

shouldn't have any genuine problems, Buenafe Moya-Kramnik, Villarroledo rpd 1998.

14 axb5 ♖xd4 15 ♖xd4 cxd4 16 ♖xd4 e5 (D)



Compared with the equivalent position in Line B2321, the only difference is that White's rook is on e1 instead of f2. This favours White, as the rook won't be attacked after ...fxg3 (see the note to Black's 17th move). However, there is an advantage for Black as well – the a7-g1 diagonal is no longer covered and Black can exploit this in all sorts of tactical complications.

17 ♖c3 d5

In the variation 17...exf4 18 ♖xg7 the *intermezzo* 18...fxg3 doesn't attack the rook, like in Line B2321. Therefore Black is forced to take on g7, which gives White an advantage. 18...♖xg7 19 ♖d4+ f6 20 gxf4.

After the text-move (17...d5) White has three possible ways to react:

a) 18 exd5?! ♖xd5 19 ♖xd5 ♖c5+ (here we see one possibility to use the weakness of the a7-g1 diagonal) 20 ♖g2 ♖xd5 21 ♖f3 ♖xb5 22 ♖xa7 exf4 23 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 and White is struggling for a draw, since he loses a pawn and his king is no less exposed than Black's.

b) 18 ♖xe5 ♖c5+ 19 ♖h1 dxe4 20 ♖e2 ♖xe5 (20...f6!? 21 ♖c3 f5 22 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 23 ♖xa7 ♖a8 24 ♖b7 ♖fb8 25 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 26 ♖d1 ♖d5 27 c3 ♖f6 gave Black enough compensation to draw in B.Gonzalez-Vera, Ubeda 2001) 21 fxe5 ♖xe5 22 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 23 ♖xe4 (23 ♖xe4 ♖d7 is equal) 23...♖f5 (threatening 24...♖d2) 24 ♖e2 (after 24 g4 ♖h4 25 ♖f1 ♖d2 26 ♖d3 ♖d8! Black is threatening 27...♖f3) 24...♖fe8 25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 with an equal position.

c) 18 fxe5 dxe4 19 ♖e2 ♖c5+ and then:

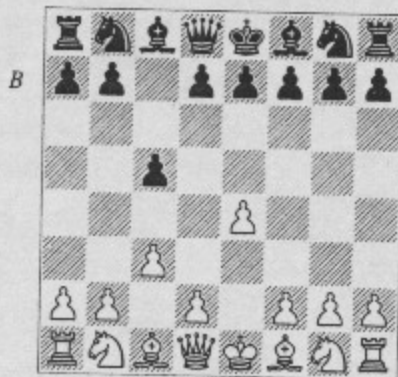
c1) 20 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 21 ♖xf2 ♖d5 22 ♖d2 (22 ♖d4? ♖b4; 22 ♖xe4 ♖xc3 23 bxc3 ♖d2+ 24 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 25 ♖xe2 ♖e8 26 ♖xa7 ♖xe5 should be a draw) 22...♖xe5 =.

c2) 20 ♖e3 ♖xe3+ 21 ♖xe3 ♖d5 =.

c3) 20 ♖h1 ♖d5 21 ♖d2 ♖xe5 22 ♖h6 (22 ♖xe4 ♖xb2 23 ♖xa7 ♖c3 gives Black counterplay; 22 c3 f5 23 ♖xa7 ♖g7 is complicated) 22...♖g7 23 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 =.

4 The Alapin Variation (2 c3)

1 e4 c5 2 c3 (D)



The name of the variation comes from the Lithuanian Simon Alapin, who played 2 c3 three times in the Vienna tournament in 1898 (although there are a few earlier games recorded, played occasionally by unknown players). Nowadays 2 c3 is one of the most popular Anti-Sicilians.

Many players regard this is a comfortable and easy way to meet 1...c5. Why so? Why is the Alapin Variation more popular than other Anti-Sicilians?

I have an explanation for that. First of all, it is a safe system. At the same time it is an active one. There is not a great deal of sharp theory; White goes mostly for a type of position, rather than a concrete line (although a general

approach like this must be supported by concrete variations). Safe, little theory, easy to learn, active – what else can one expect from an opening variation?

But... there are always two sides of the coin. 'Easy' doesn't always mean good. One gets used to it and is not able to face problems when the time comes. The main trap here is the temptation to avoid problems because it is easier than solving them. When Black knows exactly what to do, White is often not able to come up with new ideas, which often means playing different positions. 'Active' is only partially true, since Black has clear ways to neutralize White's activity completely. 'Little theory' is also good only to a certain extent. With time one becomes unable to learn (new) theory, which is a part of the reality of modern chess, whether we like it or not.

I have noticed that once one has learned the Alapin Variation with White, it is rather difficult to switch to something else. In my opinion this is exactly the reason for its popularity – it is often like a drug for White. At some point they realize that in certain lines White has few resources to fight for an advantage, but what is there to do? Play something else? No, it is easier to make a draw from time to time,

hoping that maybe the next opponent will not repeat those equal positions. This is what many players hope: that for various reasons their opponents won't go for the equal lines.

What can I say about that? Everyone must decide for himself whether reaching an equal endgame with Black is acceptable. Normally this shouldn't be a problem for Black. Let White struggle for the advantage, as he is supposed to do!

I personally don't have any problem when my opponent goes for an equal line with White (well, I must confess that when I was younger I might have felt nervous sometimes when my opponent was obviously playing for a draw). My feeling is that in almost every position there are enough resources to outplay a weaker opponent. However, it is true that certain lines of the Alapin Variation lead to positions that are extremely drawish. I can't ignore the fact that some readers might feel it psychologically uncomfortable to play such a line against a weaker opponent who only wants to make a draw.

Therefore I have provided two types of options for Black in this chapter. Firstly I deal with safe lines, in which Black easily reaches equality if he just knows the theory. A relative drawback here is that White can choose some lines where the resulting positions are very drawish (see Line B33121 for instance). Those players who want to achieve positions with many fighting resources should have a look at the more ambitious lines discussed in Line B21.

I must add that there are some strong players who play the Alapin Variation consistently with White, and are constantly seeking improvements. For instance, the Slovenian GMs Pavasovič and Sermek have spent a great deal of effort finding resources for White in various kinds of more or less equal positions. They often succeed in outplaying their opponents thanks to very good home preparation, which helps them exploit the finest details, sometimes even in endgames. This only proves that in order to be well prepared with Black, one must independently analyse these equal positions and, naturally, play them well over the board.

Now let's go back to the position after 2 c3. White's intention is obvious – to play d4 and build a strong pawn-centre (with pawns on e4 and d4). The most natural way for Black to prevent White's idea is to attack the e4-pawn. He has two ways to do it: 2...d5 and 2...d6. Russian Grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov, who is the biggest specialist in the Alapin Variation, has always considered the latter option to be the best way for Black. I agree with his opinion on this matter and recommend it as well.

2...d6

It is interesting to mention that this natural move only became popular in the second half of the 20th century, whereas the move 2 c3 was known long before that. The idea of provoking White to push his e-pawn might have been considered too risky until it became clear that Black has good

possibilities to attack or exchange White's pawn on e5.

Besides the natural 3 e5, White can protect or even temporarily sacrifice the e4-pawn...

A: 3 d3 51
B: 3 e5 52

Other moves are weaker:

a) 3 d4 dxe4 (3...d6 is also good for Black) 4 dxf7+ cxf7 5 Wh5+ ag8 6 Wd5+ e6 7 Wxe4 d5 ♣.

b) 3 We2 e5 ♣.

c) 3 Wc2 d6 4 d3 e5 and 1 would already prefer Black.

d) 3 Wa4 d6 4 d5 g6 5 d3 Wc7 6 0-0 dg7 ♣ 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 dxe4 9 d5 d5 ♣ Lucchetti-Chernushevich, Besançon 2001.

e) 3 f3 e5 (there are obviously other ways as well; by playing 3...e5 Black wants to continue ...d5 and prevent White from replying to that with e5) and now:

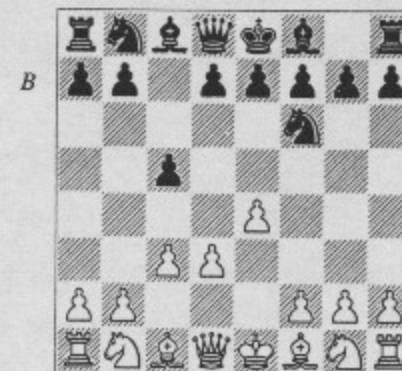
e1) 4 d4 cxd4 5 cxd4 exd4 6 d6 (not 6 e5? Wa5+; 6 Wxd4 d6 ♣) 6...d5! 7 dxd4 Wb6 (the idea is to give an annoying check on f2 if White removes the knight from d4) 8 Wc2 0-0 9 db3 db4+ 10 d3 d5 ♣.

e2) 4 d4 de7 (the immediate 4...d5 is less clear: 5 exd5 dxd5 6 Wb3) 5 d2 0-0 (Black is ready to play ...d5) 6 d4 cxd4 7 cxd4 d5 ♣ 8 exd5 dxd5 9 dxe5 db4+ 10 d3 dxc3 11 bxc3 dxc3+ 12 dxc3 Wh4+ 13 g3 Wxc4 ♣.

f) 3 d3 e5 (also to prevent White from meeting ...d5 with e5) 4 d3 d6, followed by ...de7, ...0-0 and ...d5, leaves Black slightly better.

A)

3 d3 (D)



With this rather passive continuation, White shows that he doesn't really have the ambition to fight for an opening advantage. It hardly fits with the idea that the Alapin Variation is a way to play actively. Nevertheless, Black must know exactly how to react. Among strong players, only the German GM Jörg Hickl and sometimes Andrei Kharlov play 3 d3. White's plan is often similar to the one in Line D of Chapter 1: first to finish development and then prepare the d4 advance. In contrast to that line, here Black has committed himself to ...d6.

3...d6

My advice is that Black must have a flexible approach. Now if allowed (by 4 d3), he can go for the immediate 4...d5. In case White plays 4 f4 (with the idea of meeting 4...d5 with 5 e5) Black can continue in the usual manner against d3 systems – fianchettoing his king's bishop. As mentioned in Line D of Chapter 1, Black has a

reasonable position with his knight on f6 as well. All the more that here White also committed himself with an early c3, which offers Black additional possibilities for counterplay, such as ...b5-b4 or ...c4.

4 ♘f3

Or 4 f4 d6 5 ♘f3 g6 6 g3 (6 ♖e2 is another plan, but it too doesn't give Black any opening problems: 6...♙g7 7 0-0 0-0 {7...c4!?) 8 ♘a3 ♜b8 =) 6...♙g7 7 ♙g2 0-0 and now:

a) 8 0-0 c4!? (8...♜b8 and 8...b5 are alternatives; with the text-move Black tries to exploit White's early c3) 9 ♘a3 (9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 ♘d5 11 dxc4 ♜b6+ 12 ♖h1 ♘c3 13 ♙xe3 ♜xc3 14 ♜e1 ♜h6 15 ♘d2 ♜h5 with compensation, De Toledo-Milos, Araraqua 1999) 9...cxd3 10 ♜xd3 ♜b8 11 ♘c2 b5 12 ♘fd4 ♜b6 13 ♙e3 ♘xd4 14 ♜xd4 ♘d7 15 ♜d3 ♜c7 16 ♘b4 ♘b6 17 ♙d4 a5 ♞ Podkrižnik-Jelen, Ljubljana 1998.

b) 8 ♜c2 (to protect the e4-pawn once more, thus preventing ...c4) 8...b5 9 0-0 ♜b8 10 a3 a5 11 ♖h1 b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 ♙e3 (Kharlov-Alterman, New York 1997) and now 13...bxc3 14 bxc3 ♜b6 15 ♘bd2 ♜b2 (Kharlov) gives Black complete equality.

c) 8 ♘a3 ♜b8 9 0-0 b5 10 ♘c2 b4 11 c4 ♙g4 12 h3 ♙xf3 13 ♙xf3 ♘d7 leads to a complicated position. It would be nice for Black to open the queenside, but White will obviously try to prevent that. So in the future Black must combine two plans: firstly, he should continue to seize space on the queenside by advancing his a-pawn, and, secondly, at the right moment he

should be ready to create counterplay in the centre, most probably with ...e6 and ...f5.

4...d5 5 ♘bd2

After 5 e5 White will very soon be forced to play d4, with a pawn-formation reminiscent of the French Defence. Given the closed character of the position, White's loss of a tempo won't play a decisive role, but nevertheless Black will surely have no opening problems. 5...♘d7 6 ♜e2 (6 d4 e6 =) 6...e6 7 g3 g6!? (Black wants to provoke d4, which will permit him counterplay on the queenside) 8 ♙g2 ♙g7 9 ♙f4 ♜c7 10 d4 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♜b6 12 ♙e3 ♜a6!? (again an interesting decision; more typical would be ...0-0 and ...f6 with a good middle-game) 13 ♘c3 (13 ♜xa6 bxa6 opens the b-file in Black's favour; the doubled pawns are of little importance, because White cannot attack them) 13...♜xe2+ 14 ♖xe2 a6 15 ♜hd1 ♘b6 16 b3 ♙d7 = Zetocha-P.Varga, Budapest 1997.

5...♙g4 6 ♙e2 e6 7 0-0 ♙e7 8 ♜e1 0-0 9 ♜c2 ♜c7

Black has a fairly good position. Hickl-Hraček, Bad Homburg 1997 continued 10 ♘f1 ♜ad8 11 ♙g5 d4! (based on the fact that White cannot close the position with 12 c4) 12 ♘ld2 (12 c4? ♘xe4! 13 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 14 dxe4 d3 15 ♙xd3 ♘b4 ♞) 12...h6 13 ♙h4 dxc3 14 bxc3 ♘h5 with a slight advantage for Black.

B)

3 e5 ♘d5

Now:

B1: 4 g3 53

B2: 4 ♘f3 54

B3: 4 d4 68

The main lines are B2 and B3, between which there is considerable scope for transpositions. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I shall be recommending two main systems for Black in these lines: one which provides safe equality at the practical risk of allowing White to force drawish simplifications, and one (based on playing ...e6) that avoids simplification and so is more suitable for those who need to create winning chances as Black against an opponent who is only interested in a draw.

Let us first of all discuss some aspects of the principal recommendation in which, rather than playing a quick ...e6, Black tries to develop his light-squared bishop outside the confining pawn-chain. White has several possible plans:

1) To delay the advance d4 (Line B22).

