A Practical White Repertoire with 1.d4 and 2.c4

The Complete Queen’s Gambit

VOLUME 1

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A Practical White Repertoire with 1.d4 and 2.c4

Volume 1: The Complete Queen’s Gambit

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Sooner or later every chess player faces the problem of building his or her opening repertoire. This is particularly difficult when you play with White, since you need to be well prepared against all of Black’s possible responses. However, most players, including the author, have no inclination to devote all their time to studying opening variations. Therefore, we have decided not to cover the favourite opening move of Ostap Bender* – 1.e2-e4.

As our main opening weapon for White we have chosen the closed openings arising after 1.d2-d4, in which an understanding of chess and a knowledge of the typical resources in the middle game and the endgame are often much more important than a detailed knowledge of a large number of variations. We have analysed the most straightforward possibilities for White, generally based on the development of the knight to c3 and the fastest possible occupation of the centre with pawns.

Unfortunately it is impossible to cover all the possible theory after 1.d2-d4 for White within a single book, so the author plans to publish two further volumes.

The first book is devoted to the move 1...d7-d5 for Black. I believe that the most challenging defences for White to face are the Queen’s Gambit Accepted (Part 2), the Queen’s Gambit Declined (Part 4) and the Slav Defence (Part 5). A few less popular options for Black are covered in Parts 1 and 3.

* Ostap Bender is the picaresque hero of the hugely popular Russian comic novel “The Twelve Chairs” (1928) by Ilf and Petrov. It is still not widely known in the West, despite the efforts of, for instance, Mel Brooks, who made a film adaptation of it in 1970.
In the second book we shall deal with the openings in which Black fianchettoes his dark-squared bishop. These are first and foremost the Gruenfeld and the King's Indian Defence.

In book three we shall analyse in detail the Nimzo-Indian Defence and a few other defences not covered in our first two books.

This series has been written for players of all levels. The author hopes that it will be useful for grandmasters as well as for amateur players.

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Alexei Kornev
Part 1
Black avoids the main lines
1.d4 d5 2.c4

The first part of our book will help readers avoid this situation with White. The point is that despite the fact that all these openings are only semi-correct, they have accumulated plenty of theory, with which White must be familiar in order to fight for an opening advantage.

Among all the openings analysed in the first part of the book, the most interesting are the Chigorin Defence (2...£c6), in which Black exerts piece pressure against White's centre, and the Albin Counter-gambit (2...e5), which was resurrected at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to the efforts of Alexander Morozevich. He has played the Albin at the highest level and has introduced many new and non-standard ideas. Black's compensation for the sacrificed pawn is objectively insufficient, but White must have a deep knowledge of theoretical variations, otherwise he can easily get lost in the maze of complications.

In the first part of our book we shall deal with some lines which are encountered only rarely in contemporary tournament practice. They are: 2...c5 (Chapter 1), 2...£f5 (Chapter 2), the Chigorin Defence 2...£c6 (Chapter 3) and the Albin Counter-gambit 2...e5 (Chapter 4).

Black cannot rely on equalising with these defences and furthermore a single inaccuracy can land him on the verge of disaster. However, there are players who employ them in tournament practice hoping that their opponents are theoretically unprepared.
This move is considered to be not quite correct, and rightly so. The main reason is that, as a rule, symmetrical positions are in White’s favour, since after all he moves first... In addition to the extra tempo inherent in playing White, he gains further time by attacking Black’s queen on d5 with his knight on c3 and the two extra tempi provide White with a stable advantage in this open position, despite the fact that Black has no pawn weaknesses in his camp.

3.cxd5

We shall now analyse A) 3... \textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}xd5} and B) 3...\textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}f6}.

It is rather dubious for Black to play 3...cxd4?! since after 4. \textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}xd4} White simply ends up with an extra pawn. A possible continuation is 4...e6 5.e4 exd5 6.exd5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}f6} 7.\textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}c3}± and Black has no compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

Black’s position is also very bad after 5...\textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}c6} 6.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}d1} exd5 7. exd5 \textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}b4} 8.a3! \textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}xd5} 9.\textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}b5}+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}e7} 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}e2}+ \textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}e6} 11.\textit{\textcolor{green}{$\Box$}f3}±. There are so many pieces left on the board that Black’s king, having lost the right to castle, has only very slim chances of survival.

A) 3...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\Box$}xd5}

This move leads to the situation we mentioned above – White
will gain another tempo by attacking the enemy queen with his knight.

4.\f3 cxd4 5.c3 \a8

5...\a5 – This retreat of the queen fails to solve all Black’s problems. 6.\xd4 \f6 7.g3! (we shall see a similar idea after 5...\d8) 7...e5 8.b3 \c7 9.g2 \b4 10.d3 0-0 11.g5 \d8 12.f3 \xc3+ 13.xc3 \c6?! (here it was better for Black to play 13...\xc3+!? 14.bxc3±, although even then, despite his weakness on c3, White maintains a slight edge in the endgame) 14.0-0 \e6 15.\ac1+. White exerts strong pressure on the queenside and soon converted it into a fullpoint in the game Fressinet – Degraeve, Belfort 2010.

6.\xd4

6...\d7

Black avoids the exchange of queens and wishes, just like White, to gain a tempo by attacking the enemy queen with his knight on c6.

The endgame is worse for Black after 6...\xd4. It is easy to see that White has two extra tempi in a symmetrical position – his knights are on c3 and d4, while Black’s are still on their initial squares. 7.\xd4 \f6 (7...a6? 8.d5+!) 8.db5 \a6 9.g3±. This is one of themain ideas of the variation. White develops his bishop on the long diagonal, where it exerts maximum pressure against Black’s queenside, impeding the development of its black counterpart – the bishop on c8. It thus seems less convincing for White to play 9.e4±, although even then he maintains a slight edge in the endgame, Shantharam – Dave, India 1994.

7.\e5

This move is quite obvious. White prevents \c6 and wishes to exchange on d7, gaining the advantage of the two bishops, which would be a considerable achievement in this open position.

7...\f6

The endgame is prospectless for Black after 7...\c6?! 8.\xd7+ \xd7 9.\xd7 \d7 10.e3 \d8 11.0-0-0+ \c8 12.\d8+ \xd8 13.g3 e6 14.g2± K.Hulak – Manievich, Pula 1994. White has a great advantage in the position arising. He leads in development and his bishops are pointed menacingly at Black’s queenside. White is already threatening to win the enemy a7-pawn after \xc6.
Chapter 1

8.\( \text{cxd7} \) \( \text{fxd7}! \)? 9.g3 \( \text{c6} \)
10.\( \text{wd2} \)

Black has completed the development of his queenside pieces and White no longer has a development lead, but Black is far from equality yet, since he is unable to counter the pressure of White's strong bishop on g2.

10...g6 11.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{tg7} \) 12.0-0 0-0 13.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{de5} \) 14.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c7} \)
15.\( \text{d5} \)± with a big advantage for White, Opocensky - Puc, Zagreb 1947.

4.e4!? This is an energetic move. White wishes to retain his d5-pawn, which cramps Black's forces, even at the cost of losing his e4-pawn.

There is an interesting alternative here in 4.\( \text{f3} \), which generally leads to a slight but stable advantage in the endgame, for example: 4...\( \text{cxd4} \) 5.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{x} \) 5 6.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 7.\( \text{xd4} \) a6 8.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{bd7} \) 9.g3 \( \text{h6} \) 10.\( \text{d2} \) e5 11.\( \text{c2} \)±. White had a minimal advantage which after Black's inaccurate play 11...b5 12.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{b8} \) 13.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 14.0-0 \( \text{b7} \) 15.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \) 16.\( \text{fc1} \) g6 17.a4 b4 18.\( \text{a2} \) a5 19.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 20.\( \text{xc4} \)± became overwhelming, owing to the chronic weakness of Black's a5-pawn, Sakaev - Salmensuu, Ubeda 2001.

4...\( \text{xe4} \) 5.\( \text{dxc5} \)

B) 3...\( \text{f6} \)
This is Black's main reply.

5...\( \text{xc5} \)

It seems rather dubious for Black to play 5...\( \text{a5} \)±. Such early queen sorties in the opening are
arising after 7...exd5) with 9.d6! exd6 (Black’s position becomes even worse after 9...\texttt{b}xd6 10. \texttt{b}xd6\texttt{d}d6 11.\texttt{b}b5 \texttt{e}e4 12.0–0–0 \texttt{d}d8 13.\texttt{d}d2! \texttt{f}f6 14.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{e}e7 15. \texttt{c}c7+=) 10.\texttt{b}b5 \texttt{e}e4 11.\texttt{b}xd6 \texttt{d}d6 12.\texttt{c}c5 \texttt{e}e4 13.\texttt{x}xf8 \texttt{xf}8 14.a3±; Black has only one pawn for the exchange and White only needs to demonstrate good technique to convert it into a full point.

\subsection*{8.\texttt{w}xd5}

\section*{8...\texttt{a}e7}

Black has many options here, but none of them equalise.

His position remains difficult after 8...\texttt{c}c6 9.\texttt{w}xd8+ \texttt{d}d8 10. \texttt{d}d5 \texttt{d}e6 11.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{d}d7 12.\texttt{e}e5± and White’s advantage is not in doubt, since his knights have occupied the centre of the board, Donner – O’Kelly de Galway, Havana 1965.

The move 8...\texttt{e}e7+ was tried in the game Portisch – Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969. This looks rather dubious, because Black is behind in development, so he should not avoid the exchange of queens, which ought to be in his favour. Furthermore his queen on e7 will impede the development of his kingside. The game did not last long... 9.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{c}c6 10.\texttt{b}b5 \texttt{d}d7 11.0–0 \texttt{e}e6 12.\texttt{e}e5 \texttt{xe}5 13.\texttt{x}xe5 \texttt{xb}5 14.\texttt{x}xb5 \texttt{a}6 15.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{d}d8 16.\texttt{b}b6 \texttt{xd}1 17.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{f}6 18.\texttt{f}f5 \texttt{g}6 19.\texttt{c}c7+ \texttt{f}7 20.\texttt{d}d5. Black cannot avoid heavy loss of material, so resigned.

After 8...\texttt{w}xd5 White’s pieces are noticeably more active. 9. \texttt{x}xd5 \texttt{e}e6 (the development of Black’s knight to the edge with 9... \texttt{ba}6 only increases White’s advantage after 10.\texttt{b}b5+ \texttt{d}d7 11. \texttt{xd}7+ \texttt{d}d7 12.0–0 \texttt{f}6 13.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{f}7 14.\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{c}5 15.\texttt{c}7 \texttt{ad}8 16. \texttt{x}a6 \texttt{xe}3 17.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{bx}a6 18.\texttt{ac}1± Gleizerov – Westerinen, Stockholm 2000) 10.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{c}c6 11.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{d}d7 12.0–0 \texttt{d}d6 13.\texttt{fd}1 0–0–0 14.\texttt{ac}1±. White’s pieces are ideally placed and his knight on d5 is exceptionally strong. Black will do well to survive in this endgame. Still, he has no pawn weaknesses, so White’s task maybe not so easy after all...

\subsection*{9.\texttt{w}xd8+ \texttt{xd}d8 10.\texttt{e}e3}

Black’s defence is difficult even after the exchange of queens. 10...\texttt{ba}6

He fails to solve all his problems with 10...\texttt{e}6, because after 11.0–0–0 0–0 12.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{c}c6 13.
hardly ever justified. 6.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) (of course 6...\(\text{xc}5??\) is answered with 7.\(\text{a}4++\), winning a piece) 7.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xc}5\) 8.\(\text{a}3\). Of course White’s knight would be much better placed on c3, but he has a concrete idea, which is to develop the rook on c1 with tempo, attacking Black’s queen and exploiting the fact that Black’s bishop on c8 is unguarded at the moment. 8...\(\text{d}7\) 9.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 10.\(\text{c}4\)

Now Black must chose a square for the retreat of his queen. After 10...\(\text{h}6\) the simplest for White would be to exchange the queens, weakening Black’s pawn structure and obtaining a stable advantage in the endgame. 11.\(\text{h}6!\) (the move 11.f4 also leads to a slight edge for White, but since he can bring about such a favourable endgame by force he does not need to enter complications in the middlegame, H.Olafsson – Westerinen, Reykjavik 1997) 11...\(\text{g}x\text{h}6\) 12.\(\text{e}5\)±. White deprives his opponent of his only compensation for the disrupted pawn structure – his bishop pair – and sets up a trap in the process: now if 12...\(\text{g}7?\) 13.\(\text{b}5!++\)

6.\(\text{f}3!\)??

This White’s best move. He leads in development and should prevent any attempt by Black to close the position, which would be possible if White plays 6.\(\text{c}3\); then Black could continue with 6...\(\text{e}5!\)±, making his defence a bit easier.

6...\(\text{e}6\) 7.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{exd}5\)

After 7...\(\text{e}7\) White should play 8.\(\text{e}3\), more or less forcing his opponent to exchange on d5. If 8...0–0? White wins the exchange (after 8...\(\text{exd}5\) 9.\(\text{xd}5\)± the position is similar to the one
This move is considered to be more reliable than 2...c5, which was analysed in the previous chapter, but nevertheless it does not feature among Black’s main weapons against 2.c4.

Edward Lasker was one of the first players to try this line, back in the year 1913, but it has never become particularly popular. It can be seen sometimes in the games of contemporary grandmasters such as Shirov, Malaniuk and Miladinovic.

The move 2...\textit{f5} is based on a sound positional idea. Black would like to solve immediately a problem which is typical for the majority of the closed openings – the development of his bishop on c8. But the disadvantage of this move is equally clear. Black loses the possibility after 3.cxd5 of recapturing on d5 with a pawn, as in the most popular openings (the Slav Defence and the Queen’s Gambit Declined).

\textbf{3.cxd5!?}

Of course this is White’s most natural and principled response to Black’s second move, emphasizing its main drawback.

White’s other possibility of fighting for an opening advantage is with the move 3.\textit{c3}. The main ideas for both sides can be illustrated by the game Kramnik – Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1998: after 3...e6 4.\textit{f3} \textit{e5} 5.\textit{b3} \textit{b6} 6.c5 \textit{c7} 7.\textit{f4} \textit{c8} 8.\textit{h4} \textit{g6} 9.\textit{xg6} hxg6 10.e4\textdagger, a position typical for the Chebanenko variation of the Slav Defence has arisen. White has the better development and more space, so he has the better chances, but Black’s position is very solid. He has no pawn weaknesses and has solved the problem of his light-squared bishop.

\textbf{3...\textit{x}b1}
This is a sad necessity for Black. He must part with this bishop, because after 3...\( \text{\texttt{xd5?!}} \)
4.\( \text{\texttt{c3}} \pm \) he would lose tempi not only moving his queen again, but also retreating his bishop after e2-e4.

4.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \)

This intermediate check is an important resource for White and it is vital to remember it. The routine recapture 4.\( \text{\texttt{xb1?!}} \) is inaccurate, because after 4...\( \text{\texttt{xd5}} \), the a2-pawn will be hanging. White will have to lose time protecting it and this will enable Black to organize pressure in the centre against White’s d4-pawn.

4...c6

The endgame arising from 4...\( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 5.\( \text{\texttt{xd7+}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xd7}} \) 6.\( \text{\texttt{xb1}} \) is inferior for Black. White has the bishop pair, the better pawn structure (he has exchanged his c-pawn for the enemy d-pawn) and moreover Black will have to lose time regaining his d5-pawn.

After 6...\( \text{\texttt{gf6}} \) 7.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 8.\( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{fxd5}} \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f6}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{d5!}} \) e6 11.\( \text{\texttt{dxex6}} \) fxe6 12.\( \text{\texttt{h3}} \pm \), White gained a clear advantage in the game Pinter – Matkovic, Pula 1997. In addition to all the other defects of Black’s position, his e6-pawn was very weak.

5.\( \text{\texttt{dxc6}} \)

5.\( \text{\texttt{xb1?!}} \) This option also enables White to keep an opening edge. He has the better chances in the ensuing middlegame, thanks to his bishop pair. He only needs to complete his development, carefully watching out for Black’s possible pawn breaks e7-e5 and c6-c5, for example: 5...\( \text{\texttt{xd5}} \) 6.\( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 7.\( \text{\texttt{b4}} \) e6 8.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{gf6}} \) 9.e3 a5 10.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{bxa5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xa5+}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a6}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e7}} \) 15.e5 \( \text{\texttt{d5}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a7}} \) 17.0-0\( \pm \) Khenkin – Goreacinic, Frankfurt 2012. The centralised position of Black’s knight on d5 is not sufficient to compensate for White’s space advantage and bishop pair. Furthermore, White will be able to organise an attack if Black cas-
White's pieces are all actively deployed, while Black still has to develop his c8-bishop and connect his rooks.

11.b5+ d7 12.xd7+ xd7 13.0-0

White's rooks will occupy the central files with tempo.

13...d5c5 14.xc5 xc5 15.hel+ e6 16.d4 0-0 17.xe6 fxe6 18.f3 (diagram)

White has a slight but stable advantage in this endgame, thanks to his better pawn structure. 18...g5+ This is Black's best survival chance (after 18...c7 19.h3 ad8 20.xe6± White was a pawn up in the game Gleizerov – Berkell, Stockholm 2002).

19.xc2 eae8 and despite the fact that Black has avoided the immediate loss of his e6-pawn and has thus maintained his material advantage, he will still have to fight long and hard for a draw. His e6-pawn is weak and White's knight has the excellent e4-outpost.

Conclusions

The move 2...c5 is not often encountered in the tournament practice. Hardly any really strong players play it, and quite deservedly so. As a rule, White easily obtains an opening advantage. The most prudent line for Black is to exchange the queens and to defend an inferior endgame; otherwise, he risks losing very quickly, as happened in the game Portisch – Bronstein, Monte Carlo 1969. White has a clear advantage in the endgame thanks to his lead in development. His rooks quickly seize the open files and threaten to invade the seventh rank at any moment. Of course, it cannot be said that this advantage is decisive, but the number of players who are be willing to play this variation with Black, forced to choose between being crushed in the middlegame and conducting a long and difficult defence in an endgame, diminishes with every passing year...
Chapter 2
tles kingside, thanks to his strong pawn on e5, which deprives Black's knights of the important f6-square.

5...\(\text{c}xc6\) 6.\(\text{xb}1\)

6...e5

If Black regains his pawn immediately with 6...\(\text{xd}4\) the endgame arising is considerably worse for him. 7.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 8.e3 \(\text{c}6\) 9.b4! This is an important finesse and the only way for White to fight for an opening edge. (After the routine move 9.\(\text{b}5\) he fails to obtain any advantage, since after 9...\(\text{c}8\) he is unable to weaken Black's queenside pawn structure; after 10.\(\text{d}2\) a6 11.\(\text{a}4\) b5 12.\(\text{d}1\) e6 13.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}6\) 14.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{f}6=\) White is unable to exploit his advantage of the bishop pair owing to his lag in development, Kishnev – Svidler, Copenhagen 1991.) 9...e6 10.a3. This is the idea of White's previous move. He not only prepares to fianchetto his c1-bishop, but also restricts its opponent on f8, pre-

venting the check from the b4-square. 10...\(\text{d}6\) 11.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 12.\(\text{b}2\) \(\text{e}7\) 13.g3! White fianchettoes his other bishop too, exerting maximum pressure against his opponent's position. 13...\(\text{ac}8\) 14.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{hd}8\) 15.\(\text{e}2\) Ehlvest – Rausis, Riga 1995. The resulting position is a perfect illustration of the theme of the advantage the bishop-pair in the endgame. White's bishops on b2 and g2 dominate the entire board and even though the black position contains no pawn weaknesses, White can play for a win for a long time at absolutely no risk.

7.\(\text{d}2\)

7...\(\text{xd}4\)

After 7...\(\text{xd}4\) we reach a position resembling the Tarrasch Defence, but with a very important drawback for Black. After the development of White's bishop on g2, Black will have great problems with the protection of his light squares. This is the consequence of Black's exchange of bishop for
knight on move three! 8.g3! This is an important nuance; White does not yet commit his g1-knight and keeps open the possibility to transfer it to the d3-square via the route h3-f4-d3.

Now Black cannot solve his problems with the move 8...\(\text{d}d5\). He prevents indeed the above mentioned manoeuvre of his opponent’s knight, but his queen on d5 is rather unstable and this becomes quite obvious after White’s bishop is developed on g2. 9.f3 b5. This is the only way for Black to justify the placement of his queen on d5, but he loses the base under his knight on c6. 10.b3 bxb3 11.axb3 d6 12.g2 d8 13.0-0 ge7 14.f3 f6 15.h3. It would be very difficult for him to maintain the material balance, since he has too many pawn weaknesses: a7, b5 and d4. 15.c8 16.a6 c7 17.g5 f8 18.e4 b4 19.f4 e8 20.xc7 xc7 21.e1 e8 22.xa7+- After White’s pieces have occupied the ideal positions, his a-pawn is joining the attack on the queenside, Rapport – Lejlic, Sarajevo 2010. His initiative is very powerful and all Black’s pieces are restricted by the d4-pawn. White doubtlessly has a great advantage.

8.\(\text{xd}d4\)

Now Black cannot solve his problems with the move 8...\(\text{d}d5\). He prevents indeed the above mentioned manoeuvre of his opponent’s knight, but his queen on d5 is rather unstable and this becomes quite obvious after White’s bishop is developed on g2. 9.f3 b5. This is the only way for Black to justify the placement of his queen on d5, but he loses the base under his knight on c6. 10.b3 bxb3 11.axb3 d6 12.g2 d8 13.0-0 ge7 14.f3 f6 15.h3. It would be very difficult for him to maintain the material balance, since he has too many pawn weaknesses: a7, b5 and d4. 15.c8 16.a6 c7 17.g5 f8 18.e4 b4 19.f4 e8 20.xc7 xc7 21.e1 e8 22.xa7+- After White’s pieces have occupied the ideal positions, his a-pawn is joining the attack on the queenside, Rapport – Lejlic, Sarajevo 2010. His initiative is very powerful and all Black’s pieces are restricted by the d4-pawn. White doubtlessly has a great advantage.

8.\(\text{xd}d4\)

After 8...\(\text{xd}d4\), there arise positions similar to these which we have already analysed, except that the queens have disappeared off the board. This does not change the evaluation of the position, though... 9.g3 c5 10.h3 f6 11.g2 b6 12.f4 0-0 13.e1 ac8 14.d3 (We are already familiar with this transfer of the knight.) 14...\(\text{fe}8\) 15.b4 and in this quite typical endgame for this variation Black is faced with a difficult de-
Chapter 2


He cannot equalise with 9... $b4. Although Black deprives his opponent of his bishop pair, the weakness of his light squares and his d4-pawn precludes him from equalising. 10.$g2 $xd2+ 11. $xd2 $f6 12.$h3 $d8 13.$hc1 $d6 14.b4 a6 15.b5 $d8 16.$f4 0–0 17.bxa6 $xa6 18.$c8 g5 19. $d3+. Now that White has carried out the standard transfer of his knight to the d3-square he has every chance of exploiting the weakness of Black’s pawn structure, Kruppa – Eliet, Cappelle la Grande 2000.

9.e3 $c6 10.$b5

This is one of the main ideas of this variation. White wants to exchange on c6 and to transform his advantage of the bishops into chronic pawn weaknesses in Black’s camp.

10...$c8

In this way Black avoids weakening his pawn structure, but White maintains the advantage anyway.

After 10...$d6 he can immediately disrupt Black’s queenside pawn structure with 11.$xc6+ $xc6.

White has several ways of fighting for the advantage in the endgame arising.

After 12.$e2 White wants to send his knight to the a4-square, from where it will control the c5-square. However, the serious drawback of this plan is that it is just too slow. 12...$f6 13.$c1 $d7 14.$c3 $ab8 15.b3 $hc8 16.$e2 c5! This is the only way for Black to fight for equality (after the unfortunate move 16...$e6, White was able to carry out his plan: 17.$hd1 $a3 18.$c2 $d5 19.$a4+ Finegold – Haskel, Tulsa 2008). 17.$a4 c4! Now you can see the idea of Black’s previous move. He is unwilling to conduct a passive defence and seeks counterplay by sacrificing a pawn. 18. $xc4 $e4 19.$hd1 $c6=. White will find it difficult to realise his material advantage, because Black’s pieces are very active,
which cannot be said for White's knight on a4.

White can achieve more with the simple move 12.$f3. He first wants to complete his development. 12...$e7 13.$e2 $f6 14.$h1 $f7 15.$e4+. This is an important pawn advance. White fixes the e5- and f6- pawns on the same colour as Black's bishop. Now, besides his weak pawns at a7 and c6, he will also have to worry about his "bad" bishop.


White has a clear edge in this endgame. He has the advantage of the two bishops and a lead in development. Black's pawns on e5 and f6 are not impeding White's active operations, since his knight can go at any moment to the d6-outpost via d2-c4.

Conclusion

As you have seen from the variations in this chapter, the move 2...$f5 does not solve Black's opening problems. In general he has to choose between two inferior positions. He must either opt for an "inferior Tarrasch Defence" with a catastrophic weakness of his light squares, or a very difficult endgame in which he will have to defend weaknesses on a7 and c6 without any chances of creating counterplay. It is hardly surprising that the move 2...$f5 has almost disappeared from contemporary tournament practice.
Chapter 3 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6

The Chigorin Defence

This move introduces a defence named after the great Russian chessplayer Mikhail Ivanovich Chigorin. It was a revolutionary idea at the time; instead of fortifying the centre, Black tries to organise piece play and aims to exert pressure against White’s central d4-pawn.

This defence has been played by Smyslov, Ivanchuk, Morozevich and many other strong grandmasters. Nevertheless, the Chigorin Defence has two serious drawbacks and has not gained many followers at the top level:

1) The position of Black’s knight on c6, in front of his c7-pawn, is disadvantageous, creating great difficulty in accomplishing the freeing pawn advance c7-c5.

2) Black presents his opponent with an advantage in the centre, which is a considerable positional concession.

3.c3

I believe this to be White’s most principled move, since it increases his pressure against the d5-square. Now Black is faced with a difficult choice. Every plausible move has some positional defect:

with A) 3...e6, Black shuts the bishop on c8 inside his own camp;

if B) 3...e5, after capturing on d5, White gains time by attacking
the enemy knight;
the early development of a piece with C) 3...\(\Box f6\), does not contribute to the fight for the centre and Black's pieces will soon be forced to retreat from the attack of White's pawns;
D) 3...dxc4 is the most popular response, but even here, after 4.d5, no matter where Black's knight moves, D1) 4...\(\Box a5\), or D2) 4...\(\Box e5\), White seizes the opening initiative.

We shall now analyse all these possibilities in order.

A) 3...e6
After this move the positions arising are typical of the Queen's Gambit, but with Black's knight unfavourably placed on c6.
4.\(\Box f3\)

4...\(\Box f6\)
This is a natural development of the knight and Black can hardly manage without it.

Instead, 4...\(\Box b4\) 5.\(\Box g5\) \(\Box f6\) usually amounts to no more than a transposition of moves, so we shall analyse only the variations that lead to original positions.

5...\(f6\) – This weakening of the position is unusual in the Queen's Pawn openings. Black's knight is better placed on f6 than e7. 6.\(\Box d2\) \(\Box e7\) (it is somewhat dubious to play 6...dxc4?! 7.e3 \(\Box x c3\) 8.\(\Box x c3\) \(\Box d5\) 9.\(\Box d2\) b5 10.b3± since his weakened pawn structure will count against him at some point and White's prospects are clearly better, despite the missing pawn, Shneider - Miladinovic, Tivat 1995) 7.e3 0-0 8.a3 \(\Box x c3\) 9.\(\Box x c3\) \(\Box f5\) 10.\(\Box b3\) \(\Box e7\) 11.\(\Box d3\)±. White has a superior pawn-structure and the advantage of the two bishops, so he will have an enduring positional advantage in the middlegame, Bondarevsky – Terpugov, Moscow 1951.

5...\(\Box e7\) – This move is more reliable than 5...\(f6\), but here too White easily obtains a positional advantage. 6.e3 0-0 7.\(\Box c2\) \(\Box d7\) 8.a3 \(\Box x c3+\) 9.\(\Box x c3\) a5 10.b3±. Once again Black has no compensation for White's bishop pair, Zakhartsov – Dmitriev, Voronezh 2008.
**5.\textsf{\texttt{h}}g5**

Now the position resembles the Ragozin System, with the difference that Black’s knight is already unfavourably placed on the c6-square. In the Ragozin White usually has to give a check with his queen on a4 in order to achieve this. Here he can make a more useful move instead.

After 5...\textsf{\texttt{e}}e7 we reach a position from the Queen’s Gambit Declined and again the position of Black’s knight on c6 is detrimental to his prospects. 6.e3 0–0 (it is possible that his main line might be a move in the spirit of the Lasker Defence, 6...\textsf{\texttt{e}}e4, although even then after 7.\textsf{\texttt{x}}xe7 \textsf{\texttt{xe}}7 8.\textsf{\texttt{d}}d3 \textsf{\texttt{xc}}3 9.bxc3 0–0 10.0–0± White maintains a slight opening edge since Black still has to solve the problem of the development of his c8-bishop and the position of his knight on c6 may turn out to be unfavourable for him, as usual in this opening...) 7.\textsf{\texttt{c}}c1 a6 8.a3 \textsf{\texttt{e}}e8 9.\textsf{\texttt{d}}d3 dxc4 10.\textsf{\texttt{xc}}4 \textsf{\texttt{b}}b8 11.0–0 \textsf{\texttt{d}}d5 12.\textsf{\texttt{x}}xe7 \textsf{\texttt{c}}xe7 13.\textsf{\texttt{e}}e4 f6 14.\textsf{\texttt{e}}e2 c6 15.\textsf{\texttt{fd}}1 \textsf{\texttt{g}}g6 16.\textsf{\texttt{c}}c5± and White’s advantage is not in doubt, Miles – Franco Jimenez, Seville 1994. Black has not completed his development (the problem of his bishop on c8 has not been solved yet) and his pawn-structure has been weakened with the move f6. In addition, White has the permanent threat of e3-e4, after which Black will have the difficult task of finding a good square for the retreat of his knight.

**6.e3 \textsf{\texttt{h}}6**

**7.\textsf{\texttt{x}}xf6**

Unfortunately this exchange is forced, because after 7.\textsf{\texttt{h}}h4 g5 Black can organise strong counterplay based on the misplacement of White’s bishop on g3 (\textsf{\texttt{f}}f6-e4,h6-h5-h4).

7...\textsf{\texttt{xf}}6 8.\textsf{\texttt{c}}c2 0–0 9.a3 \textsf{\texttt{xc}}3+ 10.\textsf{\texttt{xc}}3 \textsf{\texttt{e}}e8 11.\textsf{\texttt{c}}c1 \textsf{\texttt{d}}d7 (diagram)

**12.cxd5**

After this move, the position resembles the Exchange Varia-
tion of the Queen’s Gambit, which will be analysed in detail in the following chapters.

12...exd5 13.\(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}d8\)

This is an important defensive manoeuvre for Black. He exploits the fact that his \(c7\)-pawn is taboo at the moment to relieve his opponent’s pressure on the \(c\)-file.

14.\(\text{\&}e5\) \(\text{\&}f5\) 15.0–0

This natural move is much safer than 15.g4?!., which was played in the game Dreev – Zvjaginsev, Groningen 1997, leading to double-edged play.

15...c6 16.b4 a6 17.a4±

White launches the minority attack, which is typical in this pawn structure. Black has no counterplay on the other wing, so White has the better prospects but of course it is too early to talk about his eventual victory.

B) 3...e5

(diagram)

This move is too ambitious. Black wants to seize the initiative, instead of playing for equality. Unfortunately for him, this attempt is not objectively justified and the move 3...e5 just leads to variations in which his queen's knight is roaming all over the board in search of a safe square.

4.cxd5 \(\text{\&}xd4\) 5.e3 \(\text{\&}f5\)

6.e4!

This move is simple and strong! Now Black's knight, just like a hero in the Russian fairy tale, has to choose one of three possible paths. Here, however, none of them promises Black anything good.

6...\(\text{\&}fe7\)

This is possibly his safest line.

After 6...\(\text{\&}d6\) White should continue in the spirit of the King's Gambit: 7.f4!? exf4 8.\(\text{\&}f3\)± and he
Chapter 3

regains easily the sacrificed pawn, while the Black’s knight travels have not ended yet, Herzog – Tsuprik, Email 2010.

6...d4 – Of course, Black’s wish to centralise his knight is understandable, but with energetic play White can deprive it of a reliable base. 7.f4 d6 8.e3 c5 9.d3. Despite all Black’s efforts, he has failed to keep his knight on the d4-square. After, for example, 9...exf4 10.exd4 cxd4 11.dxd4 f6 12.b5+ d7 13.0-0 e7 14.d7+ d7 15.e5 fxe5 16.xe5 xe5 17.xe5 0-0 18.xf4+, there arises a position in which White has every chance of realising his extra pawn.

7.d3 g6

8.b5+

This is a typical resource for White. The exchange of the light-squared bishops in such positions is in White’s favour.

8...d7 9.b3 b6 10.h4

Black’s knight will not find a safe haven on the g6-square either. The move h7-h5 would lead to a hopeless weakening of the g5-square, so Black is forced to allow h4-h5-h6.

10...d6 11.h5 e7 12.h6 xh6 13.xh6 gxh6 14.xh6±

Black’s position is extremely difficult. He lags in development, his king is stranded in the centre and once White doubles his rooks on the h-file Black’s h7-pawn will be doomed, Shariyazdanov – Jurkovic, Oberwart 2004.

C) 3...f6

After this move the position becomes difficult for Black.
This position resembles the Gruenfeld Defence, except that instead of the move g6, Black has played c6. This circumstance is definitely in White's favour, because Black is unable to undermine his opponent's centre with the move c7-c5.

In this position Black has a choice between two possible squares for the development of his bishop: C1) 5...\texttt{Af5} and C2) 5...\texttt{Ag4}.

However, you will see in the variations below that both bishop moves lead to difficult positions for Black. Therefore the least of the evils for him might be the move 5...e5 – he strikes an energetic blow against White's centre, sacrificing a pawn for the sake of the quick development of his pieces. 6.dxe5 \texttt{b4} 7.d2 \texttt{xc3} 8.bxc3 \texttt{a5} 9.a4 0-0 10.e3 \texttt{e7} 11.b5 \texttt{c5} 12.xc6 bxc6 13.0-0-. The advantage of the bishop pair (his light-squared bishop is particularly powerful, since it has no opponent) provides Black with some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but nevertheless White's chances are better, Jaracz - Barletta, Arvier 2010.

C1) 5...\texttt{Af5} 5.\texttt{f3}

Black develops his bishop and prevents White from occupying the centre with the move e2-e4. However, this development of the bishop has a definite drawback.

6.\texttt{b3} e6

6...\texttt{b6} This knight move is merely of historical interest, since it was even used against Emanuel Lasker... 7.d5 \texttt{b8} 8.e4+. Lasker - Vasquez, Havana 1893.

After 6...\texttt{xc3} 7.bxc3+, White's superiority in the centre guarantees his advantage.

7.e4!

This is a simple tactical blow, initiating complications that are in White's favour.

7...\texttt{xc3} 8.exf5 \texttt{d5} 9.\texttt{d2}

This is an important prophylactic move, after which Black is
unable to check with his bishop on the b4-square.

9...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d6}}

Allowing White to capture on b7.

9...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b8}} 10.\texttt{f6xe6 fxe6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash b5 d6?! 12.\texttt{\textbackslash g5+ \textbackslash Cibulka, Ohrid 2009; if 11...\texttt{\textbackslash e7, Llanes Hurtado – Barletta, Arvier 2010, then 12.0–0 0–0 13.\texttt{\textbackslash aae1 \textbackslash d6 14.\texttt{\textbackslash f4+ and Black’s position is very difficult, because his e6-pawn is hopelessly weak.}}}}}}

10.\texttt{\textbackslash xb7 b8 11.\texttt{\textbackslash a6 and here Black can offer tough resistance with 11...\texttt{\textbackslash e7 (his position would be hopeless after 11...\texttt{\textbackslash exf5 12.\texttt{\textbackslash c1 e6+?, Sargissian – Miladinovic, Plovdiv 2008, 13.\texttt{\textbackslash d1!–) 12.\texttt{\textbackslash b5 b6 13.\texttt{\textbackslash a4 0–0 14.\texttt{\textbackslash c1\pm, but nevertheless White has excellent winning chances, Husari – Jamrich, Budapest 1998.}}}}}}}}

\textbf{C2) 5...\texttt{\textbackslash g4}}

Black allows the move e2-e4, but tries to organise counterplay with his pieces against White’s pawn centre.

\textbf{6.e4}

\textbf{6...\texttt{\textbackslash xf3}}

The d4-pawn is not protected, so Black inflicts a weakness in White’s kingside pawn-structure.

After 6...\texttt{\textbackslash xc3?! 7.bxc3 White is able to avoid the doubling of his pawns on the f-file and that guarantees him an advantage in all variations. 7...\texttt{\textbackslash e5 8.d5 \texttt{\textbackslash b8 9.\texttt{\textbackslash a4+ \textbackslash d7 (Black loses his centre pawn without enough compensation in the variation 9...\texttt{\textbackslash d7 10.\texttt{\textbackslash b3 b6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash xe5\pm Saric – Miladinovic, Neum 2008) 10.\texttt{\textbackslash xe5 \texttt{\textbackslash f6 11.\texttt{\textbackslash e2}}}}}}}}}}

\textbf{7.gxf3 \texttt{\textbackslash xc3 8.bxc3 e5}}

This line was tested in many games in the pre-computer era. Of course nowadays, when most players use computers to analyse such variations, a position like this can only provoke ironic smiles... White maintains a great advantage after 11...\texttt{\textbackslash xe5 12.\texttt{\textbackslash xg4 0–0–0 (12...\texttt{\textbackslash xc3+ 13.\texttt{\textbackslash d2\pm) 13.0–0–0, or 11...b5 12.\texttt{\textbackslash xb5 \texttt{\textbackslash xe5 13.\texttt{\textbackslash xg4 \texttt{\textbackslash xe4+ 14.\texttt{\textbackslash e2 \texttt{\textbackslash xe2+ 15.\texttt{\textbackslash xe2\pm Garcia Palermo – Libeau, Germany 1988.}}}}}}}}}}}

\textbf{7.gxf3 \texttt{\textbackslash xc3 8.bxc3 e5}}
This is the whole point of Black’s previous play. He wants to provoke the pawn-advance d4-d5 and then to create a blockade with his minor pieces on the d6- and c5-squares.

