Notice that Black's move order to arrive at this position has prevented White from playing an effective Queen's Gambit Exchange variation, since his knight is committed to f3 before ...e6 is played.

5 Bg5 (Diagram 2) 5...dxc4

The Moscow variation (5...h6) and 5...Nbd7, transposing to the Cambridge Springs variation of the QGD, are both valid alternatives dealt with below. Black can also try and reach a Semi-Slav via the Abrahams variation, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6, but there I will be advocating 4 e4, the Marshall gambit.

The text introduces the Botvinnik system, named for the fifth and one of the greatest world champions, one of the sharpest and most analysed opening systems in chess, and perhaps of all the queen's pawn openings the one which leads most easily to positions where the material balance is not the most important factor. A

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disproportionate number of the greatest games ever have been played in this system (L.Polugaevsky-E.Torre, Moscow 1981 and V.Ivanchuk-A.Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1996 being the two that leap to mind). When I told one GM I was writing this book and including the Botvinnik, he told me I was mad: 'it's all computers, and the game starts on move 20.' There might be some sour truth in that at GM level, but it would be a sad state of affairs if amateurs couldn't play chess's most exciting lines as well, so I'm making no apologies for including it.

The Botvinnik Variation

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4

It's too late for second thoughts: 6 a4 Bb4 is comfortable for Black, and anyway the text looks pretty strong, threatening to win a piece by 7 e5 or recapture the pawn with 7 Bxc4, no?

6...b5 (Diagram 3)

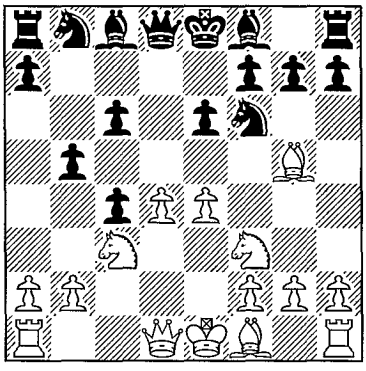

Diagram 3 (W)
Black can save his piece

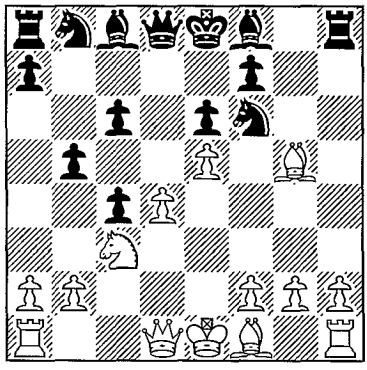

Diagram 4 (B)
Regaining the piece

After seeing the next section, one might get the idea to play 6...h6 here, trying to revert to that system, but it's too late for that: 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 Bxc4 is good for White, who has an accelerated version of the Moscow variation.

7 e5 h6

No, it was an optical illusion. With this typical twist, which occurs also in the MacCutcheon French, Black saves the piece, but in the process transforms the gambit from a White one to a Black one.

8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5

So White wins material; with the text Black gives up a pawn, but with Alatortsev's

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ever-dubious 9...Nd5 he can make it an exchange instead. White should take up the challenge with 10 Nxf7 Qxh4 11 Nxh8 Bb4 (the knight is invulnerable: 11...Bg7 12 Ng6 Qg5 13 Qc2 rescues it, while 11...Nxc3 12 bxc3 Bg7 13 Qc2 Bxh8 14 Qh7 wins the bishop back in return for it) 12 Rc1 c5 (12...Qe4+ 13 Be2 Nf4 14 Qd2! is very good for White) 13 dxc5 Nd7 14 Be2 Nxe5 15 0-0 Bb7 16 Bh5+ Ke7 17 Qe2 Rg8 (A brave try: 17...Qg5 18 Qxe5 is a cruel point) 18 Qxe5 Rxg2+ 19 Kh1 when Black is lost and White wins after 19...Nf4 20 Ng6+! and 19...Rxh2+ 20 Qxh2 Nxc3+ 21 f3.

TIP: White's plan of Be2-h5+, rescuing the knight or chasing the king to the bare kingside as the case may be, is usually an important resource in the Alatortsev.

10 Bxg5 (Diagram 4) 10...Nbd7

10...Be7 is also possible; White continues naturally with 11 exf6 Bxf6 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 g3 Na6 14 Bg2 Bb7 15 Ne4 (important to drive the Black queen from its fine post before ...0-0-0 can attack the d4 pawn) 15...Qe7 16 0-0 0-0-0 17 a4 with a complicated position in which he retains somewhat the better chances: as a rule these lie more in exploiting the rather loose black pawns than in a direct assault on the king, which is well defended by pieces and indeed pawns in spite of a rather airy look.

NOTE: White's 13th move and the light-squared bishop usually belongs on the long diagonal in this system, otherwise the combination of the b7-bishop and a rook on g8 can be most uncomfortable.

11 g3 (Diagram 5)

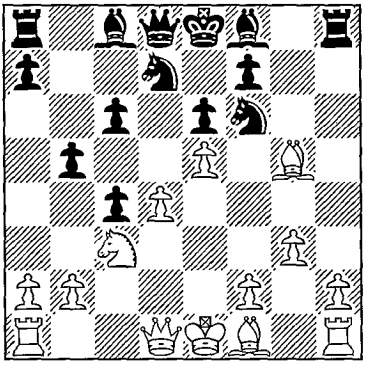

Diagram 5 (B)
It's already complex!

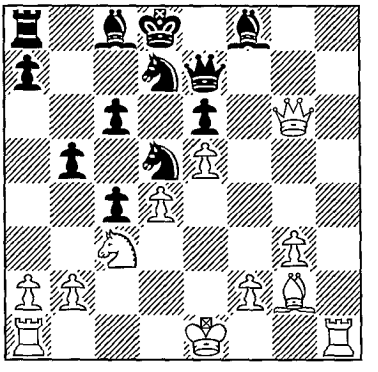

Diagram 6 (B)
Who is better?

Again the bishop belongs on the diagonal: 11 exf6 is an alternative which usually

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transposes to the position after move 15 below. The text allows Black some deviations which we'll see as we go along, but after 11 exf6 Black has 11...Bb7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 Qc7 14 Bg2 b4, while 13...Nxf6 and 13...Bh6 are also well-respected tries.

11...Bb7

11...Rg8 is perhaps the main argument against White's move order: 12 h4 Rxg5 (the point; otherwise Black has just put his rook on a passive square and given White a useful move for free)13 hxg5 Nd5 14 g6 (clearly best, liquidating the doubled pawn and undermining Black's structure) 14...fxg6 15 Qg4 Qe7 16 Bg2 is a reasonably oft-debated position, and now 16...Kd8 (Shirov's move is the vogue; the alternatives are 16...Qf7 17 Be4 Ne7 18 Nxb5 cxb5 19 Bxa8, when White should return his bishop to e4 and support it with f3 rather than exchanging, and 16...Ba6 17 Qxg6+ Qf7 18 Qxf7+ Kxf7 19 Ne4 or 19 f4, producing a tense and little-tried position) 17 Qxg6 **(Diagram 6)** 17...Qb4 18 Qc2 Qa5 was V.Kramnik-A.Shirov, Monaco (rapid) 2002 which Kramnik lost after castling short: it seems to me that keeping the rook on the h-file with 19 Kf1, followed by Rh7, Ne4, and Kg1 or Rd1 as necessary, would have given White a much more harmonious position.

The way Botvinnik played it was 11...Qa5, which doesn't have a great reputation, but is still a critical try, seeking to take advantage of the loose g5-bishop and the pin on the a5-e1 diagonal. After 12 exf6 Ba6 (aiming to prevent Bg2, since then ...c3 prevents castling) 13 Qf3 (the queen is a good substitute for the bishop on the long diagonal) 13...b4 (12 ...b4 13 Ne4 Ba6 14 Qf3 transposes, while 13...Rc8 commits the king to the centre and was beautifully dealt with in V.Kramnik-J.Ehlvest, Riga 1995: 14 Be2 b4 15 Ne4 c5 16 d5! exd5 17 Qf5!! with an overwhelming attack) 14 Ne4 0-0-0 15 Be2 Bb7! (**Diagram 7)**

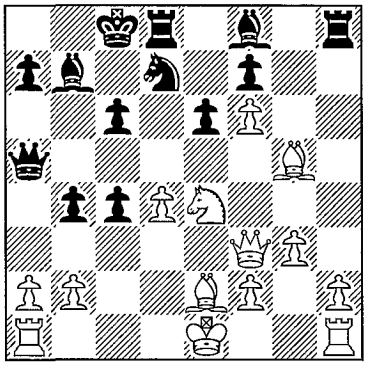

Diagram 7 (W)
Another unbalanced struggle

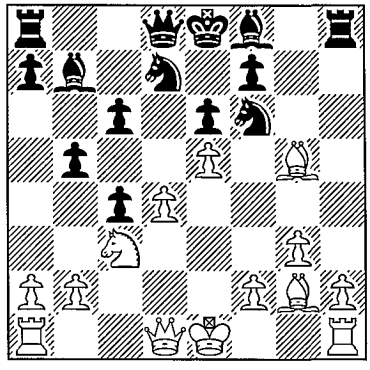

Diagram 8 (B)
Contesting the long diagonal

the position is critical. Khalifman's recommendation is 16 0-0 Qd5 17 Be3 c5 18

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Nd2, but in my opinion White has nothing – if that – after 18...cxd4 19 Qxd5 exd5 20 Bxd4 Bc5. Khalifman is dismissive of the 'greedy' 16 Bxc4 c5, when he implies that Black stands well with the threat of ...Nb6, but after 17 Bd3 I think White retains chances to prove a little something.

WARNING: Even very strong players sometimes fail completely to grasp the point in these sidelines. The 2620 Hungarian GM Ferenc Berkes recently played 15 Bg2?, instead of 15 Be2, and after 15 ...c3 failed to make it past move 25; this is more or the less the raison d'etre of Black's whole development.

12 Bg2 (Diagram 8) 12...Qb6

One of the main reasons to play 11 g3 is 12...Qc7 13 exf6 c5 14 0-0, whereas after 11 exf6 Bb7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 Qc7 14 Bg2 White is move-ordered into the position he would have reached had he played 14 d5 in our order, when 14...b4 is a presently fashionable sideline. There is also 12...Qa5 here with the idea that after 13 exf6 0-0-0 14 0-0 Black can get his knight to d3 with 14...Nc5, but this accomplishment is not enough to justify the tempi lost and the foolishly placed queen; after the simple 15 Be3 Nd3 16 Qc2 White is ready for Ne4, b3 and so on, while 16...c5 17 Bxb7+ Kxb7 18 dxc5 Bxc5 19 Bxc5 Nxc5 20 b4! is a handy trick to remember.

13 exf6 0-0-0

Black can transpose with 13...c5 14 d5 0-0-0 15 0-0, although 14...b4 is a move-order which demands resolute action in the form of 15 0-0. Black has no better then than 15...0-0-0 going back to the main lines, since 15...bxc3 16 dxe6 0-0-0 (16...fxe6 17 f7+) 17 Bxb7+ Qxb7 is very strong after 18 exd7+ Rxd7 19 Qc2 Rd5 20 Bh4 Rd3 21 Rfe1!.

14 0-0 c5 (Diagram 9)

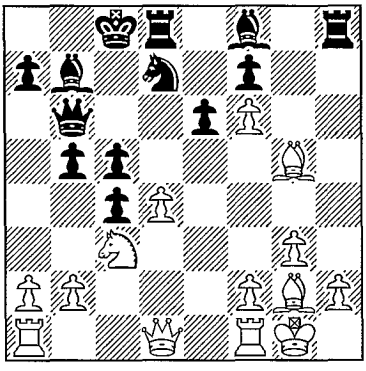

Diagram 9 (W)
A necessary weakening from Black

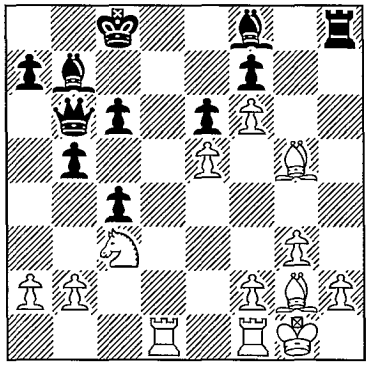

Diagram 10 (B)
A thematic and strong queen sacrifice

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I remember being astounded when I first saw this move. I couldn't understand why Black wanted to open up his king, weaken b5, and trade off White's d4 weakness. Now I can see that while these things are regrettable, without this move Black's queen's bishop and to a lesser extent queen's knight cannot play, and that he gains just as much in terms of king safety by trading the g2-bishop as by losing his b7 one. In fact the text triggers a vicious battle for the central light squares which forms the motif for the whole of the main line.

Instead 14...Bh6 seems to be rather well met by 15 Be3 Nxf6 16 Qf3 Bxe3 17 fxe3 Rh6 18 Qf4 Rdh8 19 Qg5, a clever manoeuvre which enables White to clamp down on ...c5 and keep an edge, and 14...Ne5 15 dxe5 is a famous queen sacrifice which is probably just very good for White. In *Fire On Board* Shirov writes of his sadness on meeting Botvinnik as a teenager when the old champion insisted that the sacrifice was unsound: Shirov knew better and realized that the Patriarch was no longer in touch with events in the variation which in Russia is linked more than any other with his name: 15...Rxd1 16 Raxd1 **(Diagram 10)** 16...b4 17 Ne4 c5 18 Bf4 a5 19 Rd2 a4 20 Rfd1 Bd5 21 Rxd5 exd5 22 Ng5 d4 23 Nxf7 Rg8 24 Bh3+ Kb7 25 e6 b3 26 axb3 cxb3 27 e7 Bxe7 28 fxe7 Qg6 29 Nd6+ Kc6 30 Re1 a3 31 Nc4 1-0 was the entertaining game A.Shabalov-J.Sammour, Philadelphia 1998: White's Ne4 and Bf4 plan here is typical, as is Rxd5 (White has to be prepared to invest a further exchange in this way) and Ng5-f7; once the f-pawn goes Black's chances of defending are slim.

15 d5 b4 16 Rb1 (Diagram 11)

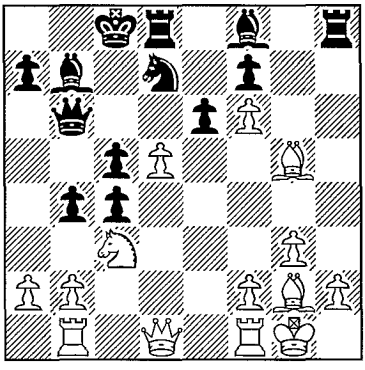

Diagram 11 (B)
Hoping the b-file will open

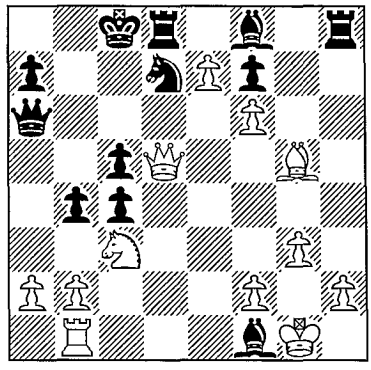

Diagram 12 (B)
Threatening 20 Qa8+

16 Na4 is the main alternative with another mass of theory on it, but the text is strong. 'This move somehow doesn't seem so logical to me, but it's terribly dangerous' (Shirov) – a feeling familiar to many Shirov victims.

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NOTE: It's certainly possible to see 16 Rb1 as a logical continuation of the fight for the central light squares; not only does White refuse to remove the c3-knight from its position attacking them, he also prepares to remove Black's light-squared bishop should his knight be captured.

16...Qa6

Escaping not only the baleful glare of the rook but also from a likely attack by the knight from d5 or a4, this unobvious move is thought to be best. The knight cannot be taken – 16...bxc3 17 bxc3 Qa6 18 Rxb7 Qxb7 19 dxe6 is crushing for White – and the main alternative is 16...Bh6 but White has a strong reply in 17 Bxh6 Rxh6 18 b3. If Black doesn't take the knight then he loses the battle for the white squares and stands worse, but 18...bxc3 19 bxc4 Qa6 20 Rxb7 Qxb7 21 dxe6 Qa6 22 Qc1 Rxf6 23 exd7+ Rxd7 24 Qxc3 is clearly more comfortable for White.

17 dxe6 Bxg2 18 e7

White has to keep hacking; both 18 Kxg2 Qxe6 and 18 exd7+ Rxd7 19 Qa4 Qxa4 20 Nxa4 Bc6 are hopeless for him.

18...Bxf1

A move whose strategic point is very well described by Khalifman – 'Black continues to destroy White's pieces'! Instead 18...bxc3 19 exd8Q+ Kxd8 20 Kxg2 simply loses material while 18...Qc6? 19 Nb5 is also the end, but the more reasonable alternatives seem to fall short as well: 18...Bb7 19 exd8Q+ Kxd8 20 Ne2 Bf3 21 Re1! (a cunning prophylactic move to prevent 21...Qe6, which now fails to 22 Nd4) 21...Bd6 22 Qd2 Ba8 23 f3 Ne5 24 Rf1 (a really fine pendulum manoeuvre with the rook: it is worth losing two tempi just to keep Black's most powerful piece stuck on a6), left one of the Botvinnik's greatest modern supporters worse as Black in S.Atalik-Se.Ivanov, Yugoslav Team Ch. 1999.

19 Qd5 (Diagram 12)

A move which really crowns White's strategic design of fighting for the central White squares and is surely aesthetically forced. Now 19...bxc3 20 Qa8+ Nb8 21 Qxb8+ is unthinkable and 19...Qb6 allows White to regain material equality with 20 Na4, so really the choices are usually thought to come down to moves of the f8-bishop to connect the rooks as we will explore further in Game 25.

The Anti-Moscow Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 (Diagram 13)

This is the Moscow Variation. Black's attention is still devoted to the c4-pawn, but he takes things in a slightly different order from the Botvinnik.

6 Bh4

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And this is the Anti-Moscow Gambit. For many years 6 Bxf6 was considered to be necessary, with the text a rash venture. Spassky and Kasparov were two who were prepared to play the gambit long ago, but since the mid to late nineties this move has come to the fore as the way to challenge Black's idea, although 6 Bxf6 and 7 e3 is still a respected system.

6...dxc4 7 e4 g5

This is the difference. Black is able to play this move before White has played e5, so he can force White into a true gambit, indeed one of the very few genuine gambits left in circulation at the top level (the two Marshall gambits are the others that come to mind).

8 Bg3 b5 9 Be2 (Diagram 14)

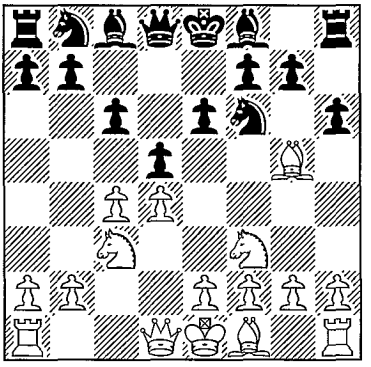

Diagram 13 (W)
Postponing ...dxc4

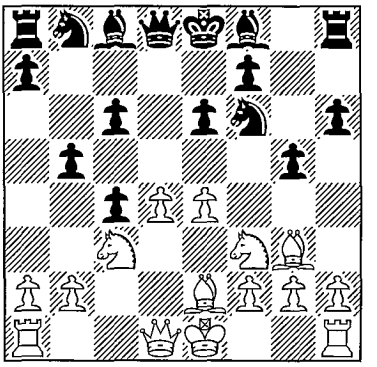

Diagram 14 (B)
White has full compensation

For his pawn White is not only noticeably better developed but has also forced Black to weaken himself on both sides. It's not easy to see where Black is going to secrete his king. In addition Black's queen's bishop is restricted, and whether or not Black can release that tends to be the critical strategic question.

9...Bb7

This is very much the main move, but Black has tried a number of alternatives:

a) 9...Nbd7 allows the immediate breakthrough 10 d5 which gives White the advantage, such as after 10...cxd5 11 exd5 Nb6 12 dxe6 Bxe6 13 Nd4 or after 10...b4 11 dxe6 bxc3 12 exd7+ Bxd7 13 bxc3 Nxe4 14 Qd4.

b) 9...b4 wins the central pawn at the cost of weakening Black's own important c-pawn, and after 10 Na4 Nxe4 11 Be5 Nf6 White has the splendid move 12 Nc5 **(Diagram 15)**, preserving his magnificent bishop from exchange and dominating the c8-bishop, after which 12...Bg7 13 Bxc4 0-0 14 Qc2 (the advantage of the bishop

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on e5 shows; normally Black can meet this move with ...Qxd4 which prevents White from castling long, but now White has everything) 14...Nbd7 15 h4 was superb for White in K.Sakaev-M.Kobalija, Russian Ch., St Petersburg 1998.

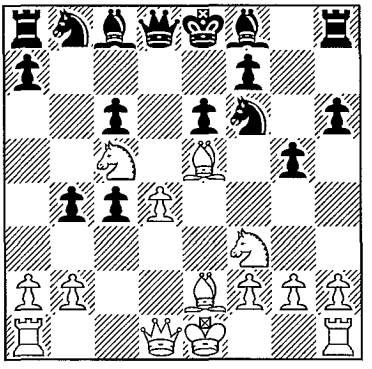

Diagram 15 (B)
Black is overwhelmed

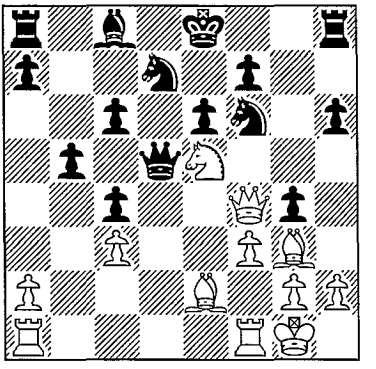

Diagram 16 (B)
Black misses his dark-squared bishop

c) 9...Bb4 doesn't look the right place for this piece. White does best to defend the e-pawn with 10 Qc2 which amounts to a sacrifice of the d-pawn, but after 10...g4 11 Ne5 Qxd4 12 0-0 White shouldn't count pawns, having started he has to go on, and 12...Bxc3 13 bxc3 Qxe4 14 Qd2 Nbd7 15 f3 Qd5 16 Qf4 **(Diagram 16)** is very dangerous for Black.