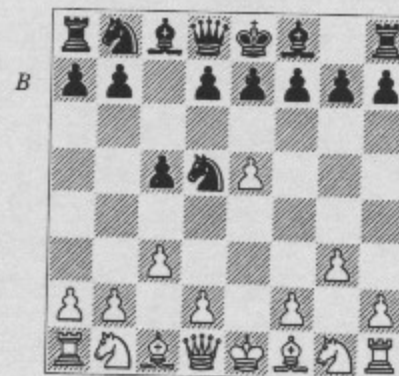
2) To play d4 and take with the queen (Line B31).

3) To play d4 and after ...cxd4 to take back with cxd4. Then after Black plays ...d6, White will seek to create threats on the a4-e8 diagonal (Line B32).

4) To play d4 and after ...cxd4 to continue with quick development, leaving Black's pawn on d4 for a while (Line B332).

B1)

4 g3 (D)



At the beginning of the 1990s, GM Rozentalis introduced this apparently quiet continuation into practice, and for several years this fianchetto, which avoids the main lines of the Alapin Variation, was quite popular. It never replaced the main lines, but it was an attractive alternative for a while. If Black doesn't know what to do, he can easily end up under positional pressure, which was proved more than once by Rozentalis. However, nowadays Black has found clear ways to solve all his problems and 4 g3 is no longer topical.

It is interesting to mention that besides Sveshnikov, Rozentalis is one of the most creative promoters of the 2 c3 Sicilian. Just like Simon Alapin, Rozentalis is Lithuanian. Those who are looking for an alternative name for the Alapin Variation can consider calling it the Lithuanian Variation. Now let's get back to concrete variations.

4...d6 5 exd6 e6

A small trick in order to recapture with the bishop. Black has several other ways of developing his pieces,

but the plan given below is the simplest one to achieve comfortable equality.

6 ♖g2 ♗xd6 7 ♜f3 ♝c6 8 0-0 0-0 9 d4

Slow development doesn't promise an advantage either: 9 ♖a3 b6 10 ♝c4 ♗c7 11 a4 (11 d3 ♗b7 12 ♞c2 h6 13 ♗d2 ♞d7 14 ♞fe1 ♞ad8 15 ♞ad1 ♞fe8 16 ♗c1 ♞c8 gives Black a slight plus, Erenburg-Jakovenko, Oropesa del Mar 2001) 11...♗b7 12 d3 ♞b8 13 ♞b3 ♗h8 (this is of course not a necessary move; it only proves that Black feels very happy with his position) 14 ♞c1 a6 15 ♗d2 ♗a8 16 ♞ad1 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♜e3 ♜ce7 19 ♗c1 = Wahls-Tischbierek, Biel IZ 1993.

9...cxd4 10 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 11 ♞xd4 ♞c7

This is a good move, preparing either ...♗d7 or ...♞d8.

12 ♜d2

12 ♗xd5 is asking for trouble. Black will have the bishop-pair in an open position, which together with White's weakened structure on the kingside will give Black strong compensation. 12...♗e5! (or 12...exd5 13 ♞xd5 ♗h3 14 ♞e1 ♞fe8) 13 ♞e4 exd5 14 ♞xd5 ♗e6 15 ♞f3 ♞ad8, Harabor-Mokry, corr. 1996.

12...♗d7 13 ♜e4

13 ♜f3 ♗c6 14 c4 e5 15 ♞h4 ♜f6 16 ♗g5 ♜e4 ♞ 17 ♜xe5? ♗xe5 18 ♗xc4 h6! 19 ♗f5 ♞fe8 and White is in trouble.

13...♗e5 14 ♞d3 a6

The position is equal:

a) 15 ♞d1 ♗b5 16 ♞c2 ♞ad8 17 ♗d2 h6 ♞ 18 f4?! ♗d4+ 19 ♗h1 f5 20

♗c1 ♗a7 ♞ S.Pedersen-Schandorff, Danish Ch (Odense) 1994.

b) 15 ♞e1 ♗b5 16 ♞f3 ♗c6 17 ♞e2 and now Rozentalis-Tkachev, Hastings 1997/8 continued 17...♜f6 18 ♗g5 ♗xe4 19 ♗xc4 h6?! 20 ♗g2!, with complications that turned out in White's favour. Simplest is 17...h6, with complete equality.

B2)

4 ♜f3

Now Black must make a major decision, depending on whether he is opting for an approach with an early ...e6 or one without.

B21: 4...e6 54

B22: 4...♜c6 66

The former can be recommended to players who are not completely happy when the opponent has the possibility of choosing a drawish line.

B21)

4...e6 (D)



Black closes the c8-h3 diagonal, but as compensation the strong knight

will remain centralized on d5 for longer.

When I started to work on the ...e6 lines, I planned to give just some general advice, since I thought that objectively White is slightly better in these lines (I couldn't help thinking that closing the diagonal for one's own bishop is a dubious idea). However, I was soon surprised to find out that Black is doing fairly well in the positions that arise. There are various plans for Black to complete his queenside development and below I have tried to point out the most promising of them.

We should note that these lines are of particular importance to those who meet 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 with 2...e6 and have a problem with 3 c3. In that case they can achieve positions examined here.

The main drawback of playing ...e6 is obvious – the bishop can no longer be developed on the c8-h3 diagonal. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the advantage is that now the d5-knight is protected and doesn't have to leave its central post after ♗c4.

5 d4

Or:

a) 5 g3 d6 6 exd6 transposes to Line B1.

b) 5 ♗c4 d6 6 0-0 (6 d4 cxd4 7 cxd4 transposes to Line B212) 6...dxe5 7 ♜xe5 ♗d6 8 d4 0-0 and now:

b1) 9 ♞e2?! ♞c7 10 ♞e4? ♜d7 (as strange as it may seem, White is already in big trouble) 11 ♞e1 (11 ♗xd5 enables White to maintain material equality, but in a clearly inferior position after 11...♜f6! 12 ♞e2 ♜xd5 ♞

11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♜xe5 13 dxe5 ♗xe5 14 ♞xe5 ♞xc4 15 ♜c3 ♜xc3 16 bxc3 f6 17 ♞g3 e5 –+ Rabiaga-Sakaev, Ohrid Ech 2001.

b2) 9 ♜d2 cxd4 10 cxd4 ♞c7 11 ♞e1 (11 ♜df3 f6 12 ♗xd5 exd5 13 ♜d3 ♗g4 14 h3 ♗h5 ♞) 11...♜c6 12 ♜ef3 ♞d8 13 ♜e4 ♗b4! 14 ♞e2 ♜xd4!? 15 ♞xd4 and now, rather than 15...♜b6 16 ♜f6+ gxf6 17 ♞g4+ ♗h8 18 ♗b3 with a mess (Rozentalis-Rublevsky, Panormo ECC 2001), keeping the knight closer to the king with 15...♜e7 16 ♜f6+ gxf6 17 ♞g4+ ♜g6 makes it hard for White demonstrate full compensation for the pawn.

5...cxd4 6 cxd4 d6!

This is more flexible and stronger than 6...♜c6. Besides attacking the white centre right away, Black keeps the option of developing the bishop to c6 via d7 and then the knight to d7.

Now:

B211: 7 a3 57

B212: 7 ♗c4 60

White's alternatives are considerably weaker:

a) 7 ♗d3 (trying to save time by omitting a3 doesn't work; Black can achieve a good position in several ways, the most precise being the immediate attack on the bishop) 7...♜b4 8 ♗e2 (8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 9 ♗e2 ♗c6 ♞) 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 (9 ♜xe5? ♞xd4 10 ♞xd4 ♜c2+) 9...♞xd1+ 10 ♗xd1 ♗c5 ♞.

b) 7 ♗b5+ (this just helps Black to develop) 7...♗d7 8 ♗xd7+ ♜xd7 (the exchange of light-squared bishops certainly isn't in White's favour; in the

following play Black takes advantage of this factor) 9 0-0 ♖c8 10 ♕d2 ♕e7 11 ♖c3 ♖xc3 12 ♕xc3 d5 13 ♖d2 b5 14 ♖b3 ♖b6 15 ♖f3 a5 16 ♕d2 0-0 17 ♖d3 h6 18 ♖ac1 ♖b8 19 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 20 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 21 ♕xc1 ♖c6 22 ♖c3 ♖xc3 23 bxc3 ♖c6 24 a3 ♖f8 25 ♖f1 ♖a7 26 ♖e2 ♖c8 and the knight comes to c4 with a big advantage. White wasn't able to hold a draw in Kerimov-Mastrovasilis, Patras 2001.

c) 7 ♖c3 ♖xc3 8 bxc3 ♖c7! (attacking c3 and keeping an eye on e5) 9 ♕d2 (9 ♕b2 ♖d7 10 exd6 ♕xd6 11 ♕d3 ♕a3!? 12 ♖b3 ♕xb2 13 ♖xb2 0-0 14 0-0 b6 15 ♖e2 ♕b7 16 ♖ac1 ♖ac8 17 ♖fd1 ♖fd8 = Rasch-Cvitan, Biel 2001) 9...♖d7 (D).



Now White faces a choice – either to help Black finish his development by exchanging on d6, or to sacrifice a pawn. In both cases Black is fine:

c1) 10 ♕d3 dxe5 11 0-0 and now Black has two equally good possibilities:

c11) 11...g6 12 ♖a4 (12 ♖c1 ♕g7 13 ♖c1 0-0 14 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 15 ♕f4

♖a5 16 ♕xe5 ♖xa2 17 h4 ♕d7 18 h5 ♖ac8 19 ♖a1 ♖b2 20 ♕d6 ♖xc3 21 ♕xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♖xa7 ♕c6 gives Black excellent compensation for the exchange, Flores-Rosito, Pinamar 2002) 12...♕g7 13 ♖xc5 0-0 14 ♖f3 b6 15 ♕e4 ♕b7 16 ♕f4 ♖xf4 17 ♕xb7 ♖c5! 18 ♖c6 ♖xb7 19 ♖xb7 ♖fb8 20 ♖a6 ♖c8 ♢ Rissotti-Esplana, Guaymallen 2001.

c12) 11...♕e7 12 ♖e1 exd4 13 cxd4 0-0 14 ♖c1 ♖d8 15 ♖e4 (15 ♕f4 ♖f6 16 ♕c7 ♖e8 17 ♖g5 h6 18 ♖e4 ♖d5 19 ♖d6 ♖d7 20 ♕b5 ♖xc7 21 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 22 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 23 ♕c4 ♖fd8 24 ♖f3 ♖d5 25 ♕b3 ♕b4 26 ♖d1 a5 ♢ Etchegaray-Delchev, Hyères 2001) 15...a6 (after 15...♖c5 16 dxc5 ♖xd3 17 ♖d4 Black has some problems finishing his queenside development) 16 ♖e2 ♖f6 17 ♖h4 ♕d7 18 ♕g5 g6 19 ♖c5 ♖d5 20 ♕xe7 ♖xc7 21 ♖g4 and now in Flores-Karpov, Buenos Aires 2000, Black played 21...♕b5, allowing 22 ♕xg6 fxc6 23 ♖xg6 hxg6 24 ♖xg6+. Although Karpov won the game, White's attack looked very dangerous. Instead, safer is 21...♖fc8 22 ♖e1 ♕e8 23 ♖h3 f5, when Black has good prospects to defend, keeping his extra material.

c2) 10 exd6 ♕xd6 11 ♕d3 0-0 12 0-0 b6 13 ♖e1 ♕b7 14 h3 (14 ♖b1 ♕f4 15 ♕xf4 ♖xf4 16 ♖e3 ♖ac8 17 ♖b4 ♕d5 18 ♖e5 ♖fd8 19 ♖e1 g6 = Hamdouchi-Bagaturov, Biel IZ 1993) 14...♕f4 (Black has good chances to get an advantage; the white pawns on c3 and d4 can easily become targets for Black's pieces) 15 ♕xf4 (15 ♖g5 ♕xg5 16 ♕xg5 ♖xc3 17 ♖c1 ♖a5 18

♖g4 f5 19 ♖e2 ♕d5 20 ♖c7 ♖f7 and White's compensation is not worth a pawn; Black is better, Ni Hua-Yakovich, Beijing 1997) 15...♖xf4 16 ♖e5 ♖xe5 17 ♖xe5 ♖ac8 18 ♖c3 ♖c7 19 ♖c1 g6 20 ♕f1 ♖d8 ♢ Peptan-Bojko-
vić, Mamaia girls Wch 1991.

B211)

7 a3 (D)



White prepares ♕d3 by making sure Black will never be able to bother the bishop with ...♖b4.

7...♕d7

Now that White has spent a tempo playing a3, Black can afford to complete his queenside development before committing his king's bishop.

On the other hand, given that White intends to play ♕d3, Black has another interesting possibility: to fianchetto his dark-squared bishop, thus reducing White's attacking potential. For instance: 7...♖c6 8 ♕d3 g6 9 0-0 ♕g7 10 ♖e1 0-0 11 b4 dxe5 12 dxe5 b6 = 13 ♖b3 ♕b7 14 ♖bd2 ♖c8 15 ♕b2 ♖f4 16 ♕e4 ♖c7 17 ♖c4 ♖e7 18

♕xb7 ♖xb7 19 ♖d6 ♖d7 20 b5 ♖f5 21 ♖xf5 gxf5 22 ♖ed1 ♖d3 23 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 24 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 25 ♕d4 ♖d8 ♢ Brynell-Cramling, Sweden 1999. This plan is a serious alternative to 7...♕d7. It helps Black to get a complicated position, where his chances are by no means worse.