9.\textbf{Bb1!}

After this strong move Black’s plans are not going to be realised.

9...\textbf{Bd6}

10.d5

White does not need to go in for the tactical complications arising from 10.\textbf{Bxb7} 0–0 11.\textbf{Ba4 Be7∞}, Cao Sang – Le Quang, Ho Chi Minh City 2012, since he can gain a big advantage at no risk at all.

10...\textbf{Ba5}

The other square for Black’s knight is no better: 10...\textbf{Bb8} 11.\textbf{Bg1} g6 12.\textbf{Bxb7}± and he has no compensation for the pawn, Ribli – Wittmann, Dubai 1986.

11.\textbf{Ba4+} c6 12.dxc6 \textbf{Bxc6}

13.\textbf{Bxa3!}

This move is not easy to see but is very strong. At first sight, it seems illogical that White voluntarily gives up his bishop pair. The point is that Black’s only remaining minor piece – the knight on a5 – is horribly misplaced at the edge of the board. White’s further plan is to keep this knight completely out of play.

13...\textbf{Bxa3} 14.\textbf{Bxa3} Bc7 15.\textbf{Bb6}± and after this final precise move, depriving the enemy knight of the b7-square, White advantage is almost decisive.

\textbf{D) 3...dxc4}

Black understands that he will not manage to hold the centre without making positional concessions, so he seeks counterplay
based on the fact that White will need time to regain the c4-pawn.

4.d5

Now Black must choose between two possible squares for his knight: either **D2) 4...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}\)**, to the delight of White’s f-pawn, or to the edge of the board **D1) 4...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}\)**, provoking the disapproval of the soul of Doctor Tarrasch.

**D1) 4...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{a}5}\)** 5.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{a}4}+\)

It is not recommended to develop the queen so early in the game, but here White has an immediate purpose – to capture the knight on a5.

5...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{c}6}\) 6.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{b}4}\)

Black has two possibilities now: **D1a) 6...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{cxb}3}\) and D1b) 6...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{b}5}\)**.

**D1a) 6...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{cxb}3}\)**

This is an old move, played more than one hundred years ago. According to contemporary theory, Black’s pawns do not compensate for the missing piece.

7.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{axb}3}\) e6 8.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{d}2}\)

But not 8.\(\textcolor{blue}{\text{x}a}5??\) \(\textcolor{blue}{\text{x}a}5\) 9.\(\textcolor{blue}{\text{x}a}5\) \(\textcolor{red}{\text{b}4}++\)

8...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{xb}3}\) 9.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{xb}3}\) exd5 10. e4 d4 11.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{c}4}\) \(\textcolor{red}{\text{d}7}\) 12.\(\textcolor{red}{\text{d}5}±\)

Capturing the knight is impossible, since this would lose the queen, so Black’s position is very difficult, Reynaldo Vera – Formanek, Andorra 1996. His pawns are not dangerous in the middle-game, especially since White has an overwhelming lead in development.

**D1b) 6...\(\textcolor{red}{\text{b}5}\)**

(diagram)

Now in contrast to the previous variation, the piece sacrifice is more justified, if only because
Black is able to bring about an endgame. If White plays precisely, however, he can maintain the advantage.

7...\texttt{xa5} 8...\texttt{xa5} b4 9...d1 cxd5 10.e4 e6 11.e3

This is the start of an important plan. In order to fight effectively against Black’s pawns, White must deploy his forces according to the following set-up: \texttt{d4, e3, f3, e2(f4), d1}, after which Black will have difficulty protecting his d5-pawn. The bishop goes to d4 not only to block the enemy d5-pawn, but also to be able to destroy its defender – the knight on f6 – at an opportune moment.

11...\texttt{f6}

The character of the fight remains more or less the same after 11...\texttt{e7} and after 12.exd5 exd5 13...d4 \texttt{f6} 14...f3 \texttt{f5} 15...e3± Black does not have enough compensation for the piece in this endgame, Volkov – Ferron Garcia, ICC 2000.

12.exd5 exd5 13...d4 \texttt{e7} 14...e3 0–0 15...e2 \texttt{e6} 16...f3 a6 17...e2± White has achieved the piece set-up that we recommended and was able to realise his material advantage convincingly in the game Vitiugov – Sempa, St Petersburg 2004.

D2) 4...\texttt{e5} 5.f4

Of course, just as in several variations that we have already analysed, Black has great problems with his queen’s knight, which was developed so lightly on move two.

Now he has a choice between knight moves: D2a) 5...\texttt{g6}, D2b) 5...\texttt{g4} and D2c) 5...\texttt{d7}.
Chapter 3

D2a) 5...\( \text{g6} \) 6.e4

White has attacked the enemy knight with tempo and occupied the centre.

6...e6

6...e5 This move presents White with an additional possibility in 7.f5!? seizing more space (he can also play 7.dxe6, transposing to the 6...e6 variation) and after 7...\( \text{f4} \) 8.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 9.\( \text{a4+ d7 10.xc4=} \) White has regained his pawn and obtained an edge, Murali Krishnan — Sareen, Nagpur 2002. He has more space and Black’s knight on f4 is rather unstable.

7.dxe6

The endgame is in White’s favour, since Black cannot capture on e6 with his bishop, for fear of losing a piece.

7...\( \text{xd1+} \) 8.\( \text{xd1} \) fxe6 9.\( \text{xc4 a6 10.f3 b5 11.b3 c5 12.e2 c4 13.c2 f6 14.e5=} \) Moranda — Mista, Warsaw 2012. White’s superior pawn structure guarantees him a slight edge in this endgame. In addition, he has a slight lead in development.

D2b) 5...\( \text{g4} \)

After this move, the resulting positions are in the spirit of the King’s gambit. White sacrifices his rook on h1 in some variations, which does not happen very often in the closed openings.

6.e4 e5 7.f5

Now there follows an almost forced variation. White is trying to develop his pieces as quickly as possible.

7...h5 8.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c5} \) 9.\( \text{xc4 f2 10.b3=} \)

This is the key to the tactical justification of White’s idea. The queen avoids the threatened knight fork with tempo. Black
cannot capture the rook, because he will lose his bishop after the queen check on b5. Later his knight will perish on the h1-square and White will emerge with two minor pieces for a rook.

10...Qf6

It is too slow for Black to play 10...a6. He is already behind in development, so losing another tempo will land him in a hopeless situation: 11.Qf1 Qg4 12.d6 cxd6 13.Qxf7+ Qd7 14.Qg5+- and in a position with material equality White's attack is decisive, Reynaldo Vera – Arenicia, Cuba 1996.

11.Wb5+ Qd7

Black has not lost any material but after 12.Qf1 his pieces will have to retreat. White's advantage is not in doubt. In the time Black's knight goes to the f2-square and then back again, all White's pieces come into play. After Black castles, his king will be insecure owing to the weakening move h7-h5.

12.Qg4 13.Qg5 Qe7 14.Qd2 0-0 15.Qb3 Qc5 16.Qe2 Qxb3 17.axb3 c6 18.0-0-0 Qc7 19. Qb1 Qd8 20.h3 Qf6 21.Qg5±. If Black's pawn were still on h7, the position could be evaluated as unclear, but with such a target White has excellent attacking chances and a clear advantage, McShane – Jones, Liverpool 2006.

D2c) 5...Qd7

This is the Black's safest move. He transfers his knight to the b6-square, to protect his c4-pawn.

6.e4 Qb6

Black's lag in development becomes too great after 6...Qc5 7. Qxc4 e6 8.Qf3, for example: 8...exd5 9.Qxd5 Qe6 10.0-0 Qxd5, Kirszenberg – Jegourel, France 2007, 11.exd5! White opens the e-file with the plan of depriving the opponent of his castling rights: 11...Qd6 12.Qd4 Qf6 13.Qe1+ Qf8 14.Qe3± and White has a great advantage, since Black must lose too much time ensuring the safety of his king and bringing his h8-rook into play.

7.a4
It is advantageous for White to provoke the pawn advance a7-a5, because after e3 and the subsequent exchange of the bishop for the enemy knight, Black will have to capture on b6 with his c-pawn, as a result of which White will have a pawn majority in the centre.

7...a5 8.e3 e6 9.xb6 cxb6 10.xc4 b4 11.dxe6
White does not mind exchanges, because he will have the advantage in any possible endgame thanks to his superior pawn structure.

11...xe6 12.b5+ f8 13.f5!
This is a very important move, because White’s plan is to restrict the enemy bishop on e6. He is not afraid of the check on h4, since Black is unable to organize a dangerous attack because of his undeveloped pieces.

13...h4+ 14.f1 d8 15.c2 e8 16.f3

16...e7
After 16...h6 17.e2±, White is ready to seize the d-file, Myers – Wyss, Winterthur 2012. Black is unable to prevent this. It is important to note the plight of the c8-bishop, which has no moves at all. It is restricted by Black’s own pawn on b7 and the white pawn on f5.

17.d1 xd1+ 18.xd1 f6 19.e5 g4 20.d4 xc3 21.bxc3 xf5 22.h3 h6 23.f2 g6 24.xb6 g7 25.d6 xd6 26.exd6 d8 27.d1 g8 28.c4 f6 29.e3± White has excellent winning chances in this endgame. His pieces, particularly his king, are all actively placed and the passed d6-pawn is tremendously dangerous. Furthermore, Black’s queenside pawns are vulnerable.
Conclusions

The Chigorin Defence is encountered only rarely in the games of contemporary grandmasters. The reason is that in this defence Black is taking too many chances, from the strategic point of view. Black usually plays it in the hope that White is unfamiliar with the theory, or with the idea of outplaying the opponent in a sharp tactical struggle. I believe that readers who have studied this chapter well will be protected against the first eventuality and will gain an advantage by exploiting the main drawback of the move 2...c6 – Black loses too much time trying to solve the problems caused by the position of this knight.

As for the second possibility (problems with tactics and calculation of variations), unfortunately, there is not a single book in the world that can shield you from this danger...
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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5  
The Albin Counter-gambit

This pawn sacrifice is named after the Rumanian chess player Adolf Albin, who played it in 1893 and 1896 against Lasker and Chigorin respectively. The Albin Counter-gambit has never been particularly popular with the chess elite, or even with “ordinary” grandmasters, and it is only thanks to the efforts of Alexander Morozhevich that it reappeared again in tournament practice for a few years. This did not last for long though, because new ideas were found for White which guaranteed him a stable advantage. So, why is the Albin Counter-gambit considered to be not quite sound? This is possibly because Black, unlike in some other gambits, does not sacrifice a flank pawn (the most obvious example is the Benko Gambit), but a centre pawn, and moreover this is not regained in a few moves, as in the Budapest Gambit, but is a real sacrifice. In addition, White’s extra e5-pawn deprives Black’s knight of the f6-square and thus impedes the development of his kingside pieces.

3.dxe5 d4  
This pawn-advance is the point of the counter-gambit. Black’s pawn on d4 prevents the natural development of White’s knight on the natural c3-square.

Black’s position is very difficult after 3...dxc4, since after 4. \( \text{\textcopyright} \text{xd8+} \text{\textcopyright}xd8 \) 5.\text{\textcopyright}c3 c6 6.e4 b5 7. a4 b4 8.\text{\textcopyright}ce2 \text{\textcopyright}e7 9.\text{\textcopyright}f3 \text{\textcopyright}g6 10. \text{\textcopyright}ed4± White retains a great advantage in the endgame, because Black lags in development and his queenside pawns are considerably weakened. It is no better for him to play 5...\text{\textcopyright}c6 6.\text{\textcopyright}g5+ \text{\textcopyright}e7 7.0–0–0+ \text{\textcopyright}d7 8.\text{\textcopyright}f4 a6 9.\text{\textcopyright}d5 \text{\textcopyright}c8 10.\text{\textcopyright}f3 b5, Pillsbury–Mieses, Monte Carlo 1903. Now the move
11.g3± would have created difficult problems for Black, since he has difficulty dealing with the pin on the d-file and completing the development of his pieces.

4.\(\text{d}f3\)

The attempt to get rid of the cramping d4-pawn immediately with the move 4.e3? can be refuted spectacularly by tactical means. It is not often that you see the promotion of a black pawn on move seven and not to a queen but to a knight! 4...\(\text{b}4+\) 5.\(\text{d}2\) dxe3 6.\(\text{x}b4??\) exf2+ 7.\(\text{e}2\) fxg1\(\text{e}+!\) 8.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{h}4+\) 9.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{g}4++\)

4...\(\text{c}6\)

This is a natural move. Black protects his d4-pawn and develops a piece at the same time.

It seems less logical for him to choose 4...c5?!., because after 5.e3 \(\text{c}6\) 6.exd4 cxd4, White not only gets rid of his doubled pawn, but gains the possibility to protect his e5-pawn, which has invaded the enemy camp slightly prematurely, with his rook from e1. 7.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{ge}7\) 8.0–0 \(\text{g}6\) 9.\(\text{e}1\). White has completed his development and has securely defended the e5-pawn. White has every chance of realising his material advantage in the ensuing struggle.

(diagram)

5.\(\text{bd}2\)

This is an important moment.

For a long time it was considered that White could maintain a big opening advantage with the natural move 5.g3, with the plan of quickly developing his kingside pieces. Black then generally tried to castle queenside as quickly as possible and begin an attack on the enemy king. This strategy often failed, because White was usually ahead of his opponent in the attacking race with the kings castled on opposite sides. The main role in this situation was played by White's bishop on g2 and his pawn on e5, which as we had already mentioned, prevented the normal development of Black's knight on the f6-square. It is well known that it is very difficult to attack if your knights are on their initial squares. This all changed when Alexander Morozevich began to outplay his grandmaster opponents with the move 5...\(\text{ge}7!\). It must be admitted that the idea to transfer the knight to g6 is by no means new. It was even tried over a hundred years ago. However, for some unknown reason, this move was ig-
nored by opening theory. It became popular only after some games by Morozevich. $6.\text{g}2 \text{g}6$

The positions are very complicated and non-standard after $7.\text{g}5 \text{d}7 8.e6 \text{fxe6} 9.0-0 \text{e}5 10.\text{bd}2 \text{h}6 11.\text{h}4\infty$ and here the situation on the board is completely unclear, Dreev – Raetsky, Sochi 2005. It is not so often that you see a white bishop on h4 with a pawn on g3. White has a slight lead in development and his knight can occupy comfortable squares in front of his opponent’s pawns on e4 and d3, but Black’s permanent threat to move his knight from g6 and to follow this with g7-g5, trapping White’s bishop on h4, prevents us from evaluating the position in White’s favour.

After $5.\text{bd}2$, Black has a wide range of options. The main moves are: A) $5...\text{ge7}$, B) $5...\text{e}6$ and C) $5...\text{g}4$.

However, before we begin our analysis of the main lines, we shall take a look at some rarely played moves.

$5...\text{e}7$ – This move is not logical, because Black’s queen is misplaced on e7, impeding the development of his kingside pieces. $6.\text{g}3 \text{f}6 7.\text{xf6} \text{xf6} 8.\text{g}2 \text{d}3 9.\text{e}3 \text{g}4 10.0-0 \text{e}0-0-0 11.a3 \text{h}5 12.h3 \text{e}6 13.b4 \text{d}7 14.\text{b}2\infty$. White has completed his development, while Black has no compensation.
for the pawn whatsoever. In addition, White’s queenside attack is much faster than Black’s offensive on the opposite wing, Sakaev – Nabaty, Plovdiv 2010.

5...\(\text{\textdollar}f_5\). This is a tricky move with the idea of \(\text{\textdollar}b_4\). 6.a3. This is a simple prophylactic move. 6...\(\text{\textdollar}e_7\) (The move 6...a5 loses a pawn to 7.\(\text{\textdollar}b_3\). After 6...\(\text{\textdollar}d_7\), the best for White is “to fall into the trap”, because after 7.b4! \(\text{\textdollar}x_b_4\) 8.axb4 \(\text{\textdollar}x_b_4\), he gains a decisive advantage with 9.e6! freeing the \(e_5\)-square for his knight and after 9...fxe6 10.\(\text{\textdollar}e_5\) \(\text{\textdollar}e_7\) 11.\(\text{\textdollar}d_3\)– Black’s two pawns are clearly insufficient to compensate for the sacrificed piece.) 7.g3 0–0 8.\(\text{\textdollar}g_2\). We have reached a typical position for this variation, with opposite-sides castling, but under very unfavourable circumstances for Black – his queen is not as well placed on \(e_7\) as on \(d_7\). 8...g5. Black wants to bring his bishop into play in this extravagant fashion. 9.0–0 h6, Gajewski – Sipila, Stockholm 2012, 10.b4! \(\text{\textdollar}g_7\) 11.\(\text{\textdollar}b_2\) \(\text{\textdollar}b_8\) 12.\(\text{\textdollar}b_3\). The pawns on \(e_5\) and \(d_4\) will soon be exchanged and White will thus preserve his extra pawn.

5...\(\text{\textdollar}b_4\) – Before playing \(\text{\textdollar}e_7\), Black develops his bishop. 6.a3. This is White’s simplest response, guaranteeing him an advantage. It will be difficult for him to retain his weak \(e_5\)-pawn, so instead he gains the advantage of the two bishops. 6...\(\text{\textdollar}x_d_2\) 7.\(\text{\textdollar}x_d_2\) \(\text{\textdollar}g_4\) 8.\(\text{\textdollar}b_4\) \(\text{\textdollar}x_f_3\) 9.\(\text{\textdollar}x_f_3\) \(\text{\textdollar}x_e_5\) 10.\(\text{\textdollar}b_2\) \(\text{\textdollar}e_7\) 11.0–0 0–0 12.\(\text{\textdollar}f_4\) \(\text{\textdollar}c_6\) 13.\(\text{\textdollar}g_3\). Although Black has regained his pawn, White’s position is clearly better. His bishops are much stronger than his opponent’s cavalry and Black’s weak \(d_4\)-pawn is a permanent source of anxiety for him, Tsai – Sagalchik, Seattle 2003.

5...f6 – Black immediately tries to solve his main problem. He exchanges White’s \(e_5\)-pawn, which is impeding the harmonious development of his pieces. Now, however, he loses the possibility of restoring the material balance, so he will have to continue the game a pawn down. 6.exf6 \(\text{\textdollar}x_f_6\) (Capturing with the queen is weaker, because after 6...\(\text{\textdollar}x_f_6\) 7.a3 \(\text{\textdollar}g_4\) 8.h3 \(\text{\textdollar}h_5\) 9.b4 0–0 10.\(\text{\textdollar}b_2\), Black’s slight lead in development does not compensate for White’s extra pawn, Seiler – Dannenberger, Hockenheim 1994. If White succeeds in completing his development, Black may well lose his \(d_4\)-pawn too. This is one of the main ideas of this variation: White advances a3, b4, develops the bishop on \(b_2\) and plays \(\text{\textdollar}d_2\)-b3 at an opportune moment, after which Black’s \(d_4\)-pawn will be attacked by four of White’s pieces. Black will be unable to hold on to it, especially since one of its defenders – the knight on \(c_6\) – may be driven from its position by White’s
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advancing b-pawn.) 7.a3 This is an important prophylactic move; White not only deprives the enemy bishop of the b4-square, but prepares the pawn advance b2-b4.

Black has two possibilities in this position, but neither of them promises a bright future.

7...a5. The inclusion of the moves a3 and a5 is in White's favour, because after 8.Qb3 Black does not have the check on b4 with the bishop. 8...Qe6 9.Qd3 Qf7 10.Qbd4 Qxd4 11.Qxd4. Black's initiative might compensate for one missing pawn, but not two. After the careless response 11...Qc5?, White has the simple reply 12.Qe3! increasing his advantage (in the game Burmakin – Halser, Graz 1997, White overlooked this possibility and played 12.Qb3±, after which he still had the better prospects anyway) and if 12...Qf8 13.Qe6+ Qxe6 14.Qxc5+-

7...Qg4. This is a more logical move. Black highlights his lead in development and tries to bring his pieces into the action as quickly as possible. However, he still has problems. 8.g3 Qe7 9.Qg2 d3 10.0–0 dxe2 11.Qxe2 0–0 12.Qe3 Qe8 13.Qb3 Qa5 14.Qc3 Qc6 15.b4 a6 16.Qb2± Finegold – Kriseler, Lansing 2001. White maintains an overwhelming advantage, not only thanks to his extra pawn, but also because his pieces are much better deployed. His bishops dominate the whole board.

A) 5...Qge7 6.Qb3

Now Black's knight cannot go to g6, which means that White's pawn on e5 will be safe.

6...Qf5

7.e4!

This is White's simplest move to gain an edge.

He does not need to enter the complications arising after 7.a3? Qe7 8.g3 a5 9.Qd3 a4 10.Qbd2∞, where Black scored a victory after a complicated struggle, I.Sokolov – Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

7...dxe3

Of course, Black's position cannot possibly be good after the strange knight move to the edge
of the board: 7...\textit{\textsc{h}}4 8.\textit{\textsc{d}}xd4 \textit{\textsc{x}}xe5 9.c5± Cosentino – Lecha Gonzalez, ICCF 2011.

\textbf{8.\textit{\textsc{d}}xd8+}

White exchanges the queens and maintains a clear advantage in the endgame. Although his e-pawns are doubled, one of them is nevertheless an extra pawn.

\textbf{8...\textit{\textsc{d}}xd8}

The character of the struggle remains more or less the same after \textit{\textsc{d}}xd8 9.fxe3 \textit{\textsc{b}}4+ (Black’s defence is made no easier by knight raids on the flanks: 9...\textit{\textsc{h}}6 10.h3 \textit{\textsc{b}}4 11.\textit{\textsc{f}}2 \textit{\textsc{c}}2 12.\textit{\textsc{b}}1 \textit{\textsc{f}}5 13.\textit{\textsc{h}}4 \textit{\textsc{d}}7 14.\textit{\textsc{d}}2 c5 15.\textit{\textsc{d}}3 \textit{\textsc{b}}4 16.\textit{\textsc{x}}xb4 \textit{\textsc{cxb}}4 17.\textit{\textsc{e}}4 \textit{\textsc{e}}7 18.\textit{\textsc{f}}3± with a clear advantage to White in the endgame, Wight – Almeida, IECC 2009) 10.\textit{\textsc{f}}2 \textit{\textsc{h}}6 11.h3 \textit{\textsc{e}}8 12.\textit{\textsc{e}}2! (this calm developing move is stronger than 12.e4, Kislik – Fodor, Kecskemét 2011, after which White’s d4-square is weakened) 12...\textit{\textsc{x}}xe5 13.\textit{\textsc{d}}1+ \textit{\textsc{d}}7 14.c5. Black has regained his pawn, but the threat to trap his bishop on b4 makes his position almost resignable: 14...\textit{\textsc{c}}8 15.\textit{\textsc{d}}4 \textit{\textsc{c}}6 16.a3! \textit{\textsc{a}}5 (16...\textit{\textsc{x}}xd4 17.\textit{\textsc{f}}xd4+-) 17.\textit{\textsc{d}}7! \textit{\textsc{d}}7 18.\textit{\textsc{b}}5+-

\textbf{9.fxe3\textit{\textsc{b}}4+}

Black’s position is no better after 9...\textit{\textsc{c}}6 10.\textit{\textsc{d}}3 \textit{\textsc{b}}4+ 11.\textit{\textsc{f}}2 \textit{\textsc{e}}7 12.\textit{\textsc{d}}2 \textit{\textsc{h}}4 13.\textit{\textsc{c}}3 \textit{\textsc{g}}6 14.\textit{\textsc{e}}4± when White has transferred his bishop to the c3-square, securely protecting his e5-pawn, Drozdovskij – Bauer, Orense 2009.

\textbf{10.\textit{\textsc{f}}2}

\textbf{10...0–0}

The position is very bad for Black after 10...\textit{\textsc{e}}6, Lalic – Dargan, Denham 2011, owing to 11.\textit{\textsc{d}}3?, for example: 11...\textit{\textsc{c}}5 12.\textit{\textsc{c}}2 \textit{\textsc{xb}}3 13.\textit{\textsc{xb}}3 0–0 14.\textit{\textsc{d}}2 \textit{\textsc{xd}}2 15.\textit{\textsc{x}}xd2 \textit{\textsc{e}}8 16.\textit{\textsc{f}}3 \textit{\textsc{e}}7 17.\textit{\textsc{e}}4! \textit{\textsc{g}}6 18.\textit{\textsc{hd}}1± and he is unable to regain the e5-pawn owing to the vulnerability of his back rank.
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It is possible that Black might have better chances of a successful defence after 10...\textit{\&}e7 11.\textit{\&}bd4 0-0 12.\textit{\&}d3\pm De Jong – Docx, Gent 2006.

11.g4! \textit{\&}h6 12.h3\pm. Black’s position is very difficult; White has not only retained his extra pawn on e5, he has also banished Black’s knight to the edge of the board, Palliser – Bonafont, Torquay 2009.

B) 5...\textit{\&}e6

This is a multi-purpose move. Black develops a piece and prepares castling queenside, preventing the move \textit{\&}b3 in the process.

6.g3

Now Morozevich’s idea of \textit{\&}g8-e7-g6 is less effective, so White can follow the classical plan of fianchettoing his light-squared bishop.

6...\textit{\&}d7

This is a logical move preparing queenside castling.

Here 6...\textit{\&}b4 appears to be inferior; Black is trying to create counterplay against White’s c4-pawn, but unfortunately for him even if he wins it, this will not really facilitate his defence. 7.\textit{\&}g2!

White loses no time protecting the pawn and puts the emphasis on the fastest possible development. He has an extra pawn in anycase, so evenif Blackcaptures his c4-pawn the material will be equal but Black will have no compensation whatsoever for White’s positional pluses (the bishop pair and a lead in development). 7...\textit{\&}xc4 8.0-0 \textit{\&}xd2. Black is forced to part with his strong dark-squared bishop in order to avoid the retreat of his bishop on c4. (His position would be even worse after 8...\textit{\&}d5 9.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}ge7 10.\textit{\&}bxd4\pm, or 8...\textit{\&}a6 9.a3 \textit{\&}e7 10.\textit{\&}b4 d3 11.e3 \textit{\&}d7 12.\textit{\&}b1 b5 13.\textit{\&}d4\pm and Black could have resigned in this absolutely hopeless position, Sorokin – Cunha, Rio de Janeiro 1991.) 9.\textit{\&}xd2. This is stronger that the routine recapture with the bishop. White is preparing \textit{\&}d1 and his c1-bishop can be developed later on b2. 9...\textit{\&}ge7 10.\textit{\&}d1 0-0 11.\textit{\&}c2!? This move
promises White better winning chances (in comparison with 11. \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{Q}}x\text{\texttt{d}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xd}}4 12.\text{\texttt{W}}\text{\texttt{xd}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xe}}2 13. \text{\texttt{W}}\text{\texttt{xd}}8 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{axd}}8 14.\text{\texttt{W}}\text{\texttt{xd}}8 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xd}}8 15.\text{\texttt{G}}\text{\texttt{g}}5 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{f}}8 16.\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{b}}7 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{b}}8 17.\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xb}}2 \))

when Black managed to draw in the game, Shabalov – Sagalchik, Buenos Aires 2003, thanks to the shortage of material left on the board). Black now has difficult problems to solve. His d4-pawn is cut off from his main forces and needs permanent protection, while White’s bishops are a powerful force. Black’s knights have no stable squares in the centre and are much inferior to the enemy bishops. Here is a sample continuation: 11...\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}6 12.\text{\texttt{b}}3 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{f}}5 13.\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}4 14.\text{\texttt{b}}2 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}3 15.\text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}3 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{e}}5 16.\text{\texttt{W}}\text{\texttt{xd}}4 \text{\texttt{W}}\text{\texttt{xd}}4 17.\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xd}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{g}}6 18.\text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}}5 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{d}}8 19.\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{f}}4 \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{c}} 20. \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xd}}8+ \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xd}}8 21.\text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xa}}\text{\texttt{7}}. \))

White’s victory is just a matter of time, because he has two strong bishops in an open position and an extra, although doubled, pawn.

7.\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{g}}2 \)

- Black has four main moves in this position: **B1)** 7...\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}7, \) **B2)** 7...\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{g}}7, \) **B3)** 7...\( \text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{3}} \) and **B4)** 7...0–0–0.

Black has no compensation for the pawn after 7...\( \text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{6}} \) 8.\( \text{\texttt{e}}\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{f}}6 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{xf}}6 \) 9.0–0 \( \text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{3}} \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{c}}\text{\texttt{b}}3 \) 0–0–0 11.\( \text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}5 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{g}}4 \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{d}}\text{\texttt{2}} \) Gligoric – Ljubojevic, Ljubljana 1975, while the line: 7...\( \text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{5}} \) 8.\( \text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{a}}4 \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}7 \) transposes to variation **B1**.

**B1)** 7...\( \text{\texttt{Q}}\text{\texttt{e}}7 \)

This move is a bit awkward for Black. He develops his king’s bishop, but his knight on g8 loses its only development square. He is preparing a flank attack with his h-pawn, but Naturally, this cannot be dangerous for White, bearing in mind his superior development.

8.\( \text{\texttt{a}}\text{\texttt{a}}4 \)

White is in no hurry to castle kingside in view of Black’s eventual attack.

8...\( \text{\texttt{h}}\text{\texttt{5}} \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{b}}\text{\texttt{3}} \)

This move is playing according to the classical principles. He counters his opponent’s flank attack with a blow in the centre, attacking the enemy d4-pawn.
This move was suggested by Tiviakov in comments to one of his games. However, White can maintain a considerable advantage with precise play.

9...d8. After this move, Black protects his d4-pawn but loses the right to castle queenside. His knight is stranded on the g8-square, however, so castling kingside is not likely soon either. His king is therefore condemned to remain in the centre of the board for a long time. 10.0-0 h4 11.d4 h3 12.fxg3±. White has a great positional advantage and after 12...h3? (Black should play 12...d6±, retaining the possibility of offering further resistance) 13. dxe3 dxe3 14.d3 d6 15.d4 d4 16.e4 e4 17.dxe4 dxe4 18.f3+ and White easily realised his two extra pawns in the game Tiviakov – Brenninkmeijer, Groningen 2001.

10.e5!

This is White’s most precise move, after which Black’s initiative comes to a dead end. Following the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, White’s knight is able to occupy the c5-square.

10...dxe2

An endgame with an extra pawn for White arises after 10...dxe2 11.xd2 dxe2 12.f2 f2 xe5 13.a1 a5 d4 14.d4 dxc4 15.xc4 dxc4

The material on the board is equal now, but in the ensuing middlegame White has every chance of scoring a victory. Black’s e6-pawn is weak, his king is in the centre and if he castles kingside the pawn on h5 will turn out to be a serious weakness. In addition, White’s pieces have been deployed much more actively.
We are already familiar with this idea. White’s knights are eyeing the enemy d4-pawn threateningly.

10...0–0

10...0–0–0?! This is a very risky move. Black castles right under the enemy attack. 11.fx{d}d4
This is a very attractive combination. White sacrifices a piece but is able to attack the a7-pawn, after which Black’s king is seriously endangered. 11...{c}xd4 12.{d}xa7 {c}6
13.{g}e3 {g}xe2+ (Black loses immediately after 13...{e}xb3? 14.{a}b6+- Jaracz – Krahe, Bad Wiessee
2007) 14.{h}h1 {f}c7 15.{g}e1. Black has defended against the mating threats, but his king on e2 is doomed. 15...{g}xe5 (Black’s attempt to sell the life of his knight dearly with the desperado move 15...{d}xg3+ leads to the opening of the f-file: 16.fxg3! {b}b8 17.{f}a4 {d}xe5 18.{f}f4 {f}6 19.{x}xe5 fxe5 20.{x}xc6+ and Black suffers huge material losses) 16.{x}xe2
{c}xe4 17.{d}d4 {f}f6 18.{x}xf6 gxf6 19.{c}c5±. Black has managed to regain the pawn he sacrificed at the start of the game, but his position is in ruins. His pawn structure has been weakened and his king is unsafe.

11.{g}g5 {c}d8 12.{f}d1 {g}4
13.{x}e7 {g}xe7 14.{c}c5± and White has completed the development of his pieces and retained the extra pawn, Jongsma – Smederevac, Beverwijk 1966.

B3) 7...{h}3

This move, in the spirit of the attack against Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defence, is aimed at exchanging his opponent’s fianchettoed bishop.

8.0–0 h5

After 8...0–0–0 there is a transposition to variation B4.

9.{x}h3 {x}h3 10.{e}e4

10...{h}4

Black continues with his standard plan of attack against White’s castled position, weakened by the move g3.

In the Dragon this attack is really dangerous, but here White can neutralise it easily, thanks to
his lead in development.

Instead, 10...0–0–0 generally comes to much the same thing, since Black has no plan other than h5–h4: 11.\(\text{\texttt{\#e}}5 \text{\texttt{\#d}}7 12.a3 h4 13.b4 hxg3 14.fxg3± f6? 15.e6+-

11.\(\text{\texttt{\#e}}5\)

White drives the enemy queen away from its active position. After this, Black’s attack comes to a dead end.

11...\(\text{\texttt{d}}7 12.a3 hxg3 13.fxg3 f6 14.e6 \text{\texttt{c}}8 15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}3±\) – Having parried his opponent’s attack, White launches a counter-offensive, Cosentino – Latal, ICCF 2011. Black’s position is virtually hopeless. His pieces are undeveloped and White’s pawn wedge on e6 cuts Black’s position into two separate halves.

B4) 7...0–0–0 8.0–0

8...\(\text{\texttt{h}}3\)

The alternative 8...\(\text{\texttt{g}}e7\) enables White to begin active play immediately on the queenside with 9.b4!? Gagunashvili – Abbasov, Nakhchivan 2011, 9...\(\text{\texttt{x}}b4

(White’s attack is also very strong after 9...\(\text{\texttt{g}}6\) 10.b5 \(\text{\texttt{c}xe5\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{a}}4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}8\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{a}}b2\) c5 13.\(\text{\texttt{b}}x\text{\texttt{c}}6\) \(\text{\texttt{x}}\text{\texttt{c}}6\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{g}}5\)! \(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}4\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{f}}\text{\texttt{b}}1\); Black’s king is under fire and White just needs to move the bishop from the b2-square, after which Black will have difficulty protecting the b7-square) 10.\(\text{\texttt{a}}b1\) \(\text{\texttt{ec}}6\) 11.a3 \(\text{\texttt{a}}6\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{g}}5\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}c5\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{ xe}}6\) \(\text{\texttt{ xe}}6\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{b}}3\) \(\text{\texttt{xc}}4\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{g}}\text{\texttt{g}}5\) \(\text{\texttt{xb}}3\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xb}}3\)

White is not concerned with keeping the extra pawn and instead tries to organise active piece play. In this position, it is Black who has an extra pawn, but White has excellent winning chances. His attack with major pieces on the b-file, supported by the bishop on g2, looks tremendously dangerous. For example, Black loses immediately after 16...\(\text{\texttt{e}}8\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{b}}1+-\)

8...h5 9.\(\text{\texttt{a}}4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}8\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{g}}5\). This is White’s most precise move. After the exchange of the bishop on e6, Black’s attack will be a thing of the past. 10...\(\text{\texttt{x}}e5\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}7\) \(\text{\texttt{xd}}7\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{a}}b3\)!. This strong move has been tested only in correspondence games. 12...\(\text{\texttt{xc}}4\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{a}}\)5
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.de d4 4...f3 \ assistants\ 5...bd2

\ assistants\ 14...xf7 xf1 15...xf1 e8
16...xb7 b4 17...f4 g5 18...xg5 d3 19.a3 c5 20.xc5 xc5 21.b4
e6 22.e1 g7 23...f7 xe1+ 24...xe1 h7 25.e4 f5 26.d8
g7 27.e6 c8 28.xc7 f7 29.b5 a6 30.d6+ xd6 31.
exd6±. White succeeded in gaining a decisive advantage after a complex tactical struggle in the game Mendl – Tinture, ICCF 2008. Subsequently he captured all Black's pawns and won an ending with a bishop and four pawns against a rook.

9.e6!
This is another typical tactical shot. White sacrifices a pawn but gains time, which is particularly important in a position with opposite-sides castling, in which every tempo counts.

9...xe6 10...g5
Another good continuation is 10...b3!? f6 11...d1± and White's play against the enemy d4–pawn, combined with threats against the b7–pawn, gave White an edge in the game Khenkin – Nieuweboer, Haarlem 1997.

10...e7 11...xe6
White exchanges the important enemy light-squared bishop.

11...xex6 12...a4...f6 13.b4! and White launches a decisive attack, Reitano – Stephens, Sydney 1996. 13...b8 14...b1
he8 15...b2 e5 (Black loses immediately after 15...xe2 16.
xc6 bx6 17...b3 xc4 18.
a5+-) 16.c5±. White is clearly ahead of his opponent in a position with attacks on opposite flanks. His pawns are far advanced on the queenside and are supported by his strong bishop on g2, so his attack has excellent chances of bringing victory.

C) 5...g4
Black develops his bishop to an active position.

6.a3
White prevents a possible check on the b4-square before attacking the enemy bishop on g4.

Black has two main options in this position: C1) 6...ge7 and C2) 6...e7.
Chapter 4

The alternatives are clearly worse.

For example: 6...a5?! 7.h3 \textit{\textit{xf3}} (7...h5, Lins – Snokowski, ICCF 2011, leads to a hopeless position for Black: 8.a4 d7 9.b5! \textit{\textit{xf3}} 0–0 0 11.f4 f6 12.e2 b8 13.f3+–) 8.xf3 c5 9.g3±; the exchange of the bishop has left the light squares in Black’s camp weak, and Black will have difficulty regaining the e5-pawn.