TIP: 15 f3 was the key move without which White would have nothing; he must open lines quickly in this variation.

d) 9...Nh5 probably loses by force after a long tactical line although White does have to be prepared for some gritty calculation: 10 Be5 Rg8 11 Bxb8 Rxb8 12 Ne5 Nf4 13 Nxc6 Nxg2+ 14 Kf1 Qb6 15 Nxb8 Nf4 16 Bxc4 a6 (16...bxc4 17 Qa4+ Ke7 18 Qxa7+ is the point) and now 17 Bb3 seems to consolidate.

e) 9...a6 has the good idea to defend b5 and thus promote ...c5 freeing the bishop, but 10 0-0 Bb7 11 Qc2 c5 12 d5 exd5 13 exd5 Bd6 14 Bxd6 Qxd6 15 a4 b4 16 Ne4 Nxe4 17 Qxe4+ Qe6 18 Qc2 Qd6 19 Nd2 is very good for White.

10 h4 (Diagram 17)

10 Ne5 and 10 0-0 are two very popular alternatives.

10...g4

10...b4 is the main alternative but White seems to have a splendid piece sacrifice: 11 hxg5 bxc3 12 bxc3! Nxe4 13 Be5 Nxc3 (13...Rh7 14 Qb1! is a typical blow in this variation and 14...Qa5 15 Nd2! gives White a huge advantage) 14 Qc2 Nxe2 15

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Kxe2 and now Black seems to be forced to abandon the rook and be the exchange down for only vague compensation, since 15...Rg8 16 gxh6 Bxh6 17 Rxh6 Nd7 18 Qh7 Rxg2 19 Kf1 gives White a fierce attack.

11 Ne5 (Diagram 18)

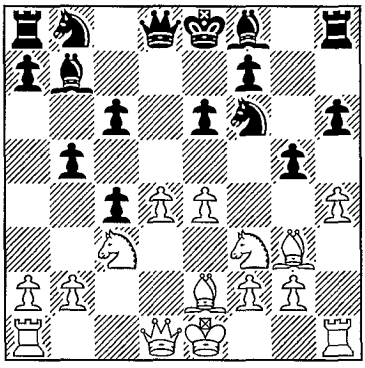

Diagram 17 (B)
Weakening Black's kingside

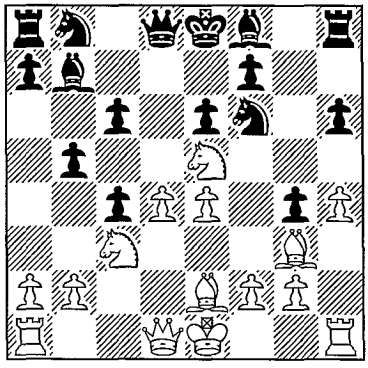

Diagram 18 (B)
A logical follow-up to 10 h4

Now 11...h5 is the subject of Game 26, although 11...b4 was Dreev's reaction in the first game in this line, but 12 Na4 Nxe4 13 Bxc4 Nxg3 14 fxg3 Nd7 15 Nxf7 Kxf7 16 Qxg4 Qe7 17 0-0+ Ke8 18 Bxe6 gave White a devastating attack. Black's main alternatives are to give up the g4-pawn in one way or another with 11...Rg8 being the most popular alternative: White continues with 12 Nxg4 Nbd7 13 Nxf6+ Nxf6 (13...Qxf6 was Dreev's choice in L.Van Wely-A.Dreev, Moscow 2004, which went on 14 e5 Qf5 15 Bf3 0-0-0 16 Qe2 Nb6 when Van Wely played 17 a4 and proposed a draw, but 17 0-0-0 was certainly an alternative) 14 Bf3 Qb6 and now, not 15 0-0 0-0-0 16 d5?? Rxg3, but 15 Qd2 when 15...0-0-0 16 Qf4 wins material, so White has time to continue with Rd1 and has good prospects.

The Cambridge Springs

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7

This move lacks the logic of the last two games, in as much as it abandons the assault on the c-pawn and instead transposes to variations which are strictly part of the orthodox Queen's Gambit Declined.

6 e3 Qa5 (Diagram 19)

This is the Cambridge Springs variation, first played by Emanuel Lasker, but now named after a tournament in that USA town in 1904. Black's idea is to entice some

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concession by having unpinned his f6-knight and thus enabling play against the c3-knight with ...Bb4 and ...Ne4. Black can of course also play 6...Be7, but this rather rare as it leads to an ancient form of the QGD in which Black has committed to ...c6 early and has also not got in ...h6.

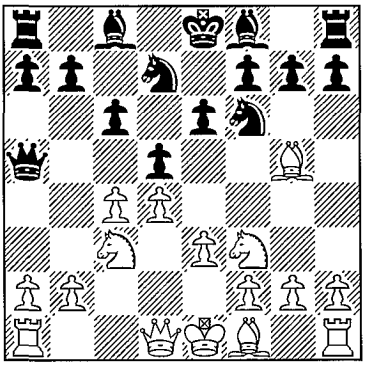

Diagram 19 (W)
Black transposes to a QGD

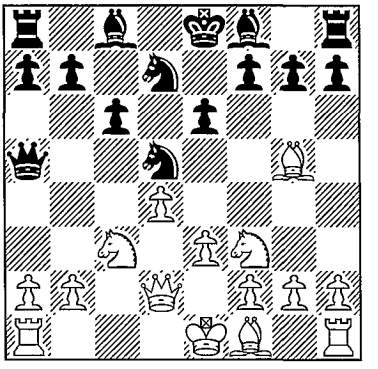

Diagram 20 (B)
Preparing to sacrifice a pawn

7 cxd5

With this move White effectively has to be willing to make a long-term positional sacrifice of a pawn in many different ways, but if this isn't you then 7 Nd2 is the move.

7...Nxd5

7...exd5 is the equivalent of playing ...Qa5 in the middle of a QGD Exchange for no reason, but even so the threat of ...Ne4 has to be addressed: 8 Nd2 is the simplest, followed by Bd3, Qc2 and 0-0, after which White can decide on the famous minority attack b4-b5, or perhaps play in the centre with e4, depending on Black's dispositions.

8 Qd2 (Diagram 20) 8...Bb4

The major alternative is 8...N7b6 after which White can hardly avoid sacrificing a pawn with 9 Bd3 Nxc3 10 bxc3 when Black has two ways to approach the c-pawn:

a) 10...Nd5 is the older move which leads after 11 0-0 Qxc3 12 Qe2 Bd6 13 Nd2 Qa5 14 Nc4 Qc7 15 Nxd6+ Qxd6 16 Bh4 0-0 17 Bg3 to a much-quoted position where White's bishops, centre and better development are supposed to give more than enough for the pawn, and certainly no-one seems anxious to explore this variation for Black.

b) 10...Na4 is the modern try which is associated with a tricky sequence: 11 0-0 Qxc3 12 Qe2 Qb2 (this is Black's idea: 12...Qa5 13 Ne5 Bd6 14 f4 Qc7 15 Qh5 makes

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it very difficult for him to develop) 13 Bc2 Qb5 14 Qd1 Nc3 15 Qd2, but after 15...Bb4 White obtained more than adequate compensation with 16 Bd3 Qa4 17 a3 Ba5 18 Qb2 f6 19 Bh4 Nd5 20 Rfc1 Bc7 21 Rc4 Qa5 22 Qc2 **(Diagram 21)**

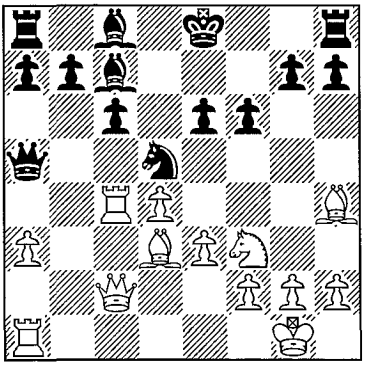

Diagram 21 (B)
The compensation won't run away

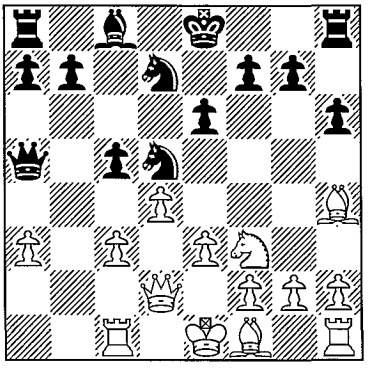

Diagram 22 (B)
Black can again win a pawn

in E.Magerramov-R.Scherbakov, Cheliabinsk 1991: notice how patiently White developed his initiative here, which is typical for this line.

9 Rc1 h6

There are several less challenging alternatives, including 9...e5 which leads straight to an unpleasant semi-endgame unless Black wants to dare a more than usually risky pawn snatch: 10 a3 Bd6 (10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 Qxa3 12 e4 N5b6 13 Bd3 is possible of course but looks pretty scary) 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 b4 Bxc3 14 Qxc3 Nxc3 15 bxa5 as in G.Kasparov-V.Smyslov, 9th matchgame, Vilnius 1984. However, 9...0-0 is a reasonable try and probably best met with 10 a3 when something like 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 Qxa3 12 e4 N5b6 13 Bd3 f6 14 Bh4 e5 15 0-0 Re8 16 Bg3 Qe7 produces a typical situation for this variation, in which White has promising compensation for his pawn and can choose between 17 Rfe1, Khalifman's 17 Ra1 (when Panczyk and Ilczuk's 17...a5 is very well met by 18 Nh4 now that moving the d7-knight to cover f5 leaves the b6 one friendless and inevitably driven back to d7 itself), or the direct 17 Nh4.

10 Bh4 c5 11 a3 Bxc3 12 bxc3 (Diagram 22)

Now the calm 12...b6 is examined in Game 27, while 12...Qxa3 13 e4 N5f6 14 Bd3 Qa5 reaches a controversial position. Khalifman and Mikhail Gurevich both state bluntly that White has the initiative after 15 d5! c4! 16 Bxc4 Nxe4 17 Qd4, but Panczyk and Ilczuk continue with 17...Ndf6 18 Bxf6 Nxf6 19 dxe6 Bxe6 20 Bxe6 fxe6 and claim Black is fine. I'm going to side with the two Polish gentlemen, but I do wonder whether 15 0-0 is as despicable as Khalifman claims. The point of

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Black's last was of course 15...cxd4 16 cxd4 Qxd2 17 Nxd2, but White's knight is well on its way to d6, the rook is ready to enter at c7, and he still has his two bishops and a substantial lead in development. All in all I think Black has definite problems still to solve, and 17...Nh5 18 f4 Nxf4 19 Rxf4 g5 20 Nc4! could be an important point.

The Marshall Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 (Diagram 23)

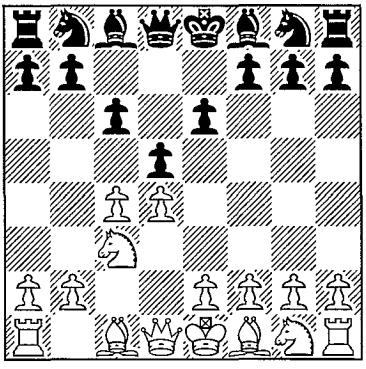

Diagram 23 (W)
Threatening 4...dxc4

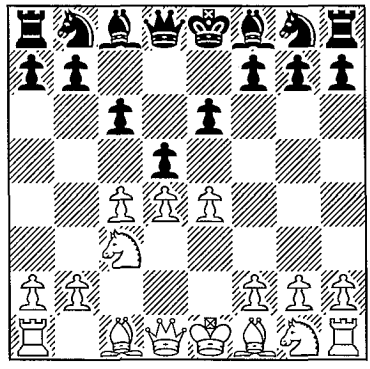

Diagram 24 (B)
An aggressive riposte

This is the Abrahams variation, although, to borrow one of Golombek's more imperialist observations, it is incorrectly called on the Continent the Noteboom variation. Black's idea can be thought of as an accelerated Semi-Slav. Again he is threatening genuinely to take the Queen's Gambit pawn, and again if White wants to he can save it by 4 e3, in which case Black may either smile and play 4...Nf6, almost certainly leading to the Meran system, or play 4...f5 with a form of Dutch Stonewall in which White didn't really want to play e3 before developing his queen's bishop.

The most obvious move in a way is 4 Nf3, but then Black demonstrates his idea with 4...dxc4 5 a4 Bb4 6 e3 b5 7 Bd2 a5 (this move is the essence of the Abrahams) 8 axb5 Bxc3 9 Bxc3 cxb5 10 b3 b4 11 Bb2 Bb7 12 bxc4 Nf6 13 Bd3 Nbd7 14 0-0 0-0 15 Rfe1 Rfe8 16 Qc2 Qc7, or some such sequence (this is the deep main line of the opening; of course there are offshoots). I would naturally according to my credo recommend that to you as the critical approach, but for one thing – this system for Black is held in very, very high regard by theory and also by top players, and grandmasters of 2600+ seldom allow it. As the Liverpool barrister proudly boasted

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of his January 1925 invention, the thoughts of youth were long, long thoughts.

Meanwhile, it's true that White hasn't yet played Nf3, and thus you might think that 4 cxd5 exd5 would enable him to transpose seamlessly into the Exchange. Sadly though, Black hasn't played ...Nf6 either, so White's next move is a bit of a poser. 5 Nf3 is no good for the reasons we know, so it really has to be 5 Bf4, but then Black hasn't played ...Be7 either, and he can meet this without loss of tempo by 5...Bd6. This too is considered rather comfortable for Black.

So why doesn't the Abrahams refute the Queen's Gambit altogether?! Well, there was a price to pay for Black's single-minded concentration on the c-pawn; he had to delay ...Nf6. White's next move is therefore a thoroughly consequent step, and indeed is the way that very strong players normally go in this position (unless they are going to play 4 e3, which is possible but not the repertoire I advocated against the Semi-Slav) and we're not going to let Black move order us into it just like that.

4 e4 (Diagram 24)

This is the 'other' Marshall Gambit (and actually predates the Abrahams, but in Marshall's time 3...c6 was played without the specific Abrahams idea). White logically exploits the absence of the knight on f6 to reach a position which is weirdly enough basically a Classical French, but with the addition of c4 and ...c6. Before we get into that, though, you may be thinking that this is all very well, but that Black might have played 2...c6 3 Nf3 and now 3 ...e6, and then where would you be? This is quite true: in fact most Abrahams types are combative sorts and prefer to avoid the notoriously unthrilling Exchange Slav, so this sequence is rare, but it is necessary to have a plan if one wants to avoid both the Abrahams main line and the Meran, and the one most GMs use is 4 Qc2 **(Diagram 25)**.

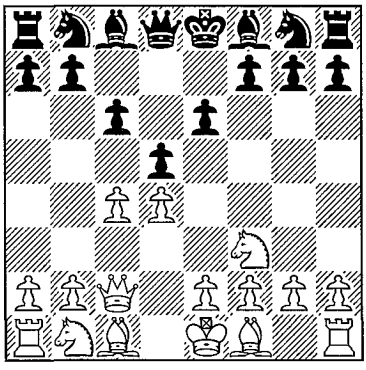

Diagram 25 (B)
An effective anti-Abrahams method

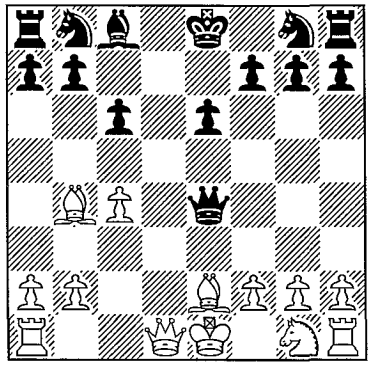

Diagram 26 (B)
Good dark-square compensation

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This line is neither common nor very difficult for White to play, so I haven't given it a whole game: a normal continuation would be 4...Nf6 5 Bg5 dxc4 (others lead to QGD formations in which Black has played the passive ...c6, but do note though 5...Nbd7 6 e3 Qa5+ when 7 Nc3 Bb4 is a undesirable version of the Cambridge Springs; instead 7 Nbd2 is good) 6 Qxc4 Be7 7 e3 b6 8 Qc2 0-0 9 Be2 Bb7 10 0-0 Nbd7 11 Nc3 with advantage to White as in Xu Jun-C.Sandipan, Jodphur 2003.

4...dxe4

Quite a popular alternative is 4...Bb4, leading to a weird Winawer French with c4 and ...c6 included. Grandmaster opinion seems to be settling on the immediate 5 cxd5 as the best reply; typical play then would be 5...exd5 (5...cxd5 6 e5 is a French where the disappearing c-pawns make it easier for White to defend his centre) 6 e5 Ne7 7 Nf3 c5 8 a3 Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Nbc6 10 Be2 Bg4 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rb1 (A.Khalifman-A.Galkin, Essent 2000), when White has a slight advantage with his active pieces and chances of an attack on the kingside dark squares.

5 Nxe4 Bb4+ 6 Bd2

This is the gambit. White could play 6 Nc3, of course, but Black's play after gaining a whole free tempo for development is just a bit too easy.

6...Qxd4

Black is committed: exchanging bishops and allowing c5 and Nd6 is unthinkable, while if he's just going to retreat then he should have chosen a different opening.

7 Bxb4 Qxe4+ 8 Be2 (Diagram 26)

Bronstein (a great exponent of this gambit) once wrote that White's development and Black's tender dark squares 'more or less balanced' the missing pawn, although his biographer Vainstein observed caustically that this observation 'was no doubt made in the hope that one of his future opponents would rise to the bait and be mated in this "roughly equal" position'.

8...Na6

Developing with tempo, but there are others:

a) 8...c5 is the main alternative, jettisoning the pawn but planning to capture on g2 and afford the queen a safe retreat to c6. White has various promising lines, but one straightforward yet promising approach is 9 Bxc5 Qxg2 10 Qd6 Nd7 11 0-0-0 Qc6 (11...Qxh1? 12 Bf3 drops the queen) 12 Ba3 Qxd6 13 Rxd6 when practice suggests that White has more than enough for the pawn.

b) 8...Qxg2 is generally frowned upon, although naturally it is a critical move and I doubt whether it's actually as bad as its reputation. One of theory's favourites against it is 9 Bf3 Qg5 10 Ne2 Na6 11 Bc3 Nf6 12 Rg1 Qf5 13 Nd4 Qe5+ 14 Kf1, when 14...0-0 15 Nxc6 Qf4 16 Qd4 is definitely good for White; a sterner test is 14...Qc7 15 Rxg7 e5, but clearly White is at least fine.

c) 8...Nd7 aims to block the bishop with ...c5 and get castled. White should carry on developing with 9 Nf3 c5 10 Bc3 Ne7 11 0-0 and now either 11...f6 12 Re1 Qc6

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13 Bd3 0-0 14 Qc2 or 11...0-0 12 Bd3 Qf4 13 Re1 Ng6 14 g3 Qh6 15 h4 give White at least adequate compensation for his pawn.

9 Ba5 (Diagram 27)

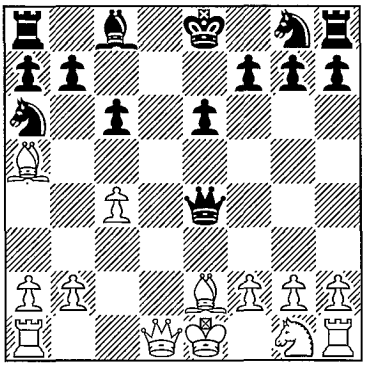

Diagram 27 (B)
With a threat!

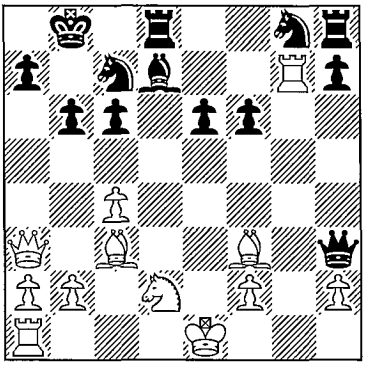

Diagram 28 (B)
Black is under some pressure

9 Bd6 and 9 Bc3 are older moves and dangerous enough, but recently this refinement has been the main try. White wants to induce ...b6 and get his queen to d6 with the gain of tempo on c6; it's true that the move he forces is a developing one, but he reasons that the black bishop will have to move again from d7.