8 ♕d3 ♕c6 9 0-0 ♖d7 10 ♖e1

Alternatively:

a) 10 ♕d2 ♕e7 11 ♖c3 ♖xc3 12 ♕xc3 dxe5 13 dxe5 ♖c5 14 ♕e2 0-0 15 b4 ♖e4 = Dončević-Illescas, Las Palmas 1989.

b) 10 ♖e2 ♖c7 11 ♕d2 dxe5 12 dxe5 g6 13 ♖c3 ♖xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♕g7 15 ♖ac1 0-0 16 ♕b4 ♖fc8 17 ♕d6? (17 ♖fe1 keeps the balance) 17...♕xf3 18 ♕xc7 ♕xe2 19 ♕xc2 ♕xe5 20 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 ♢ Azarov-Bologan, Minsk 2000.

c) 10 ♖bd2 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♖c5 (Black's pieces are very well centralized) and then:

c1) 12 ♕c4 b5 13 ♕e2 ♖f4 ♢.

c2) 12 ♕e4 ♕e7 13 ♖d4 ♕a4 14 ♖g4 (14 b3? ♖c3 →) 14...0-0 intending ...f5. Black has the initiative thanks to his lead in development.

c3) 12 ♕c2 ♖b6!? (Black prevents ♖d4 and prepares ...♖d3) 13 b4 (13 ♖b3 ♖xb3 14 ♕xb3 ♖xd1 15 ♖xd1 ♕d5 =) 13...♖d3 14 ♖b3 ♖xc1 15 ♖xc1 ♖xd1 16 ♖fxd1 ♕e7 leads to an equal endgame where Black has reasons to be optimistic: he has the bishop-pair and a strong d5-square. Most probably Black will remain with a knight on d5 and a bishop against his opponent's two knights. Then White might have some problems with his

queenside pawns and even with the e5-pawn, which can be attacked later.

d) 10 b4 a6 and now:

d1) 11 ♖bd2?! ♗c3 12 ♖e1 (12 ♖b3 ♗c8 13 ♖xc3 ♗xf3 14 ♖b2 ♗c6 ♞) 12...dxe5 13 ♗e4 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗b5! and White is in trouble, Bereulovich-Rublevsky, Azov 1996.

d2) 11 ♖e2 and now:

d21) 11...♗7b6!? 12 ♗d2 (after 12 ♗g5 ♗e7 13 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 the threat of ...♗f4 is annoying for White) 12...♗a4 (using the weaknesses created by 10 b4) 13 ♗g5 dxe5 14 dxe5 ♗e7 15 ♖h5 g6 16 ♖h6 ♗dc3! is complicated.

d22) 11...♗c8 12 ♗d2 ♗e7 13 ♗c1 (13 a4 ♗a8! {threatening to take on e5 and then b4}) 14 b5 axb5 15 ♗xb5 ♗c8! and the black rook has finished its 'dance', while White has achieved nothing by advancing his b-pawn) 13...0-0 and here:

d221) 14 a4 dxe5 15 b5 ♗f4 16 ♗xf4 ♗xf3 17 ♖xf3 exf4 18 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 ♞.

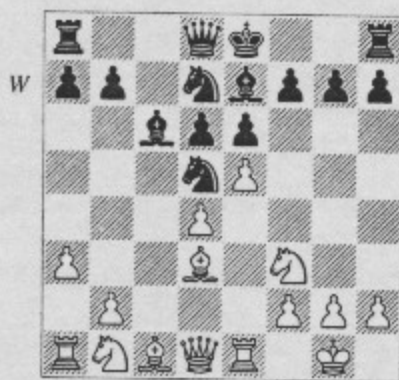
d222) 14 ♖e4 ♗5f6! 15 ♖h4 dxe5 16 dxe5 (16 ♗xc6? ♗xc6 17 dxe5 g6! 18 exf6 ♗xf6 19 ♗g5 ♗xg5 20 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 21 ♗xg5 ♗c1+ 22 ♗f1 ♗fc8 →) 16...♗e4 17 ♖h3 (after 17 ♖g4 ♗xf2! {pointing out the hanging position of White's pieces on the d-file}) 18 ♗xf2 ♗xf3 19 ♖xf3 ♗xe5 Black is winning, since White has no time to take on c8: 20 ♗xc8 ♖d4+ 21 ♗e3 ♗xd3+ 22 ♗e2 ♖xa1 23 ♗xf8+ ♗xf8 →) 17...♗dc5! 18 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 ♞.

d223) 14 ♗c3 ♗xc3 15 ♗xc3 ♗d5 16 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 17 ♗c1 ♖b8 18 ♗f4 g6 19 ♗e4 ♗b6 20 ♗d2 dxe5 21 ♗xe5

♗d6 22 ♗f3 ♗xe5 23 dxe5 ♗c8 24 ♗xc8+ ♖xc8 25 ♗xd5 ♗xd5, Alavkin-Yakovich, Smolensk 1997. Black has skilfully exchanged his opponent's active pieces and now White must play accurately to maintain equality.

10...♗e7 (D)

Again the fianchetto is a good alternative: 10...dxe5 11 dxe5 (11 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 12 dxe5 g6 13 ♖g4 ♗g7 14 ♖g3 0-0 15 ♗d2 ♗e7 16 ♗c4 ♖d4 17 ♗g5 ♗f5 18 ♗xf5 ♖xc4 19 ♗d3 ♖b3 = Nun-Ruban, Sochi 1989) 11...g6 12 b4 a6 13 ♗bd2 (13 ♗a2 ♗g7 14 ♗ae2 ♖c7 15 ♗g5 h6 16 ♗d2 ♗e7 17 ♖c1 ♗c8 18 ♖b2 0-0 19 ♗f4 ♗xf3 20 gxf3 ♗c6 ♞ Trabert-Shahade, Istanbul wom OL 2000) 13...♗g7 14 ♗b2 0-0 15 ♗c4 ♗b5 16 ♖b3 ♖e7 17 ♗e4 ♗xc4 18 ♖xc4 ♗fc8 19 ♖b3 ♗7b6 20 ♗ac1 ♗h6 is complicated, Trabert-Vera, Porto San Giorgio 1998.



11 ♗c2

White has several other options:

a) 11 ♖c2?! (too materialistic, of course) 11...♗c8 (we can see here the advantage of developing the queenside

before castling) 12 ♗xh7 dxe5 13 ♗d3 exd4 14 ♗xd4 ♗f6 15 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♖d1 ♗d4 17 h3 ♖f6 18 ♖e2 ♗xh3! (a direct consequence of White opening the h-file) 19 gxf3 ♗xc1 20 ♗c3 (20 ♗xc1 ♖g5+ →) 20...♗f4 21 ♖f3 ♗xe1+ 22 ♗xe1 ♗xh3+ is winning for Black, Emms-Palac, Toulouse 1990.

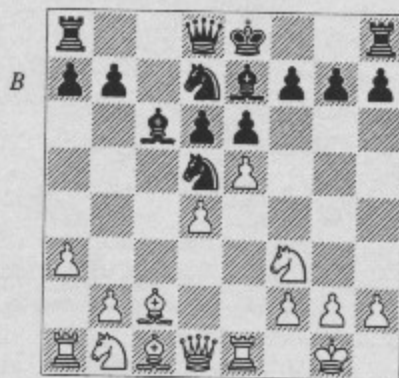
b) 11 ♗bd2 dxe5 12 dxe5 (12 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 13 dxe5 ♗f4 14 ♗e4 ♗xe4 15 ♗xe4 ♖xd1 16 ♗xd1 ♗d5 17 ♗g5 ♗xg5 18 ♗xg5 ♗c7 with equality, V.Ivanov-Novik, St Petersburg 1992) 12...♗c5 13 ♗f1 ♗f4 14 ♗c4 ♖xd1 15 ♗xd1 ♗h3+! (again we see a possible advantage of Black quickly developing his queen's bishop) 16 gxf3 ♗xf3 17 ♗d6+ (Achenbach-Janssen, Ruhrgebiet 1998) and now the easiest is to take on d6: 17...♗xd6 18 ♗b5+ (18 ♗xd6 ♗c7 19 ♗f4 ♗ac8 is slightly better for Black) 18...♗e7! (18...♗f8 19 ♗xd6 ♗b3 20 ♗b1 a6 21 ♗f1 is complicated) 19 exd6+ ♗f6 20 ♗e1 ♗b3 21 ♗b1 ♗d4 22 ♗d3 e5 (White's position is worse than it may seem; in fact, he is losing the d6-pawn without any compensation) 23 ♗d2 (23 ♗e3 ♗hd8 ♞) 23...♗hd8 24 ♗b4 a5 25 ♗c5 ♗b3 followed by 26...♗xd6.

c) 11 exd6 ♗xd6 12 ♗c3 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 0-0 14 c4 ♗xf3! 15 ♖xf3 ♖h4 (forcing White to exchange queens on h3) 16 ♖h3 (16 ♗b1 ♖xd4 17 ♗e4 ♖f6 18 ♖h3 g6 19 ♗b2 ♖e7 20 ♗h4 f5 didn't give White compensation for the pawn in Russek-Velikov, Saint John 1988) 16...♖xh3 17 gxf3 is a complicated endgame. Black has reasons to be optimistic, since White's

pawn-structure is awful. He can choose 17...♗e7!? intending ...♗f6, ...♗fd8 and ...♗ac8 with the pressure on d4 and c4, while 17...e5 is also interesting.

d) 11 b4 (this looks active, but as usual such a move has its drawbacks as well; Black is often able to use the weakened c3-square) 11...a6 12 ♗bd2 dxe5 13 dxe5 ♗c3 14 ♖c2 (14 ♖b3 ♗c5! 15 ♖xc3 ♖xd3 16 ♗b2 ♖xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♗d3 18 ♗e3 ♗f4 19 ♗d4 ♗xg2 20 ♗g3 ♗f4 21 ♗g4 ♗h3+ 22 ♗f1 ♗d5 23 ♗xg7 h5 ♞ S.Vajda-Peptan, Ostrava 1999) 14...♗c8 15 ♖xc3 ♗xf3 16 ♖b3 ♗d5 17 ♖d1 0-0 18 ♖h5 (18 ♗f3 ♗e8 and ...♗f8 is equal) 18...g6 19 ♖g4 ♗g5! (threatening 20...♗xc1 followed by 21...♗xd2) 20 ♗b3 (20 f4 ♖b6+ 21 ♗h1 ♖d4 →) 20...dxe5 21 ♗xe5 ♗f6 and Black regains the material with interest.

Now we return to 11 ♗c2 (D):



11...♖c7 12 exd6

12 ♗bd2 dxe5 13 dxe5 0-0 14 ♗b3 ♗a4 15 ♖e2 g6 16 ♗h6 ♗fc8 17 ♗ac1 ♖b6 18 ♗bd4 ♗xc2 19 ♗xc2 ♗xc2 20

♖xc2 ♖d8 = Grund-Dautov, Altkirchen 1999.

12...♗xd6 13 ♖bd2 ♖5f6 14 ♖c4 0-0 15 ♖fe5 ♗fd8

Black doesn't mind exchanging his bishops for White's knights. With every simplification of the position (especially the exchange of White's knights), the isolated pawn on d4 is more a weakness than a strength.

16 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 17 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 18 ♗g5 (D)



Black has reasonable play. White has the bishop-pair but on the other hand Black's position is solid with no weaknesses. Strategically Black even has the advantage, as he can create pressure on d4. White must try to develop and keep an initiative in order to maintain the dynamic balance. The following example is typical in that sense – White sacrificed a pawn in order to create threats against black king: 18...♗ac8 19 ♗a4 ♖d5 20 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 (the pawn-formation changes in White's favour, but now Black's pieces are more active;

White's only chance is to attack the black king) 22 ♖g4+ ♖g5 23 ♖f3 ♗c2 24 h4 (24 ♗ad1 ♗d5 ♣) 24...♖xh4 25 ♗e4 ♖h6 26 ♖g3+ ♖f8 27 ♖b8+ ♖e7 28 ♖xa7 f5 29 ♗e3 ♖f4 30 ♗f1 (White has managed to force the black king to leave its shelter, but on the other hand Black's pieces are still more active, and so he has the advantage). Now Dvoretsky-Polugaevsky, Erevan 1975 continued 30...♗xb2? 31 ♖c5+ ♖f6 32 ♖f8, and although the position remains far from clear, Black produced several more mistakes and lost. A much better idea is 30...♖xd4 31 ♖xd4 (after 31 ♖b8 ♗xb2 ♣ White is unable to create any real threats) 31...♗xd4 32 ♗b3 ♗d7, when Black has a clear advantage thanks to his extra pawn, although White retains drawing chances.

B212)

7 ♗c4 (D)



7...♖c6

I would like to point out here that Black should keep the knight on d5,

unless White attacks it with ♖c3 of course. A common move in this kind of position is ...♖b6, but it is important to take advantage of the early ...e6, which supports the knight.

8 0-0 ♗e7 (D)



Black will castle next and a strategically very complicated position will arise. Both sides must plan clearly, but Black in particular should know exactly what to do. The pawn-structure dictates that White will play for a kingside attack, while Black will try to create counterplay in the centre and on the queenside. Every piece exchange favours Black, as it reduces White's attacking possibilities. White's main plan is to place his queen and king's bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal and force Black to weaken his pawn-formation with ...g6. After that White will push his h-pawn and create further weaknesses.

However, if Black plays precisely this is rather impossible to achieve. The centre is far from closed and the d-file can be opened at any time. Also,

White still has to finish his queenside development. Finally, to secure the c2- or d3-square for his bishop, White will need to spend time on the additional move a3, which weakens the b3-square and gives Black more chances of counterplay. All that speaks in Black's favour and the outcome will depend entirely on the creativity of the players and their ability to make use of the opponent's inaccuracies. I consider the chances in this position to be equal.

9 ♖e2

Or:

a) 9 ♖c3 is dubious. In the ensuing endgame Black has a pleasant position due to White's weakness on c3: 9...♖xc3 10 bxc3 dxe5 11 dxe5 (worse is 11 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 12 dxe5 ♖xd1 13 ♗xd1 ♗d7 ♣; the bishop has an excellent square on c6) 11...♖xd1 12 ♗xd1 ♗d7 and I would rather be Black here.

b) 9 a3 is designed to take away the b4-square from Black's knights and also in some cases prepares to retreat the bishop to a2. If White doesn't play ♖c3, then sooner or later he needs to make this little pawn move. In contrast to the main line, here White should usually keep his queen on d1 for a while, to keep better control of the b3-square. 9...0-0 and then:

b1) 10 ♗d3 ♗d7 11 ♖e2 ♖a5 12 ♖e4 (12 ♗c2 ♗c8 13 b4 ♖c7 14 ♖c1 ♖c6 15 ♗b2 ♖f4 16 ♖e4 ♖g6 17 f4 a5 18 b5 ♖b6! gives Black a clear advantage, Lane-Rausis, Cappelle la Grande 1995) 12...f5 13 exf6 ♖xf6 14 ♖h4 ♖b3 15 ♗a2 ♖xc1 16 ♗xc1 ♗c8 17 ♖c3 g6 ♣ (17...♖e8 = Cosentino-Loschi, Italy 1990).

b2) 10 ♖bd2 ♗b6 11 ♔d3?! (11 ♔e4 dxe5 12 dxe5 ♔d8 13 ♗e2 ♔d4 14 ♔xd4 ♗xd4 =) 11...♔xd4 12 ♔c4 ♔xf3+ 13 ♗xf3 ♗c7 14 exd6 ♔xd6 15 ♔xd6 ♗xd6 16 ♔d1 ♗e5 and White doesn't have enough compensation for the pawn, Lematschko-Chiburdanidze, Buenos Aires wom OL 1978.

b3) 10 ♔e1 ♔d7 (preparing to finish his development with 11...♔c8) 11 b4 (11 ♔d3 ♔c8 12 ♗e2 ♔a5 is also equal) 11...♔c8 12 ♗b3 dxe5 13 dxe5 a5 14 ♔xd5 exd5 15 b5 ♔a7 16 a4 ♔e6 17 ♔d4 ♔c4 18 ♔e3 ♔b4 = Salmensuu-Rõtsagov, Tampere 1994.

c) 9 exd6 (White's point here is that in the IQP positions that arise, Black still needs some time to complete his queenside development) 9...♗xd6 10 ♔c3 0-0 (D).