6...d7?! Black ignores his opponent’s threats but ends up in a difficult position: 7.b4 0–0–0 8.b2 \textit{\textit{c6}} 9.b3 \textit{\textit{xf3}} 10.xf3±

C1) 6...\textit{\textit{ge7}}

We already know this idea of Morozevich’s, which we analysed in variation A, except that here, the moves \textit{\textit{g4}} and a3 are included.

7.h3

This move forces Black to determine the position of his bishop. He can retreat it to four different squares but none of them solves his opening problems.

7...\textit{\textit{xf3}}

It is possible that this is the least of the evils for him. Of course, Black is presenting his opponent with the advantage of the bishop pair, but at least he regains his pawn.

His position remains difficult after 7...h5 8.b4 d7 9.g4 g6 10.b3±

After 7...\textit{\textit{xe6}} 8.b3 the exchange of the pawns on c4 and d4 is in White’s favour. 8.xc4 9.bxd4 xd4 10.xd4 d5, Frydendal – Smith, ICCF 2006, 11.c2! xd4 12.e3 d5 13.xc4 xe5 14.e2± and White’s strong bishop pair guarantees an advantage for him, both in the middlegame and in the endgame.


8.xf3 g6 9.e3 dxe3 10.xe3 gxe5 11.xe5 xd1+ 12.xd1 xe5 13.e2 e7 14.0–0 0–0, Labadie – Grenouilloux, France 2001.

(drawing)

15.f4! c6 16.xf3± and White has the bishop pair in an endgame, so his position is preferable but, unlike most of the positions which we have analysed in
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.de d4 4.§f3 §c6 5.§bd2

the Albin, the material on the board is equal.

C2) 6...§e7 7.h3

7...§h5

The move 7...§xf3 was played more than one hundred years ago but it fails to solve Black's problem, because his light squares are now very weak. 8.§xf3 0–0–0 9.g3 (this is a more modern move, but he can also opt for the classical line 9.§d3 h6 10.g3 g6 11.§g2 §g7 12.0–0 §xe5 13.§xe5 §xe5 14.b4 f5 15.c5± when White's queenside attack with his pawns, supported by the bishop on g2, seems quite promising, Em.Lasker – Alekhine, StPetersburg1914) 9...§xe5 10.§xe5 0–0–0 11.§d3 f5 12.§g2 §f6 13.0–0. White succeeded in demonstrating the advantages of his position and went on to win the game: 13...§e4 14. b4 §e7 15.c5 c6 16.b5! The start of the final offensive: White sacrifices material and opens files for his pieces. 16...§xc5 17.§b1 §e6 18.bxc6 bxc6 19.§f4 §d7 20.§c1 §e8 21.§c7 §c8 22.§xc5 §xc5 23.§b7 §e7 24.§xc6+ §f8 25.§c1 §xc7 26.§xc7 §f7 27.§b5+– and the transfer of the bishop to the c4-square is decisive, Wiacek – Spitz, ICCF 2004.

8.§a4 0–0–0 9.b4

This is a typical idea in this variation. White launches an attack on the queenside with his king remaining in the centre.

9...§b8

Black parries the threat of b5 and protects his a7-pawn.

His position remains very difficult if he immediately regains
his pawn with 9...\(\text{\&}xe5\) 10.\(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 11.g4 d3 12.\(\text{\&}a2\) \(g6\) (Black loses his a7-pawn and his position becomes completely hopeless after 12...dxe2? 13.\(\text{\&}xe2\) \(g6\) 14.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(e6\) 15.\(\text{\&}xa7+\)--) 13.\(\text{\&}xa7\). White's queenside attack, starting with the moves \(\text{\&}a4\) and b4, has ended in complete success. 13...h5 14.\(\text{\&}a8+\) \(d7\) 15.\(\text{\&}xb7\) \(f6\) 16.\(\text{\&}b2\) \(e6\) 17.\(\text{\&}b5+\) \(e7\) 18.\(\text{\&}e5\). After this accurate move the exchange of queens is unavoidable and White should have no great problems in realising his material advantage in the endgame.

10.\(g4\) \(g6\) 11.\(\text{\&}b2\)

11...\(\text{\&}xe5\)

The move 11...\(f6\) was suggested by John Watson in his book “A Strategic Chess Opening Repertoire for White”. 12.\(\text{\&}g2\)! (it is obviously weaker for White to play 12.exf6?! \(\text{\&}xf6\) when Black’s piece activity compensates somewhat for his considerable material deficit, so the opponents agreed to a draw in the game Szabo – Chet-verik, Pecs 1996) 12...h5 (it is also very bad for Black to play 12...\(fxe5\) 13.b5\(±\), while 12...d3 leads to a hopeless position for Black after 13.exd3 \(\text{\&}xd3\) 14.0–0! \(\text{\&}xe5\) 15.\(\text{\&}d8\) 16.\(\text{\&}ad1\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 17.b5\(±\)--) 13.g5!

With this accurate move Black’s kingside counterplay has been parried. 13...\(fxg5\) 14.\(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 15.\(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 16.\(\text{\&}f3\)\(±\) and Black loses his d4-pawn, while his position remains unenviable.

12.\(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 13.\(\text{\&}g2\) \(\text{\&}e6\)

Black cannot escape suffering with 13...\(\text{\&}f6\) 14.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}f4\) 15.0–0\(±\) P.Nielsen – Rasmussen, Silkeborg 2008.

14.0–0 \(\text{\&}f6\)

15.\(\text{\&}ad1!\)

This move is slightly more precise than Watson’s recommendation of 15.\(\text{\&}fd1\)! , because in several variations the fact that White’s rook on a1 is undefended might become a significant factor.

15...\(\text{\&}d6\) 16.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}e4\) 17.\(c5\) c6

50
After 17...\textit{f}f4 White can finish off the game with a direct attack against the enemy king: 18.\textit{xe}e4 \textit{xe}e4 19.\textit{xe}e4 \textit{xe}e4 20.\textit{xd}d4\textit{xd}d4 21.c6 b6 22.\textit{a}a6!+– (it was still not too late to throw away his winning advantage with 22.\textit{xd}d4? \textit{xd}d4 23.\textit{a}a6 \textit{h}h2+!! and Black equalises with this beautiful bishop sacrifice: 24.\textit{g}g1 \textit{xc}c6). 18.\textit{xc}c4 \textit{xc}c4 19.\textit{xc}c4 \textit{xc}c7 20.\textit{xd}d4 \textit{xd}d4 21.\textit{xd}d4± Black has no compensation for the pawn whatsoever.

Conclusions

We have completed our analysis of the Albin Counter-gambit and, as could be expected, the evaluation of the arising positions is very sad for Black. In most variations, his position is very difficult and often hopeless. This is hardly surprising, since, in the present computer times, sacrificing a pawn on move two, especially with Black, is a very risky endeavour indeed. However, White cannot afford to treat this counter-gambit casually. The variations arising are very complex and it would be easy to forget the best order of moves when playing over the board.

We can highlight three main ideas for White against this defence:
1) the attack against Black’s d4-pawn with \textit{d}2-b3;
2) the attack against Black’s d4-pawn by means of the move b2-b4: White plays a3, b4, \textit{b}2, \textit{d}2-b3 (and eventually b4-b5, driving Black’s knight away from the c6-square);
3) the development of the bishop on g2 for the purpose of attacking Black’s king’s position (the b7-square). To this end, White posts his queen on a4 and sacrifices a pawn with the move b4, opening the b-file for his major pieces.

Generally speaking, White is much better in all the variations of the Albin Counter-gambit.
In this section of the book we shall analyse the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. This, together with the Queen’s Gambit Declined and the Slav Defence, is one of the oldest, and most reliable replies for Black to 1.d4. Unlike in the Queen’s Gambit Declined (2...e6), Black does not shut in his queen’s bishop, while unlike in the Slav (2...c6) he does not deprive his knight of the c6-square. Of course, this opening does have a drawback of its own: Black will not be able to hold on to his c4-pawn, so it turns out that with his second move he gives up the centre.

We have devoted Chapters 5-7 to the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. In Chapter 5 we shall analyse some rarely played lines for Black in which he replies to 3.e3 with 3...c5 or 3...e5. The more serious attention deserves to be paid to the move 3...e5, which leads to positions with an isolated queen’s pawn for White, but here Black is left with a c-pawn rather than an e-pawn, which is the case in most IQP positions arising from the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. This pawn-structure is more typical of the open games than the closed openings. Readers should therefore not be surprised that sometimes we quote from Nikita Vitiugov’s book on the French Defence, since these positions can arise by transposition from the Exchange Variation of the French.

Chapter 7 covers the main line of the Queen’s Gambit Accepted, while Chapter 6 examines Black’s attempts to avoid this. As White’s main weapon, the author has chosen the 7.dxc5 line, which brings about an endgame in which, despite the exchange of queens, White retains the initiative and Black’s defence is not at all simple.
3.e3

This move allows Black to play 3...e5; nevertheless, I consider it to be the most precise.

The point is that after 3.\texttt{f}3 Black has the interesting possibility of 3...a6. It is very difficult for White to prove any advantage now, because in many variations, although he regains his c4-pawn, almost all the queenside pawns are exchanged and it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to realise his positional advantage with pawns left only on one wing. For example: 4.e3 b5 5.a4 \texttt{b}7 6.\texttt{b}3. This is White's best chance of fighting for an opening advantage. (After 6.axb5 he fails to gain even a minimal edge, since after the many pawn exchanges on the queenside Black will be left with only a single weak pawn on c7 and if he succeeds in exchanging this with c7-c5 then White has no chances of advantage; for instance: 6...axb5 7.\texttt{x}a8 \texttt{x}a8 8.b3 e6 9.bxc4 bxc4 10.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{f}6 11.0–0 \texttt{bd}7 12.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}6 13.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{e}7 14.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{xa}3 15.\texttt{xa}3 0–0 16.\texttt{e}2 c5 17.dxc5 \texttt{xc}5= and the position is dead equal, Papin – Landa, Ulan Ude 2009.)

6...e6 7.bxc4 bxc4 8.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{f}6 9.\texttt{bd}2!? This is an interesting idea; White postpones castling for a while and plans to attack Black's bishop on b7 with his rook as quickly as possible. 9...\texttt{bd}7 10.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{a}7. The rook is awkwardly placed here (it might be safer for Black to play 10...\texttt{b}8!? Arabidze – M.Bezgodova, Thessaloniki.
2010) 11.0–0 c5 12.\(\text{b2}\). White has a slight edge here, but Black should be able to equalise gradually with precise play: 12...\(\text{e7}\) 13.dxc5 \(\text{xc5}\) 14.\(\text{d4}\) 0–0 15.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{fd7}\) 16.\(\text{fc1}\) \(\text{a8}\) 17.\(\text{a2}\) \(\text{b7}\) 18.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb7}\) 19.a5 \(\text{a8}\) 20.\(\text{a1}\) g6 21.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{c8}\) 22.h3 \(\text{d5}\)= Karjakin – Dubov, Moscow 2012.

In this chapter we shall deal with the moves A) 3...\(\text{c5}\) and B) 3...\(\text{e5}\).

The line 3...\(\text{e6}\) 4.\(\text{f3}\) c6 5.\(\text{c3}\), transposes to the Slav Defence (the variation with 3...dxc4), which will be analysed in a separate chapter.

Black should not try to protect his c4-pawn with 3...b5?!. If he insists on playing this, he might well fall into a well known opening trap, which appears in all the theoretical manuals; this volume will not make an exception: 4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5?? 6.\(\text{f3}\)+–

A) 3...\(\text{c5}\)
This move often transposes to the main lines of the Queen’s Gambit. In this chapter, we shall only analyse moves which lead to original positions.

4.\(\text{xc4}\) cxd4

5.\(\text{f3}\)!?
This is an interesting pawn sacrifice, for which White obtains good compensation.

After 5.exd4, Black can organise excellent counterplay with 5...\(\text{c7}\)+, for example: 6.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{g4}\) and since his bishop on c1 is undefended White cannot develop his knight to f3. It would be very difficult for him to prove any advantage.

5...\(\text{c7}\) 6.\(\text{b3}\)
After this move, White is committed to sacrificing a pawn.

To those who prefer to play with equal material, we can recommend 6.\(\text{b3}\)! e6 7.exd4. White has regained his pawn and we reach positions with a white isolated queen’s pawn, which are typical not only of the Queens
Gambit Accepted but also 2.c3 versus the Sicilian Defence. A possible continuation is 7...c6 8.0-0 d5 9.d3 a6 10.dxe3 e7 11.e3 0-0 12.Qac1 Qd6 13.Qfd1 Qd8 14.a3 Qd7 15.Qe4 Qxe4 16. Qxe4+, reaching a standard IQP position in which White’s piece activity more than compensates for the weakness of his d4-pawn, Avrukh – Lev, Israel 2004.

Now Black has a choice.
He can try to develop his kingside pieces as quickly as possible with 7...e6, but then his bishop will remain on c8. The resulting positions are similar to those we shall examine in the following chapter, but with the difference that Black’s queen is slightly misplaced on the c7-square; for example: 8.0-0 e7 9.Qc3 0-0 10. Qg5 Qc6 11.Qe2 Wa5 12.Qfd1 Qd8 13.Qh4 Wh5, Xu Jun – Wan, Ningbo 2011 and here White has the strong move 14.d5! exd5 15. Qxf6 Qxf6 16.Qxd5 Qf5 17.Qe1 h6 18.Wb5 Qxd5 19.Qxd5 Wb8 20.Qf4 Wg4 21.Wc4± and Black’s f7-square is very weak, while his queen on g4 is horribly misplaced.

7...Qg4. This is a very risky move for Black. His bishop is excellently placed here, but his lag in kingside development becomes more apparent. 8.0-0 e6 9.h3!? The inclusion of this move is very advantageous for White (he can also play 9.Qc3± Kovacevic – Leventic, Sibenik 2008). 9...Qxf6 (after 9...Qh5 Black’s bishop will be attacked with tempo after White advances d5 and recaptures on that square with his queen: 10.d5 exd5 11.Qc3 Qc6 12.Qxd5 Qxd5 13.Qxd5± and Black’s position is nearly hopeless owing to his catastrophic lag in development) 10. Qxf3 Qc6 11.Qc3.

(diagram)

Now, it is very risky for Black to accept the pawn sacrifice 11...Qxd4?! because after 12.Qa4+, he
loses his castling rights. 12...\(\text{\&}e7\) (his position is terrible after 12...\(\text{\&}c6\) 13.\(\text{\&}f4\) \(\text{\&}b6\) 14.\(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}c7\) 15.\(\text{\&}b5\) \(\text{\&}a5\) 16.\(\text{\&}fd1\)++) 13.\(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 14.\(\text{\&}e3\)±. Black’s position is very difficult, despite his extra pawn.

It is safer for him to play 11...\(\text{\&}b4\) but, even then, after 12.\(\text{\&}f4\) \(\text{\&}a5\) 13.\(\text{\&}ad1\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) 14.\(\text{\&}xc3\) \(\text{\&}d7\) 0–0 15.\(\text{\&}c4\) White seizes the initiative. He has two strong bishops and his hanging pawns on d4 and c4 are very strong in this position, rather than a liability.

7.\(\text{\&}xe3\)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board}
\caption{Position after 7.\(\text{\&}xe3\) \(\text{\&}f6\)}
\end{figure}

7...\(\text{\&}f6\)

After 7...e6 White gains a big advantage by redeploying his knight from f3 to c4 and eventu-
White has the advantage of the bishop pair and a lead in development as compensation for the pawn, while Black has problems castling. Nevertheless, it is not easy for White to prove an advantage.

12...\( \text{dxe}4 \) 13.\( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{exf5} \)

After 13...\( \text{xf6} \) 14.\( \text{ac1} \) 0–0 15.\( \text{c5} \), White has more than sufficient compensation for his minimal material deficit. He has two strong bishops. Black has great problems with the development of his queenside pieces and, something which is even more important, he has no good square for his queen.

14.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 15.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{g4} \)

It is bad for Black to play 17...\( \text{ge5} \) 18.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 19.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{f6} \) 20.\( \text{c7} \) 0–0 21.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{fxe5} \) 22.\( \text{fc1} \); White's rook has penetrated to the seventh rank, while Black's bishop on c8 has no moves and his extra doubled e-pawn is absolutely useless.

18.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f6} \) 19.\( \text{fe1} \) \( \text{b6} \)

This move has a long history. It was played by McDonnell against De la Bourdonnais in the year 1834.

Contemporary grandmasters who play this line include Anand, Vitiugov, Grischuk and Carlsen.

4.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{exd4} \) 5.\( \text{exd4} \)

We should remind you once again this position can also be reached from the Exchange Variation of the French Defence.
Now, Black has a choice between: B1) 5...\texttt{$\mathsf{b}4+$}, B2) 5...
\texttt{$\mathsf{f}6$}, B3) 5...
\texttt{$\mathsf{d}6$}.

B1) 5...\texttt{$\mathsf{b}4+$}
Black develops his kingside with tempo, but the position of his bishop on b4 might turn out to be disadvantageous and he might have to lose a tempo retreating it to d6 or e7.

\texttt{6.$\mathsf{c}3$ $\mathsf{f}6$}

It is bad for him to play 6...\texttt{$\mathsf{e}7+$}, since after 7.$\mathsf{ge}2$ $\mathsf{f}6$ 8. 0–0 0–0 9.$\mathsf{g}5$ $\mathsf{c}6$ 10.$\mathsf{e}1$ $\mathsf{h}6$ 11. $\mathsf{h}4+$ Black’s queen is clearly misplaced on e7, because the pin by the h4-bishop is awkward and it can also come under attack by $\mathsf{e}1$, Reynaldo Vera – Santos, Madrid 1999.

7.$\mathsf{f}3$ 0–0 8.0–0 $\mathsf{g}4$
Black exploits the fact that White has failed to play h3 and develops his bishop to an active position.

8...\texttt{$\mathsf{c}6$} 9.$\mathsf{h}3$!

This is an important prophylactic move. It is better for White not to allow the development of Black’s bishop to the g4-square. 9...h6 (after 9...$\mathsf{f}5$ 10.$\mathsf{g}5+$ he will have problems getting out of the pin) 10.$\mathsf{e}1$ $\mathsf{a}5$ 11.$\mathsf{d}3$ $\mathsf{e}6$ 12.$\mathsf{e}5$! (this move is more precise than 12.$\mathsf{f}4$ $\mathsf{d}5$ 13.$\mathsf{d}2$ $\mathsf{c}6$ 14.$\mathsf{a}3$ $\mathsf{d}6$ 15.$\mathsf{e}1$ $\mathsf{e}8+$ and in the game Eger – Shnyrev, ICCF 2010, there arose a very complicated position in which each side had pluses and minus) 12...c5 13. dxc5 $\mathsf{xc}5$ 14.$\mathsf{f}4$ $\mathsf{c}8$ 15.$\mathsf{f}3$+. Black’s knight is misplaced on the a5-square and White only needs to play $\mathsf{ad}1$ in order to have all his pieces deployed in ideal positions, Pitkaenen – Fetcu, ICCF 2009.

9.$\mathsf{h}3$ $\mathsf{h}5$
The exchange 9...\texttt{$\mathsf{xf}3$} usually leads to the exchange of the pawns on d4 and b7, after which White maintains an opening advantage, owing to his superior pawn structure and two strong bishops, for example: 10.$\mathsf{x}f3$ $\mathsf{c}6$ (10...$\mathsf{x}d4$ 11.$\mathsf{xb}7+$ Gleizerov – Badjarani, Abu Dhabi 2001) 11.$\mathsf{e}3$ $\mathsf{xd}4$ (of
course, Black cannot equalise with 11...\( \text{d}a5 \), since his knight is misplaced on the edge of the board. 12.\( \text{d}3 \text{+} \) 12.\( \text{xe}b7 \text{+} \) Granda Zuniga – Westerinen, Zaragoza 1995.

10.\( g4 \)

White obtains the better position by advancing his kingside pawns. Black has problems finding an adequate square for his light-squared bishop.

10...\( \text{g}6 \) 11.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 12.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 13.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{xc}3 \) 14.\( \text{bx}c3 \) \( \text{d}5 \), Marin – Vasilescu, Predeal 2006, 15.\( \text{e}1 \text{!} \) \( \text{f}5 \) 16.\( \text{b}f3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 17.\( \text{b}3 \text{+} \) and in this position White’s prospects are a bit better. Of course, Black can organise some counterplay, because White’s pawn-structure has been somewhat weakened.

B2) 5...\( \text{f}6 \)

This is a logical move. Black wants to complete the development of his kingside, placing his bishop on e7 and deploying his queen’s knight to b6, after which he will securely control the d5-square.

6.\( \text{b}3 \text{!} \text{?} \)

It is best for White to disrupt Black’s plan immediately. Now, in order to protect his f7-pawn, Black has to place his queen in a disadvantageous position in front of his bishop.

6...\( \text{e}7 \text{+} \) 7.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{b}4 \text{+} \)

Since Black lags in development, it is naturally in his favour to exchange queens.

It is obviously bad to play 7...\( \text{g}6 \text{?!} \) – he has no time to fianchetto his bishop. 8.\( \text{bc}3 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 9.\( \text{g}5 \) 0–0 10.0–0; the pin on the f6-knight is awkward for Black, Polovodin – Vorotnikov, Moscow 1983.

8.\( \text{bc}3 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 9.\( \text{xb}3 \) \( \text{d}6 \)

The endgame is very difficult for Black after 9...\( \text{b}4 \) 10.0–0 0–0 11.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 12.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 13.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 14.\( \text{xd}5 \) c6 15.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 16.\( \text{ad}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{g}3 \text{+} \) and Black has no compensation for the weakness of his kingside pawns, Kempinski – Wagner, Bad Wiessee 2011.

10.\( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 11.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 12.0–0–0 \( \text{a}6 \) 13.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 14.
**Chapter 5**

\[ \texttt{\textbf{c2 \textcolor{red}{b4} 15.\textcolor{red}{b1}}} \]

\[ 
\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}
\]

Once again White has the better prospects owing to the weakness of Black's kingside pawn structure. His two strong bishops are insufficient to compensate for this. In the game Badolati – Goze, ICCF 2010, White succeeded in increasing his advantage after

\[ 15.\texttt{f5 16.a3 \texttt{a6 17.d4 f4+ 18.c2 e7 19.he1+ f6 20.g3 e5 21.b4 ad8 22.e3 he8 23.f3 xd4 24.xd4 \texttt{d4+}} \]

Black's knight on a6 is clearly misplaced and White's rooks and bishop are poised to threaten Black's f5-pawn.

**B3) 5...d6**

This is a good square for the bishop; it is placed more securely here than on b4 and more actively than on e7.

\[ 6.f3 f6 7.0–0 0–0 8.h3 \]

We already know this idea; one of the main themes of this variation is the restriction of Black's queen's bishop.

\[ 8...h6 9.c3 c6 10.c2 \]

White continues with his plan to restrict the bishop. Now it is deprived of another developing square on the c8-h3 diagonal.

\[ 10...d4 \]

This move seems logical. Black wants to contest with tempo the d5-square, which is a key square in positions with an isolated queen's pawn.

After 10...a6 11.a3 Whitemaintains a slight advantage, since he has more space and the more active pieces. Black must make up his mind what to do with his bishop on c8. In the game Ulibin – M.Socko, Stockholm 2000, he tried to solve this problem immediately by preparing to deploy the
bishop to f5 with the support of the queen on c8, but this was countered with a sacrifice of the bishop which is typical in this variation: 11...d7 12.e1 c8?! 13. xh6! f5 14.d2 gxh6 15.xh6 d7 16.e4 d8 17.h5 e7 18. h4 and White's attack was very strong.

Black fails to equalise with 10...a5 11.d3 e6 12.e1 c6 13.a3 a6 14.e3 e7 15.ad1 ed5 16.c1 f4 17.a4 and in the game K.Georgiev – Stojanovic, Tivat 2011, White had a slight edge. His knight is heading for c5 and if Black prevents this with the move b6 he will have a weakness on the c6-square and the c7-pawn might also turn out to be weak.

11.b1 c6

Vitiugov, in his book on the French Defence, evaluates this position as favourable for Black. However, White can continue with a standard bishop sacrifice, creating favourable complications.

Black's position is very passive after 11.e6 12.xe6 fxe6 and White has easy play against Black's weakness on e6: 13.e1 d7 14.d2 bd5 15.d3 ad8 16.e2 f7 17.e1± Tkachev – Sulava, Gondreville 2006.

12.xh6!? gxh6 13.g6+ h8 14.xh6+ h7 14...g8? 15.e5.

15.e4 e7 16.e5

Black's defence is quite difficult here.

16...xd4

This is best. It leads almost by force to an endgame with a non-standard material balance.

It is inferior for Black to play 16...d5, because after 17.f4 White has a strong attack. In the game Witzschel – Johnston, ICCF 2011, Black was subsequently forced to give back the piece and ended up in a very difficult endgame, a pawn down. 17.f5 18. g5 xg5 19.fxg5 g6 20.d3 xg5 21.xg5 xg5 22.xg6 f6 23.g4 g7 24.f5±

17.xf7+ xf7 18.xf7 xe4 19.e1 h4 20.xh4 xh4
Chapters
ciple, two minor pieces can fight successfully against a rook plus pawns, but here, it should not be forgotten that White has three passed pawns on the kingside and if he can advance his pawn mass there, Black will be in great trouble. In the game Pierzak – Broniek, ICCF 2011, White went on to prove the advantages of his position. 22...\texttt{Wg7} 23.\texttt{h5 a5} 24.\texttt{e4 f5} 25.\texttt{e3 h6} 26.\texttt{e2 d4} 27.\texttt{e7 b6} 28.\texttt{g4 c5} 29.\texttt{e5 g6} 30.\texttt{h4 f7} 31.\texttt{g5+} and Black is virtually helpless against White’s advancing pawns.

Conclusion
In the 3...c5 complex White must sacrifice a pawn in order to fight for an advantage from the opening. He maintains an edge, because his compensation for the pawn is more than sufficient. He has the two bishops and a lead in development, while Black has problems castling. Readers should remember the manoeuvre of White’s knight in this variation – \texttt{f3-d2-c4-d6}. If Black weakens his position with the move a6, then White’s other knight will do the job – \texttt{c3-a4-b6}.

In the variation with 3...e5, there arise positions with a white isolated pawn on d4, which are also typical of the Exchange Variation of the French Defence. Black’s main problem is the development of his bishop on c8. White deprives it of the g4- and f5- squares with the moves h3 and \texttt{wc2} and if Black does succeed in playing \texttt{g4} then White harries it with the moves h3, g4, \texttt{c5} and f4. He should not forget about the typical tactical shot \texttt{xh6}.

In general, White gains an advantage in all these variations and since the positions arising have not been thoroughly analysed yet, there is plenty of scope for creative imagination and fantasy.
Chapter 6  

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 \f6 4.\xc4

Black avoids the main lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted

In this chapter we shall analyse Black's attempts to avoid the main lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. Our next chapter will be devoted to these.

4...e6

Black sometimes plays 4...g6, trying to reach a position in the spirit of the Gruenfeld Defence. White's simplest response to this variation is 5.\b3!? forcing the move 5...e6, which does not combine well with g6. 6.\f3 \g7 7.0–0 (it is also interesting for White to try 7.\a3!?, Aleksandrov – Vlassow, St Petersburg 2010, but this is unnecessary because he can obtain an advantage in more traditional ways) 7...0–0 8.\c3 \c6 (after 8...a6 9.\d1 b5 10.\e2 \b7 11.a4 c6 12.e4± Siegel – Nur, Washington 1996, Black will have difficulty achieving c6–c5, so his bishop on b7 will be misplaced) 9.\e2 b6 10.\d1 \b7 11.e4 h6 12.a3 g5 13.h3 \e7 14.\c2 \g6 15.\e3± Black has played inventively; nevertheless, White is better, since he has a powerful pawn-centre and well placed pieces, Ushenina – Romanishin, Rivne 2005.

5.\f3

Now Black can immediately diverge from the main lines with A) 5...a6, or he can do so a bit later after the move B) 5...c5.
After this, Black’s fifth move leads to original positions. He is in no hurry to play c7-c5 and tries first of all to develop his bishop on c8 to an active position.

7.\( \text{d3} \)

White wishes to exploit the drawbacks of his opponent’s 6th move. He is planning to play a4, after which Black will be forced to play b5-b4 and White’s knight will gain access to the wonderful c4-square.

7...\( \text{b7} \)

Instead 7...c5 8.a4 b4 9.e4 \( \text{b7} \) 10.\( \text{bd2} \) transposes to the main line.

8.a4 b4 9.\( \text{bd2} \) c5 10.e4

White sacrifices a pawn and seizes the initiative. His main purpose is to occupy the d6-outpost. His knight on d2 will aim for there with the support of the e5-pawn and the bishop on f4 (White’s bishop can also go to g5 with the idea of exchanging the defender of the d6-square – the dark-squared bishop

10...\( \text{cxd4} \)

This is the most principled move. Black accepts the pawn-sacrifice.

After 10...\( \text{c6} \) Black will still have to capture on d4 sooner or later. 11.e5 \( \text{d7} \) (11...\( \text{d5} \) 12.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 13.\( \text{fxd4} \) cxd4 14.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 15.a5 \( \text{a7} \) 16.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d8} \) 17.\( \text{fc1} \). Black’s position is very difficult despite the extra pawn. His queen is misplaced and he could easily lose his d-pawn; furthermore his king is also vulnerable, Mc – Henke, Email 2008.) 12.\( \text{e4} \) cxd4 13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{a5} \) 14.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{c1} \)

White has prepared the penetration of his knight to the d6-square and despite the missing pawn his position is preferable, Krivoshey – Simacek, Prievidza 2009.

11.e5 \( \text{fd7} \)

Black cannot equalise if he centralises his knight with 11...\( \text{d5} \) 12.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{c6} \) (it is weaker for him to play 12...\( \text{e7} \), since after 13.\( \text{xd4} \) White not only regains
his pawn but also opens a path for his queen to the g4-square. 13...0-0 14.\textit{\textbullet}g4± Ionov – Feoktistov, St Petersburg 1999.) 13. \textit{\textbullet}g5 \textit{\textbullet}c7 14.\textit{\textbullet}e1?!\textit{\textbullet}. This is the most reliable move because now White's e5-pawn is out of danger, while Black's king is in serious danger, since there is nowhere safe for it to shelter (14.\textit{\textbullet}h5 is also playable, preserving a slight edge after 14...g6 15.\textit{\textbullet}h3± Navara – Tazbir, Karpacz 2008).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{Position after 13...0-0}
\end{figure}

12.\textit{\textbullet}c4

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image2.png}
\caption{Position after 12.\textit{\textbullet}c4}
\end{figure}

12...\textit{\textbullet}c6

Here Black could try the interesting move 12...\textit{\textbullet}c5?! and if 13. \textit{\textbullet}g5 Black should follow John Watson's suggestion of 13...\textit{\textbullet}xf3! (it is obviously bad for Black to play 13...\textit{\textbullet}d5? in view of 14.\textit{\textbullet}b6± Neubauer – Trombik, Orlova 2009) 14.\textit{\textbullet}xf3 \textit{\textbullet}d5 15.\textit{\textbullet}xd5 exd5 16.\textit{\textbullet}b6 \textit{\textbullet}xd3 17.\textit{\textbullet}xa8 \textit{\textbullet}c6 18. \textit{\textbullet}b6 \textit{\textbullet}cxe5 19.b3± and although White retains an edge in this endgame, Black has good compensation for the sacrificed exchange and the ensuing struggle will be complicated for both sides.

13.\textit{\textbullet}g5 \textit{\textbullet}b8

After 13...\textit{\textbullet}c7 White gains an edge either with 14.\textit{\textbullet}f4± or 14. \textit{\textbullet}c1±

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image3.png}
\caption{Position after 13.\textit{\textbullet}g5 \textit{\textbullet}b8}
\end{figure}

14.\textit{\textbullet}c1±

Once again White's compensation for the pawn is beyond doubt, but after Black's mistake 14...h6?!, Marches Rios – Ventura Bolet, Mollet del Valles 2011, 15.\textit{\textbullet}f4!± White's advantage increases considerably thanks to his already familiar threat to penetrate with his knight to the d6-square.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image4.png}
\caption{Position after 15.\textit{\textbullet}f4!±}
\end{figure}

B) 5...c5 6.0–0
Chapter 6

In this position Black's most popular move is 6...a6 (Chapter 7), but before we begin to analyse this we shall deal with two other possibilities, which are less popular but also deserve attention. These are B1) 6...cxd4 and B2) 6...Cc6.

B1) 6...cxd4

This is not a very popular move and it can be played only by great fans of fighting against an isolated pawn. The defects of this move are obvious. After the removal of White's pawn on e3, his bishop on cl has an excellent range of action. Therefore nowadays Black, as a rule, does not present his opponent with this possibility immediately. Nevertheless, this move was played more than a hundred years ago and even in contemporary grandmaster tournaments is tried once in a while.

7.exd4 Cc6

Black will have to develop his knight to this square sooner or later, because an attempt to use the knight to increase his control over the d5-square by means of Cb8-d7-b6-d5 might end in disaster. 7...Ce7 8.Cc3 0-0 9.Ce1 Cb7 10.Cb3 Cb6 11.Ce5 Cd7 (it is possible that Black's best move here is 11... Cb5, but even then after 12.Cf3 White maintains powerful pressure and Black has problems with the development of his c8-bishop) 12.Ce3! This is White's most precise move. He transfers his took to the g3-square for a direct attack against the enemy king. 12...Cc6, Gavrilov - Dragomarezkij, Moscow 1995, 13. Cg3! Cc8 14.Cc2. Black is almost helpless against White's kingside attack, for example: 14...Cbd5 15. Cg5 Cc8 16.Cd3. Black's position has suddenly become hopeless and he must give up the exchange here with 16...g6 17.Ch6+, because after 16...Cb4?, he will be mated: 17.Cxf6 Cxd3 18.Cxg7+ Cg8 19.Cf6#

8.Cc3 Ce7 9.Ce1 0-0 10.a3

10...b6

Black is preparing to fianchetto his bishop.

If he tries to carry out an extended fianchetto with 10...a6, then White should counter this with the prophylactic move 11. Ca2!
After the careless move 11...b5?! White continues with a breakthrough in the centre – 12. d5! and attacks the f7-square. 12...exd5 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{x}}}}\)xd5 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{x}}}}\)xd5 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{x}}}}\)xd5 a6 15.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)h5 d6 16.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)e7 17.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)e7 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)xd5 18.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{f}}}}\)g5 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)f6 19.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)xg6 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)xg6 20.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)xf7 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)xf7 21.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{f}}}}\)ad1 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d1 22. \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)c6 23.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)d6 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)e8 24.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{a}}}}\)a6 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)f8 25.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)xf7 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{k}}}}\)xf7 26.b3 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{i}}}}\)e7 27. a4 bxa4 28.bxa4+– Gurgenidze – Anikaev, Kislovodsk 1972. The resulting endgame is hopeless for Black. His minor pieces cannot stop White’s a-pawn. The most that Black can do is to win the enemy a4-pawn with the help of his king, bishop and knight, but meanwhile he will lose all his kingside pawns.

After 11...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d6 White’s simplest response would be to prevent the threat of \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d8 with the move 12.g3! In the game Gelfand – Drozdkovskij, Odessa 2007, Black overlooked his opponent’s threat and lost the exchange: 12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d8? 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{f}}}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d7 14.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)a4+–

11...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d7. This is Black’s most solid move. After 12.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{f}}}}\)f4 \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)c8 13. \(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)c1± Gulko – El Taher, Manila 1990 White has a favourable isolated pawn position. Black is allmost helpless against the pawn-break d4-d5, because his knight is unable to control this square, since the pawn on a3 covers the b4-square while his bishop occupies the e7-square.

11.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d3!

This is White’s most principled move.

Naturally, he can also gain an edge with 11.d5!?+, but there is no need for him to provoke an immediate crisis in this position. He can just patiently improve the placement of his pieces, leaving the threat of the pawn-break d4-d5 permanently hanging over Black’s head.

11...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{b}}}}\)b7 12.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{g}}}}\)g5

12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{c}}}}\)c8

This is Black’s most popular reply.

An attempt by Black to prevent the pawn-break d4-d5 radically leads to a very difficult position for him. 12...\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{d}}}}\)d5 13.\(\text{\textit{\texttt{\textsc{x}}}}\)xd5

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\( \text{xg5} \) (it is possible that his best policy is to stick to passive defence: 13...exd5 14.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \) 15.\( \text{e3} \) f6 16.\( \text{ae1} \) – his bishop on b7 is restricted by his own pawn, so he is condemned to a passive and prospectless defence, Degraeve – Hauchard, Marseille 2001) 14.\( \text{e4} \) h6 15.d5 exd5 16.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{e8} \) 17.\( \text{ad1} \) ± and White's piece centralisation is becoming threatening, Klima – Chernyshova, Olo­mouc 2012.

Black weakens his king's shelter with the line: 12...h6 13.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{d6} \) 14.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c8} \) (the attempt to capture the enemy h2-pawn ended badly for Black in the gameJa­kovenko – Gaprindashvili, War­saw 2005: 14...\( \text{e7} \) 15.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 16.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{hx2} \) 17.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 18.\( \text{f5} \) 19.\( \text{g3} \) ± and Black's bishop on h2 was trapped, just like Fischer's bishop in his famous game against Spassky) 15.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{c6} \) 16.d5 exd5 17.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 18.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{e7} \) 19.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 20.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{c3} \) ±. Black's position is very difficult. He has great problems getting out of the pin along the d-file and White’s bishop exerts powerful pressure against the g7-square, Gulko – Kacheishvili, ICC 2010.

I will also mention that Black's attempt to capture the d4-pawn may lead to the loss of a piece. 12...\( \text{a5} \)?! 13.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 14.\( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xd4} \)? 15.b4 \( \text{ac8} \) 16.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e5} \) 17.\( \text{f4} \)±

13.\( \text{ad1} \)
This is White's final preparation.