9...f6

A bold move just allowing the queen into the heart of his position. The alternatives are interesting too:

a) 9...b6 10 Qd6 Bd7 (10...bxa5 11 Rd1 f6 12 f3 simply loses material, while 10...Bb7 11 0-0-0 is also grim) 11 Bc3! (at once, so that Bxg7 also threatens Qf8 mate and Black is thus obliged to prevent it, which is not the case after the slacker 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 12 Bc3 c5!) 11...f6 blunts both the c3-bishop and the knight when at the moment White's most promising approach seems to be 12 Nf3 (aiming for a set-up with this knight on d2 and the bishop on f3) 12...0-0-0 13 Nd2 Qxg2 14 Bf3 Qh3 15 Rg1 Nc7 16 Qa3 Kb8 17 Rxg7 **(Diagram 28)** and White had dangerous compensation in S.Volkov-A.Goloshchapov, Dubai 2003 (two great experts in opposition here).

b) 9...Bd7 10 Nf3 Nf6 leads to some long, rather forced, but very beautiful and interesting variations which seem at the moment to tend to equality, and which I just show briefly: 11 Qd6 Qf5 (a cunning and seemingly pointless move) 12 Ne5 Qxf2+ (olé) 13 Kxf2 Ne4+ 14 Kf3 Nxd6 15 Rhd1 Ke7 16 c5! (a critical position in which other tries have been abandoned) 16...Nxc5 17 Bb4 b6 18 Rac1 Nce4 19 Bd3 **(Diagram 29)**

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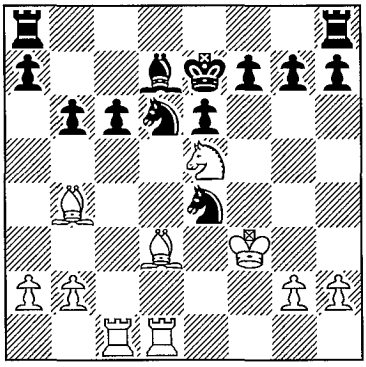

Diagram 29 (B)
Can Black defend?

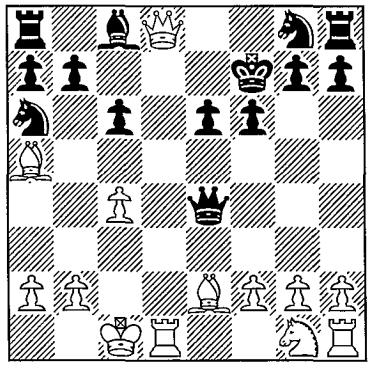

Diagram 30 (B)
Black is struggling to develop

19...f5 20 Bxe4 fxe4+ 21 Ke3 c5 22 Rxc5 bxc5 23 Bxc5, and now White is winning a piece back with quite a bind for the exchange, but practice seems to suggest that Black can hang on.

10 Qd8+ Kf7 11 0-0-0 (Diagram 30)

Now 11...e5 is seen in Game 28, while 11...b6 is a natural move which was Black's first reaction in this line, but which saw White win a beautiful attacking game after 12 Bc3 e5 13 Bh5+ g6 14 Bf3 Qf4+ 15 Rd2 Qxc4 16 Ne2 Qxa2 17 Rd6 Rb8 18 Rhd1 Be6?? 19 Rd7+! Bxd7 20 Rxd7+ in L.Van Wely-M.Krasenkow, Istanbul Olympiad 2000. However, 16...Rb8 seems to leave White nothing better than the draw after 17 Rhd1 Bf5 18 Rd7+ Bxd7 19 Rxd7+ Ke6 20 Rd6+ and so on; whether he can improve earlier remains to be seen.

Illustrative Games

Game 25
☐ **L.Van Wely** ■ **J.Smeets**
Dutch Championship, Leeuwarden 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7 11 g3 Bb7 12 Bg2 Qb6 13 exf6 0-0-0 14 0-0 c5 15 d5 b4 16 Rb1 Qa6 17 dxe6 Bxg2 18 e7 Bxf1 19 Qd5 (Diagram 31) 19...Bh6

Kramnik used to favour 19...Bxe7 20 fxe7 Bd3 (20...Rdg8 was an earlier effort against Kasparov in the 1994 New York PCA Grand-Prix, which the great man should have flattened totally with 21 Ne4 Rg6 22 Qa8+ Nb8 23 Bf4 Qb7 24 Qxb7+

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Kxb7 25 Kxf1 Kc6 26 Rd1 Nd7 and then 27 Nd6) 21 Ne4 Bxb1 22 Nd6+ Kc7 23 Bf4 Kb6 24 Nxc4+ Kb5 25 Nd6+ Kb6 when White can take a draw as several have done or carry on bravely with 26 exd8Q+ Rxd8 27 Nxf7 Re8 28 Qd6+ Ka5 29 Qc7+ Qb6 30 Qxd7 Re1+ 31 Kg2 Ka6 **(Diagram 32)**.

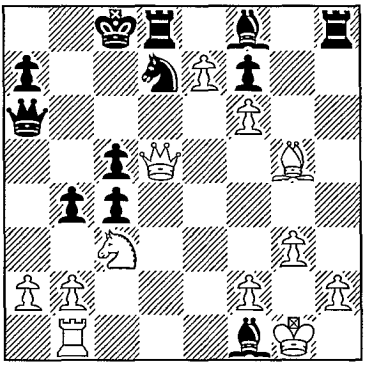

Diagram 31 (B)
How to connect the rooks?

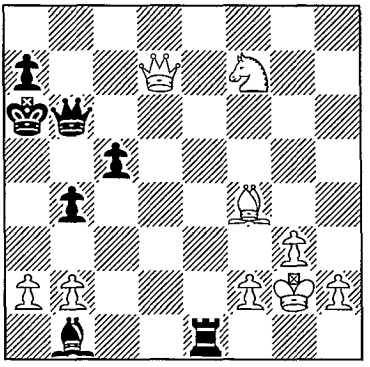

Diagram 32 (B)
It's still rather unclear

This is presently theory's last word and White is meant to be slightly better, probably because of 32 Nd8 when 32...Bxa2 loses after 33 Bc7 Bd5+ 34 Qxd5 Qxc7 35 Ne6, so Black has to play something else which is no doubt already tucked away in the computers of the leading GMs who play this variation, but anyway I think we need to get back to the game.

20 Bxh6 Bd3 (Diagram 33)

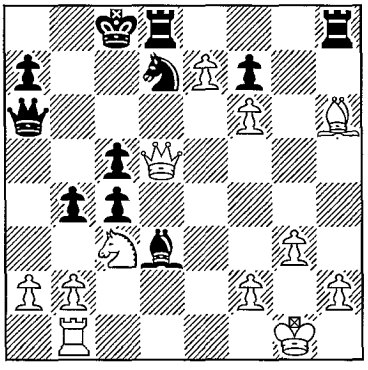

Diagram 33 (W)
Returning the rook

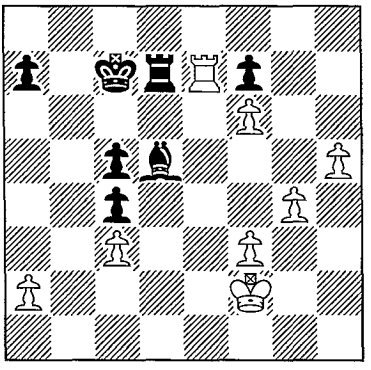

Diagram 34 (B)
White queens

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A stunning defence and the only move played so far. 20...Rxh6?? is smashed by 21 Qa8+ Nb8 22 exd8Q+.

21 Qa8+

White has other tries but this is the thematic one.

WARNING: 21 exd8Q+ is well met by 21...Kxd8 with equality: this is the whole point of giving up the bishop with 19...Bh6 rather than 19...Bxe7.

21...Nb8 22 exd8Q+ Rxd8 23 Re1 bxc3 24 Bf4 Qb6

24...Qb7? 25 Re7 is the crux of White's idea, elaborated initially by Yermolinsky.

25 bxc3 Bf5

Black's only constructive idea is to take the bishop round to the long diagonal to force a queen exchange.

26 f3

This was the first new move of the game in place of the 26 h4 of Z.Azmaiparashvili-A.Shirov, Madrid 1996. Van Wely's idea is to take it more slowly, and also he perceives that the important pawn to push forward is not the h-pawn but the g-pawn. It's always interesting how long-lasting some positional themes are; even at this stage it's still the party who gets a grip on the central light squares who wins.

26...Be6 27 g4 Bd5 28 Qxb8+ Qxb8 29 Bxb8 Kxb8 30 Kf2 Kc7

30...Bc6 31 Re7 Rd2+ is a natural try, but I think White wins with 32 Ke1!: for example, 32...Rxh2 33 Rxf7 Rh1+ 34 Kf2 Rh3 35 g5 Rxf3+ 36 Ke2 Rxc3 37 g6 when the pawns cost Black both his pieces.

31 h4 Rd6 32 Re7+ Rd7?

Black was lost anyway, I believe, but this is still not a terribly grandmasterly move.

33 h5 (Diagram 34) 1-0

A terrific piece of preparation by van Wely; it was nearly ten years since Azmaiparashvili-Shirov, and no-one else had come along to challenge the verdict this variation was a draw. It's easy to shout computers, but actually they aren't much use in this line; they think Black's better even when he's probably already lost.

Game 26

☐ **A.Khalifman** ■ **M.Kobalija**

Russian Team Championship 2005

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 Bg3 b5 9 Be2 Bb7 10 h4 g4 11 Ne5 h5 12 12 0-0 (Diagram 35)

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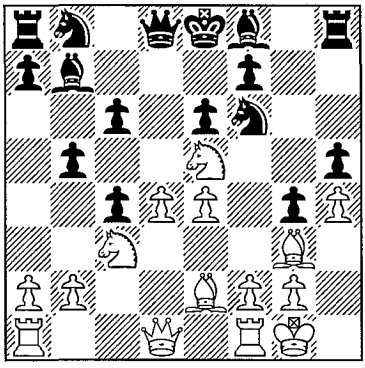

Diagram 35 (B)
White has the safer king

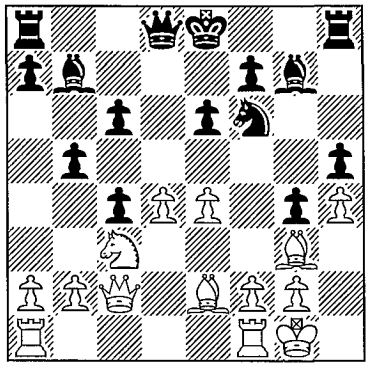

Diagram 36 (B)
Sacrificing to open the position

12...Nbd7

Instead 12...Nfd7 13 Nxf7 Kxf7 14 f3 seems to give White a winning attack, while 12...b4 13 Na4 Nxe4 14 Bxc4 is clearly extremely dangerous for Black, and 12...Bg7 13 f3 0-0 14 fxg4 hxg4 15 Bxg4 is also promising since 15...b4?! 16 Nxf7!? Kxf7 17 e5 bxc3 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 bxc3 gives White a huge attack.

13 Qc2

White takes advantage of this moment while his d-pawn is not under attack to regroup.

13...Nxe5 14 Bxe5 Bg7

Black needs to get the king out of the centre; 14...Rg8 15 Rad1 Nd7 16 Bg3 e5 17 b3 is very dangerous for him.

15 Bg3 (Diagram 36)

A bold sacrifice of the d-pawn: White aims for e5 and Ne4 if allowed, but the question is whether he can demonstrate compensation after acceptance of the sacrifice.

15...Qxd4 16 Rfd1 Qb6 17 a4 a6

Khalifman mentions 17...a5 18 Rd6 b4 19 e5 Nd7 (19...bxc3? 20 Rxe6+ fxe6 21 Qg6+ Kf8 22 exf6 is crushing) 20 Ne4 Nxe5 21 Rad1 and says that Black has difficulty in consolidating, which is certainly true especially in view of 21...Ba6 22 Qd2 Bh6 23 Rxe6+ fxe6 24 Qd6 with an overwhelming attack.

18 Qd2 Bh6 19 Qd6 Bf8

19...Bg7? 20 axb5 axb5? 21 Rxa8+ Bxa8 22 Nxb5! would illustrate the advantage of keeping the tension on the a-file.

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20 Qe5 Be7 21 Bf4 Rg8 22 Bg5 (Diagram 37)

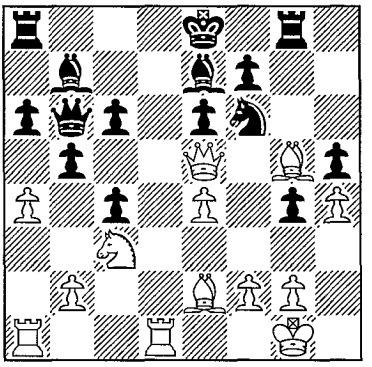

Diagram 37 (B)
Increasing the pressure

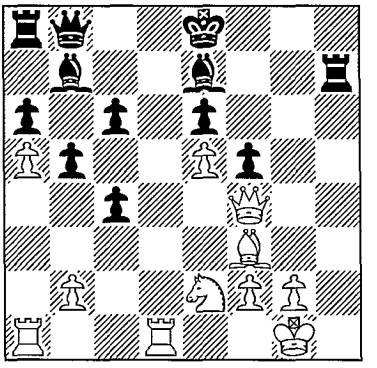

Diagram 38 (B)
Targeting e6

22...g3

Another defence was 22...Rg6 23 Qg3 c5 24 e5 Nd5 25 Ne4 Bxg5 26 hxg5 (Scherbakov) where White retains chances for the sacrificed material. With the text Black aims to exchange the enemy dark-squared bishop while retaining his own.

23 Qxg3 Nh7 24 a5

24 Be3 Rxg3 25 Bxb6 Rg8 26 e5 was the alternative, which seems to me to deserve a certain amount of consideration, but Khalifman cares for none of these things. The former FIDE world champion has few equals in the sort of fluid attacking positions with vague compensation for lost material which arise in this opening.

24...Qa7 25 Bxh5 Nxg5 26 hxg5 Rxg5 27 Qf3 Rg7 28 Qf4 Qb8

Scherbakov prefers 28...Rh7 29 Bf3 c5 30 e5 Rh4 31 Qg3 Bxf3 32 Qxf3 Rd4 with advantage for Black. That's certainly true, but I don't like 30 e5, which allowed Black's rook to vault into action and block the d-file. 30 Rd2 looks more consequent to me, when the struggle between Black's extra pawn and White's activity goes on.

29 e5 Rh7 30 Bf3 f5 31 Ne2 (Diagram 38) 31...c5?!

Black is certainly lost after this and he had to connect his rooks so as to be able to meet 32 Qg3 Kf7 33 Nf4 with 33...Rg8. The move which suggests itself is 31...Qc7 when Scherbakov says that Black's position is 'already dangerous', and after 32 Nd4 Qc8 33 g4 White does indeed have a menacing initiative: 33...fxg4 34 Be4 Rg7 35 Qh6 Kf7 36 Qh5+ Kf8 37 Bg6 c5 38 Ra3 Kg8 39 Rg3 cxd4 40 Rxg4 illustrates some of the possibilities. It is possible that Black is already gone.

32 Qg3 Kf7 33 Nf4 Rg7 34 Qh3 Bxf3 35 Qxf3 Qxe5

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This loses at once, but there is no way to stop 36 Nxe6.

36 Re1 Qb8 37 Rxe6 Rg4 38 Qd5 1-0

Game 27

☐ **A.Grischuk** ■ **A.Dreev**

Poikovsky 2005

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 Nbd7 6 e3 Qa5 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qd2 Bb4 9 Rc1 h6 10 Bh4 c5 11 a3 Bxc3 12 bxc3 b6 13 c4 (Diagram 39)

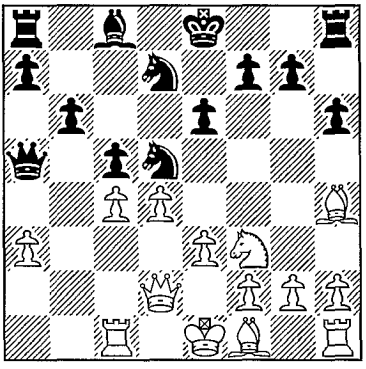

Diagram 39 (B)

Relying on the bishop pair

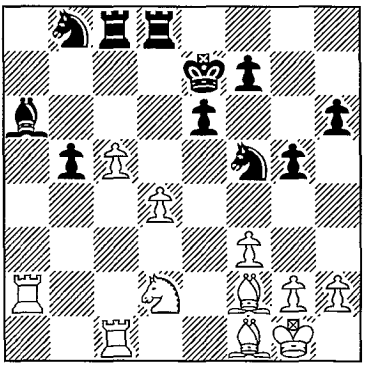

Diagram 40 (B)

Suddenly seizing the initiative

13 Bd3 has been much played as well but the text seems to give White a nice edge in a very thematic queenless middlegame.

13...Qxd2+ 14 Nxd2 Ne7 15 f3 Ba6 16 Be2 Rc8 17 0-0 Nf5 18 Bf2 Ke7 19 Rfe1 g5

19...Rhd8 was more natural, but neither move changes the fact that White has a stable advantage.

20 Bf1 Nd6 21 a4 Rhd8 22 Rc3 Nf6 23 Rc2 Nd7 24 Rec1 Nb8 25 a5 cxd4 26 axb6 axb6 27 exd4 b5

Not forced, but 27...Nf5 28 Nb3 doesn't help and Black can't defend passively for ever.

28 c5 Nf5 29 Ra2! (Diagram 40)

29 Nb3 preserving the edge was possible, but Grischuk must have calculated a lot, and intuited a lot more, and goes into action.

29...Nxd4 30 Ne4 e5 31 f4!

This had to be seen in advance; other continuations do not achieve anything.

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31...gxf4

A very difficult choice: the alternative was 31...exf4 32 Nd6 Rxc5 33 Rxc5 Rxd6, which was perhaps the best defence.

32 Bh4+ Ke6? 33 Bxd8 Rxd8 34 c6

And since 34...Ndxc6 loses to Nc5+, that's the end.

34...Rc8 35 c7 1-0

A game typical of Grischuk's style in the way he threw himself into complications near the end which he could hardly have calculated to a finish – you feel Karpov or Andersson would have handled it differently, somehow. But generally speaking it seems clear that Black has to defend passively for a long time in this variation.

Game 28

☐ **S.Lputian** ■ **D.Pavasovic**

Calvia Olympiad 2004

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 e4 dxe4 5 Nxe4 Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Qxd4 7 Bxb4 Qxe4+ 8 Be2 Na6 9 Ba5 f6 10 Qd8+ Kf7 11 0-0-0 e5 12 Bd3 Qf4+

Black has also played 12...Qg4, but after the straightforward 13 Nf3 Nc5 14 Rhe1 White has pretty good chances for his pawn. Instead 12...Qxg2 13 Ne2 Qxf2 14 Ng3 **(Diagram 41)**

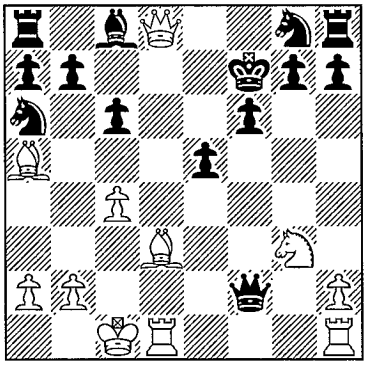

Diagram 41 (B)

Black will do well to survive

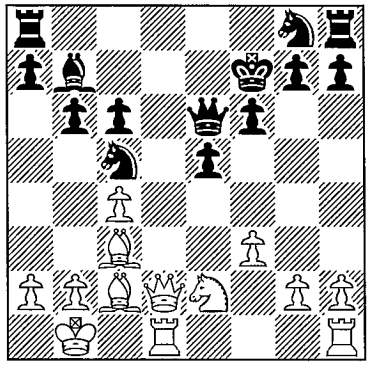

Diagram 42 (B)

White retains good compensation

is certainly a critical (and untried) choice, although obviously White has a strong initiative – usually Black players don't go in for these full-on multi-pawn grabs.

13 Kb1 b6

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The other way to try to develop the c8-bishop, 13...Nc5, bit the dust after 14 Ne2 Qxf2 15 Rhf1 Qxg2 16 Qc7+ Ne7 17 Rg1 Qxg1 18 Rxg1 in S.Mamedyarov-D.Schneider, Nakhchivan 2003, in view of 18...Nxd3 19 Rxg7+ Kxg7 20 Qxe7+ Kg6 21 Bd8 Rxd8 22 Qxd8 with a winning bind.

14 Bc3!? Nc5 15 Ne2 Qg4 16 f3 Qe6 17 Bc2 Bb7 18 Qd2 (Diagram 42) 18...a5?

Black needed to develop his pieces, but even after 18...Ne7 White has the calm 19 b3! a5 20 Rhe1 with more than enough compensation for the pawn (Scherbakov) – White continues as in the game with f4 opening vistas for his knight.

19 f4! e4 20 Nd4 Qc8

This is no time for pawn-grabbing; after the rash 20...Qxc4?! 21 Nf5 Qe6 22 Nd6+ Kf8 23 Rhe1 Rd8 24 Bd4! (Scherbakov) is crushing.

21 Qe2! h5

This can't be a good move, but even after a full-scale grovel like 21...Ne7 22 Qh5+ Kg8 23 Rhe1 (Scherbakov) White's advantage is beyond doubt.

22 f5! (Diagram 43)

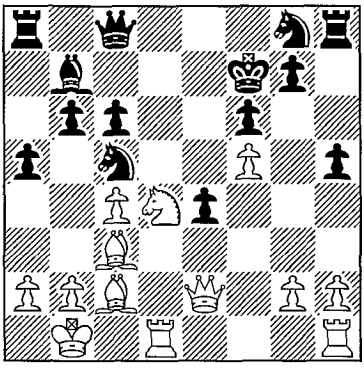

Diagram 43 (B)
Launching a strong attack

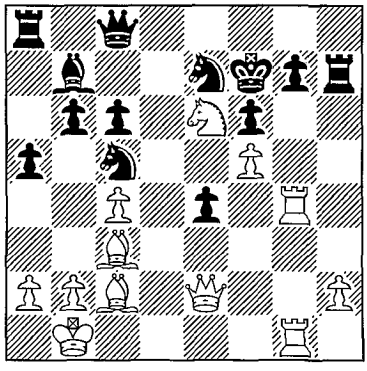

Diagram 44 (B)
Crashing through

22...Ne7 23 g4

Opening lines: with all White's pieces in play and attacking the exposed king vigorously there can only be one result; the b7-bishop and a8-rook can only send telegrams of support.