Generally I would advise Black to refrain from taking on c3 in this kind of position. Black's main task is to finish his queenside development. This is best achieved by playing ...a6 and ...b5. Now:

c1) 11 ♗e2 a6 12 ♔d1 b5 13 ♔xd5 exd5 14 ♔e5 ♔e6 15 ♔f4 ♔fc8 16 ♔ac1 ♗d8 is about equal, but it is White who needs to be most careful. Black has the bishop-pair and his d5-pawn is better protected than White's on d4. For instance, White quickly lost after 17 ♔b1 ♔xe5 18 ♔xe5 ♔xc1 19 ♔xc1 ♔c8 20 ♗e1 ♔g5 21 ♔c5 ♔xc5 22 dxc5 d4 23 c6 d3 24 c7 ♗d7 in Pavasović-Kožul, Slovenia 2000.

c2) 11 ♔e1 ♔d8 12 ♔b3 a6 13 ♗e2 b5 with a complicated position, in which Black's chances are not worse.

9...0-0 10 ♗e4

This is the most direct approach. White prepares ♔d3, trying to provoke ...g6. However, Black will have another defence – ...f5 and as practice has demonstrated, this gives him good counterplay. We should note that taking the pawn with 11 ♔xd5 exd5 12 ♗xd5 is not a threat, since it will open up the position in Black's favour.

Alternatives:

a) 10 exd6 ♗xd6 11 ♔c3 transposes to note 'c1' to White's 9th move.

b) 10 a3 (now if Black answers 10...♔d7, we'll have similar positions to those we saw in note 'b' to White's 9th move; however, Black has an additional possibility to exploit White's weaknesses) 10...♗b6 (attacking the d4-pawn and preparing ...♔a5-b3) and now:

b1) 11 ♔d1 ♔a5 12 ♔xd5 exd5 13 ♔c3 ♗c6 (with the positional threat of 14...♔b3 15 ♔a2 { 15 ♔b1 ♔f5} when the rook will be out of play on a2) 14 ♗c2 ♔g4! 15 b4 ♔fc8 16 bxa5 ♗xc3 17 ♗xc3 ♔xc3 18 ♔d2 ♔c7 with a

slight advantage for Black, Meštrović-Kožul, Pula 2000.

b2) 11 ♗e4 ♔a5 12 ♔d3 f5 13 exf6 ♔xf6 14 ♗h4 ♔b3 15 ♔a2 ♔xc1 16 ♔xc1 h6 17 ♔c3 ♔d7 18 ♔e1 ♔ac8 was about equal in Grigorian-Sveshnikov, Moscow 1983.

c) 10 ♔e1 (D) has been played several times by Sveshnikov. The rook is often useful on e1. White doesn't show his intentions yet and waits to see Black's reaction. Black has two ways to equalize:



c1) 10...♔d7 11 ♔c3 ♔xc3 12 bxc3 dxe5 13 dxe5 ♔a5 14 ♔d3 ♔c6 15 ♔d4 ♔d5 16 ♗g4 g6 17 ♔h6 ♔e8 18 ♔b5 ♔c6 (White has managed to provoke ...g6, but has no real attacking chances; his queenside pawn-structure is inferior; in the following typical example, White overestimated his position) 19 ♔ad1 (better is 19 ♔xc6 ♔xc6 20 ♔xc6 bxc6 21 c4 with a roughly equal position) 19...♗b6 20 ♔xc6?! ♔xc6 21 ♔f3 ♔ad8 (the more pieces off the board, the better for Black) 22 ♗f4 ♔xd1 23 ♔xd1 ♔d8 24

♔e1 ♗c5 ♣. White has a difficult position. The weaknesses on e5 and c3 are a good demonstration of Black's potential in this line. In fact, in Pavasović-Nedev, Dresden Z 1998 White lost both pawns in just two moves: 25 ♔g5 ♔xe5 26 h4 ♗xc3!. Here White's best chance was to struggle for a draw in a difficult endgame with 27 ♔xe5 ♔d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗xe5 29 ♗xe5 ♔d6 30 ♗xd6 ♔xd6.

c2) 10...♔a5 11 ♔xd5 (11 ♔d3 ♔b4 12 exd6 ♗xd6 13 ♔e4 f5 14 ♔d3 ♔xd3 15 ♗xd3 ♔c6 16 ♔c3 a6 =) 11...exd5 12 ♔c3 ♔e6 13 ♔f4 ♔c6 14 ♔ad1 h6 15 h3 ♗d7 is equal, Marković-Martinović, Novi Sad 2000.

d) 10 ♔d1 (this is similar to 10 ♔e1 – a useful waiting move, which improves the position of the white rook) 10...♔a5 11 ♔d3 (11 b3 ♔d7 12 ♔xd5 exd5 13 ♔c3 ♔e6 14 ♔a3 ♔c6 15 ♔ac1 ♔c8 16 h3 a6 17 ♗e3 ♔e8 = Pavasović-McShane, Leon Echt 2001) 11...♔b4 12 exd6 ♗xd6 13 ♔e4 f5 14 ♔d3 ♔xd3 15 ♔xd3 (this is the main difference from 10 ♔e1 – here White has the possibility of taking with the rook; 15 ♗xd3 a6 16 ♔g5 ♔xg5 17 ♔xg5 b5 = Tzermiadianos-M.Petrov, Panormo open 2001) 15...b6 16 b4 ♔c4 17 ♔c3 b5 (17...♔a6? allows White to win material: 18 b5! ♔xb5 19 a4 ♔a6 20 ♔a3, Sermek-Radocaj, Pula 2001) 18 a4 ♔b7 19 axb5 ♔b6! gives Black good compensation for the pawn.

e) The natural-looking continuation 10 ♔c3 allows Black to break up White's pawn-formation: 10...♔xc3 11 bxc3 dxe5! 12 dxe5 (12 ♔xe5 is

probably more realistic, heading for an equal position after 12... Qxe5 13 Wxe5 Qd7 14 Qd2 Qc6 , Salai-Shmutter, Tyniste ECC 1995) and now the multi-purpose move 12... Wa5! (D) leaves the queen very well placed, as can be seen from the following variations.



Black has achieved very good results in practice with this continuation. The point is that thanks to his better pawn-structure, Black is very likely to get an advantage once he has finished his development.

e1) 13 Bb1 is ambitious, but rather weak. Black takes on c3 and defends after that, keeping the extra pawn. 13... Wxc3 14 Bb3 Wa5 15 We4 Qd8 16 Qg5 h6 17 Qc1 Wa4 K Ghaem Maghami-Milos, Istanbul OL 2000.

e2) 13 We4 Wa4 (the main idea of the previous move; Black prevents 14 Qd3 , as this would allow the exchange of queens, which is favourable for Black) 14 Qg5 h6 15 Qxe7 Qxe7 16 Bab1 Bb8 17 Bfd1 b6 18 Bd4 Qb7 K Flores-Jakovenko, Saint Vincent 2001.

e3) 13 Qd3 Qd8 14 Qg5 (after 14 We4 g6, besides 15... Wxc3 Black has the positional threat of exchanging queens with 15... Qd5) 14...h6 15 Qxe7 (15 Qd2 Qf8 16 We4 g6 17 c4 Wa3 18 Qc2 Qd7 19 Qc1 Wa5 20 Qd2 Wc7 21 Wf4 Bac8 22 Wg3 Qg7 K Kos-Rogić, Pula 2001) 15... Qxe7 16 We4 Qg6 17 h4 Qd7 18 h5 Qc6 19 We3 Qf4! K Kos-Cvitan, Pula 2001.

e4) 13 Qd2 Qd8 14 Bfe1 (14 Qd3 $\text{Wa4!?$ prevents 15 We4 , when the position remains complicated) 14... Qd7 15 h4 Qe8 16 Bab1 Qd7 17 We4 Bbd8 18 Qg5 g6 19 Bb5 Wc7 20 Qf4 Qd4! and suddenly White is in trouble, Bednarich-Grosar, Nova Gorica 1999.

10... Qd7 11 Qd3

Or:

a) 11 Qxd5 exd5 12 Wxd5 Qb4 13 Wb3 dxe5 14 Qxe5 (14 dxe5? Qe6 15 Wa4 b5 16 Wxb5 Qc2 +) 14... Qf5 is much better for Black.

b) 11 a3 (as we already know, this move weakens the b3-square; Black can use this fact right away) 11... Qa5 (11... Bc8 is also possible: 12 Qd3 f5 13 exf6 Qxf6 14 Wh4 d5 15 Qc3 Qe4 16 Wh5 g6 17 Wh6 Bxf3! 18 gxf3 Qg5 19 Qxg5 Qxg5 20 f4 Qf3+ 21 Qh1 Wf6 and the multiple weaknesses in White's camp proved the decisive factor in Torre-Adianto, Vung Tau Z 2000) 12 Qd3 (12 Qxd5 exd5 13 Wxd5 Qc6 14 Wa2 Qxf3 15 gxf3 Qc6 is bad for White) 12...f5 13 exf6 Qxf6 14 Wc2 Qb3 15 Ba2 Qxc1 16 Bxc1 Bc8 was more than OK for Black in the game Chekhov-Cvetković, USSR-Yugoslavia 1976.

c) 11 exd6 Qxd6 and then:

c1) 12 Qxd5 exd5 13 Wxd5 Qe6 and here:

c11) 14 Wb5 a6 (or 14... Qd5) 15 Wc2 Qg4 16 Qe3 Bb8 17 Bd1 Qc7! 18 h3 Qh5 with compensation.

c12) 14 We4 Qd5! K . Of course, White cannot take the bishop because of 15... Qxh2+ and 16... Wxd5 .

c13) 14 Wh5 Wd7 15 h3 Qc4 16 Bb1 Qb4 (or 16... Bfe8) gives Black more than enough compensation.

c2) 12 Qc3 Qce7 13 Qe5 Qxe5 14 Wxe5 Qxc3 15 bxc3 Bc8 16 Qb3 Qg6 17 We3 Qb5 = Kosikov-Yuferov, Beltsy 1977.

11...f5 12 exf6 Qxf6 13 We2 $\text{Wa5!?$

This interesting idea – to switch the queen to the kingside – gives Black excellent chances.

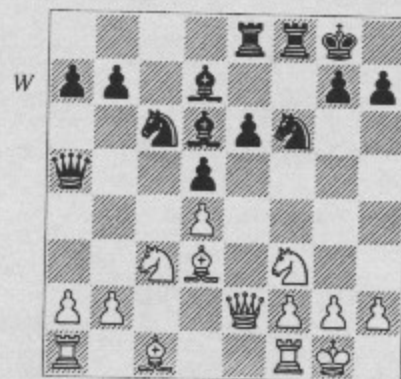
The continuation 13... Qb4 14 Qc4 d5 15 Qb3 Wb6 and 16... Bae8 is also fine for Black.

14 Qc4

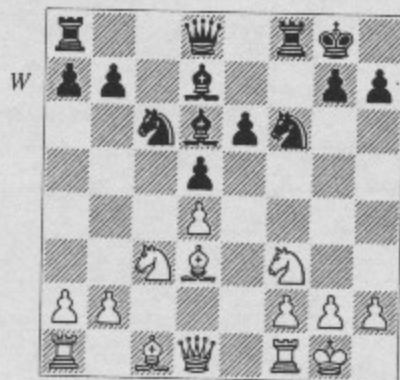
White spends a tempo to close the 5th rank.

14 Qc3 Wh5 15 a3 Qd5 16 Qe4 (after 16 Qxd5 exd5! the doubled pawns control important central squares and Black is ready to launch a kingside attack) 16... Bae8 17 Qd2 Qxc3 18 Qxc3 d5 19 Qd3 Qd6 (the position is balanced; Black now goes on to create a decisive attack) 20 h3 Bb7 21 Wd1 Qe8 22 Qe2 Wh6 23 b4 Qh5 24 b5 Qxf3 25 Qxf3 Wf4 26 Bb1 Qd8 27 Qb4 Wh2+ 28 Qf1 Qf7 29 Wd2 Qxb4 30 Wxb4 Bc7 31 Wd2 Qg5 0-1 (in view of 32 Wxg5 Bc2 with inevitable mate) Sermek-Atalik, Beijing 1997.

14...d5 15 Qd3 Qd6 16 Qc3 Bae8 (D)



Black has finished his development and is ready to play ...e5. To understand better this position, we can make a comparison with a popular line from the French Defence: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Qd2 Qf6 4 e5 Qfd7 5 Qd3 c5 6 c3 Qc6 7 Qe2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 Qxf6 10 0-0 Qd6 11 Qf3 0-0 12 Qc3 (12 Qf4 or 12 Qg5 is considered better) 12... Qd7 (D).



This position is given as 'unclear' by ECO. The difference between two diagrams is that in the first one White has his queen on e2, while Black played

two extra moves: ...♖a5 and ...♜ae8. Besides the fact that Black has won a tempo compared to the second diagram, placing the rook on e8 is a usual plan (though ...♖b6 instead of ...♖a5 is more typical), whereas White never places his queen on e2 in that line of French Defence and soon he'll have to spend another tempo removing it from e2. All this clearly favours Black, and although I wouldn't say that White is worse, Black certainly has excellent prospects.