13...\( \text{d5} \)
13...\( \text{e8} \) 14.h4!? (it also worth considering an energetic break in the centre: 14.\( \text{xf6} \)! \( \text{xf6} \) 15.d5†) 14...\( \text{a5} \) (after 14...\( \text{g6} \)? 15.d5± Black's position crumbles, Ribli – Wells, Szeged 1997; possibly his best defensive plan is to try to blockade White’s d4-pawn with 14...\( \text{d5} \) 15.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 16.\( \text{a6} \) \( \text{b7} \) 17.\( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \), Olafsson – Van der Sterren, Amsterdam 2011, 18.\( \text{b5} \)± and White maintains the initiative.

14.\( \text{xd5} \)\( \text{xd5} \)
Now it is once again safer for Black to play 14...exd5, acquiescing to a slightly worse but solid position: 15.\( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \)± Vasquez Schroder – Bauer, ICC 2003.

15.\( \text{a2} \)
It is also possible for Whiteto transfer his bishop to another diagonal. 15.\( \text{e4} \) f5. This move is almost forced; however, now
Black’s e6-pawn is very weak. 16. \( \text{d} \times \text{d} 5 \) \( \text{w} \times \text{d} 5 \) 17.\( \text{f} 3 \) ± Conquest – Kononenko, Granada 2006.

15...\( \text{f} 6 \)

16.\( \text{d} 5 \)!

Of course not 16.\( \text{e} 4 \)?!= and White’s knight loses control over the key square in this type of position – \( \text{d} 5 \), Frank – Skrbin, Pula 2011.

16...\( \text{ex} \text{d} 5 \) 17.\( \text{xd} 5 \) \( \text{g} 6 \) (17...\( \text{xb} 2 \) can be answered strongly with 18.\( \text{d} 2 \) \( \text{f} 6 \) 19.\( \text{f} 5 \)!) 18.\( \text{b} 1 \)± Black cannot avoid the loss of his queen for rook and minor piece, after which his chances of building a fortress are only minimal.

B2) 6...\( \text{c} 6 \)

This move is not very logical. There arises a mixture between the variations 6...\( \text{c} 6 \) and 6...\( \text{a} 6 \).

B2a) 7...\( \text{a} 6 \)

In recent tournament practice this move has been almost completely replaced by 6...\( \text{a} 6 \); nevertheless, it is quite logical. Black is in no hurry to exchange on \( \text{d} 4 \) and simply continues with his development.

This move was played by such great players of the past as \( \text{E} \). Lasker, Tarrasch and Rubinstein. Nowadays it can be often seen in the games of Korchnoi and some younger grandmasters.

7.\( \text{e} 2 \)

White plans to protect his pawn on \( \text{d} 4 \) by placing his rook behind it.

Now Black’s main reply here is B2b) 7...\( \text{xd} 4 \) but before we begin its analysis we shall examine B2a) 7...\( \text{a} 6 \).

8.\( \text{c} 3 \) \( \text{b} 5 \) 9.\( \text{b} 3 \)
Black cannot be happy to go in for a position with a white isolated queen's pawn, because he lags in development and is unable to prevent White's pawn-break d4-d5. 9...cxd4 10.\textit{d1} \textit{e7} (after 10...\textit{a5} 11.\textit{x}d4 \textit{c}7 12.e4 \textit{b}7 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{xb}3 14.axb3 \textit{d}6 15.\textit{xf}6 gxf6 16.\textit{h}5+, Black has the advantage of the bishop pair, but his king is terribly misplaced in the centre, Yakovich - Savchenko, Maikop 1998) 11.exd4

\textbf{9...\textit{b}7}

Now it is bad for Black to play 11...\textit{b}4 because of 12.\textit{e}5! \textit{bd}5 (in the variation 12...0-0?? Black loses a piece owing to the vulnerability of the c6-square: 13.a3 \textit{bd}5 14.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 15.\textit{c}6 \textit{e}8 16.\textit{xd}5+-- Horvath - Kallai, Hungary 1992) 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 14.a4! b4 15.a5+. Black is unable to castle, so after the bishop check on a4 he will be forced to leave his king in the centre.

His position would not be any better after 11...\textit{a}5, because White is well prepared for the pawn-break in the centre: 12.d5! \textit{xb}3 13.dxe6 \textit{xa}1 14.\textit{xf}7+ \textit{xf}7 15.\textit{e}5+ \textit{g}8 16.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8, Khenkin - Gyimesi, Koszalin 1999, 17.\textit{f}3! \textit{a}7 18.\textit{g}5+-. Black has a material advantage but his position is completely hopeless, because of the terrible misplacement of his knight on a1 androok on h8.

\textbf{10.\textit{d}1}

\textbf{10...\textit{a}5!}

This is best. Black wishes to remove his opponent's powerful bishop.

As early as the first half of the twentieth century it was well known that White could obtain an advantage against the move 10...\textit{wb}6 with 11.d5 exd5 12.e4! d4 (12...dxe4? 13.\textit{xe}4+-- Reshevsky
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c5 3.d3 c5 4.e4 xc4 cd 5.e3 c5 6.0-0

- Vidmar, Nottingham 1936) 13. e5±

It is preferable for Black to continue with 11... a5, although even then after 12.e4± White dominates the centre and maintains the advantage, Zhao – Grande Zuniga, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

The move 10... c7 can be answered in similar fashion to 10... b6: 11.d5 exd5 12.e4! d4 (Black loses immediately after 12... dxe4 13.bxc4 bxc4 14.e5 a5+ Wxe7 15. b4+, since positions with such a lag in development are just impossible to save, Kotov – O’Kelly de Galway, Groningen 1946) 13. d5 d8 14.b4 e8 15.a4 g4 Drozdovskij – J.Ivanov, Balaguer 2010.

11.e4 b3 12.axb3 cxd4 13.e5±

White has a slight edge, based on his lead in development.

13... b6

It is bad for Black to play 13... b8, Tejas – Murali Krishnan, Chennai 2010, since he loses a pawn after 14.dxb5±. White's knight is taboo: 14... axb5? 15. xb5+ e7 16. e3±

14.e5 d5 15.e4 e7 16. g4 f8 17.g5 Black’s king has lost its castling rights, while White’s pieces are very active, so despite his pawn-weaknesses and Black’s two bishops, White's position is preferable, Rajmaekers – Silva, Email 2010.

B2b) 7.cxd4

This move is no doubt more logical than 7.a6. Black immediately creates a position with an isolated pawn.

8.d1 e7 9.exd4 0–0

Korchnoi tried in several games to fight for the initiative prior to castling. 9... a5 10.b5+ d7 11.e5 (another interesting try is 11.xd7+ xd7 12.e5 c7 13.c3 0–0 14.f4 b6 15.d6! and White seizes the initiative with this standard pawn-break,
Polak – Martinez Martin, Zaragoza 2001) 11...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 (11...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 12.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c3 0-0 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f3± and White’s pieces are much more active and his weakness on d4 is almost irrelevant, Kramnik – Korchnoi, Las Vegas 1999) 12.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c3 0-0 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}c8 14.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g5 h6 (14...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}ac1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 16.\texttt{\textasciitilde}b1 g6 17.h4!? – after this energetic move, White maintains the initiative. It is weaker for him to play 17.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d7= and Black equalises by exchanging pieces, Bauer – Korchnoi, Istanbul 2000) 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f4. In the game Nyback – Bilic, Plovdiv 2010, White succeeded in breaking in the centre, obtaining a clear advantage after 15...\texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 16.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xc6 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xc6 17.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xd5 18.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e4 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d7 19.d5 exd5 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h5±

10.\texttt{\textasciitilde}c3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}a5

This move is forced but very good. It is the only way for Black to develop his bishop on c8 to an active position.

An attempt to fight for the d5-square with his knight leads to a difficult position for Black, because of the already familiar transfer of White’s rook to the g3-square. 10...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b4 11.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d7 (11...\texttt{\textasciitilde}bd5 12.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d7 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g3±) 12.a3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}bd5 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}c8 14.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}xc3 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}bxc3 g6 16.h4 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 17.h5→ and White had a very powerful attack in the game, Tkachiev – Cvitan, Cannes 2006.

11.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3b6

\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5!?

This move was played for the first time by Suat Atalik and was recommended by Boris Avrukh in his book. It has been played only rarely in tournament practice, but White’s hope of gaining an advantage in this position are currently based on it, because the standard attack beginning with the move 12.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g5 surprisingly leads only to a perpetual check, for example: 12...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b7 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}ac1 \texttt{\textasciitilde}c8 14.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}d5 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h5 g6 16.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xc6 fxg6 17.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xg6 hgx6 18.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g6+ \texttt{\textasciitilde}h8 19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}d3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}g5 20.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h3+ \texttt{\textasciitilde}h4 21.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h6+ \texttt{\textasciitilde}g8 22.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g6+ and White cannot avoid the perpetual check, Kramnik – Lautier, Monte Carlo 1999.

12...\texttt{\textasciitilde}b7

In practice Black has also tried 12...\texttt{\textasciitilde}c6 13.\texttt{\textasciitilde}g3 \texttt{\textasciitilde}h5 14.\texttt{\textasciitilde}h3 g6 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e5 (an interesting try for White is 15.\texttt{\textasciitilde}e4?) 15...\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 16.\texttt{\textasciitilde}xe5 \texttt{\textasciitilde}c7 17.g4 \texttt{\textasciitilde}g7 18.\texttt{\textasciitilde}f4 \texttt{\textasciitilde}b7 19.\texttt{\textasciitilde}ac1± – White retains a slight edge, thanks to the misplacement of Black’s knight on g7. Subse-
quently in the game Legky – Raetsky, Sautron 2001, Black failed to withstand the pressure and after 19...f5? his position was in ruins: 20.gxf5 Δxf5 21.Δb5+-

It might be interesting for Black to try here 12...Δd6 13.Δg5 Δb7 14.Δe5

Now White has the better prospects after 14...Δc6 15.Δh4 Δe7 16.Δg5= Chatalbashev – Legky, Bourbon Lancy 1998, or 14...g6 15.Δg3 Δc8, Halkias – Lopez Martinez, Oropesa del Mar 1998, 16.Δg5=

It is possible that Black's best line here is: 14...Δd5 15.Δg3 f5 16.Δh6, after which in the game Iskusnyh – Vaulin, Novgorod 1999, White did not manage to transform the pressure of his pieces into anything substantial: 16...Δe7 17.Δg5 Δe8 18.Δe1 Δc8 19.Δac1 Δxc3 20.bxc3 Δd5 21.Δf4 b5 22.a4 a6 23.axb5 axb5 24.Δa1 Δc4 25.Δxc4 bxc4 26.Δa6 Δxe5 27.Δxe5 Δf7 28.Δxa1 Δa8 29.Δxa8, draw.) 16...Δe7 17.h4 Δc8 18.Δac1 Δxc3 19.bxc3 Δxg5 20.hxg5 Δd6 21.Δe1± and White has the advantage, because his pieces are harmoniously placed and Black's e-pawn is very weak.

13.Δg3 g6 14.Δh6 Δe8 15.Δe5 Δh5 16.Δe3= – The placement of Black's knights at the edge of the board would have horrified Tarrasch. White's chances are clearly preferable, Drozdovskij – Bogdanovich, Odessa 2006.

Conclusion

We have analysed Black's attempts to avoid the main line. The variations discussed in this chapter are not often played in contemporary tournament practice, but White's route to an advantage is quite difficult, because in many variations Black has easy play against his opponent's isolated d4-pawn. In the line with 6...Δc6 followed by 7...cxd4, in order to help gain the advantage White's queen must perform miracles by moving from the e2-square to the kingside, along the route e5-g5-h4.
Chapter 7
1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 ∆f6 4.∆xc4 e6 5.∆f3 c5 6.0–0 a6

Queen’s Gambit Accepted – the mainline

We begin our analysis of the main line of the Queen’s Gambit Accepted.

The move 6...a6 is the one encountered most often in the games of contemporary players. At the start of the twentieth century it was played by Schlechter and Janowski and later on by Reshevsky. The move gained popularity and it was played in the World Championship matches by Petrosian and Kasparov. Nowadays, many contemporary grandmasters employ it, including the World Champion Anand. GM Sergey Rublevsky has contributed greatly to the popularity of this variation, since the Queen’s Gambit Accepted has been his basic opening weapon against 1.d4 for many years.

Black does not allow White’s bishop to go to g5, which would have been possible after the exchange on d4, and instead he makes a useful move, with the plan of seizing space on the queenside with b7-b5. It is very difficult for White to obtain even a minimal edge here. His task is complicated by the fact that there is a wide variety of plans to choose from and this is a difficult problem to solve. In general, this choice depends mostly on the style of the player with the white pieces. We do not have enough space to cover all the possibilities, so we have decided to recommend just one line, which according in our opinion is the most promising one for White.

7.dxc5!? This move became popular after it was used by Kramnik in his match for the World Championship against Kasparov in 2000. Of course, White usually avoids such early exchanges in the opening, since he is fighting for the advan-
tage and the exchange of queens is usually in Black's favour. This is a special case however, because despite the fact that the queens disappear from the board the position remains very complicated and in the ensuing multi-piece endgame White often manages to use his extra tempo to seize the initiative.

The move 7.\texttt{b3}!?, which was considered to be White's main weapon in his fight for an opening advantage has amassed an enormous amount of theoretical material and it would be a great problem for White to keep up with all the latest theoretical novelties, especially since Black has a great number of possibilities.

For example, he may try to create complications with 7...\texttt{b5}, although then White can maintain the initiative if he plays precisely: 8.\texttt{a4} \texttt{b4} 9.e4 \texttt{b710.e5 d4} 11.\texttt{c4} \texttt{dxc4} 12.\texttt{dxc5} 15.\texttt{f5} \texttt{d3} 16.\texttt{f6} \texttt{e8} 17.\texttt{f7} \texttt{g6} 18.\texttt{f8} \texttt{xf8} 19.\texttt{xf8} \texttt{xf8} 20.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc4} and it was White who had to think about equalising.

After 7.dxc5, Black has a choice between two possibilities. He can preserve the right to castle with A) 7...\texttt{xd1}, or else play B) 7...\texttt{xc5}, acquiescing to the fact that his king will remain in the centre, which in an endgame might even be quite desirable.
A) 7...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}1 8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}1 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}5

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

9.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}2}

White's bishop on c4 is not stable and it is best to retreat it immediately. This move is always going to be useful to White and it is best not postpone it. His knight will be very well placed on the c4-square which it will reach by the route b1-d2-c4.

We should also mention the fact that one of the reasons for the popularity of the move 7.dxc5 is that such positions are very difficult to analyse, even with a computer, since the most important element is the understanding of chess and not the power of the PC or the analysis engine used. As an illustration, I shall quote Kramnik's victory against Deep Fritz. Of course, computers were not as strong back in the year 2002, but this example still shows that mere ability to calculate variations is completely inadequate in positions of this type: 9.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}1} b5 10.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}2} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}7} 11.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}d}2 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}d}7 12.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}8} 13.a4 b4 14.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}d}2 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}5} 15.f3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}6} 16.g3 e5 17.e4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}6} 18.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}7} 19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}3} a5 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}5 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}5 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}7} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}6}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}8} 23.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}2} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}6 24.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}61 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} 25.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash a}d}1 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}c}8 26. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} 27.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}6} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4}+ 28.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}1} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}3}+ 29.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}3 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}3 30.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4} 31.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}4}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}6} 32.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}6 33. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}e}7 34.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}c}6 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}7} 35.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} f6 36.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}2} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}6} 37.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}5}+ \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}6} 38. \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}3} g6 39.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4}+. Black's rook is very passive and his a5-pawn is weak, Kramnik – Comp Deep Fritz, Manama 2002. White succeeded in converting his positional advantage into the full point.

9...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}d}7

This is Black's most flexible and most popular move.

As a rule, he refrains from the pawn-advance b7-b5 in this position, since this provides White with the possibility of attacking Black's queenside pawns with the "Ruy Lopez" move a2-a4, for example: 9...b5 10.a4 bxa4 11.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}d}7 12.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}a}4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} 13.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}2} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}7} 14.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}4} 0-0 15.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash a}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}5} 16.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} 17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}2} (17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d}5 is also play-
able, B.Socko – Rutkowski, Us­
tron 2007) 17...\[ce4 18.\[xd5
\[xd5 19.\[e1+. White has ensured
the safety of his bishops from the
attacks of Black’s knights and is
ready to attack the enemy a6-
pawn. Black is faced with a diffi­
cult defence, with no chance of
seizing the initiative.

After 9...b6, White easily gains
a slight edge. To achieve this, he
just needs to play \[c3 and \[a4.
He ends up with the advantage of
the bishop pair, since Black’s
bishop cannot retreat from the
c5-square, because it must pro­
ect the b6-pawn. 10.\[c3 \[bd7
11.b3 \[b7 12.\[b2 0–0 13.\[a4
\[fd8 14.\[xc5 \[xc5 15.\[e5+. White
has the two bishops and
can torture his opponent for a
long time in this endgame, Frid­
We shall encounter endgames of
this type very often in this chap­
ter.

9...0–0?! Black delays com­
mittting his b8-knight. 10.\[bd2
\[d8 11.\[e5
\[d6 14.\[c4 \[c7 15.\[f3 \[a7 16.e4
(this move is more energetic than
16.\[d2 \[b7 17.\[xb7 and in the
game Alekseev – Ivanchuk, Sochi
2007, the opponents agreed to a
draw.) 16...\[b7 17.\[e3 \[bd7 18.
\[c1+. White is better in this posi­
tion, thanks to the misplacement
of Black’s rook on a7.

11...\[e7 12.\[ec4 \[c6 (after
12...\[bd7 White gains the advan­
tage with the plan of restricting
the enemy bishop with f3 and e4:
13.\[b3 b6 14.\[f3 a5 15.e4 \[a6
16.\[e3 a4 17.\[d4++; White has a
slight but stable advantage here
and Black’s next careless move
17...\[ac8? lost a pawn for him af­
er 18.\[xb6! \[xb6 19.\[xa6+–
Doettling – Dlugy, ICC 2006)
13.\[f3 \[d7 14.\[b3 \[e8 15.\[d2
\[ac8 16.\[b6 \[c7 17.\[ac1+. The
pressure of White’s pieces on the
c-file spells difficulties for Black
in the future, Ki.Georgiev –
Rublevsky, Budva 2004.

9...\[c6. The knight does not
control the b6-square now. 10.
\[bd2.

11...b6 12.\[b3 \[xd1+ 13.\[xd1
Black must make a choice: to
leave his king in the centre after
10...\$e7, which is logical in the endgame, or to castle.

10...\$e7 11.b3 \$d7 (after 11...\$d8 12.\$b2 \$b6 13.\$g5 \$f8 14.\$c4± White's pieces are much more actively placed, S.Savchenko – Luch, Leiden 2009; if 11...b6 White can gain an overwhelming advantage with a standard manoeuvre which is typical of many positions in this variation, consisting of transferring his knight to the d3-square: 12.\$e1 \$d5 13.\$b2 \$f6 14.\$e4 \$b4 15.\$d3± Malaniuk – Carstensen, Krakow 2005; having deployed his knights on e4 and d3, White wants to deprive Black's bishop on b4 of possible squares to retreat to and, after forcing its exchange, not only will White have the two bishops, but his extra bishop will be very well placed on the a3-f8 diagonal) 12.\$b2 \$hc8 13.\$g5 \$b4 14.\$de4 \$xe4 15.\$xe4 \$f6 16.\$f3 \$ab8 17.\$xc5 \$xc5 18.\$a3 a5 19.\$d4 \$b5 20.\$ad1 \$e8 21.\$c1± Kveinys – Moen, Oslo 2009. Once again, just as in our previous comments, Black has great difficulties in neutralising his opponent's pressure along the a3-f8 diagonal. In these two variations you can see that if White's bishop occupies the a3-sqare, the position of Black's king on e7 becomes insecure.

10...0–0. In the endgame, as a rule, you should try to place your king close to the centre, but we have already noticed this is not always acceptable to Black. 11.a3.

With this move White prepares b2-b4, after which he will develop his bishop on b2. Black will be forced to play b5 at some point and there will arise a position with a symmetrical pawn structure, but White will have a slight edge, since he leads in development. 11...\$d8 12.b4 \$e7 13.\$b2 b5 14.\$b3 \$b7 15.\$fd4 \$xd4 16.\$xd4 \$d5 17.\$a5 \$ac8 18.f3 \$d7 19.e4 \$a8 20.\$ac1± Shimanov – Svensson, Malmo 2011. White's pieces are very active, while Black's bishop on a8 is misplaced, because it is restricted by his opponent's pawn on e4. This idea for White of restricting the mobility of Black's light-squared bishop and f6-knight should be understood and memorized, since it is regularly encountered in this variation.

10.\$bd2

This is White's most popular move. He wants to transfer his knight to the c4-square.

He has an interesting alternative here in 10.\$d4!? and with the
help of this move Nikita Vitiugov outplayed the renowned expert in this variation for Black – Sergey Rublevsky. 10...0–0 11.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 12.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}7\) 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 14.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{ab}8\) 15.\(\text{d}c\) \(\text{fd}8\) 16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 17.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 18.\(\text{x}d8\) \(\text{x}d8\) 19.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 20.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 21.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 22.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 23.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{a}7\) 24.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{axb}5\) 25.\(\text{x}b5\) \(\text{c}5\) 26.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 27.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{e}8\) 28.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{xc}7\) 29.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 30.\(\text{xc}1\) \(\text{xb}6\) 31.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{d}7\) 32.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{d}6\) 33.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{c}5\) 34.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}5\) 35.\(\text{d}d1\) \(\text{c}5\) 36.\(\text{d}d6\) \(\text{d}5\) 37.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{b}6\) 38.\(\text{b}1\) 1–0 Vitiugov – Rublevsky, Olginka 2011. No doubt the move 10.\(\text{d}4\) deserves very serious attention, but so far there is too little practical material to give a definite evaluation of it.

10...\(\text{b}6\)

Black cannot equalise with 10...0–0 11.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}4\) 12.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{ec}5\) 14.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{Chuchelov – Muhren, Netherlands 2011}\). White continued with the standard plan, based on the transfer of his knight to the c4-square and the pawn advances e4 and f3. Black’s defence will be very difficult, because he has problems with the development of his queenside pieces. The point is that he cannot play b7–b5, since this will irrevocably weaken the c6-square.

11.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{d}4\)  

(diagram)

12...\(\text{d}5\)

Black fails to reach equality after 12...0–0 13.\(\text{b}3\), for example: 13...\(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{f}3\) a5 15.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{a}6\) (the seemingly active move 15...a4 leads only to the appearance of new pawn weaknesses in Black’s camp: 16.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{c}5\) 17.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{fd}8\) 18.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{f}8\) 19.\(\text{b}5\) – his queenside pawns are very weak, Bareev – Shirov, New Delhi/Teheran 2000) 16.\(\text{e}3\) a4 17.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{fc}8\) 18.\(\text{ac}1\). White’s pieces and pawns have occupied the ideal squares for this variation and Black is doomed to a long and difficult defence, Alekseev – Wang Hao, Nizhnij Novgorod 2007.

13.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 14.\(\text{d}2\) 0–0 15.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{fc}8\) 16.\(\text{ac}1\) \(\text{e}5\) 17.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{e}3\)
18...a5

After 18...ab8 White gains a clear advantage with 19.\textit{f}2 h6, N.Maiorov – Amanbaev, Saratov 2006, and now 20.\textit{g}3!? xc4 21.\textit{xc}4 b5 22.\textit{e}2 d8 23.\textit{f}1 b6 24.\textit{xd}6 – He has two powerful bishops, while Black's a6-pawn might prove to be a weakness.

19.\textit{d}6 xc1 20.\textit{xc}1 c5

Black has also tried in practice 20...h6 21.\textit{b}5 d8 22.\textit{f}5 f8 23.a3 c8 24.\textit{d}3 when White has a slight but stable advantage, because his pieces are much more active, while Black's b6-pawn is very weak, Sakaev – Stevic, Budva 2009.

21.\textit{b}5 c8 22.\textit{c}3 f8 23.\textit{f}2 d8 24.\textit{xd}8+ x\textit{d}8 25.b3 f7 26.d3 e7 27.\textit{b}2 f5

The ensuing endgame is definitely in White's favour. He can saddle Black with an isolated pawn on e5 after 28.exf5!?

It is also good for White to play 28.\textit{c}4 fxe4 29.fxe4 \textit{xc}4 30.\textit{xc}4 Jakovenko – Rublevsky, Poikovsky 2010 reaching a classical endgame with a “bad” bishop for Black, since almost all his pawns are placed on squares of the same colour as the bishop.

28...\textit{xf}5 29.\textit{b}5 White maintains an advantage, thanks to his superior pawn structure (Black's b6 and e5-pawns are weak). He is faced with a long and passive defence. Some players might say that here, or after 28.\textit{c}4, White's advantage might well prove insufficient for victory. This may well be true, but let us look at this position from Black's point of view. He needs to learn almost 30 moves of theory just to have the chance of fighting for a draw in an inferior endgame, with no prospects of creating any counterplay. I believe that you will not find many players willing to do this.

B) 7...\textit{xc}5

Now Black loses his castling rights, but in the endgame this is generally not serious. This move has been often played lately by Ruslan Ponomariov.
8.\texttt{\textdollar}xd8+ 9.\texttt{\textdollar}e5
This might not be White’s most popular move, but nevertheless it is very interesting. He exploits the fact that after capturing on d8, Black’s f7-pawn has been left unguarded, so White gains a tempo for transferring his knight to the c4-square.
9...\texttt{\textdollar}e7 10.\texttt{\textdollar}e2

We are already familiar with this retreat of the bishop from the previous variation, since it frees the c4-square for the knight.
Black has two possibilities: he can first develop his bishop with \textbf{B1) 10...\texttt{\textdollar}d7} or bring his knight into play with \textbf{B2) 10...\texttt{\textdollar}bd7}.

\textbf{B1) 10...\texttt{\textdollar}d7}
With this move Black is mostly trying to exchange pieces. Now he wants to place his bishop on b5.
11.\texttt{c3}!? 
White prevents Black’s plan.

After 11.\texttt{f3} two pairs of minor pieces disappear from the board and although Black ends up with a weak pawn on c6, White’s advantage is rather symbolic. The arising position can be won only against a much weaker opponent, as happened in the game L’Ami – Swinkels, Amsterdam 2012: 11.\texttt{c6} 12.\texttt{x}x\texttt{c}6+ \texttt{x}x\texttt{c}6 13.\texttt{x}x\texttt{c}6 \texttt{bxc}6 14.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}4 15.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{hb}8 16.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{a}5 17.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{a}6 18.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{x}c3 19.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{f}6 20.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}4 21.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{xd}2 22.\texttt{xd}2 \texttt{a}4 23.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{ab}6 24.\texttt{cc}2 \texttt{f}5 25.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}5 26.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{b}4 27.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{b}3 28.\texttt{c}1. White has accomplished the standard transfer of his king to the c1-square in order to protect his weak pawn on b2. The pressure of Black’s rooks on the b-file is neutralised after this. 28...\texttt{b}5 29.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{a}5 30.e4!± and in the endgame with four rooks White maintains a stable advantage, thanks to his superior pawn structure. He went on to turn this into the full point.

\textbf{11...\texttt{c}8}

As well as this move, Black has tried 11...\texttt{d}8 12.b3. Although it is an achievement to gain the advantage of the two bishops White
should not capture on d7 until Black's knight is developed to the c6-square. 12...c6 13.xd7. Now is the right moment! 13...xd7 14. ed1 xd1+ 15.xd1 ed8 16.e2 e5 17.a4 b4 18.a3 d6 19.b2 c8 20.c3 g5 21.c1 c7 22.f1 h6 23.h3 fd7 24.e4 xc1+ 25. xc1 c5 26.xc5 xc5 27.b2 f6 28.e1=. Black is faced with a very difficult defence in this endgame, because White's two bishops are much stronger than Black's bishop and knight, Van Wely – N.Guliyev, Ajaccio 2007.

11...c6 12.xd7 xd7 13.b3 hd8 14.b2 f8 15.fd1 e7 16. a4 ab8 17.ac1=. Once again White's bishop pair provides him with a slight edge, Patrici – Oskulski, ICCF 2010.

12.ed1!? We are already familiar with this type of waiting move.


12...c6

After 12...e8 13.d3 a7 14. d2 c6 15.f3 f8 16.ac1 d8 17.e1 ac8 18.h3=. White's pieces are much more active and his bishop exerts strong pressure on the long diagonal.

13.xd7 xd7 14.b3=

Once again we have a standard endgame in which White can play for a win for a long time thanks to his bishop pair, while Black has no chances at all of creating counterplay.

B2) 10...bd7 This is Black's most popular move.

11.ac4

Black has two main moves in this position: B2a) 11..d8 and B2b) 11..a7.

However, first we shall begin by examining some less popular moves.
11...b6 – The defect of this move is that now Black’s bishop on c5 has no square to retreat to on the g1-a7 diagonal. 12...b7 13...b3 b5 14...c5 15...c5 16...d2 17.f3±. White has the advantage of the bishop pair and his dark-squared bishop is particularly powerful, since it has no opponent, Smeets – N. Guliyev, ICC 2007.

11...b5. This is a very dubious move. 12...a5. Of course, the knight is not very well placed at the edge of the board, but this is an exceptional case, since it prevents the development of Black’s bishop on c8. 12...e5 13...d2 e4 14...c1 d6, Van Wely – Van den Doel, Leeuwarden 2003, 15. f4! 16...d7 17.f3 17.g4± (with the plan of 18.g5). Black has great problems neutralising the pressure of White’s bishop on the h1-a8 diagonal.

11...a5. This interesting move has been played by Ponomariov in several games. 12...c3 b6 13...a4 a6 14...xc5 bxc5 15.f3!? (after 15.b3 the idea of Black’s 11th move becomes clear; he wants to advance with a5-a4 and not only reduce the number of queenside pawns but also create a weakness for White on b3: 15...h8 16...b2 a4 17...d1 18...ab1 axb3 19. axb3 f6 20...d1 and the players agreed to a draw in the game Jakovenko – Ponomariov, Poikovsky 2012) 15...h8 16...f2 a4 17.e4

B2a) 11...d8 12...bd2
Chapter 7

12...\(\text{f8}\)

If 12...\(b6\) 13.\(b3\) \(xc4\) 14.\(xc5\) White has the advantage of the two bishops, Schuurman – Vajda, Saint Vincent 2005.

After 12...\(e8\) 13.\(b3\) \(e7\) 14.\(d1\) \(c5\) 15.\(xd8+\) \(xd8\) 16.\(xc5\) \(xc5\) 17.\(d2\) \(d7\) 18.\(f3\) \(c8\) 19.\(a5\) Black’s rook and bishop have not yet come into play and any attempt to activate them will lead to the loss of the b7-pawn, N.Maiorov – Zakharchenko, Ostrava 2007.

13.\(b3\) \(e7\) 14.\(d1\)

13.\(0b3\) \(e7\) 14.\(Ml\)

This move prepares the development of the bishop to b7 and was recommended by Semkov and Sakaev in their monograph on the Queen’s Gambit Accepted.

14...\(d5\) 15.\(d2\) \(f5\) 16.\(ac1\) \(f6\) 17.\(d4\)? (17.\(c2\) Doettling – Scholz, Germany 2007) 17...\(xd4\) 18.\(xd4\) Black lags in development and his e6-pawn is weak.

After 14...\(e4\) 15.\(f3\) \(ec5\) 16.\(xc5\) \(xc5\) 17.\(f2\) Black has difficulties with the develop his queensidepieces.

15.\(f3\)!

This is White’s most logical move, with which he wants to restrict the mobility of his opponent’s bishop on b7.

He achieves nothing with 15.\(f3\) \(a7=\)

15...\(b7\) 16.\(e4\) – White has erected a barrier to restrict Black’s b7-bishop and his f6-knight and he retains a slight but stable advantage in the endgame.

B2b) 11...\(a7\) 12.\(bd2\) \(b5\)

14...\(b6\)

This move prepares the development of the bishop to b7 and was recommended by Semkov and Sakaev in their monograph on the Queen’s Gambit Accepted.

14...\(d5\) 15.\(d2\) \(f5\) 16.\(ac1\) \(f6\) 17.\(d4\)? (17.\(c2\) Doettling – Scholz, Germany 2007) 17...\(xd4\) 18.\(xd4\) Black lags in development and his e6-pawn is weak.

After 14...\(e4\) 15.\(f3\) \(ec5\) 16.\(xc5\) \(xc5\) 17.\(f2\) Black has difficulties with the develop his queensidepieces.

13.\(a5\)

This is the only move to retain any prospects of a white advantage; otherwise Black will develop his bishop on b7 and the position will become equal.

13...\(c7\) 14.\(a4\)!

This is the standard undermining move.

White can also play the preparatory move 14.\(db3\) before seizing the initiative on the queenside after 14...\(d6\), Polak – Motuz, Slovakia 2008, with 15.\(a4!!\)↑

14...\(bxa4\) 15.\(dc4\) \(b8\) 16.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 dc3.e3 e6 4.\textit{xc4 f6 5.f3 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.dc}

\texttt{Exa4 \textit{d7 17.Ea1 \textit{b5 18.b3 \textit{e4}}}

\texttt{19.f3!}

This move is stronger than 19.b2; in the game Leko – Ponomariov, Dortmund 2012, White failed to break Black’s defence:

19...\texttt{g5 20.b7 f6 21.d2↑}

and according to analysis by T. Paunovic in Chess Informant 115 White keeps the initiative. He exerts pressure against the a6-pawn and Black has difficulty in bringing his b8-knight into play.

\textbf{Conclusion}

We have now finished the analysis of the main variation of the Queen’s Gambit Accepted. As White’s main weapon we chose to enter a slightly better endgame with the move 7.dxc5. This might seem rather simple but in fact this line is quite poisonous and Black has real problems equalising. He has to defend patiently for many moves. His main problem is connected with the development of his queenside pieces and especially the c8-bishop. Even if he manages to place it on b7 this does not solve all his problems, because then White erects a barrier with his pawns on e4 and f3, restricting the mobility both of the enemy bishop on b7 and the knight on f6. In general, the positions arising are favourable to White, since he maintains a slight edge in the endgame and Black has no counterplay whatsoever.
Part 3
Black avoids the QGD

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3

The third part of our book is devoted to variations in which Black plays 2...e6 but then, instead of playing some line of the Queen's Gambit, chooses one of the less popular lines. These are: 3...b4 (Chapter 8), 3...dxc4 (Chapter 9), the Schara-Hennig Gambit (Chapter 10), the Tarrasch Defence (Chapter 11) and the Semi-Tarrasch Defence (Chapter 12).

These variations are not often encountered in tournament play but as White you need to be well prepared against them, since it is not at all easy to gain an advantage. You must play energetically and have a good knowledge of the theory. This is particularly the case with the Schara-Hennig Gambit in which Black sacrifices a pawn for the initiative and a single inaccurate move by White can mean not just losing the advantage but can even land you in the worse position.

White has also encountered some problems recently in the main Schlechter-Rubinstein variation of the Tarrasch defence. This is why we recommend as your opening weapon the move 6.dxc5, which leads to less explored positions with an edge to White.

After 3...a6?! we reach positions which will be covered in detail in the chapter devoted to the Queen's Gambit, but with Black having already played a7-a6, which is not normally necessary. After 4.cxd5 exd5 5.f3 f6 6.e3 d6 7.exd6 wxd6 8.d3 c6 9.ge2 0–0 10.a3 e7 11.wc2 White can continue with his standard minority attack, as in the game Euwe-Alekhine, Zürich 1934.

In the case of the “Triangle” variation 3...c6, White should
continue with 4.e3, because after 4.e4 dxe4 5.Qxe4 Qb4+ 6.Qd2 Qxd4 7.Qxb4 Qxe4+ we reach the basic position of the Marshall Gambit. White has definite compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but the line has accumulated so much theory that the players are often not actually playing chess but are just trying to recall the numerous variations they have memorised. Furthermore, the evaluation of many of the lines of this gambit are subject to frequent change and a single inaccurate move by White can not only deprive him of any chance of gaining of an opening advantage, but can even end in a quick loss, which has frequently happened, even to very strong players. After 4.e3 Qf6, we reach variations of the Slav Defence, which will be analysed elsewhere in this book.
Chapter 8  
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\( \text{c}3 \text{b}4 \\

The 3...\( \text{b}4 \) Variation

With this move we have a hybrid between the Queen's Gambit and the Nimzo-Indian Defence. Chigorin used to play this and later his ideas were developed by Ragozin. Nowadays grandmasters Fressinet and Alexandrov sometimes try this variation. On the one hand the bishop seems to be more active on \( \text{b}4 \) than on \( \text{e}7 \). However, there is a drawback. Here, unlike in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, Black's pawn is already on \( \text{d}5 \) and if he exchanges his bishop on \( \text{c}3 \) he will be unable to exploit the weakness of White's doubled pawns on the c-file, owing to the possible exchange \( \text{cxd}5 \).

4.\( \text{exd}5 \\

This is the simplest response.

After 4.\( \text{f}3 \text{f}6 \) there is a transposition to the Ragozin System, which has recently been used by some top players, and with some success. It is clearly impractical, to say the least, to study the white side of the Ragozin, just to be able to transpose into it after the rarely played move 3...\( \text{b}4 \).

It might look good for White to play 4.e3, but again after 4...\( \text{f}6 \) we have a transposition, this time to the Rubinstein complex of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, which has accumulated a mass of theory.

4...\( \text{exd}5 \) 5.\( \text{f}4 \\

White cannot develop his bishop to \( \text{g}5 \), so this is the only square for it.

5...\( \text{f}6 \\

This is the natural development square.