23...Nd3 24 Rhg1 hxg4 25 Rxg4 Nc5 26 Rdg1 Rh7 27 Ne6! (Diagram 44) 27...Nxe6 28 fxe6+ Kf8 29 Qxe4 f5 30 Rf4 1-0

Just in time before White got to amuse himself with something like 30...g6 31 Rxg6, although other moves will also do, naturally.

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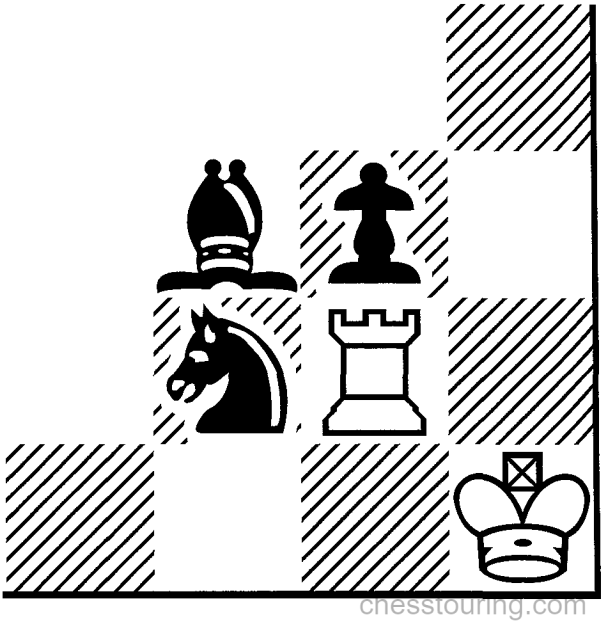
Chapter Nine

The Albin and the Chigorin

- Introduction and Rare Defences
- The Albin Counter-Gambit
- The Chigorin
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction and Rare Defences

1 d4 d5 2 c4 (Diagram 1)

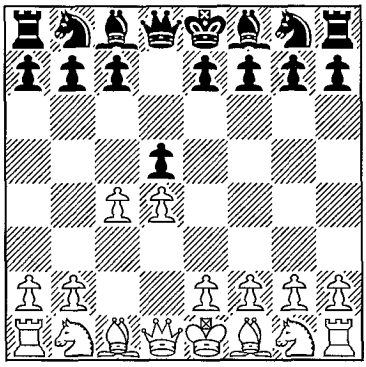

Diagram 1 (B)
Black has several minor options

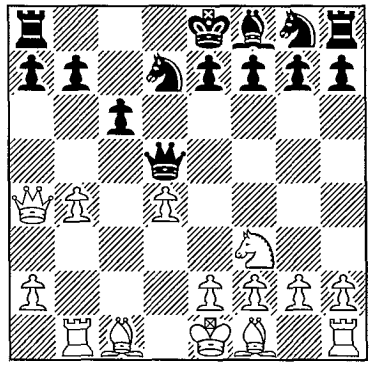

Diagram 2 (B)
Seizing an early initiative

Of Black's remaining ways to counter the Gambit of Aleppo, 2...e5, the radical Albin Counter-Gambit, and 2...Nc6, the Chigorin Defence, are his main options, but there are others:

a) 2...Nf6 is the Marshall Defence; but Marshall was better at gambits than defences, and as long as White knows a particular point he will obtain a very good position.

WARNING: 3 cxd5 Nxd5 4 e4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5! is Black's idea, but White can stop it with 4 Nf3 and then continues with e4 and Nc3, with an easy game from the opening.

b) 2...c5 is not as bad as you might think, but again White has a near-refutation in 3 cxd5 Nf6 (3...Qxd5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nc3 is also strong) 4 e4! (it is the cramping d5-pawn which White needs to hold on to, not the e-pawn) 4...Nxe4 5 dxc5 Nxc5 6 Nc3 e6 7 b4! Qf6 8 Qc2 Nca6 9 a3 exd5 10 Nxd5 and White is well-nigh winning.

c) 2...Bf5, the Baltic Defence, is the most respected of the remainder of Black's unusual tries: 3 cxd5 Bxb1 is Black's idea when 4 Qa4+ sees White takes the opportunity to cover a2 and slow Black's development down a bit by blocking c6. After 4...c6 5 Rxb1 Qxd5 6 Nf3 Nd7 7 b4 **(Diagram 2)** 7...Ngf6 (7...e5 8 dxe5 Qe4 9 Nd2 Qxe5 10 Bb2 Qe6 11 b5 is nice for White) 8 e3 e5 (8...e6 is probably more sensible, although 9 Qc2 a5?! 10 Bc4 Qe4 11 Bd3 Qg4 12 0-0 axb4 13 Bd2 Nd5 14 h3 Qh5 15

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e4 Nc3 16 Bxc3 bxc3 was also very good for White in C.Ward-J.Shaw, Oakham 1994) 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Qxe5 11 b5, since 11...Ne4 12 bxc6 Qc3+ 13 Kf1 is nothing, Black is compelled either to acquiesce in one of various miserable endings with the c6-weakness or speculate as he did in M.Sadler-M.Condie, British Ch., Swansea 1995 with 11...Rd8 12 Be2 Bd6 13 bxc6 0-0 14 cxb7 Bb8 15 Bb2 Qf5 16 0-0 Ne4, but he never looked remotely like generating enough play for the pawns.

The Albin Counter-Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 (Diagram 3)

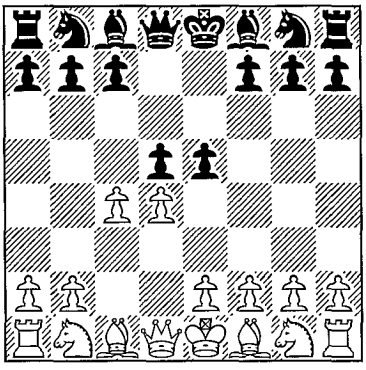

Diagram 3 (W)
Very bold, if a little suspect

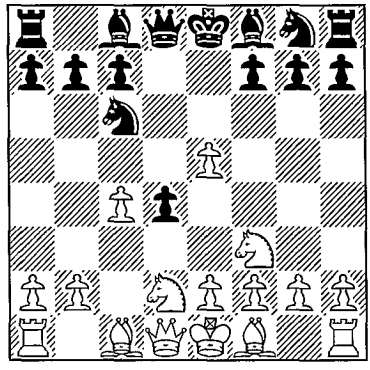

Diagram 4 (B)
Cleverly delaying the standard g3

'The Albin Counter Gambit has a very bad reputation. Black sacrifices a pawn (almost for nothing) and tries to create counterplay. Mostly it doesn't work and White gets a winning position almost from the opening' (Tiviakov). Meanwhile Morozevich has knocked over Topalov, Sokolov, Gelfand and Khenkin among others with the gambit. Well, I suppose grandmasters can allow themselves the occasional arguably over-categorical pronouncement, especially when they know they're not likely to be playing Morozevich any time soon.

3 dxe5 d4

This is the idea: Black prevents the easy development of the b1-knight, and also makes it awkward to play e3 and develop the f1-bishop. Meanwhile, defending the e5 pawn isn't at all easy.

4 Nf3 Nc6 5 Nbd2 (Diagram 4)

5 g3 is very much the main line and the Albin's recent spell of relative prosperity has coincided with Morozevich's adoption of 5...Nge7, after which White has not

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been covering himself with glory and hasn't really found any path to advantage so far as I can see, which is why I'm going for the text. The point of 5 Nbd2 is precisely to reserve White's options of going g3, Bg2 and 0-0 (which tends to be the best plan against a quick Black ...Be6, ...Qd7, ...0-0-0 and ...h5 type hack) or alternatively pressing hard on the d4 pawn (which tends to be the way to meet ...Nge7).

5...Nge7

Playing à la Morozevich as Black just aims to collect the e5-pawn. After 5...Be6 White's idea is 6 a3, for example 6...Nge7 7 Nb3 Bxc4 8 Nbxd4 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Qxd4 10 Nxd4 0-0-0 11 e3 when Black's compensation is inadequate. Instead a very traditional plan is 5...Bg4 6 a3 Qe7, aiming to retrieve e5 quickly. White should put the question to the bishop with 7 h3, when 7...Bh5 (7...Bxf3 8 Nxf3 0-0-0 9 g3 Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Qxe5 11 Bg2 gives White a comfortable edge) 8 Qa4 0-0-0 9 b4 Kb8 10 g4 Bg6 11 Bb2 **(Diagram 5)**

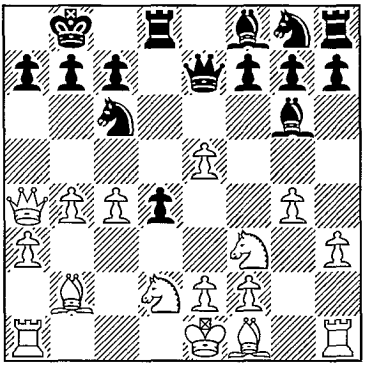

Diagram 5 (B)
Black is struggling across the board

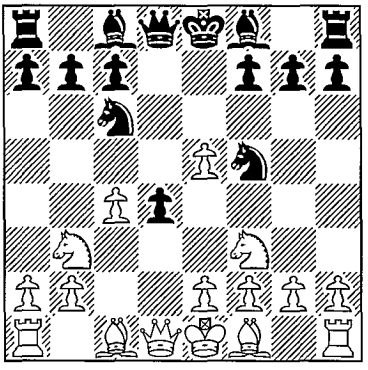

Diagram 6 (W)
Black holds d4

11...Nxe5 (11...f6 12 Bg2 leaves Black without a convenient way to continue since 12...fxe5 loses a piece to 13 b5 while after 12...d3 13 exd3 Rxd3, the surprising 14 0-0-0 leaves White far better developed) 12 Nxe5 Qxe5 13 Bg2 is very good for White since it is well-nigh impossible to meet the threat of Nf3, for example 13...a6 14 Nf3 Qe4 15 0-0 Qxe2?? 16 Nxd4 Qxb2 17 Nc6+.

6 Nb3 Nf5 (Diagram 6)

6...Ng6 7 Nbxd4 Ncxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 Nb5 leaves Black with little compensation for his pawn, so Black instead plays to hold on to d4, an ancient plan revived by Morozevich against Sokolov in 2005.

7 e4

A fairly minimalist approach, although I think quite unpleasant for Black.

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7...dxe3

Black doesn't have a lot of choice but to accept the ending.

8 Qxd8+ Nxd8 9 fxe3

Now 9...Nc6 10 Bd3 Nfe7 11 Nbd4 Bg4 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Nxf3 Ng6 14 Bxg6 hxg6 15 Ke2 0-0-0 16 b3 has seen White holding his extra pawn with decent winning chances, while 9...Bb4+ is the subject of Game 29.

The Chigorin

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 (Diagram 7)

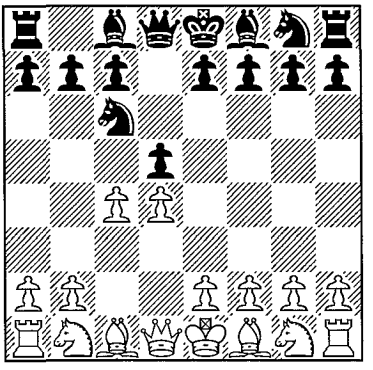

Diagram 7 (W)
The Chigorin Defence

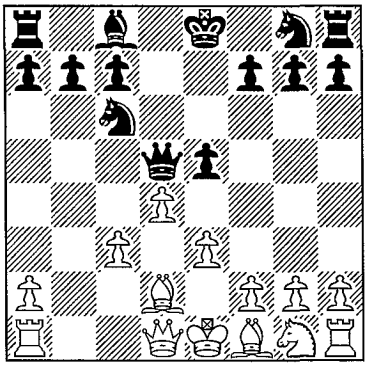

Diagram 8 (B)
The struggle for the centre begins

A tricky little number and Black doesn't see why he shouldn't just develop all his pieces with minimum pawn moves: ...Bg4, ...e6, ...Nf6 and ...Bb4. The point of starting with 2...Nc6 is that 3 cxd5 Qxd5 attacks d4 and thus gains enough time to move the e-pawn and meet Nc3 with ...Bb4, so that the queen can't be driven away immediately.

3 cxd5

There is no particular agreement among very strong players on how to meet the Chigorin, but the system I am recommending was Kasparov's choice (and 'the modern and most dangerous method' according to 1 d4 d5 expert Ruslan Scherbakov).

3...Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 (Diagram 8)

The sequence to here was more or less forced, but now a much-touted modern alternative is 7 Bxc3 exd4 8 Ne2. That isn't though so clear and the text is a more

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positional solution. White is happy with his extra central pawn and the bishop pair, acquired without conceding doubled pawns.

7...Nf6

The older method was 7...exd4 8 cxd4 Nf6, but opening White's c-file and giving away the options in the centre afforded by the e-pawn can't be right. White is better here and can start either with 9 f3 0-0 10 Qb3 followed by Bd3 (or Bc4), Ne2, e4 and deploying his rooks on the open files, or 9 Ne2-f4 followed by much the same plan.

7...Qd6 is the other modern approach for Black.

NOTE: This prophylactic move is quite common in the Chigorin: the idea is to restrain White's centre by ensuring that c4 or e4 doesn't attack the queen; without this tempo White is forced to spend time defending d4 before he can advance.

Beliavsky provided a good example of White's play in Belgrade 1995 against Miladinovic (after Morozevich the strongest recent regular exponent of the Chigorin): 8 Bd3 Nf6 9 f3 0-0 10 Ne2 Re8 11 0-0 Be6 12 Qc1 (not the most obvious move, but with his centre restrained White wants to cover e3 in preparation for activating his queen's bishop on the kingside) 12...Rad8 13 Be1 Bc8 14 Bf2 **(Diagram 9)**

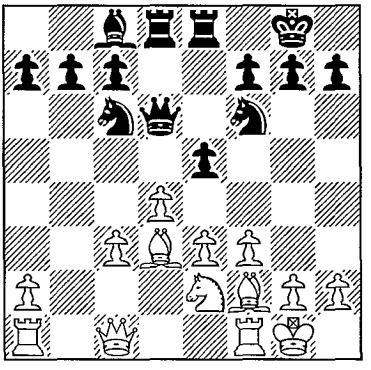

Diagram 9 (B)
Now White is ready for 15 e4

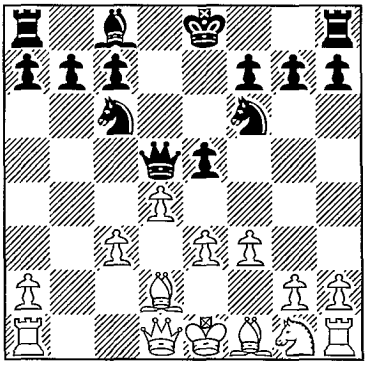

Diagram 10 (B)
Must Black play ...e4 himself?

14...e4 15 fxe4 Nxe4 16 Bh4 f6 and now, instead of the complex if good 17 Qc2, 17 Ng3 seems to me to give a pretty clear advantage.

8 f3 (Diagram 10) 8...e4

The real issue is whether to play this or 8 ...0-0, which is more critical. Usually

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White has taken advantage of the omission of ...Qd6 to advance in the centre with 9 e4, but it's not at all clear that this is a good idea. I think White needs to take it a bit slower with 9 Ne2. So far experience with this is confined to a couple of rather encouraging games of the Byelorussian GM Viacheslav Dydyshko, and 9...Re8 10 Kf2 Bf5 11 Ng3 exd4 12 cxd4 Rad8 13 Qb3 left White comfortably better in V.Dydyshko-E.Kolesnik, Minsk 2004. Black needs to find a more concrete plan for counterplay: the future will tell whether this is possible.

9 Qb3

Now 9...Qd6 is Game 30 and 9...Qf5 10 Qb5 Qe6 11 Nh3 0-0 12 Nf2 Bd7 13 Qb3 Qe7 14 Be2 also saw White getting on top in B.Avrukh-S.B.Hansen, Bled Olympiad 2002. If Black can't cause some disruption quickly then once White gets sorted out he is always going to have long-term chances with his bishops and centre. An exchange of queens would particularly help White, since he then needn't worry about some piece sacrifice in the centre blowing him away and indeed can even use a king on f2 to help secure the pawn centre.

Illustrative Games

Game 29

☐ **Joa.Fluvia Poyatos** ■ **Jor.Fluvia Poyatos**

Badalona 2005

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 d4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 Nbd2 Nge7 6 Nb3 Nf5 7 e4 dxe3 8 Qxd8+ Nxd8 9 fxe3 Bb4+ 10 Kf2 Ne6

Black abandons hope of recovering the pawn quickly and just claims that White's weaknesses mean he doesn't really stand that much better even with his extra pawn. White's structure certainly counts against him, but the back e-pawn has the potential to control some useful squares, and f7 is just as weak as e5. Black has an uphill task ahead of him to make a draw.

11 Bd3 Nc5 12 Nxc5 Bxc5 13 a3 a5 14 b3 0-0 15 Bd2 Rd8 (Diagram 11) 16 Ke2

It's not at all clear this was the best move, and 16 Be4 followed by siphoning off the rooks down the d-file had a lot to be said for it. White would like to exchange the rooks since then he can be sure of defending the front e-pawn, and also he can start to put his more active king to better use.

16...c6 17 g4 Ne7 18 h3 Ng6

I'm not sure about this. Black's queen's bishop doesn't look such a marvellous piece that you'd want to keep it, but it was handily covering d7.

19 Bc3 Bb6 20 Rhd1 Re8 21 Bf5 Bc7 22 Bxc8 Raxc8 23 Rd7 h6 24 Rad1 Nf8 25 R7d2 Ng6 26 h4 b6 27 Rd7 Nf8 28 R7d2 Ng6 29 h5 Nxe5 30 Bxe5 Bxe5 31 Nxe5 Rxe5 32

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Rd8+ Rxd8?

White has a nasty bind after 32...Re8 33 Rxc8 Rxc8 34 Rd7 – he can aim to bring the king and e-pawn up the board and widen his sphere of action with e6, but the text is far worse.

33 Rxd8+ Kh7 34 Rd6 (Diagram 12) 34...Re6??

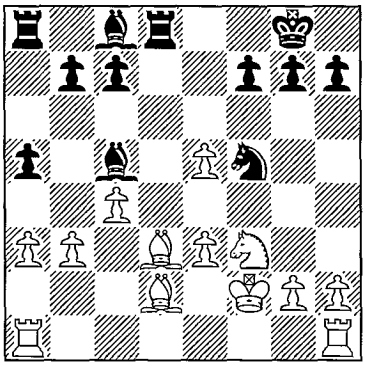

Diagram 11 (W)
White is better

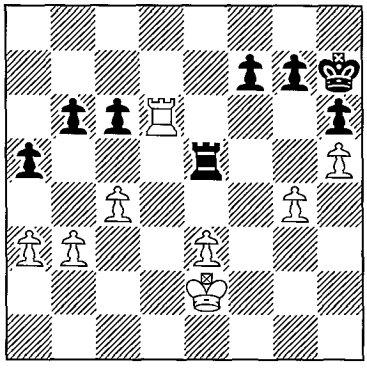

Diagram 12 (B)
Can Black aim for a pawn ending?

34...Rc5 was essential although I doubt Black can hold anyway, but anything is better than a lost pawn ending, albeit quite an instructive one: it's worthwhile for less experienced players to take a moment and try and work out White's plan from the diagram.

35 Rxe6 fxe6 36 c5 b5 37 Kf3 Kg8 38 Kf4 Kf8 39 g5! hxg5+

39...Kf7 40 gxh6 gxh6 41 Ke5 Ke7 42 e4 b4 43 a4 is no better – didn't I say that back e-pawn could yet come in handy?

40 Kxg5 Kf7 41 e4 b4 42 a4 Kf8 43 Kg6 Kg8 44 h6

A typical technique: White needs to open the position sufficiently for his advanced king to count.

44...e5 45 Kg5 gxh6+ 46 Kxh6 Kf7 47 Kg5 Kg7 48 Kf5 Kf7 49 Kxe5 Ke7 50 Kf5 Kf7 51 e5 Ke7 52 e6 Ke8 53 Kf6 Kf8 54 e7+ Ke8 55 Kf5! Kxe7 56 Ke5 1-0

Game 30

□ I.Smirin ■ F.Vallejo Pons

European Team Championship, Leon 2001

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nc6 3 cxd5 Qxd5 4 e3 e5 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 Nf6 8 f3 e4 9 Qb3 Qd6 10 Qb1! (Diagram 13)

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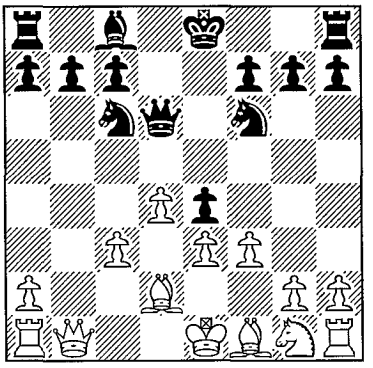

Diagram 13 (B)
White doesn't want to close things

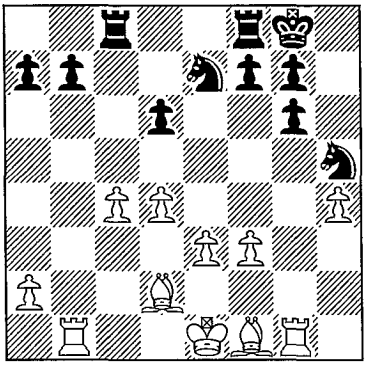

Diagram 14 (B)
White has all the positional trumps

Excellent. Closing the position with c4 and f4 would enable Black to create a blockade. Instead White aims to force Black into releasing control of e4 by ...exf3.