17 ♖g5 e5 18 dxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xe5 ♖xe5

19...♜xc5 20 ♖d2 ♖b4!? also leads to equality.

20 ♖c2 ♖c6

20...♖xc3 21 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 22 bxc3 ♖e4 =.

21 ♜ael

After 21 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 22 ♖xh7+ ♖h8 23 ♖g6 ♜ef8 24 ♖d3 ♖g8 Black has compensation and White is well advised to force a draw by 25 ♖h7+ (25 ♜ad1? d4 26 ♖e2 ♖d5 27 f3 ♖b5 -+) 25...♖h8 26 ♖g6 ♖g8 27 ♖h7+ =.

21...♖xc3 22 ♜xe8 ♜xe8 23 bxc3 ♖e4

The position is equal, Pavasović-Kožul, Ljubljana 1996.

B22)

4...♖c6 (D)

5 ♖c4

The interesting idea of delaying the d4 advance became popular in the middle of 1990s. This was rather a direct consequence of White's crisis in the main lines after 2 c3 ♖f6.



The point of delaying d4 is the following: in accordance with the traditional plan, Black will soon play ...d5 (or ...d6). Then White captures with exd6 and in reply to ...♖xd6 he plays ♖a3. In that scenario, if the moves d4 and ...cxd4 have not been played, it is more difficult for Black to achieve comfortable development (for instance he won't have moves like ...dxc3, offering to exchange queens on the d-file). White can later combine the d4 advance with ♖b5.

Initially, Black's defensive plans tended to be based around playing ...c4, but this is double-edged. On the one hand it prevents d4, but on the other hand the c4-pawn is exposed to attack by b3, when the exchange on b3 is usually in White's favour. The ...c4 plan is still very popular, but Black has another good way (in my opinion a better one) to counter White's plan.

Alternatively:

a) 5 d4 cxd4 transposes to Line B33.

b) 5 ♖a3 is another way to develop first and delay d4. 5...g6 6 ♖b3 (6 g3

♖g7 7 ♖g2 ♖c7 8 ♖e2 0-0 9 0-0 d6 10 d4 cxd4 11 cxd4 ♖g4 12 ♜d1 ♖e6 has been considered at least equal for Black since the game Bisguier-Fischer, Stockholm IZ 1962, and little has changed since then) 6...♖b6 7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 d5 (in this pawn-formation White's pieces on a3 and b3 are misplaced, so the next move is best) 9 exd6 and now in the game Baklan-Aagaard, Groningen 1998 Black carelessly played 9...♖g7?, which allowed White to take the initiative with 10 d5. As Aagaard pointed out, after 9...♖e6 Black is by no means worse: 10 ♖c4 (after 10 dxe7 ♖xe7 11 ♖e3 ♖g7 Black will soon regain the pawn, keeping more active pieces) 10...♖xc4 11 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 12 ♖xc4 ♖xd6 13 0-0 ♜d8 with a level game.

5...♖b6 6 ♖b3

After 6 ♖e2 d6 7 exd6 Black has two ways to reach equality:

a) 7...♖xd6 8 d4 (8 0-0 e6 9 ♖a3 ♖e7 =) 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 ♖f5 10 ♖c3 e6 11 0-0 ♖e7 12 ♖b5 ♖b8 13 g3 ♖d5 14 ♖c3 0-0 (14...♖d6!?) 15 ♖xd5 exd5 16 ♖f4 ♖d6 17 ♖e5 ♖xe5 18 dxe5 ♖xe5 19 ♖xd5 ♖xf4 20 ♖xf5 ♖e5 = Korneev-Lautier, Cala Galdana 1999.

b) 7...e5 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 e4 10 ♖g5 ♖xd6 11 ♖xe4 ♖b4+ 12 ♖bc3 ♖xd4 13 0-0 1/2-1/2 Adams-Khalifman, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

6...d5

6...c4 is the main alternative, leading to different types of positions.

7 exd6

7 d4 cxd4 8 cxd4 ♖g4 9 ♖e3 e6 10 0-0 ♖e7 11 ♖bd2 ♜c8 is excellent for

Black. In positions with such a pawn-formation, Black's only concern is his light-squared bishop, which is usually on c8. But here all his pieces are developed optimally and Black has good prospects on the queenside. An example: 12 ♜c1 ♖f5!? (12...0-0 13 ♖c2 ♖b4 14 ♖b1 ♜xc1 15 ♖xc1 ♖d7 16 a3 ♜c8 17 ♖d1 ♖c6 =) 13 a3 0-0 14 ♖e2 ♖d7 15 ♖a2 ♜c7 16 ♖b3 ♖c4 ♖ 17 ♖b1 ♖xb1 18 ♜xb1 ♖6a5 19 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 20 ♜fc1 ♜fc8 21 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 22 ♖d3 ♖a4 23 ♜c1 ♜c4 ♖ Proehl-Gabrielsen, Siofok 1996.

7...♖xd6 8 0-0

Or:

a) 8 d4 cxd4 transposes to Line B332.

b) 8 ♖a3 ♖e6 and then:

b1) 9 0-0 transposes to the main line.

b2) 9 ♖b5 ♖d7 brings White nothing: 10 ♖xe6 ♖xc6+ 11 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 12 ♖xe2 ♜c8 =.

b3) 9 d4 ♖xb3 10 ♖xb3 cxd4 11 ♖b5 ♖d7 12 ♖bxd4 ♖xd4 13 ♖xd4 e6 14 0-0 ♖e7 15 ♜d1 0-0 16 ♖b5 ♖c6 17 ♖e3 ♖c5 18 ♖xc5 1/2-1/2 Pavasović-Kharlov, Ljubljana 2002.

8...♖e6 9 ♖a3

9 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 10 d4 cxd4 transposes to the note to White's 10th move in Line B3321.

9...♖xb3 10 ♖xb3

10 axb3 ♖d3 11 ♜e1 e6 12 ♜c3 ♖d7 13 ♖c4 ♖xc4 14 bxc4 ♜d8 is OK for Black, Christiansen-Seirawan, USA Ch (Chandler) 1997.

10...♖d3!

This is the point. Black exploits the fact that White has delayed d4, and

disturbs the natural development of White's pieces.

10...e6 11 d4 cxd4 12 ♖d1 illustrates White's idea. This position traditionally arises via the move-order 9 d4 cxd4 10 ♘a3 ♙xb3 (instead of 10...dxc3, which is my recommendation in this book) 11 ♖xb3 e6 12 ♖d1. White has a slight initiative in that line, although Black equalizes following 12...♗d5! 13 ♘b5 ♖xb3 14 axb3 ♖d8.

11 ♖b5

Or:

a) 11 ♖e1 e6 12 ♖e3 ♗d7 13 d3 ♙c7 ♖.

b) 11 ♘b5 c4 12 ♗d1 ♖c8 13 ♖e1 e6 ♖.

11...0-0-0 12 ♗xc5

Or:

a) 12 ♘g5? c4! (White has no defence against ...♖d5) 13 ♘xf7 ♖d5 14 ♘h8 e5! 15 b3 ♖xb5 16 ♘b5 cxb3 17 ♘a3 bxa2 → Sermek-Gelfand, Portorož 2001.

b) 12 b3 e5 13 ♖e1 f6! ♖.

12...e5 13 ♗e3 ♙xa3 14 bxa3 ♘c4

Black has good compensation due to his domination of the light squares and White's broken pawn-structure.

B3)

4 d4 cxd4 (D)

Now:

B31: 5 ♗xd4 68

B32: 5 cxd4 70

B33: 5 ♘f3 71

5 ♙c4 is inaccurate:

a) Black can play 5...♘b6 6 ♙b3 ♘c6, when White has little better than



7 ♘f3 (or 7 cxd4 d6 8 ♘f3 – Line B33122) transposing to Line B332.

b) Black has the additional possibility 5...♗c7!, forcing White's bishop back to d3. This is considered the strongest and gives Black very comfortable equality: 6 ♗e2 (6 ♙xd5? ♗xe5+ ♖) 6...♘b6 7 ♙d3 (7 ♙b3 d3! 8 ♗e4 d5 9 ♙xd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♘c6 ♖) 7...♘c6 8 ♘f3 d5 9 exd6 ♗xd6 10 ♘xd4 (10 0-0 ♙g4 11 ♖d1 g6 12 cxd4 ♙g7 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 ♙e3 ♖ad8 15 h3 ♙xf3 16 ♗xf3 ♗b4! ♖ Nagendra-Gutman, Lucerne OL 1982) 10...♘xd4 11 cxd4 g6 12 ♘c3 ♙g7 13 ♘b5 (13 0-0 0-0 14 ♖d1 ♙d7 15 ♙e4 ♙c6 16 ♙xc6 ♗xc6 17 ♗xe7 ♙xd4 = Hedke-Brenninkmeijer, Groningen 1996; 18 ♖xd4? runs into 18...♖fe8) 13...♗d8 14 0-0 (14 ♙g5 ♙e6 15 ♖c1 ♖c8! ♖) 14...a6 15 ♘c3 0-0 16 ♙g5 ♖e8 17 ♖fd1 ♙e6 = Glazier-Kouatly, Lucerne OL 1982.

B31)

5 ♗xd4 (D)

The recapture with the queen is a provocative continuation. White hopes



that Black will weaken his position by chasing the queen. There is a point in such logic against an unprepared opponent. However, if Black knows exactly what to do he has more than one way to achieve a promising position. After all, by attacking the queen Black does gain time to develop his pieces.

Another drawback of White's plan is that it is not very logical to play c3 and then to recapture on d4 with a piece.

5...e6 6 ♘f3

6 ♙c4 ♘c6 7 ♗e4 ♘de7 8 ♘f3 ♘g6 9 0-0 ♗c7 10 ♖e1 b6 11 ♙b3 ♙b7 12 ♗e2 ♙e7 13 ♘a3 ♙xa3 14 bxa3 0-0 15 ♙d2 ♘ce7 16 ♘d4 ♘d5 ♖ Enchev-Delchev, Pamporovo 2001.

6...♘c6 7 ♗e4 f5 8 ♗e2

The point of this move is that in order to get rid of the strong e5-pawn Black must play ...d6 and then White hopes to put pressure on the e-file.

From a strictly strategic point of view, 8 exf6 gives White a positional advantage: two pawn-islands for White versus three for Black. As we'll soon see, White can 'increase the advantage'

by keeping Black's king in the centre. The bad news for White is that Black has good dynamic play. His pawn-centre is mobile and his pieces are active, while White will find it difficult to coordinate his pieces. 8...♘xf6 9 ♗h4 (9 ♗c2 is met by 9...d5 followed by ...♙d6 and ...e5) 9...d5 10 ♙d3 ♙d6 11 ♙g6+ (11 ♙g5 ♘f7 12 ♘d4 h6 13 ♙e3 ♘e5 14 ♙c2 g5 15 ♗h3 ♘g6 ♖ Vorotnikov-Sveshnikov, Lvov 1983) 11...♘e7 12 ♙c2 h6 13 ♙g6 ♙d7 14 0-0 (14 ♙f4 e5 15 ♙g3 ♙e8 16 ♙xe8 ♖xe8 17 ♗a4 ♘f7 ♖ Novopashin-Sveshnikov, Volgodonsk 1981) 14...♙e8 15 ♙xe8 ♗xe8 16 ♘d4 ♘f7 17 ♙e3 ♘e5 18 f3 ♘c4 ♖ Frois-Yakovich, Santo Antonio 2000.

8...♗c7 9 g3 d6 (D)

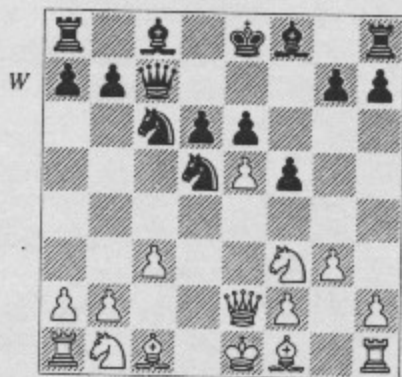
9...b5! is a good alternative. Black ignores the e5-pawn and begins activity on the queenside. Such a plan is unpleasant for White, because now it is more difficult for him to find a sensible plan than in our main line. In practice Black has achieved very good results in this line. 10 ♙g2 (10 ♗xb5 ♘xe5 should be fine for Black) 10...a5 11 0-0 ♙a6 and now:

a) 12 ♙f4 ♙e7 13 ♘bd2 0-0 14 ♖fe1 b4 15 c4 ♘xf4 16 gxf4 a4 17 ♖ed1 ♖ad8 18 b3 ♖fe8 ♖ intending ...d5, Rusanov-Brodsky, St Petersburg 2000.

b) 12 ♖e1 ♙c5 13 ♘bd2 0-0 14 ♘b3 ♙b6 ♖ Kranzl-Stanec, Aschach 1997.

c) 12 ♖d1 ♙c5 13 ♘d4 b4 14 ♘b5 ♗b6 15 c4 0-0 16 a4 (after the alternative 16 ♙xd5 exd5 17 ♖xd5 ♙xb5 18 cxb5 ♘d4 19 ♗c4 ♘e6 White will

soon have problems on the kingside; besides 20... xf2+ , Black threatens 20...f4 with a strong attack) 16...bxa3 17 d1c3?! (17 d1xa3 is better, although after 17...f4! the complications are in Black's favour) 17...axb2 18 xb2 dxc3 19 xc3 ad8 gives Black a clear advantage, Deviatkin-A.Rychagov, Tula 2001.



10 exd6 xd6 11 g2 0-0 12 0-0 f6

Black is ready to push his e-pawn. White should react promptly in order to keep a level game:

a) 13 bd2 e5 14 c4 e4 15 dg5 (15 fd2 xe6 16 xd6 xd6 17 f3 xd5 $\bar{\text{f}}$ Novopashin-Rashkovsky, Volgodosk 1981) 15...h6 16 xd6 xd6 17 c4+ wd5 18 xd5+ dxd5 19 h3 de5 = Kranzl-Rogozenko, Bad Wiessee 1997. White has two bishops, but neither of them is easy to activate. I remember I was happy with the position and eventually won after advancing my kingside pawns later on.

b) 13 c4 e5 14 c5 xe7 15 d3 and now in Vorotnikov-Gorbatow, Moscow

1992 Black continued with 15...a6, which allowed White to take some initiative on the queenside after 16 c4+ gh8 17 b4. According to Gallagher, Black should play 15...e4 16 xf4 (16 g5 gh8) 16... wa5 17 c4+ gh8 18 g5 xc5 , when White has nothing better than a draw by repetition with 19 f7+ gh8 20 h6++ gh8 .