It is also possible for Black to play 5...\( \text{e}7 \). He is ready to counter the appearance of White's
bishop on d3 with the move \( \text{xf5} \). Naturally, the exchange of the light-squared bishops in such positions is in Black’s favour. 6. \( \text{wa4+} \) – This is a standard check with which White forces his opponent’s knight to occupy an unfavourable square in front of the pawn on c7. 6...\( \text{bc6} \) 7.e3 \( \text{xf5} \) (after 7...0-0 8.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 9.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 10.\( \text{ge2} \) \( \text{xc3}+ \) 11.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{ce7} \) 12. \( \text{b1} \) b6 13.0-0 c6 14.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15. \( \text{fc1} \) White’s rooks have occupied excellent positions, while Black’s queenside pawn-structure has been weakened, Sadler – Baburin, Isle of Man 1994) 8.\( \text{f3} \) 0-0 9.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{d6} \) 10.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c8} \) 11. 0-0 \( \text{e7} \) 12.b4! White should immediately begin his standard pawn-minority attack on the queenside (gains no advantage with the less energetic line 12.\( \text{fc1} \) c6, Chernin – Dizdar, Yerevan 1996). 12...\( \text{g3} \) 13.\( \text{hgx3} \) c6 14.b5

\[ 6.e3 \]

\[ 6...0-0 \]

Here 6...c5 7.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 8.\( \text{ge2} \) 0-0 transposes.

It looks interesting, but somewhat riskier, for Black to play 6...\( \text{e4} \) 7.\( \text{a4+} \)?? \( \text{c6} \) 8.\( \text{b5} \) and here, after 8...a5 9.\( \text{ge2} \) 0-0 10. 0-0?+, or 8...\( \text{xc3+} \) 9.\( \text{xc3} \) 0-0 10.\( \text{e2}+ \), White maintains a slight advantage.

It seems rather passive for Black to play 6...c6. White easily completes his development and once he has castled kingside it is difficult to understand what Black’s bishop was doing on b4 in the first place. 7.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g4} \) 8.\( \text{ge2} \) 0-0 9.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{e7} \) 10.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{e8} \) 11.h3 \( \text{e6} \) 12.a3 \( \text{a5} \) 13.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{bd7} \) 14.b4 \( \text{b6} \) 15.0-0 \( \text{f8} \) 16.\( \text{a4} \). White will post his knight on c5, after which there will arise a typical position with a slight edge to White, Illescas Cordoba – Campos Moreno, Barcelona 1994.

\[ 7.\text{d3} \text{c5} \] \[ 8.\text{ge2} \text{c6} \] \[ 9.0-0 \]

\[ 9...\text{xd4} \]

It looks very risky from the strategic point of view for Black to play 9...c4 10.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{e6} \) 11.\( \text{g5} \) since, although he has seized
space on the queenside, White's chances, based on active operations in the centre and on the kingside (f3 and e4), seem much more realistic, Klausen – Carleton, corr. 1995.

10.exd4 \(\text{\textit{g4}}\)

White gains a minimal edge after 10...\(\text{\textit{d6}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) \(\text{\textit{e6}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\), because after the possible exchange of the dark-squared bishops White will stand better, since Black's light-squared bishop will be restricted by his own d5-pawn.

11.f3 \(\text{\textit{h5}}\) 12.a3 \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\)

13...\(\text{\textit{g6}}\)

It is inaccurate for Black to play 13...\(\text{\textit{c8}}?!\) 14.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) (White can also play 14.\(\text{\textit{f5}}\) and Black's rook will be forced to retreat) 14...\(\text{\textit{e8}}\) 15.b4 \(\text{\textit{g6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{c5}}\) b6 17.\(\text{\textit{a6}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{xd3}}\). White has some initiative and after the error 18...\(\text{\textit{d7}}?!\) he could have increased his advantage considerably with 19. \(\text{\textit{c7}}\)! (in the game Bareev – Lautier, Paris 1991, White overlooked this possibility and played 19. \(\text{\textit{c3}}\) =) 19...\(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) 21. \(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{fe1}}\) \(\text{\textit{b7}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 24.b5 \(\text{\textit{xa3}}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\text{\textit{b4}}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\)

14.\(\text{\textit{a4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xd3}}\) \(\text{\textit{e8}}\) 16.b4±

White has seized the initiative. His knight is heading for the c5-square and Black will have great problems evicting it, because the pawn-advance b7-b6 will weaken his queenside (the c-file) and the exchange on c5 looks rather dubious, since White will recapture with his d-pawn, obtaining the excellent d6-outpost for his bishop and the possibility of creating a passed pawn on the queenside.
**Conclusion**

We have been analysing the variation with 3...\( \texttt{b4} \). We have chosen for White the move 4.cxd5 as the most practical approach. This usually leads to positions which are similar to the Queen’s Gambit, which will be dealt with later.

Black has two main lines of defence:

1) He refrains from the pawn-advance c7-c5. In that case, White should give a check on a4 in order to force the enemy knight to block the c7-pawn. Then he has good chances of obtaining an advantage, especially since he has a clear-cut plan, based on advancing his queenside pawns, with the aim of creating weaknesses in Black’s queenside.

2) He advances c7-c5. Then the most probable scenario is that there will arise a position with a symmetrical pawn-structure, in which White can gain an edge by transferring his knight from c3 to c5. Nevertheless, we should mention that although White keeps a slight advantage, Black’s position is very solid. White will have to work long and hard to breach this defence.
The 3...dxc4 Variation

After the move e7-e6, this capture is very rarely played, because it leads to positions from the Queen’s Gambit Accepted, but with the inclusion of the moves \( \text{d}c3 \) and e6, which should be in White’s favour. Nevertheless, this move was once played by Steinitz, while Rubinstein used it throughout his playing career. Even a few contemporary grandmasters have played it once in a while.

4.e4

Naturally White is not obliged to continue with 4.e3 now and can afford to play a more ambitious move, immediately occupying the centre.

4...c5 5.d5

This is the only way to fight for an opening advantage.

5...\( \text{Af6} \) 6.\( \text{xc4} \) exd5 7.\( \text{xd5} \text{xd5} \) 8.\( \text{xd5} \)

This position has been tested in many games. Sometimes he
Black has responded with A) 8... \( \text{d6} \) but in most cases Black has played B) 8...\( \text{e7} \).

A) 8...\( \text{d6} \)

This move is risky, because on d6 the bishop does not control the g5-square, so White’s knight often heads there. In combination with the bishop on d5 and a queen sortie to h5, White can create pressure against the f7-square and, if Black castles kingside, against h7 as well. Black will probably avoid Scholar’s Mate, but will be unable to equalise.
9...g6

After 9...0-0, White can realise all the ideas outlined above. 10.\texttt{f3} \texttt{d7} 11.\texttt{g5}, while if 9...\texttt{f6} 10.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g6} 11.\texttt{xg6} \texttt{hxg6} 12.\texttt{e3} \texttt{a6} 13.0-0-0± Vyzmanavin – Bus, Copenhagen 1991, the endgame is better for White; he is ahead in development and his minor pieces are very active, which cannot be said about Black’s knight on a6.

10.\texttt{h6} \texttt{f8} 11.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{b3} \texttt{e7} 13.\texttt{f3}±. Even though White has moved his queen four times already, he has gained the advantage and later converted it into a full point in the game Petrosian – Radulov, Plovdiv 1983.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{B)} 8...\texttt{e7} 9.\texttt{f3} 0-0 10. \texttt{0-0} (diagram)
\end{itemize}

10...\texttt{b6}

10...\texttt{a6} Black has sometimes tried developing his knight to the edge of the board with the aim of driving the enemy bishop away from its excellent position on the d5-square. After the bishop retreats an endgame arises in which White has a slight edge: 10...\texttt{a6} 11.\texttt{b3} \texttt{c7} 12.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{xd8} 13.\texttt{f4}+. White’s pieces are more actively placed and Black’s pawn majority on the queenside is irrelevant. White’s plan is very simple – he should try to advance his f- and e-pawns as quickly as possible, for example: 13...\texttt{e6} 14.\texttt{g3} \texttt{f6} 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{f8} 16.f4!? \texttt{d2} 17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xb2} 18.e5\texttt{d8} 19.f5 \texttt{g5} 20.\texttt{e6} \texttt{xf3}+ 21.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{d2}, S.Atalik – Gyimesi, Vrnjacka Banja 1998, 22.\texttt{e1}±

11.\texttt{e3} \texttt{c6}

11...\texttt{a6}. This move is played with the same idea as on move 10 – to drive the enemy bishop away from its central position. However, this will be now take place without the exchange of queens. 12.\texttt{e5} \texttt{c7} 13.\texttt{b3} \texttt{b4} 14.\texttt{c2} \texttt{e6} 15.\texttt{c4} \texttt{b5} (15...\texttt{ad8} 16.
Chapter 9

f4\(b\) 16.f4\(c\). White has advanced his e- and f- pawns and Black is unable to exploit his queenside pawn majority because of his misplaced queen, V.Milov – Afek, Budapest 1993.

11...\(A\)e6. This is a logical move. Black wants to exchange the light-squared bishops, since White’s bishop is much more active than its black counterpart.

12.b4! This is a strong move. White exploits the vis-a-vis of Black’s queen and White’s bishop on e3. It is obvious that Black cannot capture the b4-pawn, because of \(A\)b1. 12...\(A\)xd5. Black has accomplished his plan, but is still a long way from equality (12...\(A\)d8? is bad on account of 13.\(A\)xc5, and White was clearly better after 13...\(A\)c7± Jussupow – Ehlvest, Belfort 1988, but 13...\(A\)xc5 would have lost outright after 14.bxc5 \(A\)xc5 15.\(A\)xb7 \(A\)xd1 16.\(A\)fxd1 g6 17. \(A\)xa8+–). 13.bxc5 \(A\)xc5 (Black is lost after 13...\(A\)c7? 14.exd5 \(A\)xc5 15.\(A\)c1 \(A\)a6 16.d6 \(A\)b6 17.\(A\)xc5 \(A\)xc5 18.\(A\)d5 \(A\)ac8 19.d7 \(A\)c6 20. \(A\)e5+- Heinig – Berndt, Germany 1992) 14.\(A\)b1 \(A\)d6 15.\(A\)xc5 \(A\)xc5 16.exd5 \(A\)d8 17.\(A\)b3 b6 18. \(A\)bc1 \(A\)d6 19.\(A\)fd1±. White’s strong passed d5-pawn provides him with an enduring initiative.

12.\(A\)c1

12...\(A\)g4

The alternatives for Black also fail to equalise:

12...\(A\)b4 13.\(A\)a4 (another interesting idea for White here is to play 13.a3!? \(A\)xd5 14.exd5±, intending b4) 13...\(A\)xd5 14.exd5 \(A\)f5 15.\(A\)fd1± and once again White’s passed d5-pawn guarantees him an edge, despite Black’s bishop pair, Sanchez Guirado – Baron Rodriguez, Cala Galdana 1999.

12...\(A\)xb2 13.\(A\)xc5 \(A\)xc5 14.\(A\)xc5± Sorin – Cifuentes Parada, Matanzas 1995.

12...\(A\)e6 13.\(A\)xe6 fxe6, Brenninkmeijer – J.Polgar, Amsterdam 1990, and now after 14. \(A\)c2?!± White’s pawn structure is excellent and he is attacking the enemy c5-pawn, keeping some advantage.
13.h3

Instead, 13...e6 14.xe6 fxe6 15.c2 produces a position similar to the game Brenninkmeijer – J.Polgar, Amsterdam 1990 (see above) except that White has gained an escape square for his king, Ibragimov – Estrada Nieto, Ubeda 1997.

13...h5. After this retreat of the bishop Black must consider that, after an eventual g2-g4, his bishop will have to occupy a very passive position. 14.a3! b5 (14... a5?! 15.g4 g6 16.d2±) 15.e1 e8 16.g4 g6 17.e2 xe2 18. xe2 and in order to evaluate this position correctly it is enough to compare the strength of the bishops on d5 and g6.

14.xf3 ad8 15.fd1±

Here it is less accurate for White to play 15.e2 b4 16.c4 c6 17.h1 d4 18.g4 h8 19. b3 and in the game Herraez Hidalgo – Ubilava, Elgoibar 2002, the players agreed a draw.

15...b4 16.b3 d3 17. c3 e5 18.e2 xd1+ 19. xd1±

White has retained the advantage of the bishop pair. If he manages to advance his e- and f-pawns quickly, Black's position could easily become very difficult.

Conclusion

We have analysed the move 3...dxc4. As you have seen in our comments, White can gain an opening advantage in very simple fashion by using two main ideas:

1. The power of the bishop on d5, which exerts pressure both on Black's kingside (the f7-square) and the queenside (the b7-square).

2. White leads in development and can start to mobilize his kingside pawn majority much faster than his opponent.
Chapter 10

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\( \triangle c3 \) c5

The Schara-Hennig Gambit

This move generally leads to the Tarrasch Defence, which we shall analyse in the next chapter. First, however, we shall deal with an interesting pawn sacrifice, which is known to theory by the name of the Schara-Hennig Gambit.

4.cxd5 cxd4

Black does not wish to play a position with an isolated queen’s pawn, as happens in the Tarrasch Defence, and prefers to have active piece play and a lead in development, at the cost of only a minimal material deficit. This gambit is encountered very rarely in contemporary tournament play, but during my work on this book I came to the conclusion that it deserves much more serious attention. White preserves his extra pawn, but the activity of Black’s pieces makes its realisation very difficult. It often leads to an endgame in which Black’s bishop pair helps him to make a draw, despite being a pawn down.

This gambit was played by Alekhine, Tartakower and Maroczy. Among contemporary grandmasters, Nakamura has employed it. Some representatives of the more attractive half of human-kind have also tried this gambit – the first official World Women’s Champion Vera Menchik, as well as Pia Cramling.

I should also mention that, the faster the time-limit, the more
dangerous for White this gambit becomes. In a game played at a classical time-control, even if White forgets some theoretical variation, he might still manage to find the correct moves over the board. But when playing at a faster time-control, or in blitz, a single inaccuracy, or a lack of knowledge of the theory (readers will soon see that there is plenty of theory on it...), can immediately place White on the verge of disaster.

Here we shall analyse: A) 5.\texttt{\textit{H}}x\texttt{d4} and B) 5.\texttt{\textit{a}}4+.

**A) 5.\texttt{\textit{H}}x\texttt{d4}**

This move offers Black an extra option – to simplify immediately into an endgame in which it is very difficult for White to realise his extra pawn, owing to Black’s lead in development. It is therefore more prudent for White to play 5.\texttt{\textit{a}}4+, which will at least reduce the time required to study this gambit. However, I decided not to remove the analysis of 5.\texttt{\textit{H}}d4 from the book. It can be viewed by players who have enough time and like to play endgames. It can also be studied by players who might wish to play this endgame as Black. As previously mentioned, trying it in a game played at a classical time-control would be risky for Black, but in games with shorter time-controls it might come as an unpleasant surprise for White. Our more practical readers may move immediately to variation **B**.

5...\texttt{\textit{c}}6 6.\texttt{\textit{H}}d1 exd5 7.\texttt{\textit{H}}xd5 \texttt{\textit{e}}6 8.\texttt{\textit{H}}xd8+ \texttt{\textit{H}}xd8

This is the endgame I mentioned. White has an extra pawn but Black has already completed the development of his queenside. In addition, White must already worry about his opponent’s threat of\texttt{\textit{c}}6-b4-c2.

**9.e3**

This is the most logical move. In anticipation of the above-mentioned threats, White is ready to develop his bishop to b5 with tempo and then defend against
Chapter 10

the threatened knight fork by moving the king to the f1-square.

9...\(\text{\&}b4\)

This is Black’s most natural and active move.

It is considerably weaker for him to play 9...a6. This move is not in the spirit of the gambit play that Black has initiated. After all, he did not sacrifice a pawn in order now to apply prophylactic measures. 10.a3. This prevents the threat of \(\text{\&}b4\) and allows White to complete his development smoothly, with every chance of exploiting his extra pawn. 10...\(\text{\&}f6\) 11.\(\text{\&}f3\)

Now Black has two options, but neither of them would ease his suffering in the endgame.

11...\(\text{\&}d6\) – with this quiet move Black tries to complete his development. However, this is obviously not the way to gain compensation for the sacrificed pawn. After 12.\(\text{\&}e2\) 0–0 13.0–0 \(\text{\&}fe8\) 14.\(\text{\&}d4\) \(\text{\&}xd4\) 15.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(\text{\&}d5\) 16.\(\text{\&}e1\) \(\text{\&}f8\) 17.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) 18.bxc3\(\ddagger\) White has every chance of realising his extra pawn, Berghaus – Berends, Email 2002.

11...\(\text{\&}a5\). Black’s knight is heading for the b3-square. 12.\(\text{\&}d4\) \(\text{\&}b3\), Biriukov – Gutsko, Dombai 2010, and now 13.\(\text{\&}xe6\)! This is an important exchange. In this position, Black’s powerful light-squared bishop is much more dangerous to White than the knight on b3. Furthermore, White’s last move saddles Black with a weak pawn on e6. 13...fxe6 14.\(\text{\&}b1\) b5 15.\(\text{\&}e2\) d6 16.\(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}xc1\) 17.\(\text{\&}xc1\)\(\ddagger\). White has a solid extra pawn in the endgame and only the presence of bishops of opposite colours leaves Black with some minimal drawing chances.

10.\(\text{\&}b5+\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 11.\(\text{\&}f1\)!
This is a very strong move and after the famous game Smyslov – Estrin, Leningrad 1951, it virtually ended any interest in trying this variation as Black. In fact, though, his position is not that bad at all.

11...\(\text{\textit{\textit{d6}}}\)

This knight is heading for the e4-square. The idea of Black’s counterplay is very simple – to play \(\text{\textit{c2}}\) and after \(\text{\textit{b1}}\), to deflect White’s knight from the protection of the a2-pawn and the d1-square with the move \(\text{\textit{e4}}\)!

The alternatives are all clearly worse for Black.

11...g5 – the extended fianchetto fails to equalise. 12.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{g713.\textit{d4}}\textit{xd4} 14.\textit{exd4} \text{\textit{c2}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xg5+}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6} 16.\textit{c1}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxg5} 17.\textit{xc2}}\) \(\text{\textit{exd4}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxf6}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{dd1}}\) \(\text{\textit{exd1}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{xd1}}\)\(+\), with a solid extra pawn for White.

11...a6. This is better than 11...g5; Black dislodges the enemy bishop from its active position, but this fails to solve all Black’s problems. 12.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g5}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{c2}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{b1}}\) h6 15.b3! A very strong move. White wants first to develop his queen’s bishop and only then exchange Black’s c2-knight (it is weaker for White to play the immediate 15.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\), Legky – Bronstein, France 1996, since then he is unable to develop his bishop to b2). 15...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{b2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe1}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{xe1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{hd8}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{f2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{a3}}\) \(\text{\textit{e8}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{hd1}}\)\(+\) – White has succeeded

in parrying the activity of Black’s pieces without weakening his position and has kept his extra pawn.

12.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) \(\text{\textit{c2}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{b1}}\)

13...\(\text{\textit{e4}}\)!

This tactical idea makes the evaluation of the entire variation very unclear.

It is clearly weaker for Black to play 13...\(\text{\textit{f5}}\)? 14.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g5}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{c1}}\) h6? 16.e4+– Smyslov – Estrin, Leningrad 1951.

14.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\)

The position is very unclear after 14.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{a3}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb5}}\)

White’s light-squared bishop has left the board and Black’s bishop on e6 will cause White a
lot of problems. Now Black is threatening to capture on a2 as well as to check on c4, after which White will have great problems connecting his rooks. All this leads to the conclusion that Black has good compensation for the pawn. In a practical game his play will be much easier.

14...f5

This not only protects the knight but frees the f7- and f6-squares for his king. He needs to activate his kingside pieces as quickly as possible.

15.g3!

The analysis engines promise White some edge after 15.h4!? , but I do not fully trust this recommendation.

15...b6

By protecting his b-pawn Black prepares to play dxe4.

16.h4 dxe4

The idea of a perpetual attack on White’s rook is the tactical justification of Black’s previous play. If White now intends to play for a win he has to go in for tactical complications.

17.Qxe4 Qxb1 18.Qg5

18...Qd5

Black’s bishop is very strong on this square, because it prevents e4.

White has a slight edge after 18...Qxa2 19.e4 h6 20.exf5 Qf6 21.g4±—his pieces are well coordinated, while Black’s knight on b1 is out of play. This leads me to evaluate the position in White’s favour, despite the loss of the exchange.

19.Qe1

Preparing to play e4. It is essential for White to neutralise the pressure of Black’s bishop on the long light-squared diagonal and to develop his bishop on c1.

19...Qf6

Here 19...h6?! is bad because after 20.e4! fxe4 21.Qxe4 Qf7 (21...Qxe4 22.Qa6+-) 22.Qe5+ Qg8 23.f3 Qxa2 24.Qe3±. White’s pieces are lined up picturesquely on the e-file, while Black’s bishop on a2 and his knight on b1 just look ridiculous in comparison.

20.e4
20...fxe4

It is bad for Black to play 20...\text{\texttt{b}}b4 21.exd5 \text{\texttt{x}}xe1 22.\text{\texttt{d}}xe1+= since White's minor pieces are stronger than Black's rooks.

21.\text{\texttt{d}}xe4+ \text{\texttt{d}}xe4 22.\text{\texttt{g}}g5+ \text{\texttt{f}}f5 23.\text{\texttt{x}}xd8 \text{\texttt{b}}b4 24.\text{\texttt{d}}d1 \text{\texttt{d}}d2 25.\text{\texttt{e}}e7 \text{\texttt{e}}xe7 26.\text{\texttt{x}}xd2 \text{\texttt{d}}d8 27.\text{\texttt{x}}xd8 \text{\texttt{x}}xd8=

After a complicated tactical struggle an equal endgame has appeared on the board. All Black needs to do to draw is to exchange his bishop on e4 for the enemy knight, after which White should be unable to realise his extra pawn in the resulting position with bishops of opposite colour.

It is possible that White's play can be improved somewhere.

Nevertheless, from the practical point of view, if we consider that the chances of encountering the Schara-Hennig Gambit are only minimal, then it would be simpler for White to avoid this variation altogether, by giving a preliminary check with the queen on move five.

B) 5.\text{\texttt{a}}a4+!

The idea of this check is to deprive Black of the possibility of gaining a tempo by attacking White's queen, because after the inclusion of the move \text{\texttt{d}}d7, Black cannot play \text{\texttt{c}}c6.

5...\text{\texttt{d}}d7

A creative but rather dubious try for Black is 5...b5?! for example 6.\text{\texttt{a}}xd4 \text{\texttt{c}}c6 (6...a6 7.\text{\texttt{f}}f3± is harmless to White, while the move 6...b4 loses after 7.\text{\texttt{b}}b5!+-, since Black cannot dislodge White's knight with 7...a6 because of 8.\text{\texttt{x}}xe6 axb5 9.exf7+ \text{\texttt{e}}e7 10.\text{\texttt{x}}xb8\text{\texttt{c}}+ and this spectacular under-promotion to a knight wins the game) 7.\text{\texttt{d}}d1 exd5 8.e4! This energetic move leads to an overwhelming advantage for White. 8...d4 (the endgame is difficult for Black after 8...dxe4 9.\text{\texttt{a}}xd8+ \text{\texttt{x}}xd8 10.\text{\texttt{f}}f4 a6 11.0-0-0+ \text{\texttt{d}}d7 12.\text{\texttt{xe}}4
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\[ \text{10.f6 13.xxf6 gxf6 14.d3 c5 15.} \text{f5 a7 16.f3, when White has} \]

\[ \text{the better pawn structure and the} \]

\[ \text{more active pieces, Fourie – Barnett, Email 2006)} 9.xb5 d7 10.d5 \]

\[ \text{Black has no compensation for} \]

\[ \text{the sacrificed pawn. 10...f6 (after} \]

\[ 10...b4 11.xd7+ xd7 12.} \text{f3 xd5 13.exd5 b4+ 14.d2,} \]

\[ \text{Black remains a pawn down and} \]

\[ \text{the exchanges have been in} \]

\[ \text{White’s favour, Lundin – Drugge,} \]

\[ \text{Gothenburg 2005)} 11.a4 xd5 12.exd5 e5 (it is no better for} \]

\[ \text{Black to continue with 12...b4} \]

\[ 13.f3 a6 14.c6 c8 15.0–0} \text{xc6 16.dxc6 c6 17.xd4 f6} \]

\[ 18.e1+ f7 19.f4, and Black’s} \]

\[ \text{bishop pair is not sufficient com-} \]

\[ \text{pensation for his missing pawn,} \]

\[ \text{since his king is also weak)} 13.} \text{e2 c5} 14.0–0 0–0 15.f4±.} \]

\[ \text{Black cannot play 15...xb5 16.} \]

\[ \text{xb5 xd5 17.b4, because this} \]

\[ \text{loses a piece, so White has every} \]

\[ \text{chance of realising his extra pawn.} \]

\[ 6.xd4 exd5 7.xd5 c6 \]

\[ \text{There is a transposition of} \]

\[ \text{moves after 7...f6 8.d1 c6} \]

\[ 9.f3 c5 10.e3.} \]

\[ 8.f3 f6 9.d1 c5 10.e3 \]

\[ \text{e7 11.e2} \]

\[ \text{We shall now analyse B1) 11...} \]

\[ \text{g5, B2) 11...0–0 and B3)} \]

\[ 11...0–0–0.} \]

\[ \text{B1) 11...g5} \]

\[ \text{This is an interesting move.} \]

\[ \text{Black saves time by not castling} \]

\[ \text{and tries to seize the initiativeim-} \]

\[ \text{mediately.} \]

\[ 12.d4! \]

\[ \text{Schandorf gives the following} \]

\[ \text{variation in his book: 12.0–0 g4} \]

\[ 13.d4 e5 14.xc6 c6 15.xg4 and evaluates this position} \]

\[ \text{in White’s favour.} \]

\[ 6.xd4 exd5 7.xd5 c6 \]

\[ \text{This evaluation is wrong, be-} \]

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cause after 15...\texttt{e}d8 16.\texttt{e}e2, Black has the powerful tactical shot 16...\texttt{d}xg2!. Of course, he will regain the piece in a few moves, while White’s king position will remain weakened. In addition, White will have problems completing the development of his queenside pieces. After for example 17.\texttt{d}xg2 \texttt{g}g8 18.h3 \texttt{h}5 19.f3 h\texttt{x}g4 20.h\texttt{x}g4 \texttt{h}8 21.\texttt{f}h1 \texttt{f}h1 22.\texttt{f}xh1 \texttt{f}e7\texttt{e}, although White is two pawns up, he will find it difficult to realise them.

12...\texttt{e}g4
For 12...0–0–0 13.0–0 – see variation B3.

13.\texttt{d}xc6 \texttt{d}xc6 14.\texttt{b}b5\texttt{+}\+
White succeeds in exchanging Black’s active bishop and can count on maintaining an opening advantage.

B2) 11...0–0

This is a playable move and has been tested in a lot of correspondence games. Instead of striving to create a position with opposite sides attacks after cas-

tlingqueenside, Black seeks compensation for his minimal material deficit in better development and pressure on the c- and d-files. However, there are no weaknesses in White’s position and after the completion of his development, he has every chances of realising his material advantage.

12.0–0 \texttt{f}d8 13.a3 \texttt{e}e5
13...\texttt{a}ac8 14.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{g}4 15.h3±
14.\texttt{c}c2

14...\texttt{e}g4
This move might look active, but it allows White to develop his c1-bishop without any difficulty and to reduce Black’s pressure by exchanging several minor pieces.

Instead, after 14...\texttt{a}ac8 15.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{eg}4 (Black should not weaken his king’s position by playing 15...g6 16.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{b}b6 17.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{eg}4 18.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{e}5 19.\texttt{f}3± De Jong – Kuijf, Netherlands 2008; White has achieved his primary task – to complete the development of his queenside pieces – leaving Black with absolutely no compensation.
for the sacrificed pawn) 16.h3\(±\), White dislodges the enemy knight from its active position, Mason – Matijosius, Email 2010.

15.b4 \(\text{a}\)b6 16.\(\text{a}\)b2 \(\text{a}\)c8 17. \(\text{d}\)xe5 \(\text{b}\)xe5 18.\(\text{e}\)ac1 18.\(\text{d}\)fd1!?±

18...\(\text{f}\)f5 19.\(\text{w}\)b3 \(\text{g}\)g4 20. \(\text{x}\)xg4 \(\text{c}\)c7 21.g3 \(\text{x}\)xg4 22.\(\text{d}\)e2 \(\text{w}\)e8 23.\(\text{d}\)d4 \(\text{h}\)h3 24.\(\text{f}\)fd1 \(\text{w}\)e4 25.f3 \(\text{w}\)e7 26.\(\text{f}\)f2±

In this position White will have great problems exploiting his extra pawn, because Black has two strong bishops, while White’s king shelter has been weakened. Nevertheless, White still has some winning chances, thanks to his control of the d4-square, which is a comfortable base for his minor pieces. For example: 26...\(\text{d}\)d7 27.\(\text{e}\)e2 \(\text{e}\)e6 28.\(\text{w}\)xd8+ \(\text{xd}\)d8 29.\(\text{w}\)d1 \(\text{x}\)xc1 30.\(\text{w}\)xc1 \(\text{c}\)c7 31. \(\text{e}\)e4 \(\text{w}\)d8 32.\(\text{d}\)d4 a5 33.\(\text{w}\)c3 f6 34.e5 axb4 35.axb4 fxe5 36. \(\text{d}\)xe5 \(\text{d}\)xe5 37.\(\text{w}\)xe5± Schueppen – Martos Crespo, Email 2010. White has exchanged the rooks and even more importantly he has deprived his opponent of the advantage of the bishop pair. He has not only the extra pawn, but also the very strong attacking tandem of queen plus knight.

**B3) 11...0–0–0**

This is Black’s most natural move. He not only castles, but hopes in the future to exploit the X-ray pressure of his rook against the enemy queen on the d-file.

12.0–0 g5

It is less energetic for Black to play here 12...\(\text{d}\)b8, allowing White time to develop his pieces. 13.a3 g5 14.b4 \(\text{b}\)b6 15.b5 \(\text{e}\)e5 16.\(\text{d}\)d4 \(\text{c}\)c8 (it may be better for Black to play 16...\(\text{g}\)g4, but even then after 17.\(\text{w}\)b3± White retains the advantage, Lamy – Lorin, France 2002) 17.\(\text{d}\)a4!? An interesting move. Now Black must make up his mind about the future of his bishop. It is bad to capture on d4, so the bishop must abandon its active position. (It is also good for White to play 17.a4±, Lalic – Russek Libni, Linares
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 c5 4.cd cd5. a4 31.c5 ñxc5 32.bxc5+ ñb7 33. ñd3.

It might be interesting for Black to try to dispense with the move g4 and play 13...h5. However, White still continues with his standard pawn sacrifice 14.b4 and quickly brings his queenside pieces into play, retaining the better prospects. It is important to notice that White’s king is protected by four pawns, while Black’s king is defended by only two. 14...ñxb4 (14...ñd6 15.ñcb5 ñe5 16.ñb2±) 15.ñb3 ñxd4 16.exd4±

The material on the board is equal, but White still has an edge, for example: 16...ñe6 17.ñc4 ñxc4 (it is too dangerous for Black to play 17...ñxd4 because after 18. ñxe6+ ñxe6 19.ñxg5 ñxb3 20. axb3 ñd5 21.ñb5 ñd3 22.ñf1 ñxd1+ 23.ñxd1 f6 24.ñxa7+ ñb8 25.ñxd5 fxg5 26.ñb5±, White has an extra pawn in the endgame; Black’s bishop is stronger than White’s knight, since there is play on both sides of the board, but the weakness of Black’s pawns on g5 and h5 is also a factor) 18.ñxc4+ ñb8 19.ñb1 ñxc3 20.ñxc3 ñd5 105
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21.\(\text{g3}\) + \(\text{a8}\) 22.\(\text{xf5}\) f6 23.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{g7}\) 24.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{xf3}\). It will be difficult for White to realise his extra pawn owing to the strong blockading position of Black's knight on d5 whether White plays 25.\(\text{fxg3}\) + or 25.\(\text{hxg3}\) h4 ±

14.\(\text{b4}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 15.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 16.\(\text{exd4}\)

A familiar position has arisen, except that instead of h5, Black has played the move g4. It is not easy to see which side this favours, because on the one hand Black's pawn on g5 is not hanging, but on the other hand White's bishop now has access to the excellent f4-square.

16...\(\text{e6}\)

Black should avoid 16...\(\text{c6}\) 17.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{xb5}\) 18.\(\text{xb5}\) ±, since he will have problems fighting against White's bishops, while if 18...\(\text{xd4}\)? 19.\(\text{e3}\) + Black's king is hopelessly weak, Flear - McSheehy, Charlton 1983. He will not even be a pawn up, since White can capture on a7 anytime he wants.

17.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{d5}\) 18.\(\text{xd5}\)

18...\(\text{xd5}\)
Black's rook is very unstable on this square.
It would be safer to play 18...\(\text{xd5}\) ±, giving up a pawn once again. 19.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{d6}\) 20.\(\text{xg4}\) + \(\text{b8}\) 21.\(\text{fe1}\) \(\text{f6}\), Rice - Daurelle, Email 1997, 22.\(\text{e5}\). White has no objection to an exchange of bishops, but he wants to improve his pawn structure in the process. 22...\(\text{xe5}\) 23.\(\text{dxe5}\) \(\text{f4}\) 24.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{hg8}\) 25.\(\text{e3}\) ±. Black's pieces exert some pressure against White's kingside, but this is not enough to compensate for the missing pawn. In addition, Black's pawns on f7 and h7 may turn out to be very weak in the endgame.

19.\(\text{c4}\)!
White does not achieve much with 19.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{d6}\) 20.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 21.\(\text{fb1}\) b6 22.\(\text{a4}\) ± Prudnikova - Voiska, Azov 1990.

19...\(\text{d6}\) 20.\(\text{e1}\)!
This move is more precise than 20.\(\text{g3}\) ± Le Gore - Hux, USA 1990. White does not need to weaken his light squares.
20...\(\text{h}4\)

There is no need to fear the sacrifice 20...\(\text{xh}2+\) 21.\(\text{g}xh2\) \(\text{h}4+\) 22.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{h}5\) 23.\(\text{xe}6+\) \(\text{xe}6\) 24.\(\text{c}3+\) \(\text{d}7\) 25.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{h}1+\) 26.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xg}2\) 27.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}8\) 28.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{h}3\) 29.\(\text{g}3+\) -- and White parries the attack, emerging with a decisive material advantage.

21.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}5\)

After 21...\(\text{h}3\) White gains a decisive material advantage with a counter-sacrifice of the exchange: 22.\(\text{x}e6\) \(\text{xe}6\) (if 22...\(\text{xh}5\) 23.\(\text{f}4+\)--) 23.\(\text{x}d5\) \(\text{ex}d5\) 24.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 25.\(\text{b}5+\). White begins a crushing offensive against Black’s king, bereft of any defenders.

22.\(\text{x}d5\)

After 22...\(\text{xd}5\), with accurate play White can more or less force the exchange of half of Black’s attacking strength: 23.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{a}6\) 24.\(\text{e}8+\) \(\text{xe}8\) 25.\(\text{xe}8+\) \(\text{c}7\) 26.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{x}f4\) 27.\(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{b}8\) 28.\(\text{xf}4+\)

23.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{d}7\) 24.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 25.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 26.\(\text{g}7\) \(\text{g}8\) 27.\(\text{e}5\) -- After the exchange of queens White’s king is completely safe, while Black’s problems are just beginning.

**Conclusion**

We have completed our analysis the Schara-Hennig Gambit and we can arrive at the conclusion that White needs to react very precisely and accurately against it. It is important for him to play the move 5.\(\text{a}4+\), to deprive Black of the option of going into an endgame in which it is very difficult for White to prove any advantage.

The main variations of the Schara-Hennig Gambit usually lead to positions with opposite-sides castling, where it is essential for White to develop his queenside pieces as quickly as possible. He usually sacrifices his b-pawn with b2-b4, and follows this up with \(\text{b}2\) and \(\text{cb}5\). White has the better prospects in the ensuing complex middlegame, since his king is much better protected by pawns.
After this capture the Tarrasch Defence appears on the board. It is named after the outstanding German player and theoretician Siegbert Tarrasch, who was an ardent proponent of this defence. We must say however that, despite his efforts, his brainchild did not acquire great popularity. The point is that Black usually ends up with an isolated pawn on d5 and this is not to everybody’s liking. Nevertheless, historically this defence has undergone two bursts of popularity. The first followed the match for the World Championship in 1963 in which, thanks to this opening, Boris Spassky was able to neutralise Tigran Petrosian’s play with the white pieces. The second boom was influenced by Gary Kasparov’s games at the start of the 1980s, when, against the strongest grandmasters of the day, he not only managed to neutralise Black in the opening, but often outplayed them completely in the ensuing struggle. Later, however, he was less successful with the Tarrasch in his first World Championship match against Karpov, after which he gave up this defence.

Many contemporary grandmasters have employed the Tarrasch. As well as Kasparov, Grischuk, Lastin, Akobian, Illescas, Bezgodov have all played it. You can also sometimes encounter this opening in games by female players, for instance Kovalevskaya has often played it recently.

5.\textit{\textbf{d}}f3

(diagram)

In this position, the most logical and strongest move for Black is C) 5...\textit{\textbf{c}}6. Nevertheless, before we begin to analysis this, we shall examine some less popular alternatives: A) 5...\textit{\textbf{c}}xd4 and B) 5...\textit{\textbf{f}}6.
It is premature to play 5...c4, because White can strike a blow in the centre with 6.e4!, gaining a great advantage; for example: if 6...dxe4 7.\textit{\text{c}}g5\pm, and now after the careless 7...\textit{\text{f}}f6? 8.\textit{\text{c}}xc4+– Black is unable to prevent a catastrophe on the f7-square, Sergiev – Ilardi, Email 2008.

A) 5...\textit{\text{c}}xd4?!  
This is a positional concession. Black clarifies the central pawn structure and White easily gains a positional advantage.  
\[ \text{6.\textit{\text{d}}xd4 \textit{\text{c}}c6 7.\textit{\text{g}}3 \textit{\text{f}}f6 8.\textit{\text{g}}g2} \]

\[ \text{8...\textit{\text{b}}b6} \]  
This move is of historical rather than theoretical importance.