TIP: The queen is often well placed on b1 in this structure: it presses usefully on both e4 and b7, and is hidden from irritating ...Nb4 ideas.

10...Bf5

Instead 10...exf3 11 Nxf3 0-0 12 Bd3 Re8 13 0-0 would favour White with his mobile centre and 10...Qe7 11 Ne2 0-0 12 Ng3 exf3 13 gxf3 Re8 14 e4 is also good for White, albeit double-edged as he has to be careful of his king.

11 Ne2 Bg6 12 Qb3

It looks as though White hasn't gained much with his sophisticated queen jinks, but the bishop on g6 is vulnerable to exchange, which suits White.

12...0-0 13 Nf4 Na5?!

This helps White in as much as it allows him to force the trade of queens, which is desirable for him.

14 Qb4 Nc6 15 Qxd6 cxd6 16 h4!

Excellent again; once the queens are gone White doesn't need to castle – the king will be fine on f2 – and in classical two bishop style he aims to gain space and prevent the Black minor pieces finding secure spots. More specifically he also prevents Black from maintaining ...e4 (evidently moving the h-pawn and allowing Nxg6 fxg6 is undesirable).

16...exf3 17 gxf3 Nh5 18 Nxg6 hxg6 19 Rg1 Rac8 20 c4 Ne7 21 Rb1 (Diagram 14) 21...Nf5?!

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Exchanging b7 for White's h4-weakling while allowing White's rook to the seventh and sidelining Black's knight is a sign of distress: perhaps 21...b6 22 e4 Nc6 23 Bc3 was better but White's advantage is obvious.

22 Rxb7 Nxh4 23 Kf2 Rb8 24 Rb3

Possibly Vallejo had missed this idea and was banking on counterplay down the b-file: instead he now finds himself forced either to reunite White's pawns or concede the b-file, and White's advantage becomes decisive.

24...Rb6 25 Bd3 Rfb8 26 Rgb1 Kf8? 27 Bb4! Ke7 28 Bxd6+! 1-0

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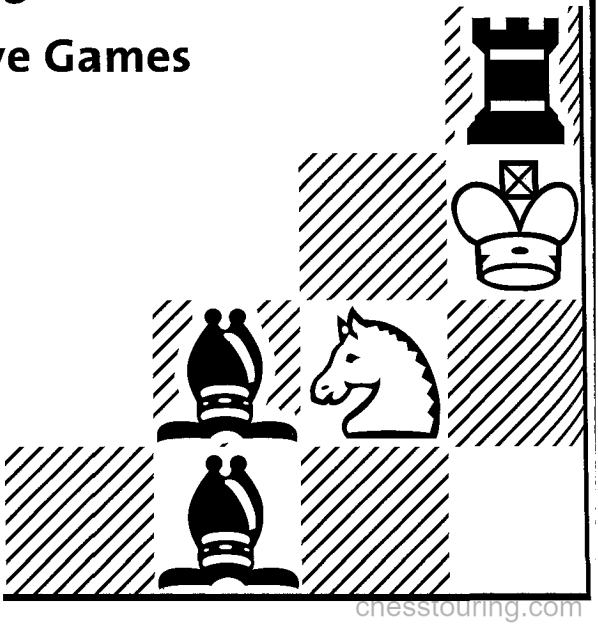
Chapter Ten

The Dutch

- Introduction
- The Classical
- The Stonewall
- The Leningrad
- Illustrative Games



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Introduction

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 (Diagram 1)

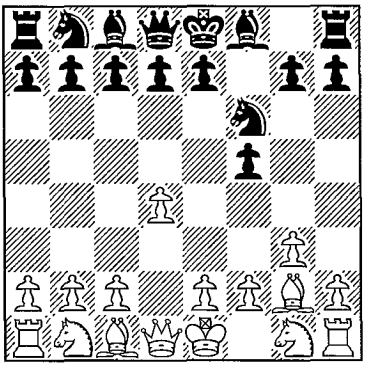

Diagram 1 (B)
Black has three main defences

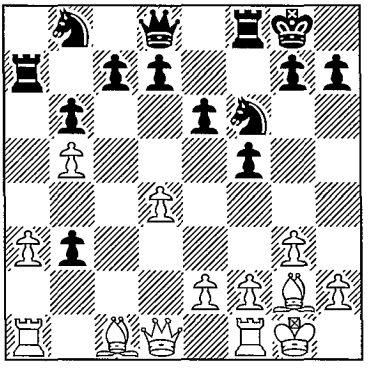

Diagram 2 (B)
Black has been outplayed

By far the most challenging idea. The bishop moves to a splendid diagonal and at the same time prevents Black from fianchettoing his queen's bishop – the lines with e3 and Be2 where Black is able to do this can be quite dangerous for White. We will now consider Black's playing ...e6 and then usually ...d6 (the Classical variation), ...e6 and ...d5 (the Stonewall), and ...g6 (the Leningrad variation).

There's also 3...Nf6 4 c4 Bb4+ which led to a perennial contender in the greatest-ever-game polls (E.Bogoljubow-A.Alekhine, Hastings 1922), but is not terribly well regarded these days, although to read some Dutch books you'd think it equalized by force. 5 Nd2 is the most principled reply, and now Black's plan is usually some variation on 5...a5 6 Ngf3 b6 when I liked very much White's play in V.Eingorn-J.Kristiansen, Copenhagen 1988: 7 a3 (putting the question at the right moment; if the bishop retreats then 7...Be7 8 Ne5 c6 favours White – ...c6 wasn't a move Black wanted to play) 7...Bxd2+ 8 Nxd2! Ra7 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nb1 (heading for the best square, which is c3) 10...Ba6 11 b3 a4 12 Nc3 axb3 13 Nb5 Bxb5 14 cxb5 with a decided advantage for White **(Diagram 2)**.

The Classical

1 d4 e6

A tricky move order which of course depends upon Black being willing to play the French. In our repertoire White has to play 2 c4, since after 2 Nf3 d5 we can't

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get the sort of QGD we want, and after 2 g3 d5 we definitely can't.

2 c4 f5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Be7

The pure Dutch order to get here would be 1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 e6 4 c4 Be7.

5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 (Diagram 3)

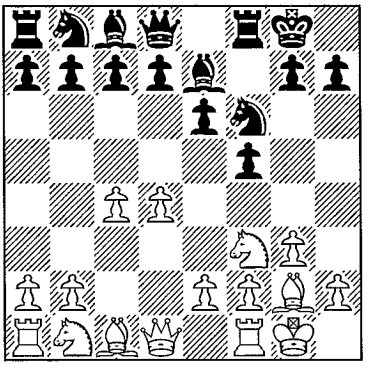

Diagram 3 (B)
How will Black challenge the centre?

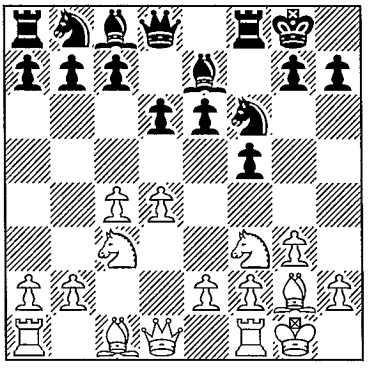

Diagram 4 (B)
Black again has a wide choice

6...d6

This version of the Classical Dutch is often known as the Ilyin-Zhenevsky system, after a colourful Russian/Swiss player of the early part of the last century. It's fair to say that most grandmasters don't rate the Ilyin-Zhenevsky, but invariably Black has tactical resources and Dutch games almost always include a sharp exchange of blows at some point.

Black can also wait until he sees where the White queen's knight goes before he decides on whether he's going to set up with ...d6 or ...d5:

a) 6...c6 is the most cunning when Black intends to meet 7 Nc3 with 7...d5, achieving an old-fashioned form of Stonewall but with White's knight committed to c3, which most masters feel is not best. Assuming White is going to play as I recommend in the next section against the ...Be7 Stonewall, then 7 Nbd2 should do the trick.

b) 6...Ne4, Alekhine's move is well met by 7 d5! Bf6 8 Nfd2! Nxd2 9 Qxd2! (a common theme; the knight would be useless on d2 and is needed on c3 in connection with the following tactical tricks) 9...Qe7 (9...e5 10 d6 is annoying) 10 Nc3 Bxc3 11 Qxc3 e5 12 b3 d6 13 c5 b6 14 c6 with a great advantage for White in J.Parker-N.Pert, British League 1999.

7 0-0 (Diagram 4) 7...Ne4

An important branching point of the opening, and one which deserves a disquisition.

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NOTE: There are two basic pawn breaks in the Classical Dutch. One of them is White's e4, and the other is Black's ...e5.

With the text move Black plays directly for his own advance; he will bring the bishop to f6 and thereafter White can hardly prevent ...e5. He also has two major alternatives:

a) 7...Qe8 was the main move historically, but with 8 b4 White seizes space immediately and this is a dangerous and lesser-known alternative to 8 Re1. The first point to notice is that the tactical solution 8...e5?!, which many books including both Williams and Pinski advocate, is actually weak after 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 Nxe5 Bxb4 and now the riposte 11 Nd5! **(Diagram 5)**,

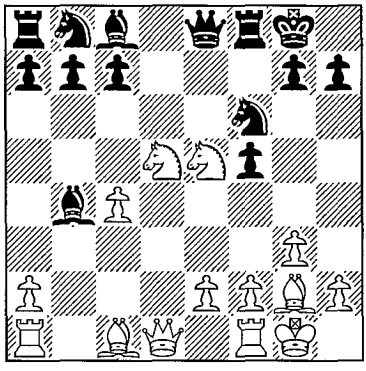

Diagram 5 (B)
A vicious tactic

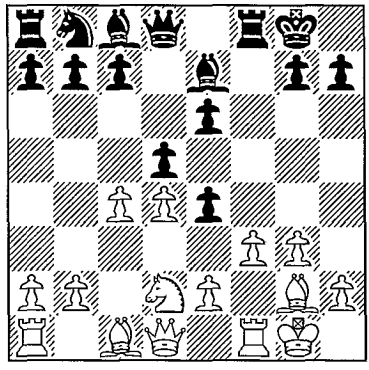

Diagram 6 (B)
White must remove the e4-pawn

when 11...Qxe5 12 Bf4 cleans Black up, so he has to go for something like 11...Bd6 12 Nd3 when White has a strong initiative.

Given that, it's hard to see how 8 b4 could be inferior to the popular 8 b3. Black might try 8 b4 Nc6 which was played by the leading English prophet of this system, Simon Williams, against Valery Neverov at Port Erin 2002, but 9 b5 Nd8 10 a4 (getting ready for Ba3) 10...Qh5 11 e3 favoured White. Neverov's last showed one good reason not to play Qc2 too early: White contemplates the manoeuvre Ne1, gaining a tempo by threatening the exchange of queens – something Black doesn't want at all, since it diminishes his kingside chances while leaving White's queenside ones unaffected – and then Nd3, putting the knight on an excellent square.

b) 7...a5 became fashionable later. Again White can play critically with 8 Re1, but that is very complicated and 8 b3 is an obvious alternative. Williams' preference is then 8...Ne4 (8...Na6 9 Bb2 c6 is sort of hedgehog approach, but 10 Re1 Bd7 11 e4 fxe4 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Rxe4 a4 14 h4!, preparing Bh3, gave White the edge in

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J.Lautier-E.Bricard, French Ch., Besancon 1999) 9 Bb2 Nxc3 (9...Qe8 is a mistake according to Williams because the queen is misplaced here after 10 Nxe4 fxe4 11 Ne1 d5 12 f3) 10 Bxc3 Qe8 when I think White played very well in K.Sundararajan-S.Williams, Yerevan 1999: 11 Qc2 Nd7 12 a3 (12 e4 f4 13 e5 has been more popular but I don't care for it) 12...Qh5 13 b4 g5 14 Ne1 (a calm and strong manoeuvre) 14...a4 15 Nd3 Rf6 16 f3 f4 17 Nf2 Nb6 18 Bb2 d5 19 cxd5 Nxd5 20 Ng4 Rf8 21 e4 fxe3 22 Rae1 Bd6 23 Nxe3 Bd7 24 Nc4 when White was decidedly better despite the splendid d5-knight.

8 Nxe4

The most principled move – of course something like 8 Qc2 is also possible.

8...fxe4 9 Nd2 d5 10 f3 (Diagram 6)

Now 10...Nc6!? is seen in Game 31, although 10...exf3 11 Nxf3 Nc6 has been played more often, but I don't understand why 12 b3 isn't then played: I don't see how Black can equalize from this position. Instead 10...e3 11 Nb1 dxc4 12 Bxe3 Bf6 'gives Black an easy game' according to Williams, although I don't agree: it seems to me that White is better after 13 Na3 Nc6 14 Nxc4 Nxd4 15 f4 when it is difficult for Black to develop his pieces.

The Stonewall

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 c6 (Diagram 7)

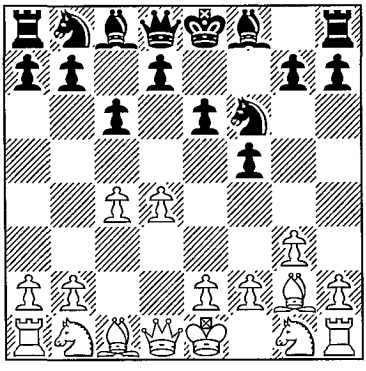

Diagram 7 (W)
Black aims to avoid Nh3-f4

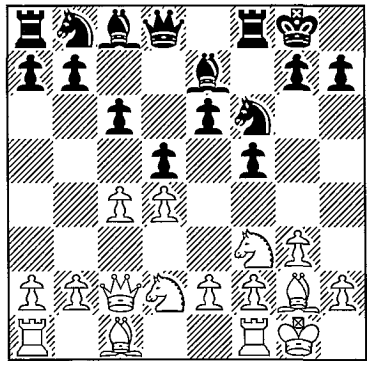

Diagram 8 (B)
White has the edge

With this move Black announces his intention to play the Stonewall, which is named after his c6-d5-e6-f5 pawn chain. This move is part of a modern refinement of the opening which has relaunched it since it fell into disuse after its heyday in

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the 1950's, when Botvinnik had success with it and the contestants were willing to play it for both colours in the 1951 Botvinnik-Bronstein match and also the 1958 Smyslov-Botvinnik match.

NOTE: Black's point with 4...c6 is that he wants to see where White's king's knight is going before he places his d-pawn. Most people think 4...d5 5 Nh3 is good for White, but after the text 5 Nh3 d6 6 Nf4 e5 is reasonable.

Another way to play the Stonewall is 4...Be7, which also avoids Nh3 lines since it gives Black another obvious waiting move in ...0-0 while White is pretty much out already, so there follows 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 d5. This was how Botvinnik and the other 1950's Soviet giants used to do it, but Petrosian demonstrated an efficient set-up which caused the opening to fall into disrepute: 7 Qc2 (White's idea is Nd2-f3 and Nf3-e5-d3, cementing his hold on e5, but 7 Nbd2 Nc6 is annoying) 7...c6 8 Nbd2 **(Diagram 8)** gives Black a choice very common in the Stonewall between central action, getting some black squares with ...b6 and ...Bb7, taking the c8-bishop to pastures new on the kingside, or a traditional ...Qe8-h5 hack. However, in each case White's plan is the same, and everywhere he maintains the better chances, as with 8...Ne4 9 Ne5 Nd7 10 Nd3 Bf6 11 Nf3 Kh8 12 b3 Qe8 (G.Kasparov-N.Short, Brussels rapid 1987), and now Kasparov's 13 a4.

5 Nf3 d5 6 0-0 Bd6 (Diagram 9)

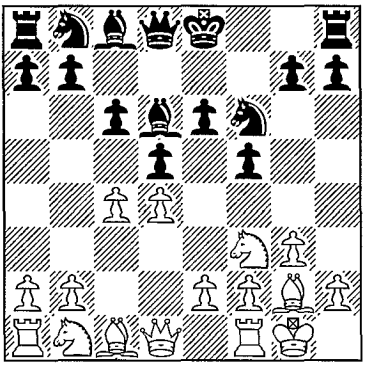

Diagram 9 (W)
The Modern Stonewall

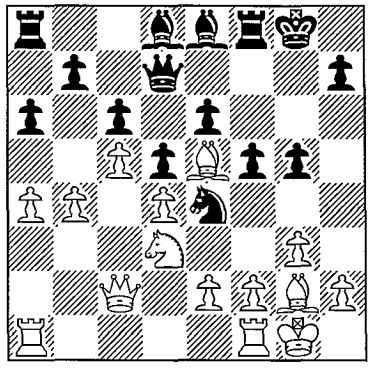

Diagram 10 (B)
White is much better

For a long time Black's last was thought inferior because of 7 Bf4, but after a few games with 7...Bxf4! 8 gxf4 it became apparent that Black's plan of ...Bd7-e8-h5 followed by ...Ne4, ...Nd7, and perhaps even ...Kh8, ...Rg8 and ...g5 was very dangerous. In fact Black's set-up is now very well-respected and White doesn't have

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any particularly approved method to try for an advantage against it, so I'm going to go out on a limb and recommend something little-tried which I like.

7 Qc2 0-0 8 Ne5 b6

This has been the commonest move, although I am not sure it is the best. White's last two moves were rather specifically designed to meet a ...b6 plan, and moreover he hasn't yet committed the queen's knight to d2, which now enables him to play another move which is good against ...b6 and less good against ...Bd7-e8 plans. A great Stonewall connoisseur, Mikhail Ulibin, instead played 8...Qe7 against Lautier at Moscow 1992, and the game went on 9 Nd2 Ne4 10 Ndf3 b6 11 Bf4 Ba6 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 Rfc1 with advantage to White since he has the c-file and attempts to grab e2 fail.

NOTE: 10...Bd7 would not have been a good idea because White has neither weakened himself by gxf4 nor has he committed himself to at least b3 and preferably Bb2 too.

After 10...Bd7, 11 Nd3 Be8 12 b4 a6 13 a4 Nd7 14 c5 Bc7 15 Bf4 Bd8?! 16 Nfe5 g5 17 Nxd7 Qxd7 18 Be5 **(Diagram 10)** showed why and gave White a decisive advantage in G.Dizdar-J.Radocaj, Pula 1993 which was a model of what White would like to achieve in the Stonewall: a queenside attack and domination of e5.

9 Nc3

This is a recent novelty but I think very logical. Black is now under pressure on the queenside and the c-file, since White hasn't wasted time on b3, has kept the possibility of Nb5 or even sometimes a sacrifice on d5, and has targeted f5 with his queen so that after cxd5, ...exd5 may not be possible. We will see how to exploit White's small advantage in Game 32.

The Leningrad

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 (Diagram 11)

This move introduces the Leningrad Dutch, a complex line, well respected and still little studied as respectable openings go. It has perhaps lacked only a 2700+ advocate to bring it completely into the mainstream. The Leningrad can be thought of as basically a King's Indian in which Black has taken the precaution of getting ...f5 in before he starts. In simple terms his most basic plan is get in ...e5 in his own time and be a move or two ahead of a King's Indian, although he certainly has others; sometimes he plays with ...c5, and if White tries to put a spoke in the plan with d5 before Black can play ...e5, then usually Black chooses to develop and keep the pawns as they are, perhaps eroding the d5-beachhead with ...c6. This strategic flexibility is the most attractive thing about the Leningrad and makes it a slippery customer for White to deal with.

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4 c4 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 Nf3 d6 7 Nc3 (Diagram 12) 7...Qe8

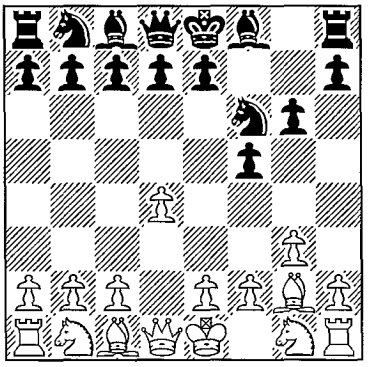

Diagram 11 (W)
The complex Leningrad

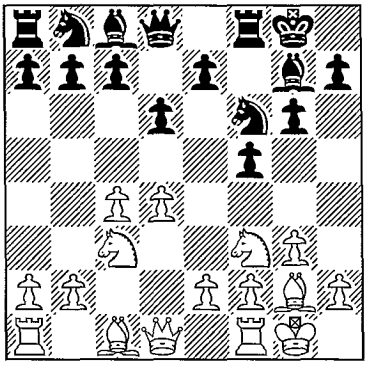

Diagram 12 (B)
Black has several plans

The Leningrad comes in three main brands, and this is the branching point. This brand is the most popular and has been for some years. Black simply threatens ...e5 and White needs to come up with an idea to meet this. First though, the two main alternatives are 7...c6, waiting flexibly, and the older 7...Nc6, treating the thing like a King's Indian where the e-pawn just happens to be on e7 and not e5:

a) 7...Nc6 8 d5 Na5 (8...Ne5 was once the main line of the whole opening but is now teetering on the verge of refutation after 9 Nxe5 dxe5 10 c5 Kh8 11 Qb3 h6 12 Rd1 a6 13 Bd2 Qe8 14 Rac1 g5 15 Na4 when White is very fast and threatens 16 Ba5, while 15...Bd7 is refuted by 16 c6) 9 Qa4 (the most forcing way to play) 9...c5 10 dxc6 Nxc6 (10...bxc6 11 c5 dxc5 12 Ne5, Gelfand's pawn sacrifice, had been working very well until 12...Rb8 appeared as the fly in the ointment, but 13 Be3 might be a good move) 11 Rd1 Kh8 (this move of the young Pole Bartel has helped in a small revival of this line lately; against other moves White's plan of c5 had been doing very well) 12 c5 d5 when I think White can stay ahead with Roiz's 13 Bf4 Be6 14 Rac1 Bg8 15 Nd4 Qc8 16 Ndb5.

b) 7...c6 has passed rather out of fashion but is still very solid. White's main reply is 8 d5 when 8...e5 (8...Bd7 is the other move, when White has an interesting try in 9 Nd4 trying to prevent development by the pressure on c6) 9 dxe6 is the only move worth considering; as Jon Tisdall pointed out, if they ever abolish the en passant rule everyone will be playing the Leningrad. Then 9...Bxe6 **(Diagram 13)** creates the basic structure of this line. White can point at the weak d6-pawn but Black's active pieces and the e4-square give him plenty of counterplay. After 10 Qd3 Nbd7 (10...Re8 is probably better: 11 Ng5 Nbd7 12 b3 Nc5 13 Qc2 Qe7 14 Bb2 Rad8 15 Nxe6 would give a paradigm situation for this line; Black is very solid but

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White can perhaps claim a tiny advantage) 11 Bf4 Nb6 (this counterattack was the idea of 10...Nbd7) 12 b3 Ne4 13 Nd4 Nxc3 14 Nxe6 Qe7 15 Bd2 Qxe6 16 Bxc3 Bxc3 17 Qxc3 is a forced sequence to a position which has arisen in a few games and where I think White ought to be able to claim an edge; this balance of forces isn't always good for him by any means but the knight needs recycling from b6 and White can use that time to organize pressure in the d-file.