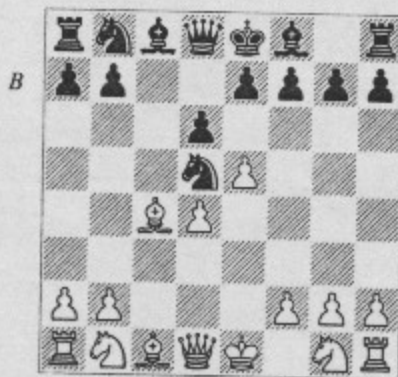
c) 13 d4 dxd4 14 cxd4 xd7 15 d3 a6 16 wd1 ad8 17 wb3 b5 18 xd2 gh8 = Finkel-De Vreugt, Dieren 1997.

B32)

5 cxd4 d6

5... d6 is less precise. Black keeps the a4-e8 diagonal closed, thus reducing White's possibilities, but 6 d3! is unpleasant, as Black doesn't have the reply ... dxe5 followed by ... dxc3 .

6 xc4 (D)



By not including the moves d3 and ... d6 White wants to make use of the a4-e8 diagonal, which has been slightly weakened by the move ... d6 . However, this doesn't really work and

the best White can do is to play a later d3 , transposing to the usual lines.

6... db6 7 xb5+

7 xb3?! dxe5 8 wh5 (otherwise Black has an advantage in the end-game) 8...e6 9 dxe5 dxc6 10 d3 wd3! 11 d3 xb4 12 xd2 da5! $\bar{\text{f}}$ Tong Yuanming-Alterman, Beijing 1995.

7... d6

7... xd7 8 e6 is a more popular line, leading to complicated positions. However, after the text-move Black has absolutely no opening problems.

8 d3

Or:

a) 8 d3 is the last chance to transpose to Line B33121.

b) 8 d5 a6 9 xc6+ (9 e6 axb5 10 exf7+ gh7 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 d3 wd7 13 0-0 e5 14 d3 xe7 $\bar{\text{f}}$ Colding-Grishchuk, New York 2000) 9... bxc6 10 $\text{dxc6 e6!?$ (the easiest way to regain the pawn) 11 d3 wc7 12 cxd6 xd6 13 xe3 d5 $\bar{\text{f}}$.

c) 8 exd6 e6 (8... wd6 9 d3 e6 =) 9 d3 xd6 10 d3 (10 xc6+ bxc6 11 0-0 0-0 =) 10... 0-0 11 0-0 xd7 leaves the bishop misplaced on b5, and Black has enough time to deploy his pieces comfortably versus the isolated d-pawn. Note also that Black has a slight lead in development. The position is probably balanced, though I would certainly choose Black.

8... dxe5 9 d5 a6 10 xa4

10 xe3 axb5 11 dxc6 wc7! 12 xb6 wb6 13 d5 wd8 (or first 13... wa5+ 14 b4) 14 c7 wd6 15 db6 (15 c1 xd7 and soon Black will win the c7-pawn, gaining a decisive advantage) 15... a6 16 xd6 (16 dxc8

xc7 17 c1 xc6 $\bar{\text{f}}$) 16... exd6 17 dxc8 (17 d5 xc6 18 de2 xe6 $\bar{\text{f}}$) 17... xd7 traps the knight. Black wins both the knight and the c7-pawn.

10... dxa4 11 xa4 b5 12 dxb5 xd7 13 d3 d4 14 wd1 xf5

White is in trouble: 15 cf1 g6 16 d2 g7 17 d3 xc2 18 wd2 e4 19 dxe4 xe4 20 dxe4 wd5 21 wd3 0-0 $\bar{\text{f}}$ Rozenalis-Sadler, Hastings 1997/8.

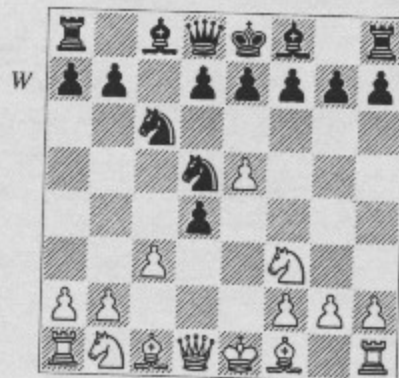
B33)

5 d3

White continues developing, using the fact that Black cannot take on c3 because the d5-knight is unprotected.

5... d6 (D)

For 5...e6 see Line B21.



Now:

B331: 6 cxd4 71

B332: 6 xc4 76

B331)

6 cxd4

White can now choose between plans with d3 or xc4 .

6...d6

Now:

B3311: 7 ♖c3 72

B3312: 7 ♗c4 73

After 7 exd6 ♗xd6 8 ♖c3 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 e6 10 0-0 ♗e7 Black has a comfortable position against the isolated pawn. Usually if the bishop is on c8 White can claim a slight initiative, but the bishop is already on g4, so Black has no problems at all, to say the least:

a) 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♖e4 ♗c7 13 a3 0-0 14 ♖g3 ♗g6 15 h4 h6 16 h5 ♗h7 17 ♗d3 ♗xd3 18 ♗xd3 ♗ad8 is much better for Black, Laakso-Rötšagov, Jyväskylä 1996.

b) 11 a3 0-0 12 ♗e3 ♗ac8 13 ♗d2 ♗fd8 ♣ 14 ♗ac1 ♖xc3 15 ♗xc3 e5! 16 ♗d1 ♗xf3 17 ♗xf3 exd4 18 ♗xd4 ♗f6 19 ♗xc6 ♗xd4 20 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 0-1 Jicman-E.Cosma, Baile Tusnad 2001.

c) 11 ♗b3 ♗b4 12 ♖xd5 ♗xb3 13 axb3 exd5 14 h3 ♗f5 15 ♗b5 f6 16 ♗xc6+ bxc6 17 ♗f4 g5 18 ♗d2 ♖d7 19 ♗a4 ♗d3 20 ♗fa1 a6 21 b4 ♗d6 22 ♗4a3 ♗b5 ♣ Smyslov-Hort, Amsterdam 1994.

B3311)

7 ♖c3 (D)

This attempt to disturb Black's centralized knight has an obvious flaw. Black can break up White's pawn-structure by taking on e5 and c3.

7...dxe5

Of course it would be nice to switch the move-order – to take first on c3 and then on e5, but unfortunately White



wouldn't take back on e5: 7...♖xc3 8 bxc3 dxe5 9 d5! is favourable for White.

8 dxe5 ♖xc3 9 ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 10 bxc3

The position is balanced. White's inferior pawn-structure is compensated by his space advantage (thanks to the strong pawn on e5) and the possibility of exerting pressure on the b-file.

10...♗d7

Now:

a) 11 ♖d4 ♗c8 12 ♗e3 a6 13 ♖d2 e6 14 f4 ♗c5 15 ♗d3 0-0 16 ♗ab1 f6 17 exf6 gxf6 18 ♗he1 ♖h8 19 g4 b5 20 h4 ♖b7 21 a4 e5 = Sveshnikov-Lanka, Bratislava 1996.

b) 11 ♗b1 ♗c8 12 ♗e3 a6 13 ♖d2 e6 14 ♗d3 ♗c5 15 ♗he1 ♗xe3+ 16 ♗xe3 h6 17 ♖d4 ♗c7 18 ♗b6 ♗c6 19 ♗e4 ♗xe4 20 ♗xe4 ♖d7 21 f4 g6 22 ♗e3 ♗c5 = Afek-Van Wely, Amsterdam 2001.

c) 11 ♗e3 e6 (11...g6 is the alternative way of developing the bishop: 12 ♖d4 ♗c8 13 ♖d2 ♗g7 14 f4 0-0 15 ♗b1 f6 16 exf6?! (better is 16 e6 ♗xc6 17 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 18 ♗xb7 f5 with

equality) 16...♗xf6 17 ♗d3 ♗d6 18 ♗hc1 a6 19 ♖e2 ♗c6 with an advantage for Black, Kharlov-A.Fedorov, Ekaterinburg 2002) 12 a4 a6 13 ♗d3 ♗c8 14 ♖d2 ♗c5 15 ♗d4 h6 16 ♗hb1 ♗c7 = Al.Karpov-Brodsky, Smolensk 2000.

B3312)

7 ♗c4 ♖b6

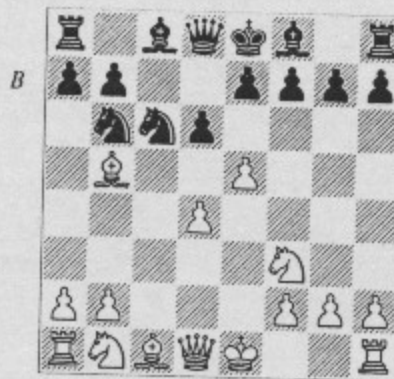
Now:

B33121: 8 ♗b5 73

B33122: 8 ♗b3 74

B33121)

8 ♗b5 (D)



This is one of those lines that often leads by force to 'dead drawn' positions. I have played against this line several times, and occasionally fell into a psychological trap: I was annoyed with those equal positions and tried to complicate matters. This usually ended up badly. Now that I am more experienced I can permit myself to give some advice for those who aren't happy with a quick draw: reach

a level position and play on, but without crossing the line. Continue to play the equal position. If your opponent plays well until the end, then just let it be a draw.

8...dxe5 9 ♖xe5 ♗d7 10 ♗xc6

Or:

a) 10 ♖c3 ♖xe5 11 dxe5 ♗xb5 12 ♗xd8+ (12 ♖xb5 ♗xd1+ 13 ♖xd1 ♖d5 =) 12...♗xd8 13 ♖xb5 a6 14 ♖c3 (14 ♖c7+ ♖d7 15 ♗e3 ♖c4 16 ♖d5 {16 ♗d1+? ♖xc7 17 ♗c1 b5 18 b3 e6 19 bxc4 b4 20 ♖e2 ♖c6 ♣ A.Vajda-Rogozenko, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1992} 16...♖xe3 17 ♖xe3 e6 =) 14...e6 =.

b) 10 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 11 ♖c3 (a popular variation in recent years) 11...♗d8 (after 11...e6, 12 ♗g4 h5 is acceptable for Black, but White has the more unpleasant 12 0-0 ♗e7 13 ♗g4 0-0 14 ♗xc6!? ♗xc6 15 ♗h6 ♗f6 16 ♗fd1 threatening 17 ♖e4 with attacking prospects; the text-move is designed to avoid this) and then:

b1) 12 ♗f3 a6 13 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 14 ♗xc6+ bxc6 15 ♗e3 e6 = followed by ...♗e7 and ...♖d7. White has one weakness – on d4; Black has two – on c6 and a6. However, White also has a poor bishop on e3, so the position is equal. Both sides can protect their weaknesses without major difficulties.

b2) 12 0-0 e6 (12...♗xd4?! 13 ♗b3 gives White compensation, Godena-Rechlis, Eupen ECC 1994) 13 a4!? (a recent idea; 13 ♗e3 ♗e7 14 ♗g4 0-0 =; 13 ♗g4 ♗xd4 14 ♗f3 ♖d5 15 ♗d1 ♗e5 16 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 17 ♗xc6+ bxc6 18 ♗f4 ♗f6 19 ♗ac1 ♗e7 20 ♗xc6 ♗xd1 21 ♗xd1 0-0 =; 13 ♗g5 ♗e7 14 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 15 ♗g4 {15 ♗f3 0-0 16

♙xc6 bxc6 17 ♖xc6 ♜xd4} 15...0-0 16 ♙xc6 bxc6 17 a3 ♜d7 = Fogarasi-Anka, Budapest 2001) 13...♙e7 (best; 13...a6 14 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 15 ♙g5 f6 16 ♙e3, Potkin-Atakisi, Batumi Ech 2002, 16...♙e7 17 ♖h5+ g6 is double-edged; e.g., 18 ♖h6 ♗f7 19 ♜fc1 ♔d5 20 ♔e4 ♖b6 21 a5 ♖b5) 14 ♖g4 (14 a5 ♔d5 15 a6 gives White nothing due to 15...♔c7! 16 ♙xc6 bxc6!) 14...0-0 15 ♜d1 f5 16 ♖g3 a6 17 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 with excellent play for Black.

b3) 12 ♙e3 looks most logical to me – White protects the d4-pawn so that he can meet 12...e6 with 13 ♖g4 a6 14 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 15 0-0 h5 16 ♖e2 (16 ♖h3 ♙e7 17 ♜ac1 g6 18 ♜fd1 0-0 =; 16 ♖g5 h4 17 h3 ♜h6 followed by ...♜g6 with counterplay) 16...h4 17 h3 (17 ♖g4?! h3 18 gxh3 ♙e7 19 ♜ac1 {19 ♖xg7? ♔d7 –+} 19...g6 leaves White with a terrible pawn-structure and no active play at all) 17...♙e7 18 ♖g4 0-0 =.

10...♙xc6 11 ♔xc6 bxc6 12 0-0 g6

Most probably in the near future there will be an exchange of the c6-pawn for the d4-pawn. That would lead to positions where neither side has much to play for. White's only chance to fight for an advantage is to attack the e7-pawn before Black castles, but that proves to be harmless too.

13 ♜e1 ♙g7 14 ♙g5 0-0

Even if Black didn't have this tactical trick, then 14...♔c8 would be sufficient for equality.

15 ♙xe7 ♖xd4

Now:

a) 16 ♔c3 ♜fe8 17 ♖f3 ♔c4 18 ♖xc6 ♔e5 19 ♖c5 ♔d3 20 ♖xd4

♙xd4 21 ♜ed1 ♙xf2+ 22 ♗f1 ♜xe7 23 ♜xd3 ♙b6 24 ♔d5 ♜e5 = Span-Van der Weide, Leeuwarden 2001.

b) 16 ♖xd4 ♙xd4 17 ♔d2 (17 ♔c3?! ♜fe8 18 ♙g5 ♔c4 19 ♔e4 ♜e6 20 ♜ad1 ♙xb2 ♢ Novak-Palac, Pula 2000) 17...♜fb8 18 ♜ab1 (18 ♙a3?! ♔a4; 18 ♜ac1 ♙xb2 19 ♜xc6 ♔d5 = Alterman) 18...♔d5 19 ♔b3 ♙g7 20 ♙d6 ♜b5, Sammalvuori-Krakops, Halle jr Wch 1995. The pressure on b2 is enough to compensate for the weak c6-pawn, which will be protected with ...♜c8 if need be. Black's plan is to play ...a5-a4 with equality.