The alternatives for Black fail to equalise.

For example: 8...\textit{\text{c}}c5. The desire to force his opponent to clarify immediately the position of his knight in the centre is understandable. This move has a serious drawback however. White's knight retreats from the centre with tempo. 9.\textit{\text{b}}b3 \textit{\text{d}}b4 10.0–0

We have reached a position in the spirit of some variations of the English Opening. 10...\textit{\text{e}}e6 11.\textit{\text{e}}e3. This move emphasizes the main defect of Black's concept – his dark-squared bishop is not fighting for the key squares in this position – d4 and c5. 11...0–0 12.\textit{\text{e}}c1 \textit{\text{c}}c813.\textit{\text{e}}e714.\textit{\text{b}}b5\textit{\text{b}}6 15.\textit{\text{d}}d4\pm White enjoys complete control over the d4-square, while Black has no counterplay at all. White retains a stable advantage and his opponent is faced with a long and laborious defence, Ribli – Schmittdiel, Austria 1998.

8...\textit{\text{e}}e7. This move is safer than 8...\textit{\text{c}}c5 but Black cannot rely on equalising with it. 9.0–0 0–0 10.\textit{\text{f}}f4 \textit{\text{e}}e6 11.\textit{\text{c}}c1 \textit{\text{d}}d7 12.\textit{\text{xe}}6
fxe6 13.e4 d4 14.e5 dxc3 15.exf6

White has the advantage of the two bishops in an open position, while Black's pawn on e6 is very weak, so White can play for a win in this endgame for a long time. In contrast, Black must defend with extreme precision, since a single mistake will lead to his demise. The game Yevseev – Gorjunov, St Petersburg 2012, continued 16...txf6 17.bxc3 ffd8 18.\textit{e}e3 ffxd1+ 19.ffxdl ffd8 20.fxf8+ ffxd8 21.fxa7=. White captured the key a7-pawn and won this endgame convincingly, demonstrating a very instructive plan for realising his advantage. He advanced his pawn to a5 and sacrificed his bishop on b7 at the right moment: 21...fxc3 22.fxb6 ffd6 23.a4 f7 24.a5 f7 25.fxb7. After 25...fxb7 26.a6 Black's knight and bishop were unable to prevent the promotion of White's passed pawn. The well-known rule that the knight is a very poor fighter against a passed rook's pawn was confirmed in this game.

\textbf{9.fxe6 bxe6}

This is a familiar transformation of advantages. Now instead of a weak isolated d5-pawn, Black will have two hanging pawns – d5 and c6. As is well known, it is essential for White in similar positions to occupy the d4 and c5-squares as quickly as possible. The unfortunate placement of Black's queen will help White to do this, since his pieces will attack the enemy queen with tempo (d4a4 or e3).

10.0–0 fe7 11.e4 f6b5

This is one of the earliest examples in chess history of this classic plan. Now Black is faced
with a difficult and prospectless defence.

15...\(\text{f}e8\) 16.\(\text{f}2\)!
White frees the f1-square for his bishop.

16...\(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{x}e7\) \(\text{x}e7\) 18.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}e8\) 19.\(\text{f}1\) \(\text{c}e8\) 20.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 21.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{x}c5\) 22.\(\text{x}c5\)+

This is a dream position for the strategy of play against an isolated pawn. Black's pawns are securely blockaded on squares of the same colour of his bishop. In the game Rubinstein - Salwe, Lodz 1908, White convincingly went on to turn his positional advantage into a full point. 22...\(\text{c}7\) 23.\(\text{fc}2\) \(\text{b}6\) 24.b4 a6 25.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{b}8\) 26.a3 \(\text{a}7\) 27.\(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 28.\(\text{xa}7\) \(\text{a}8\) 29.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 30.\(\text{f}2\) h5 31.\(\text{e}2\) g6 32.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{c}8\) 33.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 34.\(\text{h}4\) a5 35.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{b}8\) 36.b5 a4 37.b6 \(\text{a}5\) 38.b7.

This game is one of the masterpieces of an outstanding master of positional play.

B) 5...\(\text{f}6\)
This move is considered by theory to be less precise than 5...\(\text{c}6\), and deservedly so. White is presented with the additional possibility of pinning Black's knight.

6.\(\text{g}5\)
Naturally White makes use of this chance.

6...\(\text{e}6\)

Black must play this, otherwise, after the seemingly attractive move 6...\(\text{e}7\), White has the response 7.dxc5. Of course, Black does not lose a pawn, but he ends up in a prospectless position. 7...0–0 8.e3 \(\text{e}6\) 9.\(\text{b}5\)! White brings the c6-square under control. After this move, Black is forced to capture on c5 with his bishop 9...\(\text{xc}5\), and then lose another tempo retreating it: (9...\(\text{bd}7\) is bad because of 10.c6 and White retains an extra pawn) 10.0–0 \(\text{e}7\) 11.\(\text{e}2\)+

(diagram)

As a rule, in positions where Black has an isolated queen's pawn he can organise counterplay
based on his better piece development. This is not the case here, however. He has lost several tempi in order to regain his c5-pawn. White is even slightly ahead in development. With his last move he is trying to bring a rook into the attack against the weak enemy d-pawn. This method is not often encountered in such positions. White usually chooses just to blockade the isolated pawn. Later, in the game S. Atalik– Zheliantdinov, Lviv 1999, Black failed to anticipate his opponent’s plan and quite quickly found himself in a very difficult position.

11... c6 12. f1 d1 a6?! 13. c4 a5 14. xf6 dxc4 15. xe7 xe7 16. d4±

His position would not be so bad if he were able protect his c4-pawn and ensure the safety of his bishop on e6. However, according to the rules of chess, he has the right to make only one move at a time in this position, so he preferred to continue the game with an equal number of pawns. White’s prospects are better in the ensuing middle game, not only because he has fewer “pawn-islands”, but also because his king is better protected.

7. xf6 xf6

8. e4

Of course, White did not give up his powerful dark-squared bishop for the enemy knight for no reason. He wants to open up the game in the centre and exploit his lead in development. This energetic plan was used by Alekhine in his games.

8... dxe4 9. b5+

White develops his bishop with tempo and prepares castling.

(diagram)

Now Black can block the check in three different ways, but his position remains difficult in all cases.
It might look as though Black has achieved a lot. He has deprived his opponent of castling and has almost completed his development. However, after 13...

0–0 14.\(\text{x}e6\) fxe6 15.\(\text{x}c6\) bxc6 16.g3 \(\text{xf}5\) 17.\(\text{g}2\)±, most of the minor pieces have rapidly disappeared off the board and Black has great difficulty in protecting his pawn-weaknesses on a7, c6 and e6, Tavani – Sheers, Email 2010. In addition, White’s knight is perfectly placed on e4 and his king, having castled artificially, is completely safe.

C) 5...\(\text{c}6\)

This is without doubt Black’s best move. He develops his knight and does not allow the rather unpleasant pin after 5...\(\text{f}6\).

6.\(\text{x}c5\)!

This is a very interesting move which has become more and more popular lately.

The explanation has little to do with the objective strength of the
Chapter 11

move. The move 6.g3 introduces the so-called Schlechter – Rubinstein system, which for many years spelled disaster for the numerous fans of the Tarrasch Defence. Many players decided to give up the struggle against this variation and abandon the Tarrasch Defence altogether. Later, however, Black began to obtain excellent results in the system 6... £if6 7.ig2 £e7 8. 0–0 0–0 9.£g5

9...c4!? This is the key move! Black does not wish to have an isolated queen’s pawn, and instead he strives to obtain counterplay by seizing space on the queenside. White has had problems against this line, mostly because he has to memorise a lot of theory. A single mistake can lead to the loss of his opening edge. Let’s see just one of the possible variations: 10.£e5 £e6 11.b3 £a5 12.£d2 £ad8 13.bxc4 £xd4 14.£xd5 £b4 15.£xf6 gxf6 16.£x£d4 £xc3 17.£c4 £xd4 18.£xa5 £xa1 19.dxe6 £c3 20.e7 £xa5 21.exd8 £xd8 22.£b1 b6 23.£c1†

(diagram)

White has a slight edge in this endgame, based on having the better pawn-structure, since Black’s kingside pawns are disrupted. However, it is also clear that Black has excellent drawing chances, in view of the reduced material left on the board. In the game Sargissian – Hallias, Aix-les-Bains 2011, White failed to realise his advantage, despite all his efforts. 23...£d7 24.£h3 £e7 25.e3 £b4 26.£c4 £c5 27.£f5 £h6 28.£g2 £e5 29.£g4+ £f8 30.£c2 £d5 31.£f1 £d2 32.£c4 £d5 33.£e2 £h5 34.£e4 £e5 35.£d3 £h5 36.£a4 a5 37.£f4 £g7 38.£h4 £d5 39.£a4 £d4 40.£f5 £d7 41.g4 £e7 42.£f4 £c7 43.£d5 £f8 44.£b5 £c2+ 45.£f3 £c3 46.£d7 £a3 47.£e4 £c5 48.£f5 £xe3 49.£xf6 £e7+ 50.£f5 £xh4 51.£b7 £e6 52.£c4 £f6+ 53.£e4 £g3 54.f5 £h4 55.£d5. The Tarrasch Defence is not encountered very often in tournament play nowadays, so it would be more sensible for White to study 6.dxc5, instead of wasting time mastering the enormous quantity of theory after 6.g3.

(diagram)

6...d4!

After 6...£f6?!, White can protect his pawn on c5 with the ugly-
looking move 7.e3. Although his light-squared bishop cannot be developed to its standard diagonal, it will be comfortably placed on g2 later. Meanwhile, Black will have serious problems regaining his pawn on c5.

7...e7 8.g3 0–0 9.g2 g4 10.d4± White’s advantage is beyond doubt, Savina – Gunina, St Petersburg 2008.

It seems rather dubious for Black to play 7...a5, because after 8.a3!?+, owing to the threat of b2-b4, Black cannot regain his pawn without considerable positional concessions. 8.e4 9.b4 (9.c1!?+?) 9...xc3 10.wb3 xb4 11.xb4 wb4 12.axb4 e4 13.d4. The material is equal, but the endgame is extremely difficult for Black. 13...b6 14.c1 bxc5 15.bxc5 d7 16.d2 xd2 17.xd2 a5 18.e3± Martins Barriga – Gaal, Argentina 1998. White has a powerful passed c5-pawn and his bishop on d4 is ideally placed in the centre. Black lags in development and his passed a5-pawn is more of a liability than an asset. All this leads us to evaluate the position as clearly in White’s favour.

7...g4. This is a good move. Black does not regain his pawn yet, but gains some counterplay. 8.a4 xf3 9.exf3 d4 10.0–0–0 xc5 11.b5 0–0 12.xc6 bxc6 13.xd4± White retains a pawn up, although it is doubled. Black has some counterplay, although insufficient for equality, along the b-file.

7.a4!

A paradoxical move! This retreat of the knight to the edge of the board was passionately criticised by Tarrasch but is considered nowadays to be one of White’s best weapons against his defence. He securely protects
the pawn on c5 with his knight.

We cannot say the same about the move 7.\textit{De}4?!?, because after 7...\textit{dd}5, Black gains excellent play by attacking White’s knight with tempo. If in this position we placed Black’s c8-bishop on g4, then we would have a position from the famous game Botvinnik-Flohr from the Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann Defence, except with colours reversed.

Black has a choice between two main possibilities here. He can try to chase his opponent’s knight away from a4 with the move \textbf{C1} 7...\textit{b}5, or he can regain his pawn immediately with the less ambitious move \textbf{C2} 7...\textit{c}5.

Black’s position remains difficult if he develops his light-squared bishop: 7...\textit{f}5 8.e3 \textit{d}3. This pawn might look strong, but will soon be a source of anxiety for Black, since it will need constant protection. 9.a3 \textit{f}6 10.b4 \textit{d}5 11.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}4 12.\textit{b}2±. White is already a solid pawn up, since Black will not regain the pawn on c5, Nickel – Kulvietis, Chessfriend.com 2003. In fact, White will soon have two extra pawns, because Black will not be able to hold on to his d3-pawn either.

7...\textit{g}4 8.a3 \textit{e}7 9.h3 \textit{h}5 10.b4 \textit{f}6, Dreev – Yemelin, Tomsk 2006, 11.g4!? \textit{g}6 12.\textit{g}2. White has securely protected his pawn on c5, so Black must try to create complications. 12...\textit{h}5 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}4 14.0–0 0–0 (after 14...\textit{x}g5, Black regains his pawn but his position remains very bad: 15.\textit{x}g5 \textit{x}g5 16.b5 \textit{a}5 17.\textit{x}g5 \textit{wx}g5 18.f4 \textit{ff}6 19.c6±; White has advanced his pawn-majority on the queenside with a big advantage and if 19...\textit{b}xc6? he wins with 20.\textit{e}1+−) 15.\textit{b}2 \textit{x}g5 (15...\textit{e}8 16.h4±) 16.\textit{xd}4±. Having exchanged his flank pawn on g5 for the central enemy d4-pawn, White can face the future with optimism, since Black’s compensation for the pawn is insufficient.

\textbf{C1} 7...\textit{b}5 8.\textit{c}xb6 \textit{ax}b6 9.e3
The subsequent play is focused on the knight on a4. With his last move White prevents the threat of b6-b5.

9...\texttt{b}4+ 10.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}7 11.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{a}5

Black brings his rook into action.

If 11...\texttt{f}6 12.\texttt{c}1! White attacks the enemy knight on c6 and forces advantageous simplification. After 12...\texttt{d}xe3 13.\texttt{f}xe3 \texttt{xd}2+ 14.\texttt{xd}2± Black has some, although insufficient, compensation for the pawn, thanks to White's weak e3-pawn and his misplaced knight on a4, Taras - Zagumenna, Email 2012.

12.\texttt{a}d4 \texttt{a}d4 13.\texttt{a}xb4 \texttt{xb}5 14.\texttt{a}xa5 bxa5 15.\texttt{c}5

An interesting position has arisen in which White's rook and two pawns can fight successfully against Black's two minor pieces. White maintains the advantage because firstly, he leads in development and secondly, he can quickly create a passed pawn on the queenside.

15...\texttt{c}6

15...\texttt{f}6 16.\texttt{xd}7\texttt{xd}7 17.\texttt{a}4 0–0 18.\texttt{xa}5 \texttt{d}6 19.0–0± Black will have difficulty coping with White's two connected passed pawns on the queenside, Delfs - Rudolf, Email 2002.

16.\texttt{d}8+ \texttt{d}8 17.0–0 \texttt{e}7 18.\texttt{a}4

It would be also interesting to try 18.\texttt{f}d1+!? \texttt{c}7 19.\texttt{a}c1.

18...\texttt{d}6 19.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{b}4 \texttt{xb}4 21.\texttt{a}6+ \texttt{d}7 22.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{a}8 23.\texttt{a}5±

White's passed a-pawn guarantees him a stable advantage in this endgame, Blanco Gramajo - Mozzino, Argentina 1996. The method of realising the advantage in endgames of this type is well known from some of Capablanca's games. It is essential for White to exchange a couple of rooks and to apply the principle of two weaknesses. Black will have to combat the enemy a-pawn and meanwhile White's rook will snap up all Black's pawns on the opposite wing.
C2) 7...hx5

This move is less ambitious. Black regains his pawn immediately, but White gains the advantage of the two bishops. Furthermore he will not have to worry about his knight on a4.

8.\(\text{\texttt{xc5}}\) f6 9.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) fx5

It is generally not desirable to develop the queen at such an early stage of the game, because the opponent might attack it with tempo.

10.\(\text{\texttt{c1}}\)

This is the most natural move, developing the rook with an attack on the enemy queen.

This is Black's best reply. His queen not only protects the d4-pawn from here, but also attacks the enemy b2-pawn.

It is clearly weaker for Black to play 10...\(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xa2}}\). Pawns on a2 are not necessarily useful in every position... 12.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 14.e4+. White has two powerful bishops and dominates the centre. In addition, Black's queen on a2 is misplaced. 14...\(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) 15.e5 \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xb6}}\) 17.e6 fxe6 18.\(\text{\texttt{xb7}}\)+. White's advantage is decisive, Schleining – Grabuzova, Valjevo 2012.

11.e3

This move is played according to the classical rules of strategy. White has the advantage of the bishop pair and so he must open the position.

11...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\)

This is Black's main reply. There is a transposition of moves after 11...\(\text{\texttt{g4}}\) 12.\(\text{\texttt{c4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{f6}}\).

His position becomes very difficult after 11...dxe3 12.\(\text{\texttt{xe3}}\).
Black is helpless against the activity of White's powerful bishops after 12...\textit{b}b4+ 13.\textit{d}d2 \textit{e}e4+ 14. \textit{e}e2 \textit{g}e7 15.0-0 0-0 (it is no better for Black to choose 15...\textit{g}g4 16.h3± Van Schyndel – Duvette, Email 2011) 16.\textit{e}e1 \textit{f}f5 17.b4 a6 18.\textit{c}c5± and White's bishops are very strong, while Black still needs to complete the development of his queenside pieces and to find a safe haven for his queen, Lalic – Kantorik, Tabor 2012. If 12...\textit{x}xb2 13.\textit{c}c4 \textit{b}b4+ 14.\textit{d}d2 \textit{e}e6 15.\textit{x}xe6 \textit{fxe}6 16.0-0± White has more than sufficient compensation for his minimal material deficit and after Black's suicidal move 16...0-0-0? 17.\textit{b}b1 \textit{a}a5 18. \textit{b}b3+– his king came under a crushing attack in the game L'Ami – Willemze, Haarlem 2012.

\textbf{12.\textit{c}c4}

12...dxe3

We should also mention that the move 12...\textit{xb}2? is senseless, because after 13.\textit{x}xd4 \textit{xd}4 14. \textit{c}c3±, White regains his pawn while preserving all the pluses of his position.

Black's other possibility here is 12...0-0 13.0-0

Now Black has a choice between many different moves.

It is bad for him to opt for 13...dxe3, since after 14.\textit{xe}3 the pawn-capture 14...\textit{xb}2? loses to 15.\textit{c}2 \textit{a}3 16.\textit{c}5+-

He fails to equalise with 13...\textit{g}4 14.exd4 \textit{xd}4 (if 14...\textit{ad}8 15.\textit{c}3 \textit{xf}3 16.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xd}4 17. \textit{f}4±, Black's knights haveno stable squares in the centre and are obviously weaker than White's bishops). After 15.\textit{e}3, White maintains an edge, which is typical for this variation: 15...\textit{xf}3 16.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 17.\textit{xd}4± and the position is similar to the one reached in the previous variation, except that the queens have been exchanged. However, Black is still a long way from equality, Peek – Thornton, Caleta 2012.

13...\textit{e}6. Black is trying to solve the problem of White's bishop pair in a radical manner; he exchanges one of them, but ends up with a weak pawn on e6. 14.
\( \text{\textit{Chapter 11}} \)

\( \text{\textit{\&e6 fxe6 15.exd4 } \text{\textit{\&xd4 16.\&xd4}} \text{\textit{\&xd4 17.\&e1 \&d5. This move has been analysed in Aagaard’s book. White maintains a slight edge, thanks to his better pawn-structure. In addition, his bishop might turn out to be stronger than Black’s knight in action on both sides of the board. In an endgame with major pieces, the vulnerability of Black’s king might prove to be decisive, because it is protected by only two pawns. For example: 18.a3 \&ac8 19.\&b4 \&fd8 20.h3\pm, with a slight advantage to White; another interesting try is 20.\&e7!? \&xc1 21.\&xc1 \&d7 22.\&c8+ \&f7 23.\&f8+ \&g6 24.h3\pm and Black will have great problems in the ensuing struggle, owing to the unfortunate position of his king on g6.} \)

\( 13.\text{\textit{\&xe3 \&b4+ 14.\&d2 \&e7+ 15.\&e2 0-0 16.0-0\pm}} \)

There has arisen a classical position on the theme of the power of the two bishops. Black can choose between a great number of moves, but this would not change the evaluation of the position as in White’s favour.

\( 16...\&d8 \)

After the move recommended by Aagaard – 16...\&e6, White can gain a slight edge with 17.\&b5\pm or 17.\&e1\pm

\( 17.\&e1 \)

Here Black has to accept a slightly inferior position and simply complete the development of his queenside pieces, because if he plays ambitiously with 17...\&e4?! 18.\&b5 \&g4?! suddenly his position deteriorates considerably. 19.\&xc6 bxc6 20.\&c2! With this move, which is based on a rather simple tactical motif, White wins a pawn (this improves on 20.\&e2 \&e8 21.\&e3 \&d7 22.\&c3 \&xc3 and in the game L’Ami – Aagaard, Helsingor 2012, the players agreed to a draw.). 20...\&f5 (Black is forced to give up a pawn, because he loses after 20...\&xf3?? 21.gxf3 \&d7 22.\&xe4 \&xd2 23.\&e8\pm+) 21.\&xc6\pm. White has good chances of realising his extra pawn.
Conclusion

We have just completed our analysis of the Tarrasch Defence. White maintains a slight but stable advantage in all the variations of this opening. Furthermore, in many lines, if Black does not wish to accept being slightly worse, White's advantage can quickly become decisive. As our main weapon against this defence we have chosen the move 6. dxc5, because in the main lines with 6.g3 not only does White have to learn an enormous amount of theory, but it is also very difficult for him to obtain even a slight edge after 9...c4. In the variation we have chosen, positions arise which are very untypical for the Tarrasch Defence. Instead of positions with an isolated queen's pawn, there arise positions with an open centre in which White can play for a win without any risk, thanks to his powerful bishop pair, no matter what defensive plan Black chooses. (The exchange of White's bishop on c4 after &e6, deprives him of the advantage of the bishop pair, but creates a weak e6-pawn in Black's camp, while White will have lively piece-play.)
Chapter 12  

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\( \text{\texttt{c}3} \) \( \text{\texttt{f}6} \)

The Semi-Tarrasch Defence

This is one of Black's strongest moves, generally leading to positions from the Queen's Gambit Declined. This will be the subject of the next section of our book.

4.\( \text{\texttt{c}xd5} \) \( \text{\texttt{\texttt{dx}d5}} \)

Although unusual, this move is nevertheless encountered from time to time in tournament practice. Of course, it is not as good as 4...exd5, the Queen's Gambit Declined, but it is playable.

In principle, Black is playing unambitiously and trying to equalise by exchanging pieces. However, this cannot guarantee equality, because White is quickly able to occupy the centre with his pawns.

5.e4

This is White's most natural move.

5...\( \text{\texttt{f}xc3} \) 6.bxc3 c5 7.\( \text{\texttt{f}3} \)

This is the simplest response. Another option is 7.a3!? The idea of this prophylactic move is to prevent an eventual check on b4, which would lead to an exchange of minor pieces. It is logical for White to try to keep as many pieces on the board as possible, since he has a central pawn majority and his potential passed d-pawn will be very strong in the middlegame (although not necessarily in the endgame). I do not see any reason for White to avoid the main line, because his advantage there is beyond doubt.

After 7.\( \text{\texttt{f}3} \) we have transposed the main tabia of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence (traditionally reached by the move order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\( \text{\texttt{c}3} \) \( \text{\texttt{f}6} \) 4.\( \text{\texttt{f}3} \) c5 5.\( \text{\texttt{c}xd5} \) gxc5 6.e4 gxc3 7 bxc3).

7...\( \text{\texttt{c}xd4}!! \)

Black continues the opening plan initiated with the move 4...\( \text{\texttt{\texttt{c}xd5}} \) and prepares to develop his bishop to b4.

(diagram)
1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. d3 c3 f6 4. cd c5 5. e4 cd 6. bc c3 7. f3 cd 8. cd

Avoiding the exchange of bishops is unpromising to Black. For example: 8... e7 9. c4 0–0 10. 0–0 c6 11. b2. White’s bishop has occupied a strong position and might be of great help in the attack, while its black counterpart merely impedes the coordination of Black’s pieces in their cramped position. 11... b6 12. c1 a5 13. d3 b7 14. e2 a6 15. cd1 b5 16. d5 exd5 17. exd5 f6 18. e5+. All White’s pieces have been deployed to active attacking posts and he soon scored a win in the game Grischuk – Paap, Mainz 2005.

A) 8... c6 9. c4

This is the best position for White’s bishop, since it supports the pawn break d4-d5.

8. cxd4

In this position Black has two options. He can first develop his queen’s knight with A) 8... c6, or he can play the immediate B) 8... b4+.

9... b5

The move 9... b4+ will usually transpose to variation B. Here we shall only cover a variation which lead to original positions. 10. d2 a5 11. b1! This move
was played long ago by Rubinstein. White forces exchanges and heads for a superior endgame. After 11...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2+ \) 12.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2 \) 0-0 13. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}5 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2+ \) 14.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}a}}5 \) 15. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}h}}c1 \text{±} \), Black lags in development and is helpless against an invasion by White's rooks along the c-file, while Black's knight on a5 is a sorry sight, Zakhartsov – Atabayev, Budapest 2012.

10.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}e}}2 \)

![](image)

10...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}4+ \)

It does not seem logical for Black to play 10...\( \mathbf{\text{a}}6 \), since the effect of this is merely to weaken his pawns and destabilise his knight on c6. 11.0-0 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}e}}7 \) 12.a4 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}4 \) 13.d5 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}a}}5 \) 14.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}f}}4 \) exd5 15.exd5 0-0 16. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}6 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}f}}6 \) 17.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}c}}1! \) With this strong move White is preparing to invade the c7-square with his rook and Black's defence is now very difficult (it is clearly weaker to play 17.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}1!? \) and in the game Van Wely – Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo 1998, White even lost from this position). 17...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}a}}7 \) (17...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}7 \) 18. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}c}}7\text{±}; \) 17...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}c}}3 \) 18.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}g}}5 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}7 \) 19. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}5\text{±} \) 18.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}e}}5\text{±} \). White has an overwhelming positional advantage, because all his pieces occupy excellent posts in the centre, his d6-pawn cramps Black's pieces and the black knight on a5 is horribly out of play.

11.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}2 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}a}}5 \)

Black's position is very bad after 11...\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2+ \) 12.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2 \) a6 13.d5!. This pawn break is standard in this variation. 13...exd5 14.exd5 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}e}}7 \) 15.d6 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}g}}6 \) 16.a4 bxa4 17.0-0 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}7 \) 18.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}d}}1 \) 0-0 19.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}a}}4 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}b}}5 \) 20. \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}}5 \) \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}}5 \) 21.d7!\text{±}. White's d-pawn has marched all the way to the d7-square and Black's pieces are completely stifled, Wolff – Ziliani, Email 2009.

12.d5

Once again this move guarantees an advantage to White.

12...exd5 13.exd5 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}e}}7 \) 14. 0-0 \( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2 \) 15.\( \mathbf{\text{\textbar{}x}} \text{d}2 \)

It is evident that the exchange of queens would be in Black's fa-
15...0-0 16.\( \text{\textipa{c}c3} \) \( \text{\textipa{c}d8} \)

17.\( \text{\textipa{f}3}! \)
White's bishop not only protects the d5-pawn but also supports the eventual occupation of the c6-outpost by his knight.

White gains no advantage from 17.\( \text{\textipa{x}b5?! \text{\textipa{b}7} } \) 18.\( \text{\textipa{c}c5} \) (18.\( \text{\textipa{d}6} \) \( \text{\textipa{g}6} \) 19.\( \text{\textipa{e}c1} \) \( \text{\textipa{x}g2} \) 20.\( \text{\textipa{x}g2} \) \( \text{\textipa{g}5+} \) 21.\( \text{\textipa{h}1} \) \( \text{\textipa{x}b5} \) ) 18...\( \text{\textipa{x}d5} \) 19.\( \text{\textipa{x}d5} \) \( \text{\textipa{x}d5=} \) since, although his pieces are more active, there are no weaknesses in the black position, Polugaevsky – Mecking, Petropolis 1973.

17...\( \text{\textipa{f}5} \) 18.\( \text{\textipa{e}c1} \) \( \text{\textipa{d}6} \) 19.\( \text{\textipa{d}4}! \)
With this strong centralisation White obtains a stable advantage in all variations.

19...\( \text{\textipa{e}8} \)

It looks rather dubious for Black to play 19...\( \text{\textipa{b}6?!} \) because of 20.\( \text{\textipa{f}4} \). White's queen frees the d4-square for the knight, which is heading for the c6-outpost. 20...\( \text{\textipa{d}7} \) 21.\( \text{\textipa{d}4} \) \( \text{\textipa{fe8}} \) 22...\( \text{\textipa{c}6±} \). White has highlighted the drawback of the move b7-b5 – the weakening of the c6-square, Jus-supow – Ribli, Montpellier 1985.

20.\( \text{\textipa{c}5} \) \( \text{\textipa{b}7} \) 21.\( \text{\textipa{d}4} \) \( \text{\textipa{a}6} \) 22.\( \text{\textipa{c}6±} \)

This position might not be as bad for Black as the one in the previous note, but nevertheless White's advantage is not in question, Muenster – Mattheus, corr 1998.

B) 8...\( \text{\textipa{b}4}+ \)

We have already mentioned that without the exchange of the bishops Black can scarcely obtain an acceptable position. The pawn structure resembles some varia-
tions of the Gruenfeld Defence, but with the important difference that there Black's bishop is placed on g7 and exerts pressure against White's d4-pawn. The bishop on g7 thus plays a very important role. Here we see just the opposite: Black's bishop is passive and it is hard for Black to find an active position for it. Therefore the best that he can do with this bishop is to exchange it.

9.\*d2\*xd2+

The way to obtain an advantage with White after 9...\*a5 was demonstrated by Rubinstein more than a hundred years ago. 10.b1 \*xd2+ 11.\*xd2 \*xd2+ 12.\*xd2 0–0 13.b5! This move has long become a standard idea for White. He provokes a weakening of Black's queenside. 13...a6 14.d3 \*d8 15.hc1 b5 16.c7±. Black's pieces are still undeveloped and White's rook has penetrated to the c7-square, Rubinstein – Schlechter, San Sebastian 1912. Rubinstein went on to realise his advantage in his typical style, slowly but surely.

10.\*xd2 0–0 11.c4

In this position Black must determine the most appropriate square for his knight. He has the choice between the safe move B1) 11...\*d7 or the more active B2) 11...\*c6.

Usually 11...b6 has no independent value, since it does not resolve the issue of the best square for the knight, but merely postpones it. 12.0–0 \*a6. This is a way for Black to use 11...b6 to head for original positions. 13.\*ac1. White does not mind an exchange of pieces, because he gains tempi to occupy the c-file with his rooks. 13...\*xc4 14.\*xc4 b5. Black prepares to transfer his knight to the c4-square to build a barrier for White's rooks on the c-file (after the routine 14...\*d7 15.\*fc1± Black has difficulties neutralising the pressure of White's major pieces on the c-file, Janjgava – Rodriguez Lopez, Linares 1997). 15.c5 a6, Anikaev – Bronstein, Minsk 1983, 16.\*fc1 \*d7 17.c7 \*b6 18.\*c6 \*c4 19.\*f4±. Black has realised his plan, but White's rooks have already accomplished their mission before Black was able to block the c-file with his knight on the c4-square.

B1) 11...\*d7 12.0–0

(diagram)

12...b6

There is no better place for Black's bishop than on the long diagonal.
The attempt to find another place for the bishop with the variation 12...\(\textit{f}6\) 13.\(\textit{f}e1\) and now 13...\(\textit{d}7\) (instead, for 13...\(\textit{b}6\) 14.\(\textit{ad}1\) \(\textit{b}7\) 15.\(\textit{f}4\) \(\textit{c}8\) 16.\(\textit{b}3\) – see 12...\(\textit{b}6\)) 14.e5 \(\textit{d}5\) 15.\(\textit{xd}5\) \(\textit{xd}5\) 16.\(\textit{ab}1\) \(\textit{b}6\) 17.h3 \(\textit{c}8\) 18.\(\textit{h}2\) \(\textit{a}4\) 19.\(\textit{bc}1\) \(\textit{b}5\) 20.\(\textit{g}4\) \(\textit{c}4\) 21.\(\textit{c}3\) \(\textit{b}5\) 22.\(\textit{g}3\) leads to a position in which Black faces a hard task defending his castled position, Smyslov – Ernst, Subotica 1987.

13.\(\textit{ad}1\) \(\textit{b}7\) 14.\(\textit{fe1}\) \(\textit{c}8\) 15.\(\textit{b}3\)

15...\(\textit{f}6\)
This is a reliable move which is often seen in the games of contemporary grandmasters. Black develops his queen close to his king with the idea of hindering his opponent’s mating attacks in the middle game.

Black has a few other possibilities here.

15...\(\textit{f}6\). Black wants to create some counterplay by putting pressure on White’s central e4-pawn. 16.\(\textit{f}4\) \(\textit{c}7\) 17.\(\textit{xc}7\) (the alternative is to keep the queens on the board and try to organise an attack in the middlegame; the move 17.\(\textit{h}4\)± was played as long ago as the classic game Keres – Fine, Ostend 1937) 17...\(\textit{xc}7\) 18.\(\textit{xc}7\) \(\textit{d}5\) 19.\(\textit{xd}5\) \(\textit{xd}5\) 20.\(\textit{e}5\) \(\textit{d}6\) 21.\(\textit{c}6\) \(\textit{a}6\) 22.\(\textit{e}7\)±. White’s piece activity provides him with a slight edge in this endgame, Vitiugov – A.Mastrovasilis, Bursa 2010. It is obvious that 22...\(\textit{xc}6\)? is impossible owing to 23.\(\textit{dxc}6\) \(\textit{xc}6\) 24.\(\textit{xf}7\)+

15...\(\textit{h}6\) – This is a solid but passive line for Black. 16.\(\textit{h}3\). White is in no hurry either and makes a useful escape square for his king. We should mention the fact that both White and Black have played all their obligatory moves and now White’s main task is to accomplish the thematic pawn-break d4-d5 under the most favourable conditions. 16...\(\textit{f}6\) 17.\(\textit{c}2\) \(\textit{fd}8\) 18.\(\textit{e}3\) \(\textit{f}4\) 19.\(\textit{b}1\) \(\textit{b}8\) 20.\(\textit{d}3\) \(\textit{a}6\) 21.\(\textit{a}3\) \(\textit{d}6\) 22.\(\textit{b}2\) \(\textit{b}7\)

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23.d5! This is the right moment to start active play, because White has improved the position of his pieces to the maximum. 23...exd5 24.e5! The sequence of moves d4-d5 exd5 and now e4-e5! is a standard resource for White and we shall encounter it in many variations, time after time. Now all Black’s pieces are restricted by his own d5-pawn, while White’s knight will occupy the excellent d4-square, from where it can go to f5, joining in the attack against the enemy king, or support the pawn break e5-e6. 24...\l’c5 25.e6 fxe6 26.\l’c4± Andreikin - Rakhmanov, Moscow 2012. For the moment Black is two pawns up, but this advantage is illusory. He will lose his e6-pawn next move and then almost all White’s pieces will take part in the attack on the enemy king.

15...\l’e8. Another slow move. 16.h3 h6 17..e3 \l’c7. Here White could have gained the advantage with the standard pawn break 18.d5! (in the game Sakaev - Hera, Budva 2009, White played too slowly with 18.\l’c2, missing this opportunity to begin decisive active operations after patiently improving his position) and after for example 18...exd5 19.exd5 \l’d6 20.d4 \l’c5 21.f5 \l’f6 22.\l’c2 \l’cd8 23.\l’xe8+ \l’xe8 24.d6± White has eliminated the blockade of the d6-square (it is well known that the queen is not the best blockader...) and completely taken over the initiative.

16.\l’e3 \l’fd8 17.h3

Once again, before the start of the decisive offensive, White should not forget about creating an escape hole for his king.

17...\l’f8 18.d5 exd5 19.\l’xe5 \l’g6 20.\l’g5↑

White has a very powerful initiative and after the blunder 20...h6? in the game Jakovenko - Naiditsch, Odessa 2009, White landed a knock-out blow with 21.\l’xf7+-- \l’xf7 22.d6 \l’c4 23.d7 \l’h7 24.\l’e8. This variation illustrates perfectly the power of White’s passed pawn on the d-file.

B2) 11...\l’c6

Black’s knight is more actively
placed on this square than on d7, but this move also has a certain drawback. After White accomplishes the thematic pawn break d4-d5, Black’s knight will be forced to retreat to the edge of the board.

12.0–0

12...b6
Black is preparing to develop his bishop.

12...e5. This is a rather dubious move. Black lags in development and is unable to prevent the invasion of White’s pieces along the c-file. 13.d5 a5 14.f1c1 f6 15.d6+ xc4 16.d5+ f7 17.xc4 e8 18.c7±. The pawn on d6 in combination with the rook on c7 is a powerful force and Black can hardly complete the development of his queenside pieces without losing material, Tregubov – G. Kuzmin, Kallithea 2002.

Black has sometimes tried 12...d6 with the idea of creating pressure as quickly as possible against White’s d4-pawn. 13.ad1

17.g5. This motif is already familiar from Jakovenko’s games. White’s knight is heading for e4 and on the way creates the threat of a tactical strike on the f7-square. Black has often underestimated this.

The careless 17...a4? allows the combination 18.xf7! xf7 19.e6! and after the retreat of Black’s queen, White’s pawn advances with decisive effect. So in the game Browne – Olafsson, Reykjavik 1980, Black was forced to give up his queen with 19.xe6 20.dxe6+ e8 21.d3 xd1 22.xd1 ac8 23.h3 d5 24.f3. There are many examples in tournament practice where two rooks successfully cope with a queen, but this position is not one of them. Black’s king is hopelessly weak and he should lose.

17.ac8 18.e4±. The blockade is broken and the advance of the d-pawn guarantees an advantage to White.

13.ad1
Unlike in the majority of the closed openings, where White’s rooks are generally best placed on c1 and d1, here their best squares are d1 and e1.