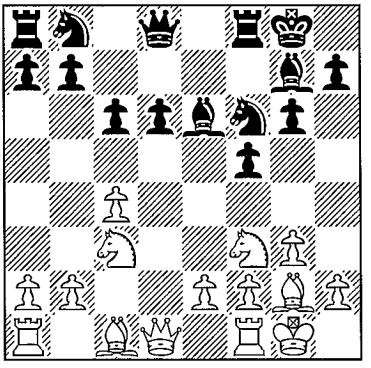

Diagram 13 (W)
An unbalanced position

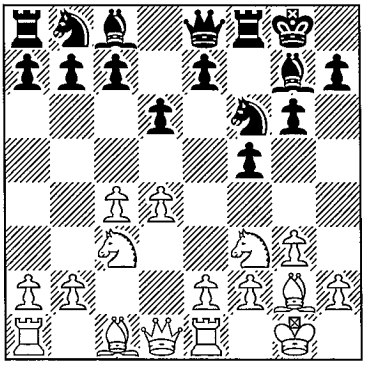

Diagram 14 (B)
Supporting the e4-advance

8 Re1 (Diagram 14)

This definitely isn't the most popular move among 2600+ players – maybe I'm getting a bit demob-happy – but I'm not alone in recommending it; in his excellent book Leningrad expert Stefan Kindermann called it his 'secret weapon for White'.

8...Qf7

Regarded as the best move, hitting c4 and reminding the e1-rook that it doesn't defend f2 any more. So how had White planned to meet the immediate 8...e5, which in my experience is the commonest reply at subtitled level? Well, his last move didn't exactly conceal his plan: 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 e4 f4 (this might not be best – in fact I suspect it just loses – but it illustrates a theme that can be very dangerous in the Leningrad, and anyway the alternatives give White a very comfortable edge) 11 gxf4 (White has to accept the challenge) 11...Nh5 (this is always the move to watch for in the Dutch after an ...f4-sacrifice) 12 f5 (Kindermann's idea) 12...gxf5 13 exf5 c6 (or 13...Nc6 14 Nd5) gives White a near-decisive advantage after either the simple 14 Ne4 or 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 f4, since 15...Bd4+ 16 Kh1 regains the piece.

9 b3

9 Ng5 is a sharp alternative which I'd love to recommend and sets a vicious trap: 9...Qxc4 10 Bf1 Qc6 (10...Qb4 unfortunately spoils White's fun completely and leaves Black better, unless you can prove different) 11 Qb3+ d5 12 Bf4 **(Diagram 15)**

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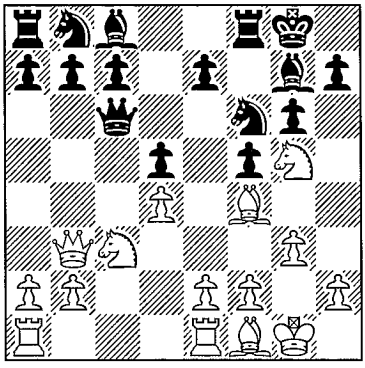

Diagram 15 (B)
The black queen must be careful

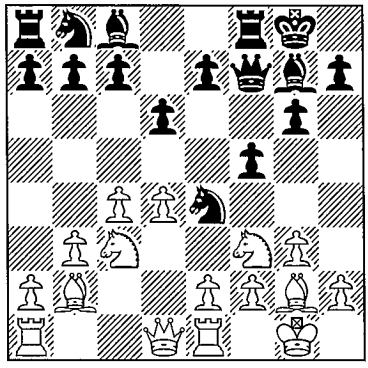

Diagram 16 (B)
How will Black develop his queenside?

12...Qd7 (Kindermann's recommendation), but now comes the powerful blow 13 e4 fxe4 (13...h6 14 exd5 hxg5 15 Bb5! is the point, since the Black queen is checkmated after 15...Qd8 16 Bxc7) 14 Bh3 Qc6 15 Bxc8 Rxc8 16 Ngxe4 when White has a crushing position: this variation was pointed out by Martin Carpenter on *chesspublishing.com*.

9...Ne4 10 Bb2 (Diagram 16)

Now 10...Nd7 is seen in Game 33, while 10...Nc6 11 Rc1 is a cunning move linked to the idea 11...e5 12 dxe5 Nxc3 (this move is a mistake in view of White's 14th: better is 12...dxe5 13 Nxe4 fxe4 14 Ng5 Qxf2+ 15 Kh1 Rd8 16 Qc2 Qf5 when 17 Nxe4 Qh5 18 Nc5 Nd4 19 Bxd4 exd4 20 Nxb7 Rf8 is a critical position according to Kindermann; it seems to me that White has some chances to demonstrate something after 21 Qe4) 13 Bxc3 dxe5 14 Qd5 Kh8 (14...Be6 15 Ng5 Bxd5 16 Bxd5 Qxd5 17 cxd5 – this is the reason the rook came to the closed c-file) 15 e4 which gives White a very nice position.

Illustrative Games

Game 31
☐ **D.Fridman** ■ **T.Taylor**
Minneapolis 2005

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Be7 5 Nc3 0-0 6 Nf3 d6 7 0-0 Ne4 8 Nxe4 fxe4 9 Nd2 d5 10 f3 Nc6 11 fxe4 dxc4?!

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Erenburg suggests (correctly I think) that 11...Rxf1+ was preferable: as a general rule in this variation the party that first gets the chance to make this move should do so. The exception is when it enables White to get Bxf1xc4 in. Here White should play 12 Nxf1 dxc4 and now 13 Be3 e5 14 d5 when White is better as Black's knight will be offside on a5.

12 Rxf8+ Bxf8 13 e3 (Diagram 17)

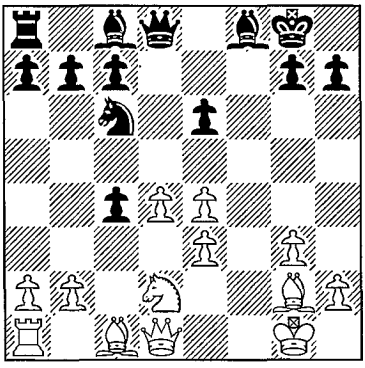

Diagram 17 (B)
White maintains his centre

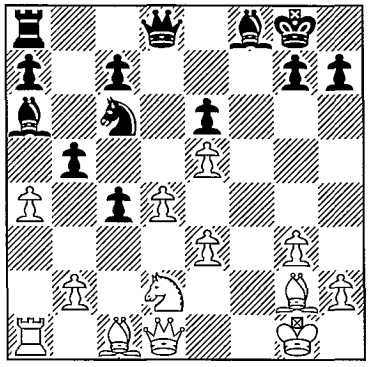

Diagram 18 (B)
Decisively opening the diagonal

13...b5?

NOTE: This is a bad move: Black cannot allow White to make his g2-bishop powerful by e5.

Necessary was 13...e5 14 d5 Na5, but again White is better after either 15 Qa4 or 15 Nf3, intending Bd2.

14 a4

Black is virtually lost already, since he is going to have about four isolated pawns while White's pieces are also much more active.

14...Ba6 15 e5 (Diagram 18) 15...Nb4

15...Nxd4 makes no difference: 16 Bxa8 Nb3 17 Qg4! Nxa1 18 Qxe6+ Kh8 19 Qxa6 Qxa8 20 Qxb5.

16 Qg4 c6 17 Qxe6+ Kh8 18 axb5 Bxb5 19 Be4 a5

After 19...Qe7 20 Qxe7 Bxe7, 21 Nb1! and Nc3 tidies everything up and wins quite easily.

20 Nxc4 Ra7 21 Nd6 Bxd6 22 exd6 Qf8 23 Qf5 Qg8 24 d7 Ra8 25 Bd2 Rf8 26 Qh5 Nd3 27 Bxa5 g6 28 Bxg6 1-0

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Game 32
☐ **I.Khenkin** ■ **A.Vaisser**
French League 1999

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 c6 5 Nf3 d5 6 0-0 Bd6 7 Qc2 0-0 8 Ne5 b6 9 Nc3 a6

An admission already that the opening has gone wrong – this move is never good in the Stonewall, since it takes away a square which either bishop or knight may use, weakens b6 and hence indirectly c5 also, and puts another pawn on a light square storing up trouble for the c8-bishop in a simplified position. But alternatives are hard to come by and 9...Bb7 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 Nb5 illustrates White's idea in its plainest form.

10 Bg5 (Diagram 19)

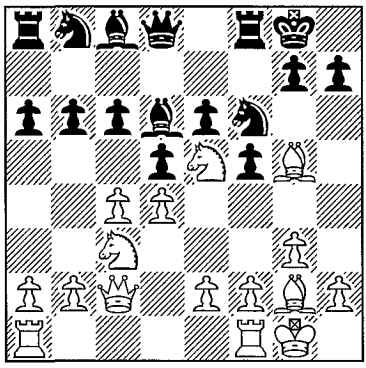

Diagram 19 (B)
Sharper than Bf4

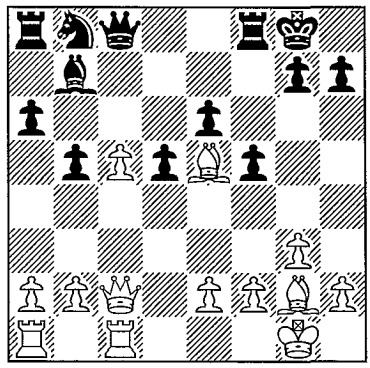

Diagram 20 (B)
White is a little better

10...Bb7

White was threatening cxd5, Bxf6 and Nxd5, but the text allows a different tactical flea bite which causes further concessions.

11 Na4

Preventing 11...Nbd7 in view of 12 Nxd7 winning at once, but that means Black can hardly develop.

11...b5

More or less forced but no less hideous for that.

12 cxd5 cxd5

12...bxa4 13 dxc6 regains the piece with interest.

13 Nc5 Qc8 14 Rfc1 Ne4 15 Bf4 Nxc5 16 dxc5 Bxe5 17 Bxe5 (Diagram 20)

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Black has at least managed to block c5, and while the e5-bishop looks impressive at the moment it can be challenged by the knight. This balance of forces quite often occurs in the Stonewall and generally it favours White at least a little if there is no dead point in the centre at e5, but it's not as good as it may optically appear. White's king's bishop is restrained by the stone wall just as Black's is.

Generations of writers have observed that the problem with the Stonewall is Black's potential bad bishop, but Kramnik, an advocate of Black's set-up, once iconoclastically asked about the opening in general, 'In what respect is my queen's bishop inferior to White's king's bishop? I don't see it. ' He had in mind middlegame positions, of course. In a simplified endgame it can be a very inferior piece indeed.

17...Bc6 18 Bd6 Rf7 19 f3 Nd7 20 Qd2 Qd8 21 Rf1 Ra7 22 Rac1 a5 23 a3 Rb7 24 h3

White is playing flexibly. To get anywhere he will need to open a line and he is thinking of e4 or perhaps even g4.

24...b4 25 axb4 Rxb4 26 Ra1 Rb5 27 Rfc1 h6 28 Ra3 Kh7 29 e3 Qf6 30 Rc2 Ne5??

Losing in one move: 30...a4 was essential, with a long struggle ahead in which White is still better but not yet and perhaps not ever decisively so.

31 f4 Nc4

31...Nd7 32 Rxa5 might leave Black with a slightly less spectacular negative assessment according to Fritz, but you can see why he wanted to get on with it and maybe set a few tricks, unless even now White's next had eluded him.

32 Rxc4 dxc4 33 Bxc6 Rxb2 34 Qd4 Rb1+ 35 Kh2 Rb3 36 Be5 Qe7 37 Ra2 c3 38 Bg2 Qa7 39 c6 Qa6 40 c7 Rf8 41 Qd8 Rg8 42 Rxa5 1-0

A good scrap rather spoiled by Black's oversight, but I believe White's opening idea is strong and Black needs to set up slightly differently on move seven or eight somehow.

Game 33

□ J.Hellsten ■ H.Herraiz Hidalgo

Calvia Olympiad 2004

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1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 c4 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 Nf3 d6 7 Nc3 Qe8 8 Re1 Qf7 9 b3 Ne4 10 Bb2 Nd7 (Diagram 21) 11 Rc1 Ndf6 12 e3 Nxc3

12...c6 13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Nd2 Nxd2 15 Qxd2 is the same as the game except that White's queen's rook is on c1 not c2, and still favours White according to Zhang Zhong.

13 Rxc3 Ne4 14 Rc2 c6 15 Nd2 Nxd2 16 Qxd2

16 Rxd2 had been played in V.Filippov-Zhang Zhong, Shanghai 2000 which had gone 16...Bd7 17 d5 Rac8 18 f4 Bxb2 19 Rxb2 Qf6 and now Zhang gives 20 Rd2 Rf7

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21 dxc6 Bxc6 22 Bxc6 Rxc6 23 e4 with an advantage to White, which looks right in view of his e-file pressure, slightly better covered king and less ragged pawn structure. Hellsten has a different idea connected to Qa5 with pressure on the queenside.

16...Bd7 17 Qa5 (Diagram 22)

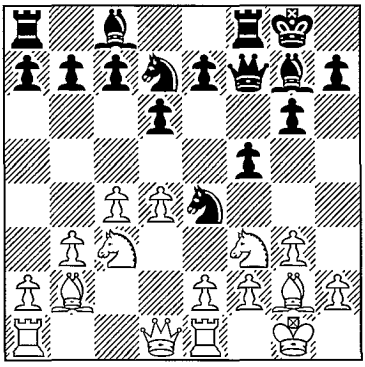

Diagram 21 (W)
Preparing to support the e4-knight

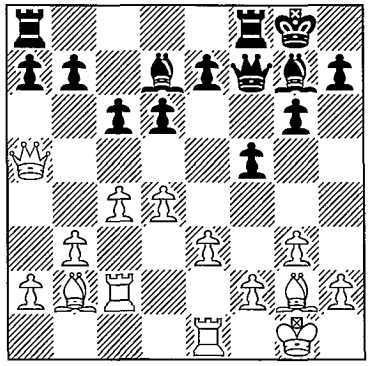

Diagram 22 (B)
Threatening 18 Qc7

This was the idea. Black has a long defensive task ahead of him.

17...b6 18 Qa6 Qe8

Otherwise 19 Qb7, but now Black's pieces are passive and he has weakened his queenside pawns a little.

19 b4 e5 20 dxe5 dxe5 21 Rd2 Rf7 22 Red1 Be6 23 c5 Qc8 24 Qa4 e4 25 Bxg7 Kxg7 26 Rd6 b5

This doesn't keep the queenside closed as effectively as Black would like, but 26...bxc5 27 bxc5 Bd5 is no panacea either as White can just trade the bishop off with 28 Bf1-c4: his safer king and more active pieces still give him a definite pull.

27 Qc2 Bd5 28 Bf1 a6 29 a4 (Diagram 23)

This is the problem: it's hard to cope with the twin threats of 30 axb5 axb5 31 Bxb5 and of straightforward infiltration along the a-file.

29...Rb8 30 Qc3+ Kg8 31 Ra1 Rd7 32 axb5 axb5 33 Qe5 Rbb7?!

33...Rxd6 34 Qxd6 Qf8 was more prudent and gave very good chances to defend after a prolonged grovel, but evidently Black had overlooked White's next move completely.

34 Bxb5

A dramatic blow, although by no means clearly decisive.

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34...Re7?

34...Rxb5? loses to 35 Rxd7 Qxd7 36 Ra8+ Kf7 37 Rh8, and presumably Black judged that 34...Rxd6 35 cxd6 Rxb5 36 d7 Qf8 37 Ra8 Qxa8 38 Qe8+ Qxe8 39 dxe8Q+ Kg7 was losing for him, although this looks highly debatable to me, and anyway after the text Black is hopelessly lost.

35 Qf6 Qf8 36 Bxc6 Bxc6 37 Qxf8+ Kxf8 38 Rxc6 Rxb4 39 Rc1 Ke8 40 Rb6 Rb7 41 Rxb7 Rxb7 42 c6 Rc7

As usual White is winning with the extra pawn and the passive rook, although he has to be quick before Black simply ingests the extra pawn with ...Ke8-e7-d6.

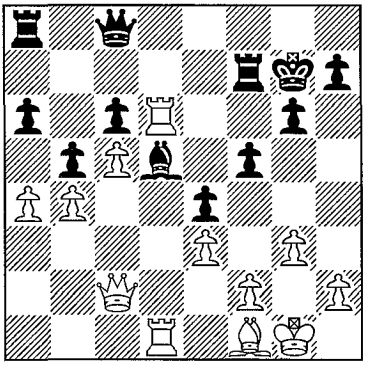

Diagram 23 (B)
Levering Black open

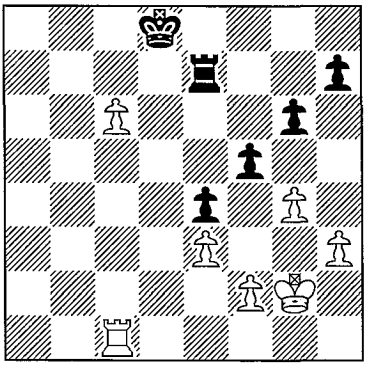

Diagram 24 (B)
The decisive advance

43 Kg2 Kd8 44 h3 Re7 45 g4 (Diagram 24) 45...fxg4 46 hxg4 Kc7 47 Kg3 h5 48 Rc4 hxg4 49 Kxg4 Re5 50 Rc1 Rf5 51 Rc2 Re5 52 Kf4 Re6 53 Kg5 Rd6 54 Kh6 Rf6 55 Kg5 Rd6 56 Kf4 Re6 57 Ra2

White decides he can't win a kingside pawn by zugzwang and instead transposes into a two-v-one position where I think he is objectively winning with the Black king distant.

57...Rxc6 58 Kxe4 Kd6 59 Kf4 Ke6 60 Kg5 Kd5

60...Kf7 61 Ra7+ Kf8 was the alternative with an ending which looks lost to me, although I don't have much to offer in terms of proving that brash statement.

61 Ra4 Rc2 62 Rf4 Rc6 63 Rf6 Rc5 64 Kxg6 Ke4 65 Rf4+ Kd3 66 e4 Kd4 67 f3 Rc8 68 Rf5 Ra8 69 Kg5 1-0

Not the most spectacular of games, but at the moment 8 Re1 looks like condemning Black to a bit of a thankless defence.

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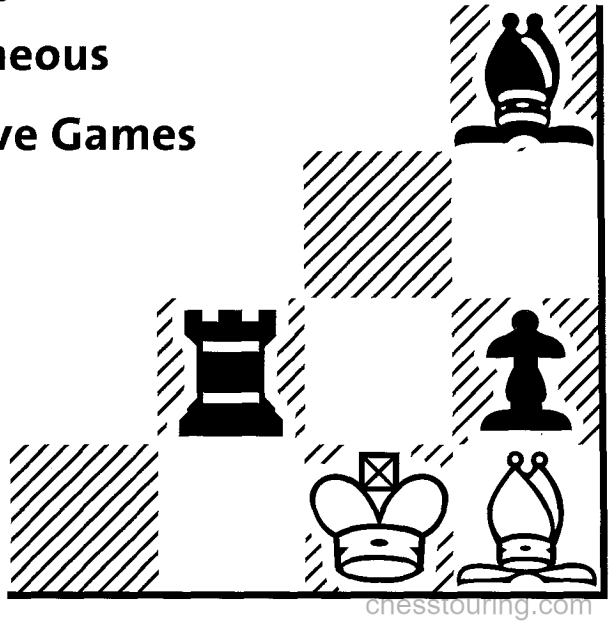
Chapter Eleven

Rare but Tricky Tries

- The Budapest
- The Modern
- Black Plays 1...d6
- Black Plays 1...e6
- Miscellaneous
- Illustrative Games



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The Budapest

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 (Diagram 1)

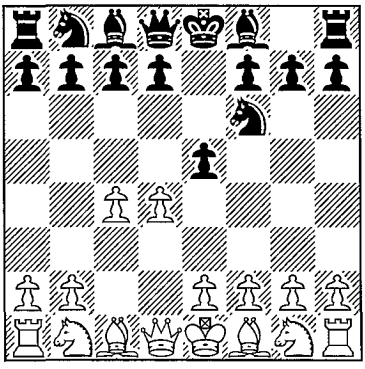

Diagram 1 (W)
The Budapest

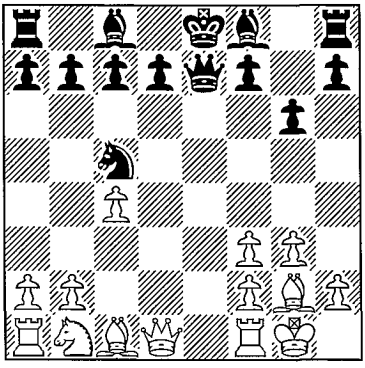

Diagram 2 (B)
Follow Alekhine against the Faj

The Budapest Gambit is a funny thing. It's not half as bad as it looks, it's used every now and then by top grandmasters and from time to time other top grandmasters get knocked over by it (Bacrot and Epishin, for example). What was once a search for lively counter-attacking play, however, today tends to be used to reach solid and slightly worse positions. Such is life.