B33122)

8 ♙b3

This has recently become one of the most popular attempts to fight for an advantage in the 2 c3 ♔f6 Sicilian. White learned that to create any problems for Black, he must be prepared to make some concessions.

8...dxe5 9 d5 ♔a5 10 ♔c3

White is a pawn down and he is ready to exchange his bishop for the knight. These are the concessions I was talking about. What does White achieve in return? Let's see.

In contrast to many other lines of the Alapin Variation White has managed to push his pawn to d5, which secures him a space advantage. This strong central pawn is an important feature of the position and Black would like to get rid of it. Thus, Black will spend time eliminating/exchanging the d5-pawn and meanwhile White is planning to complete his development and start creating threats on the central files.

10...♔xb3

10...f6 is an interesting possibility; Black wants to keep his material advantage and simply ignores the d5-pawn. The plan is ...g6 and ...♙g7. However, as the reader might have observed, I generally consider that material is less important than positional factors. While I am sure that 10...f6 is a reasonable move, in this book I am recommending the more natural plan with ...e6.

11 ♖xb3 c6 12 ♔xe5

12 ♙g5 ♙e7 13 ♜d1 exd5! 14 ♔xd5 ♙xg5 15 ♔xg5 0-0 16 h4 ♔xd5 17 ♜xd5 ♖c7 ♢.

12...exd5

12...♙d6 is a good alternative: 13 ♖b5+ ♗f8 14 dxe6 ♙xe6 15 ♙f4 (15 ♔f3 ♙c4 favours Black) 15...♔c4! and then:

a) 16 ♜d1?! ♖e8! ♢.

b) 16 0-0-0 ♖c7 17 ♔d7+ (not 17 ♜xd6? ♔xd6 18 ♖b4 ♖b6 19 ♔d7+ ♙xd7 20 ♙xd6+ ♗g8 21 ♖f4 h5 and Black wins, Neubauer-Tratar, Portoroz 1998) 17...♖xd7! 18 ♙xd6+ ♔xd6 19 ♖xd7 ♙xd7 20 ♜xd6 ♗e7 =.

c) 16 ♔xc4 ♙xf4 17 ♔e3 ♖d7 18 ♖c5+ ♖d6 with a complicated position, which is roughly equal.

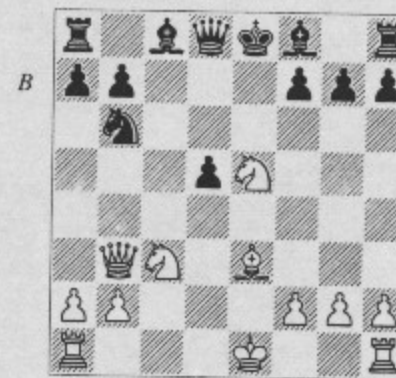
13 ♙e3 (D)

White has sacrificed his d-pawn, but in return he has developed his minor pieces very actively. All he has to do now is bring his rooks into play, after which his initiative will start to be dangerous.

On the other hand, Black has no weaknesses, except his lack of development, which is a temporary factor.

As long as Black keeps his extra pawn on d5, he is practically out of danger even when the king stays in the centre. That's why White indirectly increases the pressure on d5.

13 ♖b5+ ♙d7 14 ♔xd7 ♖xd7 15 0-0 ♙e7 16 ♜e1 ♜d8 (16...♖xb5 17 ♔xb5 ♔d7 is a possible improvement if Black is not satisfied with a quick draw) 17 ♙e3 0-0 18 ♙xb6 axb6 19 ♖xd7 ♜xd7 20 ♔xd5 ½-½ Palkovifeher, Budapest 2002.



13...♙d6 14 ♖b5+ ♗f8 15 ♔f3

This quiet retreat is best.

The nice-looking 15 0-0-0 has the obvious drawback that White's own king can now easily be attacked. Black has easier counterplay here than if White castles kingside. 15...♙e6 16 ♔f3 (16 f4 ♙xe5 17 fxe5 h6 ♢ Van der Werf-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1995) 16...♜c8 17 ♔b1 (as a consequence of 15 0-0-0 White must lose time running away from the c-file with the king) 17...♔c4 18 ♔xd5 a6 19 ♖b3! (White must play accurately; 19 ♖xb7? ♜b8 20 ♖xa6 ♔xb2 –+; 19 ♖a4? ♙f5+

20 ♖a1 ♙c2! 21 ♗xc2 ♜xc3 -+)
19...♗a5 20 ♙b6 ♜xb6 21 ♗xb6 ♗c5
22 ♗xc5 ♙xc5 23 ♜e3 ♙xe3 24 fxe3
♙f5+ 25 ♖a1 ♙e7 26 ♜d4 ♙e4 =

Liiva-Rogozenko, Internet rpd 2000.

15...♙e6 16 0-0 ♜c4!?

Forcing matters. A quiet plan with 16...h6 followed by ...♙g8-h7 has proved in practice to be too slow, and gives White enough time to generate dangerous activity in the centre and on the queenside.

17 ♗xb7

17 ♖ad1!? ♜e3 18 fxe3 ♗b6 also leads to an equal endgame: 19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 ♜xd5 (or 20 ♜g5 ♙e7 21 ♜xd5+ ♙xd5 22 ♖xd5 f6 =) 20...♗a5 (20...♙xd5!? 21 ♖xd5 ♙e7 22 ♜d4 g6) 21 ♜xb6 (21 ♜f4 ♙e7 22 ♜xe6 fxe6 =) 21...♙c7 22 b4 ♖xa2 =.

17...♗c8 18 ♗xc8+ ♖xc8

In the endgame Black needs some accuracy to secure full equality:

19 ♙d4

19 ♙xa7 ♜xb2 =.

19...♙c5 20 ♙xc5+

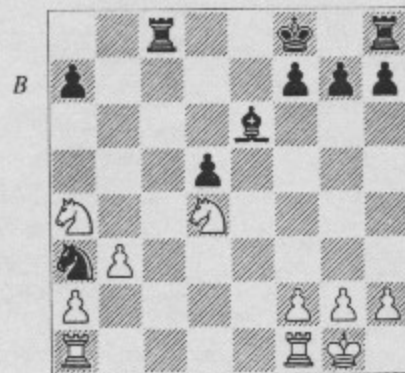
The plan with 20 ♙xc5+ and 21 ♖a4 is double-edged. As we'll see, the white knight is badly placed for the fight against Black's d-pawn. Otherwise:

a) 20 b3 ♜d6 21 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 22 ♜e2 ♙e7 =.

b) 20 ♖ac1 ♙e7 (or 20...♜xb2 21 ♜xd5 ♜d3 22 ♙xc5+ ♜xc5 23 ♖fd1 g6 24 ♜f4 ♙g7 =) 21 ♙xg7 ♖hg8 22 ♙d4 ♙xd4 23 ♜xd4 ♜xb2 is about equal too.

20...♖xc5 21 ♖a4 ♖c8 22 b3 ♖a3 23 ♜d4 (D)

23 ♖ac1 ♜c2!.

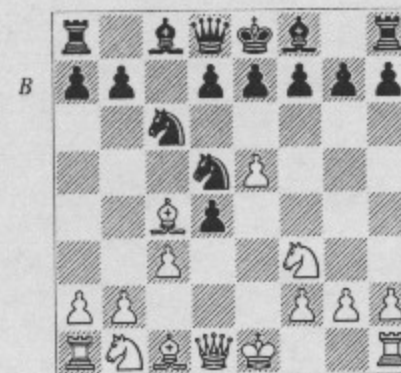


This position was reached in the game Pavasović-Jelen, Ljubljana 2002. Black now carelessly played 23...♙e7? and after 24 ♖ac1 he suddenly had serious problems because of the poorly placed knight on a3, which was not able to come back into play. Instead, Black should take care of the knight: 23...♜c2 gives him a good position. For instance: 24 ♜xc2 ♖xc2 25 ♖fc1 ♖xc1+ 26 ♖xc1 ♙e7 intending ...♙d6 and ...♖b8-b4, when the central d-pawn is more valuable than White's queenside majority. It is also well known that rook plus bishop is potentially stronger than rook plus knight. Now if White goes for the a7-pawn Black will get strong counterplay: 27 ♖c7+ ♙d6 28 ♖xa7 ♖c8 with advantage for Black.

B332)

6 ♙c4 (D)

For the moment White doesn't care about material and goes for quick development. As usual in such cases, Black shouldn't grab pawns, but rather be ready to return the extra material in



order to obtain good development himself.

6...♙b6 7 ♙b3 d5

This is slightly more precise than 7...d6, when White has the possibility of transposing into Line B33122 with 8 cxd4 dxe5 9 d5. However, there is usually no difference between ...d6 and ...d5 in such situations.

8 exd6 ♗xd6

Now:

B3321: 9 0-0 77

B3322: 9 ♜a3 79

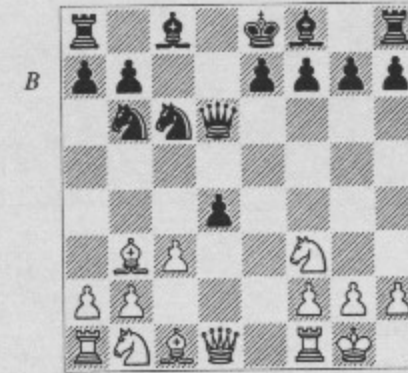
B3321)

9 0-0 (D)

This was for a long time the main position of the 2 c3 ♜f6 line. However, practice has shown that Black has several safe ways to reach complete equality. Nowadays, one tends only to see it adopted when White is hoping to outplay his opponent in an equal position, or to make a draw without difficulties against a stronger opponent.

9...♙c6 10 ♜a3

10 ♙xe6 ♗xe6 11 ♜xd4 ♗d7 (this is simple and safe; Black also equalizes



after 11...♜xd4, but I like the text-move, which looks logical – it removes the queen from the exposed e6-square and it doesn't activate White's queen) and then:

a) 12 ♜b5 a6 (12...♗xd1 13 ♖xd1 ♖c8 =) 13 ♗xd7+ ♙xd7 14 ♖d1+ ♙c8 15 ♜5a3 e6 16 ♙e3 ♙c7 17 ♙xb6+ ♙xb6 18 b4?! (18 ♜c2 ♙e7 19 ♜d2 ♙c7 20 a4 = Ilinčić) 18...♙e7 19 ♜c4+ ♙c7 20 a4 ♖hd8 21 ♜bd2 b5! ♚ Smagin-Ilinčić, Belgrade 1998.

b) 12 ♙e3 e6 13 ♜d2 (13 ♗g4 looks more ambitious; Black can then choose between 13...♜c4 and 13...♜e5 14 ♗g3 ♜g6, followed by ...♙d6, with an equal game in both cases) 13...♜d5 14 ♜c4 ♙e7 15 ♜xc6 ♗xc6 16 ♗e2 ♜xe3 1/2-1/2 Rozentalis-Lesiège, Montreal 2001.

c) 12 ♜xc6 and then:

c1) 12...♗xc6 13 ♗e2 (after 13 ♜d2, 13...e6, 13...g6 and 13...♖d8 all lead to equality) 13...e6 14 ♜d2 ♙e7 15 ♜f3 ♙f6 16 ♙g5 ♙xg5 17 ♜xg5 h6 18 ♜f3 0-0 19 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 with equality, Blatny-de Firmian, Chicago 1995.

c2) 12...♖xd1 13 ♜xd1 bxc6 14 a4 e5 15 a5 ♔d5 16 ♔d2 0-0-0 (16...f6 17 ♔c4 ♕f7 followed by ...♕e6 is also equal – Ilinčić) 17 ♔c4 f6 18 ♖e3 ♜d7 = 19 a6 ♖e7 20 ♔a5 ♔xe3 21 ♜xd7 ♕xd7 22 fxe3 e4 23 ♜a4 f5 24 ♜d4+ ♕c7 ♝ Savić-Ilinčić, Yugoslav Ch 2001.

10...dxc3

Usually Black isn't eager to take on c3 and help White develop, but here it is different. The main point is to gain time by offering White the exchange of queens, which traditionally favours Black in these lines.

11 ♖e2

By keeping queens on the board, White hopes to exploit his development advantage.

Black is fine in the endgame after 11 ♔b5 ♖xd1 12 ♜xd1 ♜c8 13 ♖xe6 fxe6 since the doubled pawns on the e-file control some important squares in the centre; White must fight for equality. Following 14 ♔xc3 (after 14 bxc3?!, both 14...♔c4 and 14...g6 are fine for Black) 14...g6 15 ♜e1 ♖g7 16 ♜xe6 0-0, all Black's pieces are better placed. The weakness on e7 plays no role, since Black can easily protect it. White should be able to hold a draw, but it is clear that Black's chances are slightly preferable.

11...♖xb3 12 ♔b5

Or 12 axb3 e5 13 ♔b5 ♖b8.

12...♖b8 13 axb3 e5 (D)

White has tried various ways to fight for an advantage here, but Black has proved that he's got enough resources to neutralize all White's attempts to take the initiative. In the



following lines I would advise that Black refrain from taking on b2. Time is a more important factor, and Black's priority should be to complete his development, even if for that purpose he has to return his extra pawns.

14 ♔fd4

Other moves:

a) 14 ♜e1 gives Black a pleasant choice between 14...f6 and 14...♔d7. In both cases Black's chances are preferable and White should be looking for a way to force a draw by repetition, as in the following line mentioned by Stoica: 14...f6 15 ♔fd4 ♔xd4 16 ♔xd4 ♕f7 17 bxc3 ♖c8 (17...exd4 18 ♖e6+ ♕g6 19 ♜e4 h6 20 ♜g4+ ♕h7 21 ♖f5+ ♕g8 22 ♖e6+ =) 18 ♔f3 ♖d6 (18...♖e7!?) 19 ♖e3 ♔d5 20 ♖d3! ♔xe3 21 ♜xe3 ♖c6 22 ♖f5 g6 23 ♔g5+ ♕g7 24 ♔e6+ ♕f7 25 ♔g5+ =.

b) 14 bxc3 ♖e7 15 ♖g5 (Smagin's move) and now Black has several acceptable ways to neutralize White's initiative:

b1) 15...f6 is an ambitious move which leads to very sharp positions. White has compensation for the pawn,

but no more than that. A recent example: 16 ♖e3 ♔c8 17 ♔h4 0-0 18 ♖g4 a6 19 ♔f5 g6 20 ♔xe7+ ♔6xe7 21 ♖c4+ ♕g7 22 ♔c7 ♔d6 23 ♔e6+ ♕g8 24 ♖d3 ♜c8 25 ♜ad1 ♜c6 26 c4 ♖c8 27 ♔c5 with an unclear position, Koch-Tregubov, Belfort 2002.

b2) 15...a6 (this is the simplest way to equalize) 16 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 17 ♔xe5 0-0 (17...f6 wins a knight, but the black king remains stuck in the centre; according to Nijboer Black can give it a try, but I doubt that it makes much sense to suffer under White's extremely strong attack, when each mistake can be the last one) 18 ♔d4 ♔g6 19 ♔xg6 hxg6 = Onishchuk-Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 1996.