13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b7}}}

Black is usually reluctant to place his knight voluntarily at the edge of the board. Nevertheless he sometimes plays the move 13...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d5}}}, for example: 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{d3}}} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{b7}}} 15.\textit{\texttt{f6}}

For 15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c8}}} 16.d5 – see 13...\textit{\texttt{b7}}.

Black cannot afford prophylactic moves in this position, since his opponent is ideally prepared for the breakthrough in the centre; thus after 15...h6 16.d5! exd5

17.e5 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{c4}}} 18.\textit{\texttt{e2}} \textit{\texttt{c7}} 19.\textit{\texttt{d4}} \textit{\texttt{ae8}} 20.f4 b5 21.\textit{\texttt{h1}} \textit{\texttt{b6}} 22.\textit{\texttt{f5}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 23.\textit{\texttt{d7}} \textit{\texttt{e7}} 24.\textit{\texttt{g4}}– White has a powerful attack, while Black’s extra pawn is absolutely irrelevant, Gulko – Jussupow, Riga 1995. Furthermore, the d5-pawn impedes the action of Black’s b7-bishop along the long diagonal.

15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{e7}}} 16.\textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{fd8}} 17.h4. White’s pieces have occupied ideal positions. It is time to advance pawns. He not only makes an escape hole for his king but also wants to use his h-pawn in the attack. 17...h6 18.d5! \textit{\texttt{ac8}} 19.h5 \textit{\texttt{f6}} 20.\texttt{g4}± Sasikiran – Golod, Ajaccio 2006. White’s rook’s pawn has been advanced to h5, preventing Black from trying to exchange the queens with \textit{\texttt{g6}}; also, if White tries to penetrate with his queen to the h7-square Black will not have the defensive resource g7-g6 available. The following variation illustrates how dangerous this can be: 20...exd5 21.e5 \textit{\texttt{e7}} 22.\texttt{f5}+-

14.\texttt{f6}
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3...c3 d6f6 4.cd $xd5 5.e4 $xc3 6.bc $c5 7...f3 cd 8.cd

14...$e8

Black occupies the open file with his rook.

There is a transposition of moves after 14...$a5 15...d3.

The voluntary retreat of the knight from the centre with 14...$e7 seems dubious, since after 15.d5 exd5 16.exd5, although Black succeeds in blocking the enemy pawn with his knight, he is unable to counter the penetration of the enemy knight to the c6-square. 16...$f5 17...e5 $d6 18...c6 $xc6 19.dxc6 $xc4 20. $f4±

After some tactical complications, on the board a major-piece endgame has arisen which illustrates the power of the far-advanced passed pawn. In the game Petrosian – Korchnoi, Ciocco 1977, White went on to give a demonstration, one which has become classic, of how to realise the advantage in positions of this type:

1. He cramped Black’s pieces to the maximum with the threat of advancing his c6-pawn.

2. He then began advancing his kingside pawns, weakening the enemy king in the process. Black’s pieces could not help protect his king, because they were busy countering the passed c6-pawn.

20...$d6 21.$xd6 $c7 22.g3 $h6 23.$e5 $ac8 24.$d5 $h7 25.$e4 $g8 26.$g2 a6 27.$h4 b5 28.g4 $h7 29.$e2 $h8 30.$g5 $h5 31.$d2 $fe8 32.$f3 $g6 33.$d5 $f8 34.$f6 $e7 35.$d7 $e8 36. $xg6 $e5 37.$xh5#

15.d5 $a5

Before exchanging on d5, Black dislodges the enemy bishop from its active position.

After 15...exd5 16.$xd5 White’s bishop occupies a very powerful post in the centre.

After 16...$a5 17.$f4 $c7 18.$f5 $xd5 19.exd5, in the game Spassky–Petrosian, Moscow 1969, White brilliantly accomplished a plan based on advancing the d-pawn as far as possible. 19...$c2 20.$f4 $xa2. Of course, winning the a2-pawn is little consolation for Black, because after 21.d6 $cd8
22.d7, his rooks are a sorry sight, restricted by White's pawn on d7. The game continued 22...wc4 23.\l'f5 h6 24.\l'c1 wa6 25.\l'e7 b5 26.\l'c4 wb6 27.\l'c8 \l'b7 28.\l'e6 \l'd6 29.\l'xd8 \l'xf5 30.\l'c6 and Black resigned in view of the inevitable huge material losses. This is one of the games which contributed greatly to the drop in popularity of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence.

It looks safer for Black to play 16...wc7 17.\l'g5 h6 18.\l'g4 and although White's pieces are more active, his advantage is only minimal since, unlike in the previous variation, he does not have a passed pawn, Kolev - Delchev, Elenite 1994.

16...wc7 17.\l'f4 \l'd8 (here it is possibly best for Black to play 17...\l'fe8 18.h3 \l'b4 19.\l'b3 \l'a6 20.\l'f5 g6 21.\l'g4 \l'c4 22.\l'xc4 \l'xc4 23.\l'd7 \l'c5 24.\l'f4 \l'e7 25.\l'd6 and although his position is clearly worse he retains some chance of offering further resistance, Perez Gutierrez - Bonay, Email 2009) 18.\l'd4+. White's pieces are centralised and strong and the position is unquestionably very difficult for Black, Epishin - Amil Serantes, El Sauzal 2007.

16.\l'd3 exd5
Bearing in mind the final evaluation of this variation, it is possible that here Black would do better to accept a somewhat inferior position with 16...wc7 17.\l'f4 h6?! 18.d6+ Kashlinskaya - Manakova, Gaziantep 2012, or 16...\l'd6 17.dxe6 \l'xe6 18.\l'd4+ 17.e5!

After this move, all White's pieces have occupied active attacking positions and Black must constantly consider the possible sacrifice on h7.

17...\l'c4
Bringing his knight into play.

Black cannot solve his defensive problems with the line 17...\l'e7 18.\l'f4 f5 19.\l'd4 g6. He has securely blocked the b1-h7 diagonal, but in doing so has weakened his castled position and also the dark squares. Furthermore, most of his pawns are now placed on squares of the same colour as his bishop, which constitutes another defect of his position. 20.h4. White begins an attack on the vulnerable g6-square; first his h-pawn advances, soon to be joined by his rook on the third rank. 20...\l'c6 21.\l'b5 \l'e6 22.h5 \l'cd8 23.\l'xg6 \l'xg6 24.\l'e3 \l'd7 25.\l'c2 \l'g7 26.\l'b3+. Black's king is very weak
and he will have difficulty defending his d5-pawn, while White's knight threatens to occupy a dominating position on the d6-square, Spiteri – Fey, Email 2007. White has a clear advantage despite Black's extra pawn.

18.\textit{\&f4} \textit{\&b2}

Black fails to solve his defensive problems completely with the move 18...h6, since after 19.\textit{\&f5} g6 20.\textit{\&h3} \textit{\&g7} 21.e6 his kingside is weak, the g6-square in particular. 21...\textit{\&f6} 22.exf7 \textit{\&xf7} 23.\textit{\&g3} \textit{\&ce8}, Bhat – Gerzhoy, Palma de Mallorca 2009, 24.\textit{\&h4} \textit{\&xe1}+ 25. \textit{\&xe1} \textit{\&e8}. Black's best chance is to head for an endgame, because with his king so weak he risks being mated at any moment. 26. \textit{\&xe8} \textit{\&xe8} 27.\textit{\&xg6} \textit{\&e1}+ 28.\textit{\&f1} \textit{\&d2} 29.\textit{\&h4}+ \textit{\&f7} 30.\textit{\&g6}+ \textit{\&f8} 31.\textit{\&xh6}+ \textit{\&f7} 32.\textit{\&f4}+ \textit{\&e6} 33. \textit{\&g4}+ \textit{\&f7} 34.\textit{\&h5}+ \textit{\&g7} 35.\textit{\&e2}±. The realisation of White's material advantage will be not at all simple, but nevertheless his three passed pawns on the kingside should bring him victory in the end.

19.\textit{\&xh7}+

It looked as though Black had achieved his aim and was about to exchange White's bishop, an essential component of a successful attack. But we should remember Chekhov's dictum: "In the first act, if you can see a gun hanging on the wall, it will be fired by the end of the play" White's bishop on d3 was aimed at the h7-square all along.

19...\textit{\&xh7} 20.\textit{\&g5}+ \textit{\&g6}

Black's king is forced to take a perilous walk in front of his army. Of course he loses immediately after 20...\textit{\&g8} 21.\textit{\&h4}+–

21.\textit{\&h4} \textit{\&c4}

After 21...\textit{\&e7} the unfavourable position of Black's knight becomes a telling factor. White either wins it or brings his rook into the attack with decisive effect: 22.\textit{\&b1} \textit{\&d3} (22...\textit{\&c4} 23.\textit{\&b3}+–) 23.\textit{\&g3}–

22.\textit{\&d4}!

This is stronger than 22.h5+, which was played in the classic game Polugaevsky – Tal, Moscow 1969. White still won, but later it was proved that Black could have
defended better: 22...\(\text{h}\)6 23. \(\text{c}\)xf7+ \(\text{h}\)7 24. \(\text{g}\)5+ \(\text{g}\)8 25. \(\text{e}\)6 \(\text{xf}\)6 26. \(\text{xf}\)6 \(\text{gxf}\)6 27. \(\text{d}\)2 \(\text{c}\)6 28. \(\text{xb}\)2 \(\text{e}\)8 29. \(\text{h}\)6+ \(\text{h}\)7 30. \(\text{f}\)5 \(\text{exe}\)6 31. \(\text{exe}\)6 \(\text{exe}\)6 32. \(\text{c}\)2 \(\text{c}\)6 33. \(\text{e}\)2 \(\text{c}\) 34. \(\text{e}\)7+ \(\text{h}\)8 35. \(\text{h}\)4 \(\text{f}\)5 36. \(\text{g}\)6+ \(\text{g}\)8 37. \(\text{xa}\)7 1-0.

22...\(\text{xd}\)4 23. \(\text{x}\)d4

Black's only active piece has disappeared from the board and his king is doomed.

23...\(\text{ac}\)8 24. \(\text{e}\)3

The attack is more important than Black's miserable knight on b2.

24...f6 25. \(\text{e}\)6 \(\text{fxg}\)5 26. \(\text{h}\)5+ \(\text{h}\)6 27. \(\text{e}\)7 \(\text{we}\)8 28. \(\text{xf}\)8 \(\text{exe}\)8 29. \(\text{xb}\)2 \(\text{xh}\)5 30. \(\text{e}\)2+ \(\text{g}\)6

31. \(\text{g}\)4+–

Black has two pawns for the exchange, but he is unable to protect his king against the attack by White's queen and rooks, Gabriel – Tsonev, Email 2008.

Conclusion

We have now completed the analysis of the Semi-Tarrasch Defence. As is to be expected, it leads to inferior positions for Black. This should really come as no surprise. It is risky for him to give up the centre in the opening without obtaining definite counterplay, as happens in the Grunfeld Defence, so we could well regard the Semi-Tarrasch Defence as a sort of "inferior Grunfeld".

White's plan is quite simple. He should place his rooks on d1 and e1 and prepare the pawn break d4-d5. Later, depending on how Black's reacts, there are two main ways for the game to develop:

1. If White's pawn is allowed to complete the triumphant march forward to the d7-square, totally cramping Black's forces, he can hardly do anything, since he can blockade the pawn only with his queen and it is well known that queens make poor blockaders. White can break this blockade easily with the help of his knight (generally via f3-g5-e4).

2. If Black evicts White's bishop from its active position with the move \(\text{a}\)5, White continues with the favourable pawn sacrifice d4-d5, answering exd5 with e4-e5! Subsequently he carries out the knight manoeuvre \(\text{f}\)3-d4-f5. It is also worth remembering that White often has the tactical resource of the bishop sacrifice on h7, with a decisive attack.

Of course, it would be an exaggeration to claim that White's advantage in the Semi-Tarrasch is decisive, but his play is unquestionably much easier.
In this section of the book we shall begin the analysis of one of the main responses for Black against the moves 1.d4 d5 2.c4 – the Queen's Gambit Declined with 2...e6. It has been played for many years by chess players of all levels, starting with juniors and ending up with matches for the World Championship. It is not easy for White to obtain even a minimal edge in this opening and many of its variations have been analysed far into the endgame.

We have chosen as our main weapon for White the Exchange Variation with 4.cxd5 and we have very good reasons for this. The main point is that, unlike in many other variations of the Queen's Gambit, here it is very difficult for Black to simplify the position.

In the Exchange Variation, depending on how Black responds, White has two basic plans. These are the Minority Attack (Chapter 15) and the Pillsbury Attack (Chapter 16). It is not easy for Black to defend against these plans, so quite often the players of today try to circumvent them by employing the move order 3...e7 (instead of the natural 3...\(\text{\textit{f6}}\)). We shall therefore devote Chapters 13-14 to this line.
Chapter 13

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e7} \)

The 3...\( \text{e7} \) Variation

This apparently modest move is considered by contemporary theory to be more precise than 3...\( \text{\&f6} \).

The idea is to impede the natural development of White’s bishop to the g5-square and thus to avoid the main lines of the Exchange Variation. The line with 3...\( \text{\&e7} \) became popular after the match for the World Championship between Botvinnik and Petrosian in 1963 and since then it has been used regularly in tournaments and matches at the very highest level. It should be sufficient to mention that it was a frequent guest in the matches for the World Championship between Karpov and Kasparov. Among the current chess elite, players who often opt for this line as Black include Aronian, Carlsen, Ivanchuk, Jakovenko, Ponomariov and many others.

This variation often leads to complex multi-piece positions, offering chances for both sides. Nevertheless, White generally succeeds in obtaining the more promising position. In this chapter we shall analyse the variations in which Black plays c7-c6 at some stage. The lines in which he tries to advance c7-c5 in one move will be covered in the next chapter.

4.cxd5

This is a principled move, after which the so-called “Carlsbad” pawn structure appears on the board.

4...\( \text{exd5} \) 5.\( \text{\&f4} \)

White’s bishop has been prevented from going to g5, so it finds another good square – f4.

5...\( \text{c6} \) 6.\( \text{e3} \)

(diagram)

In this position Black has various options: A) 6...\( \text{\&f6} \), B) 6...
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qe7 4.cd ed 5.Qf4 c6 6.e3

\[ \text{\textdollar d6 and the most principled – C) 6...\textdollar f5.} \]

\textbf{A) 6...\textdollar f6}

This is not the most critical move, since Black fails to exploit the advantages offered by the 3...\textdollar e7 move order and simply transposes to variations which we shall cover in detail later, but with the difference that White’s bishop is on f4 instead of g5. On the whole, this circumstance is in White’s favour, because in many lines Black is deprived of the simplifying manoeuvre \textdollar e4, with which he facilitates his defence by exchanges.

7.Qd3 \textdollar bd7

There has arisen a position which will be analysed in Chapters 15-16, but with the white bishop on the g5-square. White usually tries to attack Black’s c6-pawn with the help of the pawn advance b2-b4-b5. This plan is known as the “minority attack” Black, in turn, generally tries to organise counterplay on the kingside, or adopts a waiting strategy, with the aim of neutralising White’s queenside pressure and making a draw.

\textbf{11...Qg6}

This is Black’s most logical move. He gains a tempo by attacking his opponent’s bishop.

Practice has also seen the move 11...\textdollar e6 – this is a standard manoeuvre in such positions. Black wants to exchange the light-squared bishops and in prepara-
tion for this he transfers his knight from f8 to g7: 12.\textit{e}e5 g6 13.\textit{ab}1 \textit{g}7 14.b4 a6 15.a4 \textit{f}5 16.b5 \textit{xd}3 17.\textit{xd}3 axb5 18.axb5\textit{f}6. Although Black has accomplished his plan, it has taken too much time and he is condemned to a long and passive defence of his weakness on c6, Beliavsky – Afif, Lucerne 1989.

11...\textit{h}5. We are already familiar with this knight transfer, except that here Black posts his other knight to the g7-square. 12.\textit{h}2 g6 13.\textit{ab}1 a5 14.a3 \textit{g}7 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 \textit{f}5 17.b5 \textit{xd}3 18.\textit{xd}3\textit{f}6. Once again, White is ahead of his opponent in the development of his initiative, Anapolsky – Danielian, Alma-Ata 1991.

11...\textit{d}6. After this move Black wants to use his knight on f8 not for creating counterplay on the kingside, but for defending on the opposite side of the board. 12.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 13.\textit{ab}1 a5 14.a3 \textit{e}6

15.\textit{a}4. In such positions this manoeuvre of White’s knight to the c5-square is standard. The point is that if White plays b4-b5 directly, without first controlling the c5-square, then after b4-b5, Black can reply with c6-c5, creating counterplay on the c-file. 15...\textit{d}7 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4 b5. This is equally a standard defensive resource for Black. Obviously, after this White will not be able to play b4-b5, but later the weakness of Black’s pawn on c6 might become an important factor. 18.\textit{c}5 \textit{b}6 19.\textit{a}1 f6 20.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}7 21.\textit{xa}8 \textit{xa}8 22.\textit{a}1. White has a slight but stable advantage, thanks to his superior pawn structure and more active bishop, Anand – Kar- pov, Corsica 2009.

12.\textit{h}2 \textit{d}6 13.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6

14.\textit{ab}1

14...\textit{e}7

This is the main line, but White also retains the advantage after the alternatives. For example: 14...\textit{d}7 15.b4 a6 16.\textit{a}4 \textit{ad}8 17.\textit{c}5 \textit{c}8 18.a4 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{fc}1; White has deployed his
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 d7 4.cd ed 5.f4 c6 6.e3

d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 d7 4.cd ed 5.f4 c6 6.e3

pieces in ideal fashion for the minority attack and Black will have soon very difficult problems to solve, Dreev – Seirawan, Dordrecht 2004.

Or 14...a5 15.a3 d7 16.a4 g6 17.c5± and again White’s game is much easier, because he has a very simple plan to follow, Macieja – E.L’Ami, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010.

15.b4 a6 16.a4 d4

17.xe4!

White does best to exchange this knight immediately, because after 17.b5 axb5 18.axb5, Black can gain enough counterplay to maintain the balance with 18... g5! 19.xg5 xg5 20.f4 xf6 21.f5 h4= Le Quang – Grachev, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

17...dxe4 18.d2 f5

After 18...f5 19.b5 axb5 20. axb5 e6 21.bxc6 bxc6 22.f1± White keeps an edge by attacking his opponent’s weak c6-pawn, because Black’s kingside offensive is ineffective.

19.d2!

This is an important defensive move. White’s knight must go quickly to the kingside, which has been weakened by the pawn advance h2-h3.

19...h4 20.f1 d8

The point of White’s 19th move can be seen in the following variation: 20...g5 21.g3 g6 22.c5± and Black’s kingside attack comes to a dead end.

21.d1

21...e6

White also preserves some advantage after Black’s other possibilities: 21...g5 22.g3±; 21...d5 22.c5 g5 23.g3 g6 24.
White has successfully defended his kingside and his initiative on the opposite wing might prove to be very dangerous.

22.b5 axb5 23.axb5 d5 24.c5 g6 25.bxc6 bxc6±. Black's c6-pawn is isolated from the rest of his pawn-mass, which gives White a big advantage.

B) 6...d6

This move might appear illogical, because Black makes two moves with the same piece in the opening, but this is justified by the fact that, in principle, exchanges are usually in favour of the defending side. In addition, the position is closed, so White is unable to exploit effectively the tempo presented by his opponent.

7.xd6 xd6 8.d3

(diagram)

Black has a choice between two moves here. He can develop his king's knight with B1) 8...f6, or he can place it in a less active position with B2) 8...e7, preparing the favourable exchange of the light-squared bishop (c8-f5).

B1) 8...f6 9.c2 0-0 10.ge2

10...e8

Black fails to equalise with 10...b6, because although he succeeds in making the favourable exchange of the light-squared bishops, he weakens his queenside pawn-structure in the process. 11.0-0 a6 12.g3±. In the game Aleksandrov - Sanikidze, Budva 2009, White gained a slight edge and after the careless move 12...c5?! 13.dxc5 xc5 14.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d3 c6 4.cd cd 5.cd c6 6.e3

...f4 d8 15.ea1 xd3 16.xd3± Black ended up in a very difficult position, owing to the weakness of his d5-pawn and his lag in development.

11.h3

White plans to castle queenside and start a pawn storm on the other wing. This plan is his most precise response to this system of development for Black.

11...bd7 12.g4 f8 13.0-0-0 a5 14.b1 b5 15.g3

White is clearly ahead of his opponent in the development of his initiative. Furthermore, not only is he attacking on the kingside, he is also eyeing the enemy pawn on c6, weakened by the move b7-b5.

15...h6

This is a very important decision for Black, because it is usually inadvisable to push your pawns on the side where the opponent is attacking.

If 15...d8, White should continue with 16.ce2!? (after 16.g5 d67 17.h4 b6=, Black created some counterplay in the game Sasikiran – Wang Yue, Beijing 2008), for example 16..d7 17.gxe4 dx4 18.xe4 dx4 19.xe4 xg5 20.h4 xh6 21.xc1 xac8 22.g3± and White has a big advantage, because his kingside attack can become very dangerous, while Black's offensive on the opposite wing has led only to the appearance of new pawn weaknesses in his position.

16.c1!? This move is stronger than 16.e4 dxe4 17.xcxe4 dxe4 18.xe4, although even then, in the game Smirnov – Isajevsky, Samara 2004, White was better, owing to the weakness of Black's c6-pawn.

16...a4 17.ce2 d7 18.f5 xf5 19.xf5 a6

20.h4

Now the consequences of the move 15...h6 are clear.

20...g6 21.g5 hxg5 22.hxg5 d6 23.h6 xg5 24.xf1 xg5 25.g3 xg7 26.d3 a3 27.b3 gh7 28.xc5 e6 29.e2 xg6 30.f4 d6 31.c1 d8
32.\textit{\textbf{c}c2} $\textit{\textbf{g}}7$ \textit{\textbf{33.\textbf{d}d3}$\pm$, and White can combines his threats on the h-file with attacks against Black’s queenside pawns.

\textit{\textbf{B2) 8...\textit{\textbf{e}e7 9.\textit{\textbf{b}b1}$?\}}}

Here the alternative 9.\textit{\textbf{c}c2} has the drawback that on this square the queen does not support the advance of the b-pawn.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Diagram showing the game position after move 8...\textit{\textbf{e}e7}.}
\end{figure}

9...\textit{\textbf{g}6}

Black is preparing not only kingside castling, but also the standard exchange of the bishops with $\textit{\textbf{f}f5}$.

With the same idea he sometimes plays the line 9...\textit{\textbf{f}f6} 10.\textit{\textbf{f}f3} $\textit{\textbf{f}f5}$ 11.b4 $\textit{\textbf{d}d7}$ 12.b5 $\textit{\textbf{x}xd3}$ 13.\textit{\textbf{x}xd3} c5 14.0–0 0–0 15.\textit{\textbf{a}ac1}$\pm$. White has a slight advantage in this position, because Black’s d5-pawn can become very weak in many lines. For example, it would be a mistake to play 15...\textit{\textbf{e}e8}? Kurnosov – Bazeev, St Petersburg 2011 (a better option was 15...c4 16.\textit{\textbf{b}b1}$\pm$ and although Black’s d5-pawn is vulnerable, his protected passed pawn provides him with some counterplay) and here White could have landed crushing tactical blow with 16.\textit{\textbf{c}cxd5} $\textit{\textbf{c}cxd5}$ 17.dxc5 $\textit{\textbf{f}f4}$ (it would be even worse to play 17...\textit{\textbf{e}e6}, in view of 18.\textit{\textbf{g}g5} 18.exf4 $\textit{\textbf{xc}5}$ 19.\textit{\textbf{e}e3} $\textit{\textbf{b}b6}$ 20.\textit{\textbf{e}e2} $\textit{\textbf{f}fe8}$ 21.\textit{\textbf{c}c4} g6 22.g3$\pm$ and White has an extra (albeit doubled) pawn.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Diagram showing the game position after move 9...\textit{\textbf{g}6}.}
\end{figure}

10.b4

White decides to continue immediately with the standard pawn advance in such positions.

10...\textit{\textbf{f}f5} 11.b5 0–0 12.\textit{\textbf{f}f5} $\textit{\textbf{xf}5}$ 13.\textit{\textbf{ge}2} $\textit{\textbf{d}d7}$ 14.0–0 $\textit{\textbf{f}f6}$ 15.h3$\pm$

White is slightly better here, since he has completely seized the initiative on the queenside.

15...\textit{\textbf{c}5}

This standard idea does not equalise for Black in this position, because although he creates some counterplay his d5-pawn is now very weak.

16.dxc5 $\textit{\textbf{xc}5}$ 17.\textit{\textbf{d}d1} $\textit{\textbf{d}d8}$

The character of the struggle remains more or less the same after 17...\textit{\textbf{fd}8} 18.\textit{\textbf{d}d3}$\pm$, and White
starts to exploit Black's weaknesses, Bacrot – Fressinet, Germany 2011.

18.\(d3\) d7
Or 18...\(\text{fe}819.\text{ac}1\)
19.\(a4\) \(b4\) 20.\(b3\) \(h4\)
After 20...\(\text{e}7\), White has the powerful response 21.b6!!

21.\(d4\) \(e4\) 22.\(b2\) \(xd4\)
23.\(xd4\) \(f6\) 24.\(c1\) b6 25.\(c3\)
\(\text{f}d8\) 26.a4 \(g7\) 27.\(c2\) \(g5\)
28.a2!!

In this position Black has some tactical chances, based on the activity of his knight, but he will need to work hard not to lose his d5-pawn.

C) 6...\(f5\)

Now Black loses immediately following 8...\(\text{hx}h4\)? 9.\(\text{b}3\) b6 10.\(\text{xh}4\)! This sacrifice is decisive and White's position is winning by force: 10...\(\text{xd}5\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\) \(cxd5\)
12.\(\text{b}5+\) \(d7\) 13.\(\text{xd}7+\) \(f8\) 14.\(\text{xd}5\) \(d8\) (14...\(\text{d}8\) 15.\(g5\))
15.\(d6+\) \(e7\) 16.\(b7\) \(g8\) 17.\(xe7+\)

Black fails to equalise with 8...h5 9.\(g5\) \(d6\) 10.\(ge2\) \(a6\) 11.\(xd6\)
\(\text{xd6}\) 12.\(f4\) \(c7\) 13.\(ae2\) \(b4\) 14.\(d2\) \(e7\) 15.\(f3\) \(e6\) 16.\(ce2\)
\(xf4\) 17.\(xf4\) \(xd2+\) 18.\(\text{xd2+}\) and White maintains an advantage in this endgame, since most of Black's pawns are placed on the
same colour as his bishop (his h5-pawn is particularly weak), Kar- plov – Portisch, Linares 1989.

After 8...h6, White can gain an edge by following a plan similar to one of the variations of the Caro-Kann Defence: 9.h5 (White also keeps a slight advantage with the simple line 9.\( \text{c}f3 \text{!?} \text{f}6 \text{e}5 \text{Schepetkova – Kamnev, St Petersbursg 2012} \)) 9...\( \text{h}7 \text{d}3 \text{.}

White's plan is quite straightforward. He exchanges the light-squared bishops and then brings his knight to the f5-square, from where it will exert powerful pressure against Black's kingside.

After 10...\( \text{c}f6 \text{f}3 \text{d}6 \text{.} \text{g}2 \text{xf}4 \text{e}xf4 \text{e}7 \text{f}2 \text{bd}7 \text{e}1 \text{c}1 \text{0–0–0} \text{f}5 \text{, White has a considerable advantage, owing to the terrible misplacement of Black's bishop on the h7-square, Salov – Shneider, Jurma-la 1983.}

10...\( \text{xd}3 \text{.} \text{x}d3 \text{f}6 \text{d}3 \text{ge}2 \text{xf}4 \text{e}4 \text{xf}4 \text{d}6 \text{5–0–0} \text{bd}7 \text{e}2 \text{ce}2 \text{0–0–0} \text{g}3 \text{e}8 \text{f}5 \text{f}8 \text{b}1 \text{, White has transferred his knight to f5 and although Black has castled queenside (which means that the f5-knight is less dangerous to him than if he had castled kingside) White's advantage is unquestionable, Vitiugov – Zhou Ji-anchao Ningbo 2010.}

8.h3

This move was analysed in detail by Mikhail Botvinnik and used by him in his match for the World Championship against Tigran Petrosian, back in 1963.

White is planning to develop his knight on f3 and to castle artificially. After this his position will be more pleasant, thanks to his extra space.

Another possible plan, also studied by Botvinnik, is based on the move 8.h4?!

8...\( \text{f}6 \text{.}

This is Black's safest move. Black wants to castle as quickly as possible.

8...c5. This move seems slightly premature, because it gives Black a weakness on d5. 9.dxc5 \( \text{x}c5 \text{.} \text{g}2 \text{e}7 \text{f}3 \text{bc}6 \text{.} \text{d}5 \text{c}6 \text{e}5 \text{。} \text{h}5 \text{f}6 \text{.} \text{g}2 \text{e}7 \text{f}3 \text{bc}6 \text{.}
0–0 0–0 13.\textit{xc}1 \textit{xb}6 14.a3 \textit{g}6 15.\textit{g}3 a6 16.b4 \textit{xc}8 17.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}7 18.\textit{xc}7 \textit{exc}7 19.\textit{dc}5±. White's knight has occupied an ideal position on c5 and he has the edge, because Black has difficulty in exploiting White's weaknesses on the kingside, Lputian – M. Magomedov, Azov 1991.

8...h5. Black sacrifices a pawn, with the aim of exploiting the opponent's kingside weaknesses. 9.gxh5 \textit{cd}7 10.\textit{e}2 and now after 10...\textit{df}6 (if 10...\textit{gf}6, Timofeev – B.Socko, St Petersbourg 2012, it would be best for White to return the pawn immediately with 11. \textit{h}6±) 11.\textit{e}5 \textit{d}6, Hort – Renet, Uzes 1990, 12.\textit{ef}3! White's best policy is not to try to retain his material advantage, but to strive instead to obtain a lively piece play. After 12...\textit{hxh}5 13.\textit{g}1 \textit{f}8 14.\textit{g}5 \textit{h}6 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}7 (Black's position is terrible after greedy 15...\textit{fxh}3?! 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}8 17.\textit{f}4± and he has virtually no moves) 16.\textit{f}3± White's pieces have occupied active attacking positions, while Black will have great difficulty bringing his g8-knight into the game.

8...\textit{d}7. This move usually transposes to the 8...\textit{d}6 variation. It leads to original positions only if Black advances with g7–g5. 9.\textit{d}3 g5. This is an interesting plan, but still insufficient for equality. 10.\textit{h}2! An important finesse. 10...h5 11.f3 h\textit{x}g4 (or 11...\textit{gf}6 12.\textit{c}2 c5 13.0–0–0 \textit{c}8 14.\textit{b}1± and White's position is preferable, owing to Black's weakness on f5, Skomorokhin – Bykov, Vladimir 2008). Now White can recapture with his h-pawn (thanks to having retreated his bishop to h2!) and Black cannot benefit from the pin on the h-file, for example 12.\textit{hxg}4 \textit{d}6 13.\textit{c}2 \textit{g}3+ 14.\textit{hxg}3 \textit{hxh}1 15.\textit{h}2 \textit{b}6 16.0–0–0 \textit{hxh}2 17.\textit{hxh}2 0–0–0 18. \textit{wh}5±, and once again White has a slight edge thanks to the weakness on f5.

8...\textit{d}6. Black is preparing to develop his knight on e7. This plan does not equalise, however, because it is too slow. 9.\textit{g}e2 \textit{e}7 10. \textit{wb}3\textit{c}8 11.\textit{g}2 \textit{g}6 12.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{a}6 14.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7, Korchnoi – Spassky, Kiev 1968. Here, after the energetic move 15.e4!, White could have completely taken over the initiative, for instance 15...\textit{dxe}4 16.\textit{xe}4 \textit{c}7 17.0–0–0 0–0 18.\textit{h}5 \textit{d}5 19.\textit{h}6 and his kingside attack is running smoothly.

9.\textit{f}3
9...0–0

Black fails to equalise with 9...

h5 10.g5 e4 11.b3 b6 12.c2 d6 13.a3 a5 14.c1 c3 15.

xc3 xc3+ 16.xc3±, and White has a slight edge in this endgame, Geller – Pachman, Beverwijk 1965.

After 9... d7, the transfer of

Black's queen's knight to the c4-


c2 c8 14.g2 d7 15.f3 g6 16.e4! This strong move guarantees White's advantage (also playable are 16.ac1 b6 17.b3 d7 18.e2 Botvinnik – Petrovian, Moscow 1963, and 16.a1!± and in both cases White's position is better). 16...0–0 17.exd5 cxd5 18.h4→ and White's kingside attack might turn out to be very
dangerous.

10.d3 c5 11.f1! c6 12.

g2

The move 12..xc8 does not equalise for Black either. 13.c1 e8 (13...a6 14.dxc5 xc5 15.a3 a7 16.e2 e8 17.g5 h6 18.h4 g5 19.g3 d7 20.b1± – Black's king is vulnerable and the d5-pawn is weak, Vitiugov – Glotov, Rybinsk 2004) 14.dxc5 xc5 15.b5 f8 16.fd4 xd4 17.

xc8 xc8 18.exd4± arriving at a typical pawn structure for this variation, Korchnoi – Karpov, Merano 1981. White has a slight edge, because Black's bishop on e6 is very passive, restricted by his own pawn on d5. We should also note the role of White's pawn on g4, which also restricts Black's bishop and deprives it of the f5-square.

13.xd4

12...xd4

After this move we again have the familiar pawn structure on the board.

Black cannot equalise with 13...d6 14.xd6 xd6 15.ce2 e8 16.c1 d7 17.b1±. White
has firm control of the d4-square and retains an advantage, despite his somewhat weakened kingside pawn structure. In the game Geller – Spassky, Moscow 1967, White subsequently managed to increase his advantage: 17...\(\text{ad8}\) 18.\(\text{b3}\)\(\text{b8}\) 19.\(\text{hd1}\)\(h5\) 20.\(g5\)\(\text{e4}\) 21.\(\text{f3}\)\(\text{hxh3+}\) 22.\(\text{xh3}\)\(\text{xf2+}\) 23.\(\text{g2}\)\(\text{xd1}\) 24.\(\text{xd1}\)\(\text{c5}\) 25.\(\text{xd5}\)\(\text{xe3}\) 26.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{exe3}\) 27.\(\text{c3}\)± and after the blunder 27...\(\text{d8}\)?, White's gained a winning position with 28.\(\text{xd8+}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 29.\(\text{e4}\) –

\[14.\text{exd4} \text{d7} 15.\text{c2} \text{f6} 16.\text{f3} \text{e8} 17.\text{e5} \text{d6} 18.\text{ae1} \text{xe5} 19.\text{xe5} g6 20.\text{f2} \text{d7} 21.\text{e2} \text{b6} 22.\text{he1} \text{c4} 23.\text{xc4} \text{xc4} 24.\text{d2} \text{e8} 25.\text{e3}\] Botvinnik – Petrosian, Moscow (game/14) 1963.

Later in this game Botvinnik managed to prove that his knight was stronger than the bishop in this position. It is half a century since that game was played, but Botvinnik's play can still be considered exemplary.

\[25...\text{a6} 26.\text{b3} \text{c6} 27.\text{a4}\]
White is preparing the transfer of his knight to the d3-square, from where it can go to c5 or f4.

\[27...\text{b6} 28.\text{b2} a5 29.\text{d3} \text{f6} 30.\text{h4} \text{f7} 31.\text{xe8+} \text{xe8} 32.\text{e3} \text{f7} 33.\text{g5} \text{e6} 34.\text{f4} \text{f7} 35.\text{d3} \text{e6} 36.\text{xf6} \text{xf6} 37.\text{g5} \text{xg5+} 38.\text{hxg5} a4 39.\text{bxa4} \text{c4} 40.\text{a5} \text{bxa5} 41.\text{c5} \text{f5} 42.\text{g3}\]

The activity of White's king decides the issue. It goes to e5 and Black's d5-pawn is doomed. 42...
\[\text{a4} 43.\text{f4} a3 44.\text{e5} \text{b4} 45.\text{d3} \text{b5} 46.\text{d6} \text{f7} 47.\text{c6} \text{xd3} 48.\text{xd3} \text{b2} 49.\text{xa3} \text{g2} 50.\text{xd5} \text{xg5+} 51.\text{c6} \text{h5} 52.\text{d5} \text{g2} 53.\text{d6} \text{c2+} 54.\text{d7} \text{h4} 55.\text{f4} \text{f2} 56.\text{c8} \text{xf4} 57.\text{a7+} 1-0.\]
Chapter 13

Conclusion

We have just finished the analysis of the variation 3...\texttt{\textit{\textsc{\texttt{e}}}}7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.\texttt{\textit{\textsc{f}}4} e6, in which Black immediately tries to solve his main opening problem, one which is in fact typical of the Queen’s Gambit as a whole – the development of the c8-bishop. White is unable to prevent the bishop from coming to f5, so he must act energetically if he wishes to fight for the advantage from the opening. He thus plays the resolute move g2-g4, forcing his opponent to determine the future of his bishop. If it goes to g6, then White continues the chase with the move h2-h4 and Black’s position becomes difficult. If it retreats to e6, then White’s task becomes harder. In that case he should follow the classic example of Botvinnik – Petrosian, Moscow (game/14) 1963, and later in the game try to exploit the unfavourable position of Black’s bishop on e6, where it is restricted by his own pawn. This positional defect can continue to haunt Black, even deep into the endgame.
Chapter 14 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\(c3\) \(e7\) 4.cxd5 exd5 5.\(f4\) \(f6\)

The 3...\(e7\) Variation

In this chapter we shall analyse variations in which Black gives up the idea of advancing with c7-c6 and tries either to push c7-c5 immediately or to use the tempo saved by not playing c6 to develop the c8-bishop. We have to admit this plan is one of the most promising for Black in his fight for equality in the Queen's Gambit and even against the move 1.d4 in general. In the majority of cases, the positions arising are typical of the Queen's Gambit. White has chances of obtaining a slight opening advantage which Black is usually trying gradually to neutralise. We shall pay special attention to the move 6...\(f5\), which was introduced into tournament practice by Ubilava. Today this variation is used even at the highest level. It should be sufficient to mention that it has been played by Carlsen, Kar-rov, Kasparov and Kramnik. It should therefore not surprise you that the author has had to work through a lot of games and theory in order to find an advantage for White and some of the variations in this book go deep into the endgame.