3 dxe5

WARNING: 3 d5 Bc5 gives Black easy play. White has to take up the challenge. Black can win the pawn back, but White will generally manage to collect the two bishops and has the square on d5 to aim for.

3...Ng4

3...Ne4 is the Fajarowicz Gambit, which generally gets a bit of a kicking from theoreticians, but has actually scored better than 3...Ng4. Then 4 Nd2 is one good answer: 4...Nc5 (4...Bb4 5 a3 Bxd2+ 6 Bxd2 is not so good as 6...Nxd2 7 Qxd2 Nc6 8 f4 holds on to the pawn, and otherwise 7 Bf4 comes) 5 Ngf3 Nc6 6 g3 Qe7 (6...g6 7 Bg2 Bg7 8 Nb3 is a bit better for White, and after 6...d6 7 exd6 Bxd6 8 Bg2 White is generally best advised to untangle with Nb3 and Bg5 or e3) 7 Bg2 g6 and now Alekhine's superb 8 Nb1 when 8...Nxe5 9 0-0 Nxf3+ 10 exf3! **(Diagram 2)** followed by Nc3-d5 led to the classic A.Alekhine-S.Tartakower, London 1932.

4 Bf4 Bb4+

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4...Nc6 5 Nf3 Bb4+ is the same thing, 4...Bc5 5 e3 attacks g4 (this is one of White's points) and drives Black back in disorder, and 4...Nc6 5 Nf3 Bc5?! 6 e3 Qe7?! 7 Nc3 Ngxe5? 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 Nd5 Bb4+ 10 Ke2! wins a piece or so. Black's main alternative is 4...g5 and in fact statistically best – Black has managed an almost-respectable 40%. A pleasingly ruthless reply was the 5 Bg3 Bg7 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 h4 **(Diagram 3)**

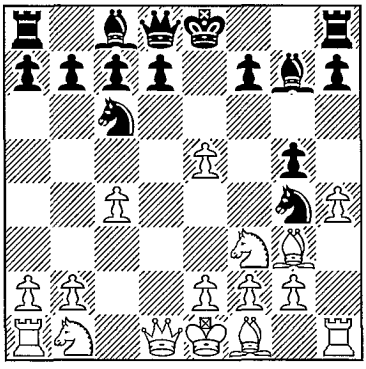

Diagram 3 (B)
Exploiting the ambitious ...g5

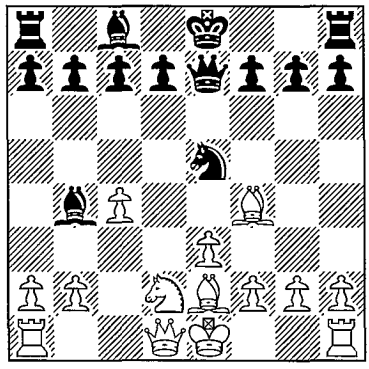

Diagram 4 (B)
White has an edge

7...Ngxe5 (7...h6 8 hxg5 hxg5 9 Rxh8+ Bxh8 10 Nc3 Ncxe5 11 Nxe5 Bxe5 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 13 Qc2 is better for White also; it is not so easy to arrange castling for Black) 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 e3 d6 10 hxg5 Qxg5 11 Nc3 Be6 12 Nd5 of A.Riazantsev-A.Tjurin, Voronezh 2004: to be sure Black can improve on 12...0-0-0?? 13 Rh5 1-0, but attaining a playable game will be altogether harder.

5 Nd2 Nc6 6 Ngf3 Qe7 7 e3

7 a3 is also played, but once Black has arranged his pieces with the queen on e7 blocking the bishop's retreat, all White needs to do is get castled and Black will probably have to give up the bishop anyway, so a3 now is a bit of a waste of time.

7...Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 Be2 (Diagram 4)

The main position of White's line. This solid approach was Karpov's choice when Short sprang the Budapest on him in their 1992 Candidates final. White has scored a very decent 69% from this position.

9...b6

9...d6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Nb3 b6 12 a3 Bc5 13 Nxc5 bxc5 14 b4 Nd7 15 Bg4 was played in the above mentioned Karpov-Short game. White has a decided advantage here: either Black takes on b4 and is left with weak pawns facing the bishops on an open board, or he allows Bxd7 followed by doubling the c-pawns and a miserable defence

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in the opposite-coloured bishops position a pawn down. Another alternative leading to a fairly miserable position for Black is 9...0-0 10 0-0 Bxd2 11 Qxd2 d6 from which the Latvian GM Normunds Miezis has lost a number of depressing games.

10 0-0 Bxd2 11 Qxd2

White has obtained the bishop pair and we will see him put it to good use after 11...d6 in Game 34. Instead 11...Bb7 12 c5 bxc5 13 Qa5 d6 14 Bxe5 dxe5 15 Rfc1 is much better for White, while 11...0-0? loses immediately to 12 Qd5.

The Modern

1 d4 g6 2 c4 Bg7 3 e4 Bg7 (Diagram 5)

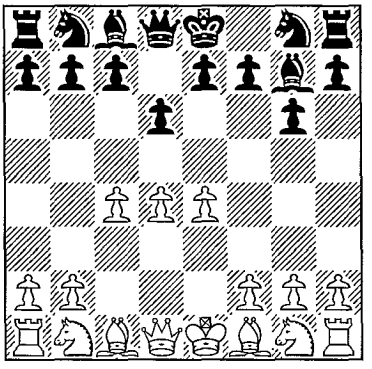

Diagram 5 (W)
The Modern

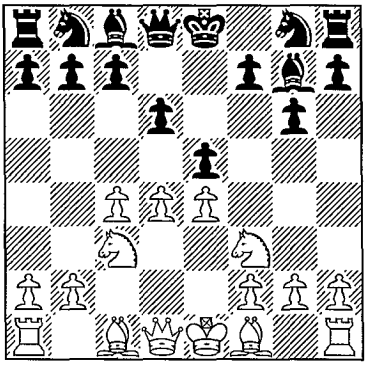

Diagram 6 (B)
White develops classically

4 Nf3 Bg4

Black can also head into the King's Indian with 4...Nf6 or prefer:

a) 4...c5 5 d5 e6 is a cunning move order when White can keep within the repertoire with 6 h3 exd5 7 cxd5 when Black can go back to a Benoni with 7...Nf6 or go in for some wild stuff as in F.Vallejo Pons-V.Topalov, Spanish Team Ch. 2000: 7...Ne7 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Bf4 h6 10 g4 g5 11 Bg3 Ng6 12 h4 Bxg4 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 Be2 Bxf3 15 Bxf3, when the young Spaniard had ample compensation for his pawn on the light squares (and the f-file) and went on to claim a notable scalp.

b) 4...e5 is the main alternative and after 5 Nc3 **(Diagram 6)** Black has a number of tricky alternatives to heading back to a King's Indian with 5...Nf6, including:

b1) 5...exd4 6 Nxd4 Ne7 is a one-time favourite of the British GM Jonathan Mestel which helped him on his way to some huge scores in British Championships of the 1980's, and has been taken up with great enthusiasm by Azmaiparashvili.

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White needs to respond critically with 7 Be3 Nbc6 8 h4, intending 8...0-0 9 h5 with a dangerous attack, and 8...f5 9 h5 fxe4 10 hxg6 hxg6 11 Rxh8+ Bxh8 12 Nxe4 gives White an edge after 12...Bf5 (12...Nf5 13 Bg5 is worse) 13 Nxf5.

b2) 5...Nd7 6 Be2 Ne7 is an old patent of Duncan Suttles well met by 7 0-0 0-0 8 Be3 h6 (Black needs to control g5 before launching the f-pawn: 8...f5 9 Ng5 Nf6 10 dxe5 followed by Qxd8 is horrid for him) 9 Qc2 f5 **(Diagram 7)**

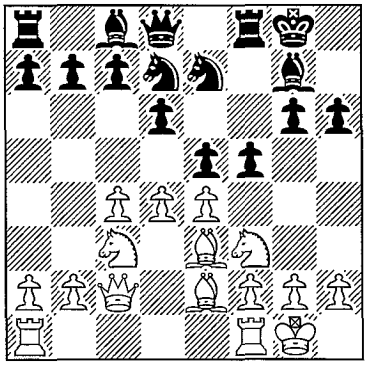

Diagram 7 (W)
Ambitious play from Black

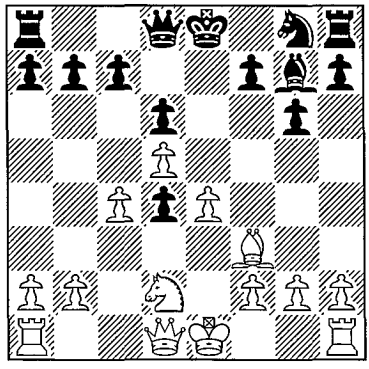

Diagram 8 (B)
d4 is a dead point

10 dxe5 dxe5 (two great Modern experts met in J.Speelman-D.Norwood, British League 2001, and Black lost horribly after the over-optimistic 10...f4 11 exd6 fxe3 12 dxe7 exf2+ 13 Rxf2 Qxe7 14 Nd5) 11 Rad1 f4 12 Bc5 with a large edge for White.

5 Be2 Nc6

5...Bxf3 6 Bxf3 Nc6 7 Be3 e5 8 d5 is just a transposition; an independent idea is 5...c6 6 Nc3 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 Qb6 8 d5 Qb4, but White can defend with 9 Qb3.

6 Be3 e5 7 d5 Bxf3 8 Bxf3 Nd4

That was the whole point, whereas after 8...Nce7 9 Nc3 f5 Black is going to miss his queen's bishop.

9 Bxd4 exd4 10 Nd2 (Diagram 8)

Epishin has had this position on several occasions, as we will see in Game 35, and has always preferred this move to the commoner 10 Na3.

Black Plays 1...d6

1 d4 d6

A tricky move-order, available of course only to Pirc/Modern players. Black is

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rooting for 2 c4 e5, when all of White's options have drawbacks.

2 Nf3 (Diagram 9)

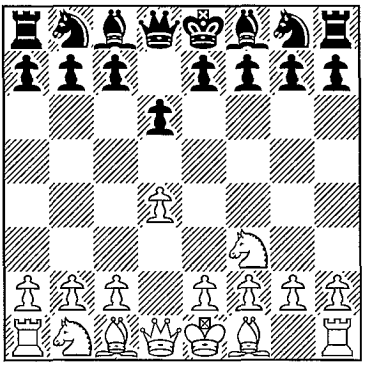

Diagram 9 (B)
Staying within our repertoire

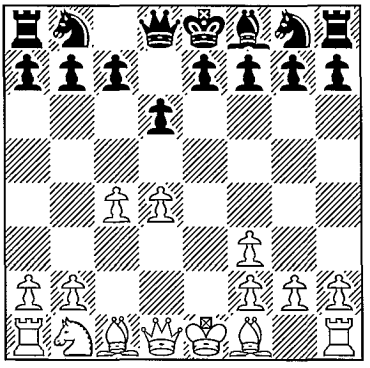

Diagram 10 (B)
Bishops and space v. structure

Black now has a variety of systems, as well as reaching a Modern with 2...g6, which try to take advantage of White committing to Nf3 early with the slight loss of control of e4 it involves and the possible ...Bg4 pin.

2...Nf6

Another option is the Yrjola and Tella recommended 2...Bg4 and after 3 c4 Bxf3 (3...Nd7 4 Nc3 e5 5 g3 Bxf3 6 exf3 Ngf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 f4 is also a bit better for White; after an exchange on d4 he can develop the other bishop at b2 and play for a gradual kingside advance) 4 exf3 **(Diagram 10)** there isn't much defined theory on this position.

TIP: From White's point of view the main things to remember are not to allow ...c6 and ...d5, when his d-pawn would be very weak stuck on a black square, and to make positive use of his kingside pawns.

These themes were exemplified in I.Sokolov-J.Van der Wiel, Dutch Ch., Rotterdam 1998: 4...g6 5 Bd3 Bg7 6 0-0 Nd7 7 d5 Ngf6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Re1 c6 10 Bf1 Nc5 11 Be3 Nfd7 12 Qd2 a5 13 h4 Re8 14 h5 a4 15 Rad1 Qb6 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 f4 Qb4 18 a3 Qb3 19 f5 and Black was under serious pressure.

3 c4 Nbd7

3...Bf5 tries to take advantage of White's slowness in playing e4 to prevent this by controlling e4. After 4 Nc3 g6 5 d5 Bg7 6 Nd4 Bd7 7 e4 **(Diagram 11)** 7...c6 (7...Na6 8 Nb3 and 7...c5 8 Nc2 have both done well for White) 8 Be2 Na6 9 0-0 Nc5 10 Bf3

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0-0 11 Nb3 Nxb3 12 axb3 a6 13 Be3, White had the edge in V.Korchnoi-L.Christiansen, Tilburg 1992.

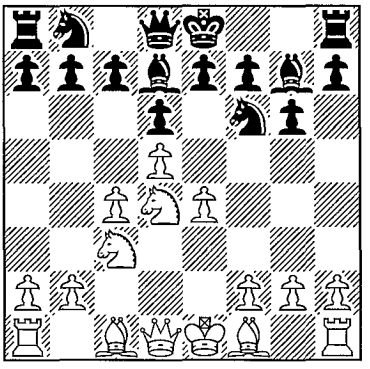

Diagram 11 (B)
Taking over the centre

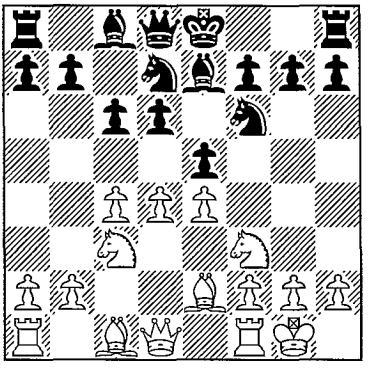

Diagram 12 (B)
The Old Indian

4 Nc3 e5 5 e4 Be7 6 Be2 c6 7 0-0 (Diagram 12)

The Old Indian, a fairly rare bird these days and not something you need to prepare a lot for, but there are a couple of things it's worth knowing: 7...0-0 (two other plans with 7...Qc7 8 Be3 Nf8 9 d5 c5 10 b4 and 7...a6 8 Nh4 0-0 9 Nf5 Re8 10 Be3 Bf8 11 d5 both allow specific responses which are worth noting) 8 Be3 Re8 (8...Ng4 9 Bd2, 8...a6 9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5, and 8...Qc7 9 d5 Nc5 10 Nd2 a5 11 a3 Bd7 12 b4 are other continuations all of which promise White a fairly easy edge) 9 d5 c5 10 Rb1, when White's extra space and easy plan on the queenside gives him an advantage.

Black Plays 1...e6

1 d4 e6

Of course with this move Black doesn't commit himself to anything other than perfectly orthodox lines (many Dutch players start this way), but most often this portends the English Defence, a cocktail of Dutch and accelerated Queen's Indian ideas developed by various English players including Keene, Plaskett, Speelman and most of all Miles.

2 c4 b6

2...Bb4+ **(Diagram 13)** is a tricky and transpositional little number: if White doesn't want to find himself playing a Bogo-Indian Defence (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4+) then he needs to step carefully. After 3 Bd2 Bxd2+ 4 Qxd2 Black has three ways to play:

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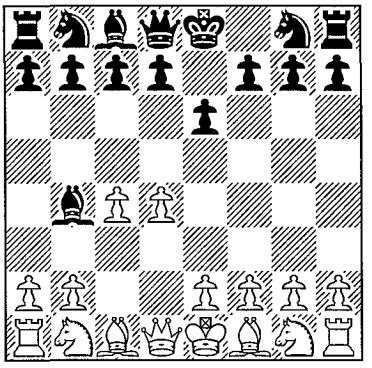

Diagram 13 (W)
The Keres Defence

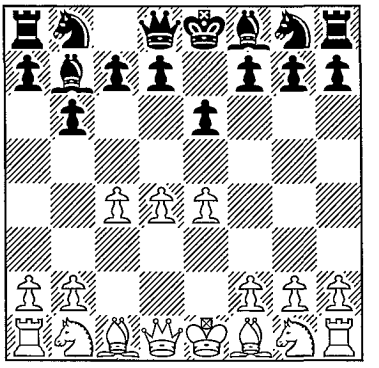

Diagram 14 (W)
The English Defence

a) 4...b6 5 Nc3 Bb7 6 e4 Nh6 was invented by Tony Miles in the early 1990s; he did fine with it until Karpov came along and crushed him with 7 f4! f5 8 e5 Nf7 9 0-0-0 g5 10 Nf3 Rg8 11 Be2 Na6 12 h3 at Biel 1992.

b) 4...Nf6 5 Nc3 0-0 6 Nf3 d6 7 g3 Nbd7 8 Bg2 e5 9 0-0 Re8 10 e4 leads to a position similar to the Bogo-Indian lines with ...d6 and...e5, save that Black has allowed White to take on d2 conveniently with the queen and so has an inferior version.

c) 4...d5 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 Nf3 0-0 7 e3 Qe7 8 Rc1 Rd8 9 cxd5 (White maybe could do this a move sooner for fear of 8...dxc4) 9...exd5 leads to a very grindy minority attack position which can also arise from the Bogo-Indian; the only solace I can offer is that usually Black isn't so desperate to get this line that he invites the French rather than start with 1 ...Nf6.

3 e4 Bb7 (Diagram 14)

This is the starting point of the English Defence. If White doesn't want to play his next move then 3 a3 Bb7 4 Nc3 was an option, although 4...Nf6 doesn't leave White much better than 5 Nf3 going into an a3 Queen's Indian. But in my view the English Defence is a bluff: 4 Bd3 is obviously the right move unless 4...f5 is good, and in my opinion it isn't. Having said that you have to be aware you're bound to be taking Black on in his backyard, but the whole philosophy of this book is to play the best moves, so ...

4 Bd3 f5

4...Bb4+ 5 Bd2 Qe7 6 Nc3 f5 7 Nge2 fxe4 8 Bxe4 Bxe4 9 Nxe4 Nf6 has been played in a few games, but in my view 10 Nxf6+ gxf6 11 0-0 ought to favour White as he's a little better developed and the g-file isn't all that dangerous by itself; Black's king isn't so safe on the queenside either. Instead 4...Nc6 is the most solid move: 5 Ne2! Nb4 (5...g6 6 Nbc3 Bg7 7 Be3 is just better for White) 6 0-0 Nxd3 7 Qxd3 d6 8

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Nbc3 Ne7 9 d5 Qd7 10 f4 g6 11 Nd4 (11 Be3 Bg7 12 Bd4 is less ambitious but also good) 11...0-0-0 was B.Gelfand-N.Short, Novgorod 1997, and now 12 a4 was King's recommendation, and I agree with him that this gives White an extremely worrying attack. Short's notes reveal that he intended 12...c5 13 dxc6 Nxc6, but after 14 Be3 I think it's going to be White who has the fun.

5 exf5 Bxg2 (Diagram 15)

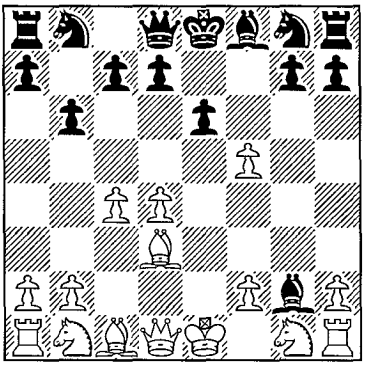

Diagram 15 (W)
Accepting the rook sacrifice

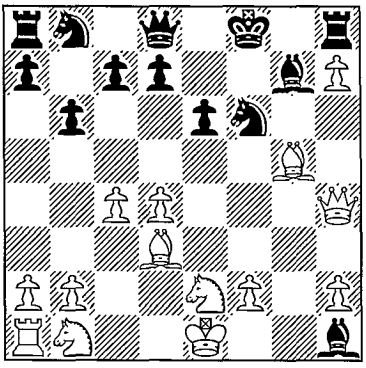

Diagram 16 (B)
White has excellent compensation

Black's last chance for sanity is 5...Bb4+ 6 Kf1 Nf6 (6...exf5?! allows the shot 7 c5! bxc5 8 a3 c4 9 Bxc4 Bd6 10 Nc3 Nf6 11 Nf3 when White is clearly better) 7 Nf3 (White has a couple of critical alternatives in 7 c5 and 7 Be2 intending c5, but the text seems to be simpler and just as strong) 7...0-0 8 a3 Bd6 9 Nc3 Qe8 10 fxe6 (I also wonder how Black is going to generate his counterplay after the untried 10 Nb5) 10...dxe6 11 Ng5, followed by Ne4, seems to leave White a pawn up for nothing much.