14...♔xd4 15 ♔xd4 f6 16 bxc3 ♕f7 17 ♔b5 a6 18 ♖e3 axb5 19 ♖xb6 ♜xa1 20 ♜xa1 ♖e8 21 ♜a5

White regains the pawn, and the game becomes completely equal.

21...b4

Or 21...♖c6 22 ♖xb5 ♖xc3 23 ♖d5+ ♕g6 24 h4 ♖c1+ 25 ♕h2 ♖c6 26 ♖xc6 bxc6 27 ♜a8 ♕f7 28 ♜c8 ♜g8 29 ♜xc6 ♖e7 =.

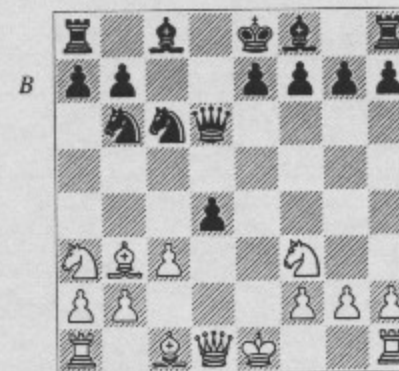
Now (after 21...b4):

a) 22 c4 ♖c6 23 ♜b5 ♖e7 24 ♖a5 ♜a8 25 h3 ♖c5 26 ♖xb4 and now, according to Murrey, most precise is 26...b6 27 ♖xc5 bxc5 28 ♖d3 (28 ♖e3 ♜c8 =) 28...h6 29 ♖d5+ ♖xd5 30 cxd5 ♜c8 =.

b) 22 cxb4 ♖e6 23 ♖c4 ♖xc4 24 bxc4 ♖xb4 25 ♜a7 ♜c8 26 ♖xb7+ ♕e6 27 ♜xg7 ♖f8 28 ♜c7 (28 ♜xh7? ♜b8 29 c5 ♖xc5 →) 28...♜b8 29 ♜c6+ ♕d7 30 ♜c7+ ♕e6 31 ♜c6+ ♕d7 ½-½ Luther-Sadler, Gausdal 1994.

B3322)

9 ♔a3 (D)



This sharp line involves a pawn sacrifice. It was first played by Ukrainian master Okhotnik in 1986 and gained popularity thanks to its slightly different concept than 9 0-0. The main point of developing the knight before castling is to prevent the exchange of light-squared bishops with 9...♖e6, which would be met by 10 ♔b5 (see below). Another idea of 9 ♔a3 is to provoke a move like 9...a6. This would also make White happy: he has developed a piece, while Black has made a defensive pawn move.

However, like in other lines of the Alapin Variation, with accurate and precise play Black is able to solve all his problems. In fact, many variations lead by force to equal endgames (this is also typical for the 2 c3 Sicilian), though in some positions tactics are still present.

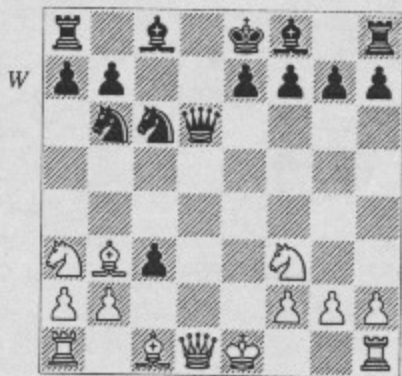
9...dxc3 (D)

We have seen this motif before – Black takes the pawn and offers an

endgame by exchanging queens along the d-file.

9...♙e6 is also possible, but is less ideal than in Line B3321. Then 10 ♖b5 ♗d7 11 ♙xc6 ♗xe6+ 12 ♙e3 ♗d7 leads to positions that are close to equal, although White might claim an initiative thanks to his lead in development.

After 9...a6 10 0-0 we have the same position as in Line B3321 but with the inclusion of the moves ♖a3 and ...a6. I suspect that Black shouldn't suffer too much because of it, but that inclusion favours White, which is reason enough for Black to avoid it – he is doing fine after 9...dxc3 and there is no need to make any concessions.



White has two main replies:

- B33221: 10 ♖xd6 80
B33222: 10 ♗e2 81

After 10 ♖b5 the most White can hope for is a draw. Black has a material advantage and no weaknesses. His problems with his centralized king and the development of his kingside

are only temporary and will be solved sooner or later. In the worst case Black will return the extra material to complete his development. 10...♗xd1+ and now:

a) 11 ♖xd1 ♖b8 12 ♙f4 cxb2 13 ♖b1 ♙f5 is very sharp. Rabięga-Van Wely, Frankfurt rpd 2000 continued 14 ♖c7+ ♖d7 15 ♖xb2 ♖d8 16 ♖d2+ ♖c8 17 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 (17...♖xd8 appears even better, keeping the f-pawn) 18 ♙xf7 e5 19 ♖xe5 ♙d6 20 ♖xc6+ ♖xc7 ♯.

b) 11 ♙xd1 cxb2 12 ♙xb2 ♖c4 13 ♙c3 ♖b8 14 ♙b3 ♖d6 15 ♖xd6+ exd6 16 ♖g5 ♖d8 17 0-0-0 ♙e6 18 ♖he1 ♖d7 (the king finds an excellent shelter behind the d-pawn) 19 ♖xe6 (19 ♖e4? ♙xb3 20 axb3 ♖c8 wins for Black, Sylvan-Sammalvuo, Roskilde 1998) 19...fxe6 20 f4 gives White some compensation, but it is probably not enough after 20...♖c8 21 ♖b2 ♖c5 followed by ...h5.

B33221)

10 ♖xd6

White has almost completed his development and hopes to generate some quick activity in the endgame. In contrast to the immediate 10 ♖b5, here White creates a weakness on d6 and opens the e-file, which might give him sufficient positional compensation after placing his rooks on d1 and e1.

10...exd6 11 ♖b5 ♖b8 (D)

We have a rare case of an extremely sharp endgame:

a) 12 ♖g5 ♖e5 13 0-0 ♙d7 14 ♖xc3 ♙e7 15 f4 ♖ec4 16 ♖e1 ♖f8 and then:

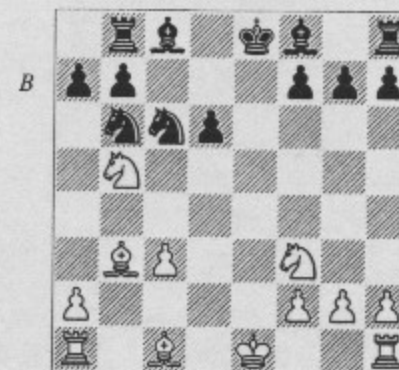


a1) 17 ♙xc4 ♖xc4 18 b3 ♙f6 19 ♖ge4 ♙d4+ 20 ♖f1 f5 21 ♖d1 ♖e3+ 22 ♙xe3 ♙xe3 23 ♖xd6 and here instead of 23...♙e8 (Blatny-Wells, Austria 1999), Wells recommends 23...♙c6, which gives Black the advantage after 24 ♖g5 ♙xf4 25 ♖c6+ ♖e7 26 ♖xc6 ♙xh2!

a2) 17 ♙c2 g6 18 a4 is a very complicated endgame. Black has many possibilities. One possibility is to enter a position with rook and two pawns for knight and bishop: 18...a5 (Black wants to play 19...♙f6, which would give him a fine position) 19 ♖xe7!? (the exchange sacrifice is based on the tactical motif that the c4-knight has no moves; the immediate 19 b3 ♙f6 is good for Black) 19...♖xe7 20 b3 f6 21 ♖f3 ♖bc8 22 bxc4 ♖xc4 23 ♙d2 ♖hc8 24 ♖a3 ♖b4!?. I would prefer Black here.

b) 12 bxc3 (D) and at this point Black can choose from several moves of roughly equal value:

b1) 12...a6 13 ♙e3 (after 13 ♖c7+ ♖d8 14 ♖d5 ♖xd5 15 ♙xd5 ♙e6 Black had a slight advantage in the



game S.Lalić-Sakhatova, Isle of Man 1994) 13...axb5 14 ♙xb6 ♙e7. As usual in such positions, Black's broken pawn-structure gives White enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that. A draw is the most likely result.

b2) 12...♙e6 13 ♙f4 (13 ♙e3?! ♙e7 14 ♖fd4 ♙c4 is slightly better for Black, L.Vajda-Delchev, Budapest 2000) 13...♖d8 14 0-0-0 d5 15 ♖he1 with enough compensation to keep the game level.

b3) 12...♙e7 13 ♙f4 0-0 = with the point 14 ♖xd6 ♙e6 15 0-0-0 ♖a5! ♯.

B33222)

10 ♗e2

White avoids the endgame.

10...♙f5

First development, then material.

11 ♖b5 ♗d7 12 ♖e5 ♖xe5 13 ♗xe5 ♖c8! (D)

13...f6 14 ♖c7+ ♖d8 15 ♖e6+ ♙xe6 16 ♗xe6 ♗xe6+ 17 ♙xe6 gives White promising compensation due to his strong light-square control and his development advantage.



This rook move, which was first played by Peter Wells, is safe for Black. It turns out that taking on a7 is bad, so now it is White who must play accurately to equalize.

14 0-0

14 ♖xa7 f6! 15 ♖a5 cxb2 16 ♙xb2 ♜c4 ♣.

14...♜c4 15 ♙xc4 ♞xc4 16 ♜xc3

Or:

a) 16 ♙f4? f6 17 ♖b8+ ♞c8 18 ♜c7+ ♜f7 19 ♖xb7 e5 20 ♖b3+ ♜g6 21 ♜d5 exf4 22 ♜xf4+ ♜h6 → Pal-kovi-Wells, Budapest 1997.

b) 16 b3 and then:

b1) 16...♞c6!?

b2) 16...♞c8 17 ♞e1 e6 18 ♜xa7 ♞c5 19 ♖b8+ ♖d8 20 ♖xb7 ♖d5 21 ♖b8+ ♖d8 22 ♖b4 ♖a5 23 ♖b7 ♖c7 24 ♖a8+ ♖d8 = and now in L.Vajda-A.Horvath, Budapest 2002, White took the unwise decision to continue the battle, and soon regretted it: 25 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 26 a4 c2 27 a5 ♜c7 28 b4 ♞d5 29 b5 ♜b7 30 ♙e3 ♙c5 31 ♜c6 ♙xe3

32 ♙xe3 ♙e4. It became clear that the advance of White's pawns brings nothing, while Black has kept his very strong pawn on c2, which controls the important squares b1 and d1. Black went on to win.

b3) 16...f6 17 ♜d6+ ♖xd6 18 ♖xd6 exd6 19 bxc4 ♜d7 followed by ...♙e7 and ...♞c8. Black's position is preferable.

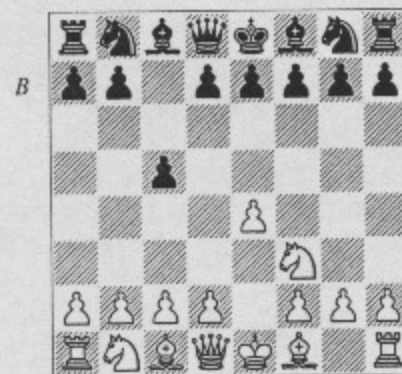
16...e6 (D)



White's active queen and lead in development constitute a certain amount of compensation for the pawn. However, Black is slightly better, since he has no weaknesses and he can keep either the extra pawn or the bishop-pair. 17 ♞e1 ♞c5 18 ♖g3 f6 (18...♙g6 19 ♙f4 ♙e7 20 ♞ad1 ♖c6 21 ♙e3 ♞c4 22 ♖b8+ ♖c8 23 ♖xc8+ ♞xc8 24 ♙xa7 =) 19 ♙f4 ♜f7 20 ♞ad1 ♖c6 21 ♙d6 ♞c4 22 h3 e5 23 ♙xf8 ♞xf8 24 ♖e3 a6 ♣ L.Vajda-Rogozenko, Bucharest 2000.

5 Miscellaneous Lines after 2 ♞f3

1 e4 c5 2 ♞f3 (D)



This standard move is normally designed to prepare the advance d4, thus entering the Open Sicilian. Black has three main answers:

- | | |
|------------|----|
| A: 2...d6 | 83 |
| B: 2...♜c6 | 93 |
| C: 2...e6 | 98 |

The choice between these moves will be primarily dictated by Black's preferred line of the Open Sicilian. However, 2 ♞f3 is a flexible move: depending on Black's answer, White can choose various Anti-Sicilian lines as well. In fact, White's idea when playing an Anti-Sicilian after 2 ♞f3 is often to exploit the 'drawbacks' of

Black's reply on the second move. For instance the move 2...d6 'weakens' the a4-e8 diagonal and White's choice of Anti-Sicilian is often based on this factor. The most popular Anti-Sicilians after 2 ♞f3 involve 3 ♙b5(+), in reply to 2...d6 or 2...♜c6. These represent a big part of the practical material. However, as reader will see, there are plenty of possible Anti-Sicilians besides 3 ♙b5(+), so I decided to divide the material between two chapters – Chapter 6 is devoted to 3 ♙b5(+), while in this chapter we shall consider other lines.

Please note that we shall only be considering the three 2nd-move options for Black listed above. Other moves (such as 2...♜f6, 2...g6, 2...a6, etc.) are weaker and won't be examined in the present book. I assume that Black has a well-thought-out repertoire and a good weapon in the Open Sicilian. In that case he must choose from one of the above moves.

A)

2...d6

Black intends to meet the Open Sicilian with a variation such as the Najdorf, Scheveningen, Classical or Dragon.