6 Qh5+ g6

6...Ke7?? 7 Qg5+ drops the g2-bishop.

7 fxg6 Bg7 8 gxh7+ Kf8 9 Ne2!

TIP: The knight heads for g6. White has to play relentlessly for the attack; winning material back with 9 hxg8Q+ Kxg8 10 Qg4 Bxh1 11 Bg5 Qf8 is fine for Black.

9...Nf6 10 Qh4 Bxh1 11 Bg5 (Diagram 16)

This position was much analysed in the more avant-garde English circles in the late seventies after a Browne-Miles encounter in 1978, but which with the aid of computers frankly seems to be just winning for White. Black has tried three moves:

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a) 11...Qe7 is seen in Game 36 and this was, I believe, the one in which aficionados of this strangely masochistic line were placing their faith in until recently.

b) 11...Nc6 12 Nd2 b5 (12...e5 13 0-0-0! e4 14 Bxe4 Bxe4 15 Nxe4 Rxh7 16 Qf4 Kf7 has been played in various games but now 17 Rd3, coming to f3, seems to be completely crushing for White) 13 cxb5! Nb4 14 Bg6 Bb7 15 Nf4 Ke7 16 Nh5 Qf8 17 d5! Nbxd5 18 Ne4, with a winning attack, was G.Flear-J.Plaskett, British Ch., Torquay 1982. This variation is rather typical of the line; White can bring all his pieces into the attack on the poor f6-knight quite slowly, because Black can't really do anything even if he's given a tempo or two.

c) 11...Bf3 was Black's next idea: 12 Nf4 Nc6 13 Nd2 Bg4 (the point, trying to keep the bishop on the kingside to defend before Nd2 can cut it off) 14 Bxf6! Qxf6 15 Qxg4 Qxd4 16 Rd1 seems to be the easiest of many ways to win; Black has no useful moves to make while White can win the exchange or so any time he wants and remains with that trump card on h7, while his king is fine on f1.

Miscellaneous

In this final section I show various offbeat moves after 1 d4, which range from the verge of respectability to the terrible.

a) 1...Nc6 is really quite a reasonable move. I suggest keeping in 1 d4 territory with 2 Nf3 when Black normally offers the Chigorin with 2...d5. After 2...d5 White could go for a Chigorin outside the repertoire with 3 c4, but I like 3 g3 **(Diagram 17)** which has always scored very well: Black usually goes either for 3...Bg4 4 Bg2 Qd7, when White can go either 5 c4 or 5 h3 followed by c3, or 3...Bf5 4 Bg2 Nb4 5 Na3 e6 6 0-0 Be7 7 c3 Na6 8 Qb3 Qc8 (Morozevich's approach), when White should go on with c4, Bf4 and Rac1.

b) 1...e5, the Englund Gambit, offers a rite of passage every chessplayer should go through in the form of the gamelet 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 Bf4 Qb4+ 5 Bd2 Qxb2 6 Bc3 Bb4 7 Qd2 Bxc3 8 Qxc3 Qc1mate, but instead 6 Nc3 gives White a virtually winning position.

c) 1...c5 2 d5 f5, known in some circles as the Clarendon Court, is well met by 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 f3 followed by e4.

d) 1...b5, the St George, was famously good enough to slay Karpov, but simple development by 2 e4 a6 3 Bd3 Bb7 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Nbd2 c5 6 c3 e6 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Re1 should leave White better.

e) 1...Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 Ne4 is Stefan Bucker's Geier (or Vulture): 4 Qc2 Qa5+ 5 Nd2 followed by sensible development should be enough

f) 1...Nf6 2 c4 Nc6 **(Diagram 18)**, the Black Knight's Tango, is not a bad opening at all. Rather than anything ambitious I think it's best to play quietly: 3 Nf3 e6 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 Qc2 leads to the Zürich variation of the 4 Qc2 Nimzo.

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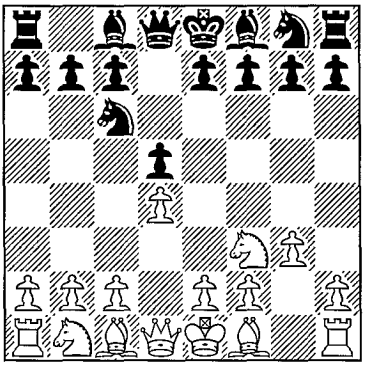

Diagram 17 (B)
Delaying c4 for once

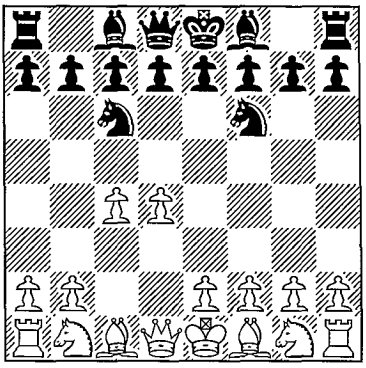

Diagram 18 (W)
White doesn't have to Tango

Illustrative Games

Game 34
☐ **M.Pein** ■ **P.Svidler**
London 1991

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Bf4 Bb4+ 5 Nd2 Nc6 6 Ngf3 Qe7 7 e3 Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 Be2 b6 10 0-0 Bxd2 11 Qxd2 d6 12 b4

12 e4 and f3 is another sound plan but Pein sticks to the usual recipe of b4 and c5.

12...Ng6?!

12...Bb7 13 c5 dxc5 14 bxc5 0-0 looks like Black's most sensible continuation to me, when White is only slightly better, but the young Peter Svidler has higher ambitions.

13 Bg3 h5 14 c5! (Diagram 19) 14...dxc5 15 Bf3 Rb8 16 Rfd1 Be6

If instead 16...h4 White has a neat little sequence: 17 Bc6+ Kf8 18 Qd8+ Qxd8 19 Rxd8+ Ke7 20 Rxh8 Nxh8 21 Bxh4+ with a clear advantage.

17 h3 h4 18 Bh2 0-0

18...cxb4 19 Rac1 gives White more than enough compensation.

19 bxc5 Qxc5? 20 Rac1 Qg5 21 Bxc7 Rbc8 22 Bb7 Rce8 23 f4 Qf6 24 e4 (Diagram 20)

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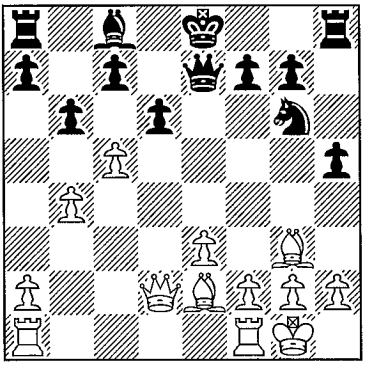

Diagram 19 (B)
The thematic advance

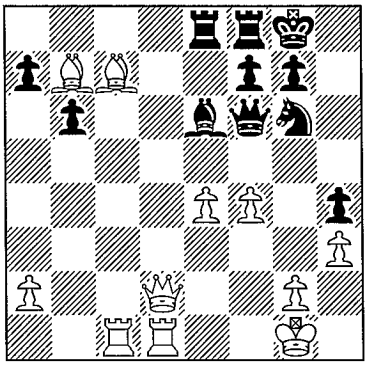

Diagram 20 (B)
Svidler is repelled

This squelches all Black's plans on the kingside and White is now just winning, which the rest of the game sees him doing very capably:

24...Ne7 25 Be5 Qh6 26 Rc7 Bc8 27 Bd6 Bxb7 28 Rxb7 Qe6 29 Qd3 g6 30 f5 gxf5 31 exf5 Nxf5 32 Bxf8 Rxf8 33 Rxa7 Kh8 34 Ra4 Qe5 35 Rg4 Re8 36 Rf1 Qc5+ 37 Kh2 Qc7+ 38 Rff4 Re5 39 Kh1 Qc8 40 Rxh4+ Nxh4 41 Rxh4+ Kg7 42 Qg3+ 1-0

42...Kf6 43 Rh6+ wins the rook. A very nice game by Malcolm Pein: commerce's gain was the board's loss when Malc hung up his pawns, put on a suit and became one of British chess's leading entrepreneurs.

Game 35
☐ **V.Epishin ■ B.Gulko**
World Open, Philadelphia 1998

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1 d4 d6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 e4 Bg4 5 Be2 Nc6 6 Be3 e5 7 d5 Bxf3 8 Bxf3 Nd4 9 Bxd4 exd4 10 Nd2 Ne7

10...c5 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 b4 makes it hard to bring support to the d4-pawn and Epishin held a slight but clear edge after 12...Ne7 13 0-0 0-0 14 Nb3 Qb6 15 a3 Rab8 16 c5 dxc5 17 Nxc5 Rfd8 18 Nd3 in another Epishin-Gulko clash at Yerevan 1996.

11 Be2 0-0 12 0-0 c6 13 Nf3 Qb6 14 Qd2 f5 15 Bd3! (Diagram 21)

Epishin gives the variation 15 Qc2 fxe4 16 Qxe4 Rae8 17 Qe6+ Kh8 18 Ng5 Nxd5 19 Nf7+ Rxf7 20 Qxe8+ Rf8 21 Qe4 Nf4 with good compensation for Black; but he rightly declines to get involved in these kinds of tactics unless he has to when he has a structural edge.

15...fxe4 16 Bxe4 cxd5 17 cxd5 Rac8 18 Qe2!

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A great move which prevents 18...Rc5 in view of 19 Ng5 Nxd5?? 20 Bxd5+ and Qe6+, so instead Black has to take control of g5.

18...Bf6 19 Ne1! Bg7

Black has nothing better than to retract his previous move: he wants to have the option of ...Nf5.

20 Nd3 Rce8 21 Rfe1 Qb5

Epishin suggests that 21...Kh8 was necessary, still with a big edge to White.

22 g3 Nxd5?

This falls into an ambush: 22...Kh8 23 Nf4 Qxe2 24 Rxe2 is crushing for White if the knight gets to e6 and so Black has to try 24...Rxf4 25 gxf4 Nxd5 26 Ree1 Nxf4 27 Bxb7 when Epishin is confident that Black doesn't have enough, but I'm not quite so sure. If White were bothered about this 23 a4 Qc4 24 Qd1 was an alternative way to maintain the d-pawn and keep the edge.

23 Nf4! Nc7 24 Qxb5 Nxb5 25 Ne6! (Diagram 22)

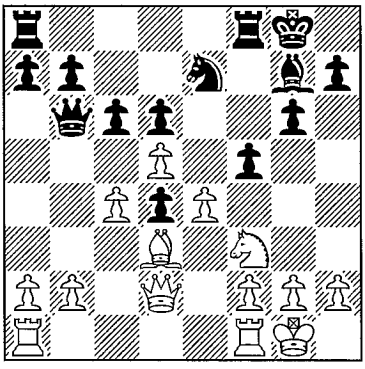

Diagram 21 (B)
Maintaining control

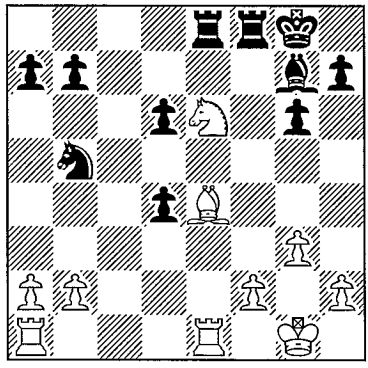

Diagram 22 (B)
A killer tactic

Decisive; if the rook moves 26 Bd5 Kh8 27 a4 wins the knight.

25...Rxe6 26 Bd5 Kh8 27 Rxe6! d3 28 Rd1 Bd4 29 Rxd3 Bxf2+ 30 Kg2 Nd4 31 Re4 Nc2 32 Rf3 Ne1+ 33 Rxe1 Rxf3 34 Re8+ 1-0

Game 36

☐ **H.Burger** ■ **J.Braun**

correspondence 2002

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1 d4 e6 2 c4 Bb4 3 e4 Bb7 4 Bd3 f5 5 exf5 Bxg2 6 Qh5+ g6 7 fxg6 Bg7 8 gxh7+ Kf8 9 Ne2 Nf6 10 Qh4 Bxh1 11 Bg5 Qe7 12 Nf4 Qf7 13 Ng6+ Ke8 14 Ne5 Qf8

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14...Qe7 15 Ng4 picks off the knight for a start with the usual continuing devastating attack – 15...Qb4+ 16 Nd2 is nothing.

15 Nc3 d6 (Diagram 23)

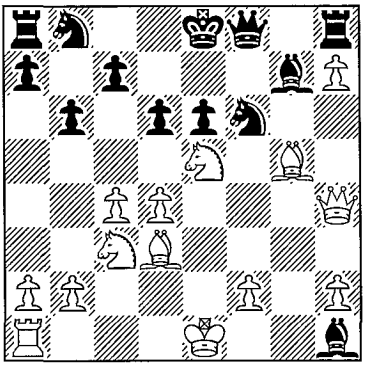

Diagram 23 (W)
Surely Black can't survive?

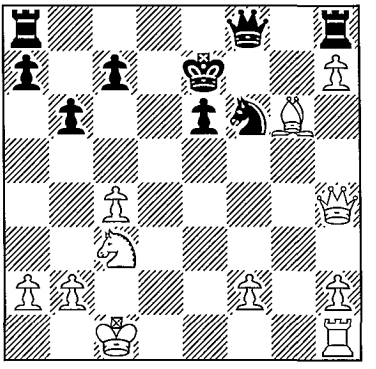

Diagram 24 (B)
White is much better

16 Bg6+

16 0-0-0 at once is also strong and led White to an overwhelming position in W.Browne-A.Miles, Reno 1999, although Miles somehow escaped.

16...Ke7

16...Kd8 17 Nf7+ Kc8 18 Bxf6 wins the piece with more to come – this is the basic point of White's Ng6-e5 pirouette.

17 0-0-0

Bauer, who rather strangely recommended this line for Black in his *Play 1...b6*, gave 17 Nf7 Nbd7 18 0-0-0 Bb7 as unclear although after the thematic 19 d5 I doubt you'll be seeing this position in any of the French GM's games; White at a stroke wins e4 for his knight to enter the attack and wrenches open the d-file: Black is toast here.

17...dxe5

After 17...Bb7 White would proceed in the same way as the above line with 18 Nf7 followed by d5: Black has to give his queen on f7 but his remaining underdeveloped pieces are quite unable to cope.

18 dxe5 Nbd7 19 exf6+ Bxf6 20 Bxf6+ Nxf6 21 Rxh1 (Diagram 24)

The dust clears and we have the usual scenario in this line: White has won back a piece and remains with the h7 pawn giving him rough material equality and his active pieces giving Black's helpless forces real problems.

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21...Qg7 22 Qg3 Rad8 23 Re1 Qh6+

23...Rxh7 24 Bxh7 Qxg3 25 hxg3 Nxh7 at least makes it to a lost ending.

24 Kb1 Rd6 25 Nb5 Nxh7 26 Nxd6 cxd6 27 f4

The rest isn't too hard: White is material up and the Black king is hopelessly exposed still.

27...Nf8 28 Be4 Qf6 29 f5 e5 30 Rg1 Nd7 31 Qd3 Nc5 32 Qd5 Qf7 33 Qc6 Rd8 34 Bc2 Rg8 35 Qc7+ Nd7 36 Rf1 Qf6 37 Qxa7 Rc8 38 Ba4 Rd8 39 Bxd7 Rxd7 40 Qxb6 Rd8 41 a4 Kf8 42 a5 e4 43 a6 e3 44 Qxe3 Rb8 45 Rf2 1-0

A crushing defeat and if he goes on playing this line I think Black can look forward to plenty more of the same. If Black wants to play the English Defence at all then I think he needs to go all the way back to move four and try one of the ideas there, but in the meantime there are points to be garnered for the braver type of White. Richard Palliser, with his usual generosity, was very helpful in letting me use some of his analysis of this game. Any errors that remain are naturally entirely the fault of the manufacturers of Fritz and if you drop me an email I'll forward it on to them.

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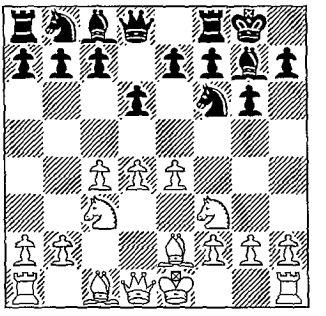
Index of Variations

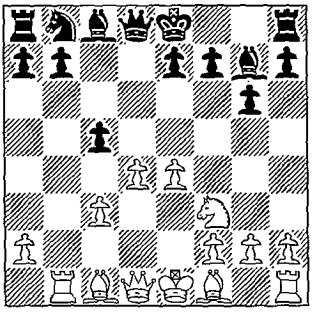
The King's Indian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6
5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 (Diagram)
6...e5
6...Bg4 – *25*
7 0-0 Nc6 – *13*
7...Na6 – *19;*
7...Nbd7 – *22*



The Grünfeld

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5
5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1
(Diagram)
8...0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 – *43*
9...Nc6 – *47;*
9...b6 – *50*



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The Nimzo-Indian

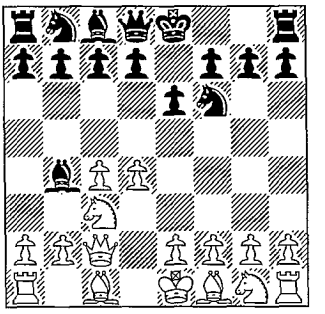
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 (Diagram)

4...d5 – *62*

4...0-0 – *66;*

4...c5 – *67;*

4...Nc6 – *71*



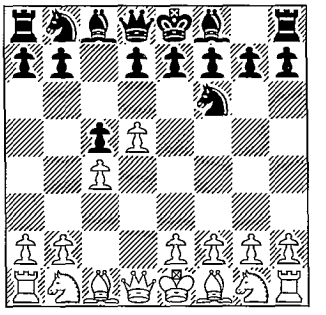
The Benoni and Benko

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 (Diagram)

3...e6 – *86*

3...b5 – *90;*

3...e5 – *86*



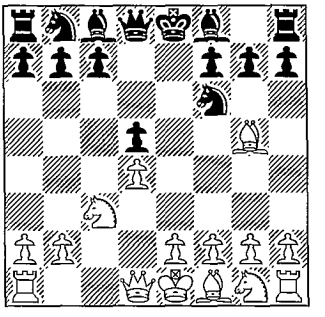
The Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 (3...c5 – *111*)

4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 (Diagram)

5...Be7 6 e3 0-0 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 Nge2 Re8

9 0-0 c6 10 Qc2 Nf8 11 f3 – *107*



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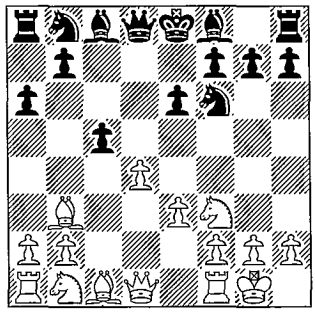
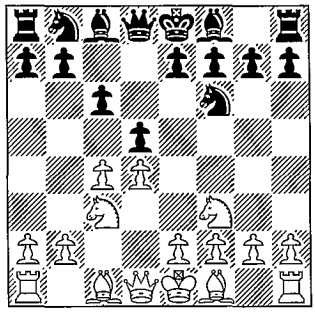
The Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6
5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3 (Diagram)
7...b5 – *126*
7...Nc6 – *131;*
7...Nbd7 – *132*



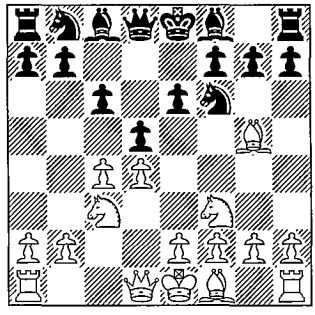
The Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 (Diagram)
4...dxc4
4...a6 – *158*
5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 e6 – *148*
6...Nbd7 – *151*



The Semi-Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 (2...e6 3 Nc3 c6 4 e4 – *182*)
3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 (Diagram)
5...dxc4 – *171*
5...h6 – *176;*
5...Nbd7 – *179*



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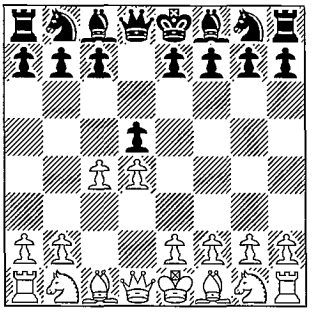
The Albin and the Chigorin

1 d4 d5 2 c4 (Diagram)

2...e5 – *196;*

2...Nc6 – *198*



The Dutch

1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 (Diagram)

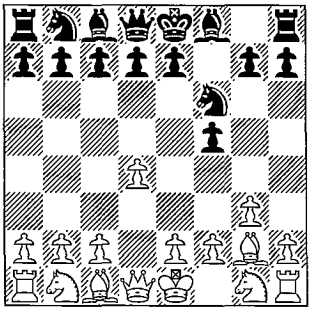
3...e6

3...g6 – *210*

4 c4 Be7

4...c6 5 Nf3 d5 – *208*

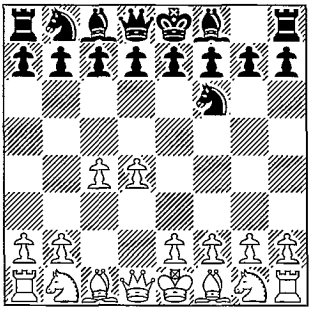
5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 – *206*



Rare but Tricky Tries

1 d4 Nf6 (1...g6 – *222*, 1...d6 – *223*, 1...e6 – *225*) **2 c4 (Diagram)**

2...e5 – *220*



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