6.e3

In this position, Black has a choice between two possibilities: A) 6...0-0 and B) 6...\(f5\).

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A) 6...0-0
This is a natural reply.
7.\textit{\textbf{\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{d3}}}}}

7...c5
This move has both pluses and minuses. Black obtains free piece play; on the other hand, in many lines his d5-pawn turns out to be weak.

8.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{ge2}}}}
Unfortunately for White, he has to develop his knight in this modest manner, because after the more natural move 8.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{gf3}}}} Black has the rather unpleasant pin 8...\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g4}}}}.

8...\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{c6}}}

9.0-0

The character of the position remains more or less the same after 11...h6 12.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b1}}}} \textsf{\texttt{\texttt{a7}}}
13.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{c2}}}
14.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{fd1}}}
15.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{g3}}}; White's pieces are actively placed and his knight is heading for the f5-square, Nikolov – Radulski, Panagyrurishte 2012. Naturally, Black cannot tolerate this knight for

A1) 9...a6
Control over the b5-square is very useful for Black in positions with an isolated pawn, because this impedes White's occupation of the key blockading square on d4, since he does not have the manoeuvre \texttt{\texttt{c3-b5-d4}}.

Nevertheless, this is insufficient for Black to equalise. White maintains a slight edge in all the variations playing against the isolated pawn.

10.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{dxc5}}}
11.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{xc5}}}
11.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{c1}}}

11...\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{e7}}}

Here Black has many possibilities to choose from: A1) 9...a6, A2) 9...c4, A3) 9...\texttt{\texttt{g4}}, A4) 9...\texttt{\texttt{xd4}} and A5) 9...\textsf{\texttt{e6}}.

10.\textsf{\texttt{dxc5}}
11.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{xc5}}}
11.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{c1}}}

11...\textsf{\texttt{e7}}

The character of the position remains more or less the same after 11...h6 12.\textsf{\texttt{\texttt{b1}}}
13.\textsf{\texttt{c2}}
14.\textsf{\texttt{fd1}}
15.\textsf{\texttt{g3}}; White's pieces are actively placed and his knight is heading for the f5-square, Nikolov – Radulski, Panagyrurishte 2012. Naturally, Black cannot tolerate this knight for
long, so after its exchange White will obtain the advantage of the bishop pair, which is a considerable achievement in this open position.

12.\cell{b1} \cell{e6} 13.\cell{d4} \cell{c8}

14.\cell{f5}

This move is more logical than 14.\cell{xc6}, which was played in the game Giorgadze – Korneev, Elgoibar 1997. Of course, it is favourable for White to exchange pieces, but when playing against an isolated pawn, it is preferable to exchange the knight for a bishop rather than a knight.

14...\cell{e8} 15.\cell{x}e7+ \cell{xe7} 16.\cell{d}3 White has a stable advantage with two strong bishops and play against the enemy isolated queen’s pawn.

A2) 9...c4

(diagram)

This is a very important decision for Black. He seizes space on the queenside and will create some counterplay there, but his d5-pawn may turn out to be weak. Furthermore, reducing the tension in the centre in this way frees White’s hands for action in the centre and on the kingside.

10.\cell{b1} a6 11.b3 b5 12.bxc4 bxc4 13.e4 \cell{e6} 14.e5 \cell{h5} 15.\cell{c}2 g6 16.\cell{h}6 \cell{e8} 17.\cell{d}2 f5

18.\cell{c}2

White transfers his bishop to the a4-square to increase the pressure against the enemy position and he frees the b1-square for his rook.

This is stronger than 18.exf6, which was played in the game Azmaiparashvili – Arlandi, Reggio Emilia 1992. 18...\cell{b}8 19.\cell{a}4 \cell{c}7 20.\cell{ab}1 White maintains
a slight edge, thanks to his extra space. Black’s d5-pawn needs protection and his knight on h5 is misplaced at the edge of the board.

A3) 9...\textit{\texttt{g4}}

This is a natural move. Black completes the development of his pieces and brings his bishop to an active position. Nevertheless he cannot equalise, because of his weakness on d5.

10.\textit{\texttt{dxc5 \texttt{xe5}}} 11.\texttt{h3 \texttt{xe2}}

Black is forced to exchange on e2, since it is bad for him to play 11...\texttt{h5} in view of 12.g4 and he loses a pawn after 12...\texttt{g6} 13.\texttt{xg6 hXg6} 14.g5 \texttt{h5} 15.\texttt{xd5}± N.Maiorov – Akshayraj, Rethymno 2012.

12.\texttt{xe2 \texttt{d6}} 13.\texttt{b3 \texttt{xf4}} 14.\texttt{xf4}±

Two pairs of minor pieces have been exchanged and Black has problems creating any active counterplay in the middlegame, while his weakness on d5 becomes more and more serious.

Subsequently in the game Wojtaszek – Fressinet, Wijk aan Zee 2011, White gradually managed to increase his advantage.

14...\texttt{d6} 15.\texttt{fd1 \texttt{fd8}} 16.\texttt{ac1}

Here, White overlooked an interesting tactical possibility: after 16.\texttt{xd5}!? \texttt{xd5} 17.\texttt{e4} he regains his piece because of the pin and ends up with an extra pawn in a double-rook endgame: 17...\texttt{ce7} 18.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 19.e4 \texttt{b4} 20.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xb3} 21.axb3 d6±

16...\texttt{b4} 17.\texttt{xb4 \texttt{xb4}} 18.\texttt{a3 \texttt{xd3}} 19.\texttt{xd3 \texttt{d7}} 20.g4!

This is a very strong move, after which Black is faced with dif-
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\(\text{d}c3\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 4.cd ed 5.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 6.e3
difficult problems to solve. The point is that White is planning to advance this pawn (g4–g5). Black cannot allow this, because he would lose his d5-pawn. Therefore he will have to push g7-g5 himself at some point, after which White's knight will try to occupy the weakened f5-square.

20...h6 21.f3 \(\text{\&}ad8\) 22.\(\text{\&}cd1\) g6 23.\(\text{\&}f2\) \(\text{\&}g7\) 24.h4 g5 25.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{hxg5}\) 26.\(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}g8\) 27.\(\text{\&}d4\)± and White went on to win convincingly from this position.

A4) 9...cxd4

This move brings about the same pawn structure as in the game Botvinnik – Petrosian (see Chapter 13) where both sides have an isolated queen’s pawn (d4 and d5).

White retains a slight advantage, since Black has problems with the development of his c8-bishop.

10.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(\text{\&}xd4\) 11.exd4 \(\text{\&}d7\)

After 11...\(\text{\&}e6\) 12.\(\text{\&}c1\) \(\text{\&}e8\) 13.\(\text{\&}e1\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 14.\(\text{\&}e5\)± White's position is preferable, because his bishop on d3 is obviously stronger than its Black counterpart, Levenfish – Kotov, Leningrad 1939.

12.\(\text{\&}e5\) \(\text{\&}c6\) 13.\(\text{\&}e1\)±

Once again, White maintains a slight edge, because Black's bishop on c6 is restricted by his own pawn on d5. After a series of mistakes, in the game Knaak – Seils, Glauchau 1987, Black quickly lost a pawn.

13...\(\text{\&}d7\)?! 14.\(\text{\&}c2\) g6? 15.\(\text{\&}c7\)! \(\text{\&}xc7\) 16.\(\text{\&}xd5\)±

A5) 9...\(\text{\&}e6\)

Black simply develops a piece and protects his d5-pawn. His
further plans, as a rule, are not very ambitious and he intends to defend a slightly worse position.

10.dxc5 \( \text{txc5} \) 11.e1 \( \text{td6} \) 12.h3 \( \text{ce8} \) 13.\( \text{txd6} \) \( \text{txd6} \)

14.\( \text{wa4} \)?
This is the only move to offer White any chances of advantage.

He does not achieve much with 14.\( \text{d4} \) \( \text{txd4} \) 15.exd4 \( \text{xe8} \) 16.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 17.\( \text{fe1} \) \( \text{h6} \) 18.\( \text{xe8+} \) \( \text{xe8} \) 19.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f8} \) 20.\( \text{xe8+} \) \( \text{xe8} \) 21.\( \text{c2} \) a5 22.a3 \( \text{b6} \) 23.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{c6} \) 24.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{g8} \) 25.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{f8} \) 26.\( \text{a2} \) \( \text{g8} \) 27.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{f8} = \).

Therefore, it is best for White to continue with 17.\( \text{wh4} \)? and after this active move, he still has chances of fighting for a win in the middlegame. All his pieces are actively deployed and the weak pawn on d5 will remain a cause of anxiety for Black in the ensuing struggle.

B) 6.\( \text{f5} \)

14...\( \text{a6} \) 15.\( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{h6} \) 16.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{fd8} \)

Here, heading an endgame with 17.\( \text{f4} \) is not so clear, because after 17...\( \text{xf4} \) 18.\( \text{xf4} \) Black can simplify the position with 18...\( \text{c4} \) and although White still has chances of an edge,
We mentioned earlier that this is one of the most unpleasant moves for White to face. He will have to demonstrate thorough knowledge of some long theoretical variations in order to obtain even a minimal edge.

7.\texttt{\texttt{b}3}

This is the only way for White to place in doubt his opponent’s sixth move. He exploits the fact that the pawn on b7 is undefended at the moment.

7...\texttt{c}6

8.\texttt{g}4!

This energetic move gives White the best chance of keeping an edge. The idea is to deflect Black’s pieces (either the knight from the d5-pawn, or the bishop from the c2-square). None of the alternatives allow White to gain anything substantial.

For example, if 8.\texttt{xb}7 the position of his queen may turn out to be disadvantageous. Of course, the queen will not be lost, but Black obtains the chance of making a draw by a permanent attack on the enemy queen, as happened in this game: 8...\texttt{b}4 9.\texttt{b}5+ \texttt{f}8 10.\texttt{c}1 \texttt{d}6 11.\texttt{xd}6+ \texttt{cx}d6 12.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{b}8 13.\texttt{xa}7 \texttt{c}2+ 14.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{a}8 15.\texttt{b}7 \texttt{b}8 16.\texttt{a}7 \texttt{a}8, draw, Parligras – Feller, Aix-les-Bains 2011.

White has an interesting alternative here in 8.a3!? preparing an unusual flight square for his queen. Still, after 8...\texttt{a}5 9.\texttt{a}2 0–0 the queen is a bit misplaced on a2 and Black can organise enough counterplay to maintain equality.

10.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}6 (it is less logical for him to play 10...\texttt{c}5, because then White will have a clear-cut plan, based on play against Black’s weak d5-pawn: 11.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 12.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}6 13.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{d}6 14.\texttt{xd}6 \texttt{xd}6 15.0–0 \texttt{ac}8 16.\texttt{d}4 Sargissian – Bakre, Kavala 2010) 11.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}5 12.0–0 \texttt{c}4 13.\texttt{fc}1 \texttt{h}5 14.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{f}6 15.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{x}g3 16.\texttt{x}g3∞. We have reached a very complicated position with chances for both sides, where White’s misplaced queen on a2 and Black’s powerful knight on c4 hinder White from exploiting the weak-
ness of Black’s c6-pawn, Mamedyarov – Fridman, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

8...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{g}4\)

This is in fact Black’s only move.

It is too passive to continue with 8...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}8?! \) 9.h3 \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{d}}}}\text{d}6 \) (9...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{a}}}}\text{a}5 \) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}2 \) c6 11.0-0-0 \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{e}}}}\text{e}6 \) 12.\(\text{\textit{\textit{b}}}}\text{b}1 \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}8 \) 13.\(\text{\textit{\textit{d}}}}\text{d}3 \) b5 14.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}}\text{e}2 \(\text{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}4 \) 15.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}}\text{g}3 \(\text{\textit{\textit{a}}}}\text{a}5 \) 16.\(\text{\textit{\textit{f}}}}\text{f}4\)± and White’s initiative in the centre is obviously much more dangerous than Black’s counter attack on the queenside, Bocharov – Rychagov, Irkutsk 2010) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{xd}6 \) cxd6 11.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}}\text{e}2 \) h5 12.g5 \(\text{\textit{\textit{e}}}}\text{e}4 \) 13.h4 0-0 14.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}}\text{g}2 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}4 \) 15.\(\text{\textit{\textit{f}}}}\text{f}4\)± Morozevich – Onischuk, Reggio Emilia 2011 and Black’s d5-pawn is doomed.

After 8...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{g}4?! \), Black loses control of the c2-square. 9.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{w}}}}\text{xb}7\) and now the knight-sortie 9...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{b}}}}\text{b}4\) is not so dangerous for White: 10.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}1 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{f}}}}\text{f}5 \) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{c}7 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}8 \) 12.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}}}\text{xc}8 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}8 \) 13.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{e}}}}\text{e}5 \) 0-0 14.a3 \(\text{\textit{\textit{d}}}}\text{d}3\)± 15.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{xd}3 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{xd}3 \) 16.\(\text{\textit{\textit{d}}}}\text{d}2 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}4 \) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}\text{ge}2\)± with very good chances of realising his extra pawn, Aleksandrov – Dobrovolski, Warsaw 2008.

9.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{w}}}}\text{xd}5!

9.\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{w}}}}\text{xd}5?! \) 0-0 10.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}2 \) \(\text{\textit{\textit{h}}}4 \) 11.\(\text{\textit{\textit{g}}}3 \) \(\text{\textit{e}}6\)± and in the game Topalov – Kasparov, Linares 1997, Black went on to win convincingly.

Now Black has a choice between entering a slightly inferior endgame with B1) 9...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{xd}5\), or seeking chances in a complicated middle game with B2) 9...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{c}}}}\text{c}8\).

B1) 9...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{x}}}}\text{xd}5\) 10.\(\text{\textit{\textit{d}}}}\text{d}5

In this endgame White should be slightly better, since the exchange of the flank g2-pawn for the central d5-pawn should be in his favour.

10...\(\text{\textit{\textit{\textit{b}}}}\text{b}4\)

This is the main move for Black. Just as in the 10...0-0-0 variation, Black accepts the fact that he has to allow his opponent the bishop pair, but he wants to do this under more favourable circumstances.
10...0–0–0. This move has the same drawback – White wins the bishop pair. 11.\(\text{Qxe7+}\) \(\text{Qxe7}\) 12. \(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{Qd5}\) 13. \(\text{Qg3}\) \(\text{Qg6}\) 14. \(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{Qe4}\) 15. \(\text{Qe5}\) \(\text{Qf8}\) 16. \(\text{a3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 17. \(\text{Qc4}\) \(\text{Qfe8}\) 18. \(\text{Qe2}\) \(\text{Qe7}\) 19. \(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qxg3}\). After this move White loses the advantage of the two bishops, but he repairs his kingside pawn structure and will have the edge in the ensuing endgame, because his central pawns are much stronger than Black’s flank pawns. 20. \(\text{hxg3}\) \(\text{b5}\) 21. \(\text{Qbt}\) \(\text{gd6}\) 22. \(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Qxc3}\) 23. \(\text{Qxc3}\) \(\text{h6}\) 24. \(\text{Qd2}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 25. \(\text{Qf3}\) \(\text{Qf5}\) 26. \(\text{Qhc1}\) \(\text{Qdd7}\) 27. \(\text{b4}\) and Black is condemned to passive defence, Krush – Zatonskih, Saint Louis 2011. Meanwhile, White can gradually increase her advantage, combining threats to advance her pawns both in the centre and on the queenside.

10...\(\text{Qh4!}\)? Black fails to equalize with this move, which enables White to repair his pawn-structure, but it sets a neat tactical trap. 11. \(\text{Qg3}\) (after the apparently attractive move 11. \(\text{Qf3?!}\) White wins a piece, but not the game, since Black obtains sufficient compensation; 11...\(\text{Qxf2+}\) 12. \(\text{Qe2}\) 0–0–0 13. \(\text{h3}\) \(\text{Qxd5}\) 14. \(\text{hxg4}\) \(\text{Qxe3}\) 15. \(\text{Qxe3}\) \(\text{Qe8+}\) 16. \(\text{Qf2}\) \(\text{Qxg4}\) and now after the possible variation 17. \(\text{Qxh7}\) \(\text{Qf5}\) 18. \(\text{Qg3}\) \(\text{Qe4}\) 19. \(\text{Qh8+}\) \(\text{Qd8}\) 20. \(\text{Qd3}\) \(\text{Qxf4}\) 21. \(\text{Qxe4}\) \(\text{Qxe4}\) 22. \(\text{Qg5}\) \(\text{Qxd4}\) 23. \(\text{Qxf7}\) \(\text{Qe6}\) 24. \(\text{Qxd8}\) \(\text{Qxd8}\) 25. \(\text{Qxd8+}\) \(\text{Qxd8}\) the complications have ended and there is very little material left on the board) 11...\(\text{Qxg3}\) 12. \(\text{hxg3}\) 0–0–0 13. \(\text{Qg2+}\) White keeps an edge, because his d-pawn is clearly stronger than Black’s h-pawn, Brodowski – Dobrowolski, Wroclaw 2012.

After 10...\(\text{Qb4+}\), White has a choice: to allow the activation of Black’s pieces after B1a) 11. \(\text{Qxb4}\), or to play the more prudent move – B1b) 11. \(\text{Qc3}\).

B1a) 11. \(\text{Qxb4}\) \(\text{Qxb4}\) 12. \(\text{Qc1}\) \(\text{c6}\) 13. \(\text{a3}\) \(\text{Qd5}\) 14. \(\text{h3}\)

After 14...\(\text{Qxf4}\) 15. \(\text{hxg4}\) \(\text{Qd3+}\) 16. \(\text{Qxd3}\) \(\text{Qxd3}\) 17. \(\text{f6}\) 18. \(\text{Qc3}\) \(\text{Qg6}\)
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19.\(\text{Re2}\) 0–0 20.\(\text{Af2} \text{Af7}\) 21.\(\text{Cc5}\) White has the advantage and Black is forced to adopt a waiting strategy. White will patiently improve his position, advancing his pawns in the centre and on the queenside.

15.\(\text{Re5} \text{Dd7}\)

Now it is bad for White to play 16.\(\text{Ah2}\)?, Krush – Zatonskih, Saint Louis 2011, in view of the tactical shot 16...\(\text{Txe3}\) 17.\(\text{fxe3 Ae4}\)†

The best move is 16.\(\text{Ag3}\) and after the possible continuation 16...0–0 17.\(\text{De2} \text{Fe8}\) 18.\(\text{Gg1 Ead8}\) 19.\(\text{Gg2 D7b6}\) 20.\(\text{Dd2 Ee7}\) 21.\(\text{Bb3 f6}\) 22.\(\text{Ah2 Df7}\) 23. \(\text{Dg3}\)† White has managed to complete his development while retaining all the pluses of his position.

B1b) 11.\(\text{Cc3}\)

This move was recommended by Alexey Kuzmin in his article on this variation in the magazine “64 Chess Review”

14...\(\text{Dxg3}\)

Black does not equalise after either 14...\(\text{Db8}\) 15.0–0 \(\text{Dxg3}\) 16. \(\text{hxg3 Db4}\) 17.e4 \(\text{Dc8}\) 18.\(\text{Dad1}\)† and White’s central pawns are more powerful than Black’s flank pawns, or 14...\(\text{Db4}\) 15.0–0 \(\text{Df6}\) 16. \(\text{Ffd1 Db8}\) 17.a3 \(\text{Cc6}\) 18.\(\text{Ah4 Dc7}\) 19.\(\text{Dac1 h6}\) 20.b4† and White’s queenside initiative might become very dangerous to Black, since his knight on c6 is obviously misplaced.

15.\(\text{hxg3}\)

The following variation is a good illustration of the possibilities for both sides.
15...\( \text{b4} \) 16.0–0 \( \text{b8} \) 17.a3 \( \text{d3} \) 18.\( \text{ad1} \) \( \text{f6} \) 19.b3 \( \text{g6} \) 20.\( \text{ed2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 21.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{ce4} \) 22.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 23.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xd3} \) 24.\( \text{xd3} \) e5 25.\( \text{fd1} \) cxd4 26.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{xd4} \) 27.\( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 28.\( \text{f1} \) \( \text{d7} \)

In the endgame White maintains a slight edge, because his bishop is more powerful than Black's knight in this open position. Furthermore, White can exploit his pawn-majority in the centre by advancing his e and f-pawns. This is very typical for the QGD – in the end White usually obtains an edge in the endgame, but it is often insufficient to win the game.

B2) 9...\( \text{c8} \)

This move leads to a very sharp position. White's plan can be easily described verbally, but it is rather difficult for him to implement it during the game. He should complete his development and cramp Black's pieces by advancing his centre pawns (these are usually placed on f3, e4 and d5). It is understandable that Black should not remain idle and should try to exploit his lead in development and the unsafe situation of White's king. It often happens that Black needs to sacrifice material for activity.

10.\( \text{g2} \) 0–0 11.e4

It seems rather dubious for Black to play 11...\( \text{xd4} \) because after 12.0–0–0 \( \text{c5} \) 13.\( \text{f3} \), although White does not win a piece and is even a pawn down, his pieces are tremendously active. 13...\( \text{d8} \) (Black also has great difficulties after 13...\( \text{xf3} \) 14.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 15.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d6} \) 16.\( \text{e2} \) and his knights are in trouble) 14.\( \text{xd4} \)
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\[ \text{\text{xd}4 15.e2 e6 16.xd4 xd4 17.g1 g6 18.xg4 xg4 19.fxg4 xg4 20.xg4=} \]
White's two minor pieces are stronger than his opponent's rook and pawns in this endgame.

Black tried an interesting but not quite correct piece sacrifice in the game Aronian - Kramnik, Monte Carlo 2011: 11...xe4 12.\( xe4 b4 \) (Black fails to equalise with 12...\( f5 \), because after 13.d2 xd4 14.0-0-0 xf2 15.h6 g4 16.xd4 xh6 17.f3±, a position arises in which White's pieces are stronger than Black's three pawns, especially since his knight on a6 is misplaced) 13.c3 f5 14.e2

14...h5 (this move is stronger than Kramnik's continuation 14...fe8? 15.f1 f6 16.h6 g6 17.\( g5 \) and White parried the attack while preserving his material advantage) 15.g3 xd4 16.f1 xc3 (if 16...e6 17.xg4 hxg4 18.ge2± White's piece is again stronger than Black's pawns) 17.bxc3 xe2 18.xe2 ae8 19.d4± and although Black still has some initiative there are only a few pieces left on the board. White's prospects in the subsequent struggle seem preferable.

12.0–0–0

12...\( f6 \)

After 12...a6 Black's counterplay on the queenside is clearly too slow, for example: 13.h3 b5 14.g1 f6 (his position is hopelessly weakened in the variation 14...b4 15.d5 f6 16.xf6+ gxf6 17.e3±) 15.e3 b4 16.a4 e8 17.f4 a5 (White's attack is decisive after 17...xd4 18.xd4 xa4 19.xg6 hxg6 20.e4 c5 21.xg6 e8 22.g3++ 18.xg6 hxg6 19.b3 c6+ 20.b1 xe4+ 21.xe4 xe4 22.g2 f5 23.xe4 fxe4 24.c1 d6 25.xg6 b7 26.h4± and in the ensuing endgame White has a powerful initiative, while Black will struggle to protect his many weaknesses.

13.f3 d8 14.d5

This is stronger than 14.ge2 b5 15.e3 b4, and Black's counterplay could become dangerous,
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Qc3 Qe7 4.cd ed 5.Qf4 Qf6 6.e3

Fridman – Prusikin, Bad Wiessee 2012.

A possible continuation is

14...Qa5 15.Qc2 Qd6 16.Qxd6 cxd6 17.Qd4 Qc5 18.Qd2 Qae8 19.Qc2± and White is threatening b2–b4, winning the enemy knight on a5. He is behind in development but stands better, because Black’s knight on a5 is badly misplaced, while White’s pawn-chain f3-e4-d5 restricts the mobility of Black’s knight on f6 and the bishop on g6.

**Conclusion**

We have analysed the various possibilities for Black after 3...Qe7, when he omits c7-c6. We have to admit that it is very difficult for White to obtain even a minimal edge in this line. This is particularly true of the Ubilava variation, where White needs to have a thorough knowledge of a great many lines, which often go deep into the endgame. We hope that acquaintance with this chapter will help readers to understand and retain the numerous finer points of this variation.
We shall begin our analysis of the classical lines of the Queen's Gambit.

4.cxd5

White has many possibilities here and I have chosen this as our main weapon mostly because it is very difficult for Black to simplify the position, as he can do, for example, in the Lasker Defence. This has acquired great popularity lately, maybe because Black is able to exchange two pairs of minor pieces very early in the game.

4...exd5 5.Qg5 c6 6.e3

(diagram)

Here we have the starting position of the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit. It has been used by many strong players. It should be sufficient to mention that Botvinnik liked to play this line and later Kasparov included it in his opening repertoire. If we add to these great players Karpov, who had many convincing wins in this variation, then it becomes evident why Black has been avoiding it lately and either plays 3...Qe7 (which we covered in previous chapters) or else starts the game with the move order 1...Qf6 and 2...e6, as if threatening to play the Nimzowitsch Defence, and then heads for the Queen's Gambit only after 3.Qf3, by playing 3...d5. It is understandable that if we were to compile a complete list of all the contemporary grandmasters who
play this variation, it would run to several pages, but nevertheless I will mention a few names. Players who use this line successfully with White include Ivanchuk, Carlsen, Kramnik, Mamedyarov and Morozevich... Handling the black pieces we often see Kir. Georgiev, Ivanchuk, Short and indeed many other grandmasters.

In general, I believe that the position is better for White, but every player should be able to play this position for both sides, since it is rich in interesting ideas and possibilities, and thus generally typical of the closed openings.

We shall analyse the main lines of this variation in our next two chapters. For now, we shall deal with a few of Black's less popular possibilities:

A) 6...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash f5}} - the idea of this move is to develop the c8-bishop as quickly as possible;

B) 6...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash bd7}} - this is a rarely played plan in which Black develops his bishop on d6 (it is usually deployed on e7);

C) 6...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash e7}} - Black is trying to avoid the main lines by exchanging the dark-squared bishops after\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash h5}}.

Black sometimes tries to develop his queen's bishop quickly but first plays 6...h6, hoping that this will prove useful in the future. However, tournament practice has shown that the move h6 is more likely to be harmful to him.

If Black wishes to justify it in a tactical way, then he risks quickly landing himself in a very difficult position. 7.h4 f5 8.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}}

8...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash b6}}. This is a very dubious move, because the ensuing complications lead to a big advantage to White. 9.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash xf5}} xfb2 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash c8+}} e7 11.hb1 xcd3+ 12.d1 g5 13.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash g3}}. Black's position is hopeless and after 13...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash e4}}, Whitewins, according to an old analysis of I.Zaitsev (13...g7 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash c7+}} e8 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash d6+-}}; 14...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash bd7}} 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash d6+}} e8 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash b4+-}}) with 14.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash f3}} g7 15.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash xeb7+}} f6 16.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash e5+}} g6. Now with the help of spectacular sacrifices, White forces mate: 17.h4+ gxh4 18.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash e6+}} fxe6 19.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash xg7+}} f5 20.g4+ hxg3 21.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash h3#}}

After 8...\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash g6}} 9.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash xf6}} xfb6 10.\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\textbackslash xf6}} gxf6, there arises an endgame which we shall analyse later, but only with the inclusion of the move h6, which is in White's favour, Yakovich - Meyer, Gistrup 1996. The point is that White's main idea in such endgames is to force the exchange of the light-squared bishops, in order to exploit the weakened f5-square. Black should try to avoid
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this exchange for as long as possible, trying to force his opponent to exchange on g6, which will improve Black’s pawn-structure. This is why his pawn is much better placed on h7.

6...\(\text{w}b6\) – This is a possible move, but it does not equalise for Black. 7.\(\text{w}d2\) \(\text{c}e4\) 8.\(\text{d}xe4\) dxe4

This is why his pawn is much better placed on h7.

9.\(\text{c}e2!\) This is an important manoeuvre. White transfers his knight to c3 in order to prevent possible threats on the e1-a5 diagonal. 9...\(\text{b}4\)? (an interesting try for Black, but still insufficient for equality, is 9...\(\text{d}6!\)? 10.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{xf}4\) 11.\(\text{xf}4\); White’s remaining bishop is obviously more active than its black counterpart) 10.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 11.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 12.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 13.0–0 \(\text{b}6\) 14.\(\text{fc}1\) 0–0 (the seemingly active move 14...\(\text{c}4\)? only increases Black’s difficulties, because after 15.\(\text{c}2\) his e4-pawn is very weak and his knight becomes rather unstable) 15.a3 \(\text{x}c3\) 16.\(\text{x}c3\) \(\text{d}5\) 17.\(\text{ac}1\)± Bischoff – Meister, Hoeckendorf 2004. Black has securely fortified his pieces on the light squares,

but White maintains a stable advantage, thanks to his strong bishop pair. His dark-squared bishop is particularly strong, since it has no opponent.

A) 6...\(\text{f}5\)

This is a sensible positional move. Black wishes to exchange his “bad” bishop. However, White can reach a slightly better endgame almost by force.

7.\(\text{f}3\)

This is the only move which promises White any advantage from the opening. It is well known that if Black succeeds in exchanging his light-squared bishop under favourable circumstances, White cannot even dream about having an edge.

Now the position is simplified by force to an endgame in which White has a slight advantage thanks to his superior pawn-structure, but we have to admit that he has not always managed to prove that over the board.
7...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}g6

This is the most natural retreat; Black's bishop maintains an active position and hinders the development of its white counterpart to the d3-square.

In practice Black has also tried 7...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}e6. This retreat may seem a bit strange, but nevertheless it is not be easy for White to prove an advantage. Of course, Black's position is slightly worse, but it is extremely solid. 8.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}xf6 9.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}xf6 gxf6 10.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}d3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}d7 11.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}ge2. White is trying to deploy his knight on g3 in order to increase his control over the f5-square. This manoeuvre is quite typical for this variation. 11...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}b6. Black's knight, in turn, heads for the c4-square. This method of counterplay is also very standard in these positions. 12.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}g3

(diagram)

The seemingly active move 12...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c4 presents no danger to White. In fact it is premature and only increases Black's difficulties. 13.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}b1 0–0–0 14.b4 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}a3 15.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}b3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c4 16.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}h5. This is also a typical move. It is advantageous for White to provoke the advance f6–f5, because firstly Black's pawn is weaker on f5 and secondly his bishop on e6 will turn into a big pawn. 16...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}e7 17.b5 c5 18.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}e2 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}a5 19.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}b1 c4. This is a very important decision by Black. His protected passed pawn is not dangerous to White, but the pawn on d5 might become a real weakness. 20.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c2 h6 21.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}hg8 22.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}f4 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}b8 23.g3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}g5 24.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}d2± Bellmann – Krivonosovs, Email 2003. Black's kingside pawn structure has been disrupted and now his pawn on d5 is weak as well. His bishop pair is absolutely irrelevant, because the position is closed, while his knight on a5 is completely out of play.

12...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}d6 13.0–0–0 0–0–0 14.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}f5 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}f8 15.g4 (White's pawn joins in the fight for the f5-square) 15...\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c7 16.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}e2 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}c8 17.h3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}d6 18.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}fg3 \textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}h6 19.\textit{\textbf{\textdagger}}dg1± Aleksandrov – Dokutchaev, Smolensk 1997; Black's weak kingside pawns are excellent targets for White's knights. It will be very difficult for Black to create counterplay on the opposite wing, so
he is doomed to passive defence in the endgame.

8.\(\text{\textipa{\text{l}}xf6}\)

8...\(\text{\textipa{\text{l}}xf6}\)

It does not seem logical for Black to play 8...gxf6, because with queens still on the board, the weakening of his kingside might be a cause of anxiety for him later. 9.h4 h5 10.\(\text{\textipa{\text{e}}ge2}\) \(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d7}\) 11.\(\text{\textipa{\text{f}}f4}\) \(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d6}\) 12.0-0-0 \(\text{\textipa{\text{xf4}}} 13.\text{\textipa{\text{exf4}}}\). This move is based on some concrete variations; (it is also possible for White to play the positional move 13.\(\text{\textipa{\text{xf4}}}!\pm\) and his superior pawn-structure guarantees him a slight advantage; Black should then stick to passive defence, relying on his solid position, since an attempt to organise active counterplay on the queenside only increases his problems: 13...b5?! 14.\(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d3}\) \(\text{\textipa{\text{xd3}}} 15.\text{\textipa{\text{exd3}}}\) b4 16.\(\text{\textipa{\text{e}}e2}\pm); Black's queenside attack has backfired and now he has pawn weaknesses on both sides of the board, Johnsen – Odden, Vadso 2007) 13...f5 14.\(\text{\textipa{\text{e}}e1+}\) \(\text{\textipa{\text{f}}f8}\) 15.\(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d3}\pm\) Chubukin – Kuerten, Email 2007. The bishop on g6 has been entombed within Black's own pawn chain. Admittedly White will have difficult exploiting the weakness of the pawns on f5 and h5, but the bishop might as well not be on the board, so the position should be evaluated in White's favour.

9.\(\text{\textipa{\text{l}}xf6}\) gxf6

This is the key position of this variation. White can choose between many different plans. However, it is not easy for him to obtain even a slight edge, since Black's defensive fortress is very solid. We shall have a look at the most unpleasant plan for Black. First, White should transfer his knight to h4 to control the f5-square. Secondly, after \(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d1}\), he plays \(\text{\textipa{\text{d}}d3}\), increasing his control over f5; thirdly, he advances f2-f4 at an opportune moment. Black will have to exchange on d3; otherwise, he risks losing his bishop after f4-f5, solater, White's knight will occupy a dominating
position on f5. In addition, as a result of the exchange of Black's bishop, his kingside pawns, having been deprived of their main defender, become very weak. Naturally, Black should not remain idle and should try to create some counterplay on the queenside. This plan for White, which we have described so straightforwardly on paper, is, however, not so easy to implement in practice.

10...f3 d7 11.h4 e7 12.g3 b6 13.f3

On the d2-square White's king would come under a permanent threat of d4, so the best square for it is f2.

13...0–0–0

A very solid move; Black wants to occupy the central files with his rooks as quickly as possible.

He has also tried the plan of trying to organise counterplay on the queenside by advancing his a-pawn: 13...a5 14.f2 a4 15.c1 c816.e2 d6 17.hd1

17...b5. This move enables Black's knight to occupy the c4-square, but leads to a considerable weakening of the pawn on c6. 18.a3 f5 19.g2 d7 20.d3 h5 21.h4 e8 22.f4++. White is better in this endgame, thanks to his better pawn structure; Black's pawns on f5 and h5 are very weak. In addition, Black's bishop is terribly misplaced on g6, Neto - Rydholm, Email 2011. However, the position is closed and it will not be at all easy for White to breach his opponent's defences.

Black has also tried the less ambitious move 17...0–0, but then White can simply continue with his general plan unhindered. 18.d3 e8 19.g4++. After this strong move, White's slight edge in the game Van Wely - Short, Wijk aan Zee 2005, gradually became decisive. He took control of the f5-square and prepared e2-g3. After 19...f8 20.e2 h6 21.f4, Black reluctantly had to exchange on d3. 21...xd3 22.xd3 f8 23.g3 a5 24.c2 b5 25.hf5 c4 26.b3 axb3 27.xb3 xb3 28.axb3 a5 29.h5. Now White's knights are perfectly placed. 29.e6 30.a2 b6 31.a4
and White won. White's play was very instructive and I believe that a knowledge of this game should be quite sufficient for the reader to play this variation confidently.

14.\textit{f2} \textit{b8} 15.\textit{d1}

This strong move enables White to develop his bishop on d3 immediately.

He would lose time and the whole of his opening advantage after 15.\textit{e2} \textit{d6} 16.\textit{hd1} \textit{he8} 17.\textit{d3} \textit{d7} = Quaranta – Koch, Email 2006.

15...\textit{he8}

16.a3!?±

This is an interesting move. White wants to deprive his opponent of any counterplay on the queenside.

The consequences of the move 16.\textit{d3} are less clear, because after 16...\textit{b4} Black creates interesting counterplay. 17.\textit{e2} (the move 17.\textit{e2} seems to be completely harmless, because after 17...\textit{a4} White will be forced to exchange on g6, giving up all hope of gaining an advantage. 18.\textit{xg6 fxg6 19.a3 \textit{f8} 20.\textit{d2} = Carolei – Poehr, Email 2009) 17...a5 18.\textit{c1} = reaching an approximately equal position. However Black played very riskily in the game Maiorov – Korobov, St Petersburg 2011, and landed in a very difficult position: 18...\textit{c4}?! 19.\textit{xxc4 dxc4 20.\textit{bd1} \textit{d3}?! 21.\textit{g2 b5 22.f4±}

16...\textit{d6} 17.\textit{d3} \textit{e7} 18.\textit{he1} \textit{de8}

White has a slight but stable edge. After for example:

19.h3 \textit{c7} 20.f4!? \textit{xd3}

21.\textit{xd3} \textit{c4} 22.\textit{e2} \textit{e6} 23.\textit{f5±, a position arises where, thanks to his powerful knight on f5 and his better pawn-structure, White can continue to play for a win for a long time and Black is condemned to passive defence, despite the active position of his knight on c4.
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.\(\text{c3}\) f6 4.cd ed 5.\(\text{g5}\) c6 6.e3

B) 6...\(\text{b}d7\)

After this move Black usually develops his bishop on e7, transposing to the main lines of the Exchange Variation, which will be covered in future chapters.

Here we shall deal with a plan for Black which is based on developing his bishop to d6.

7.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}6\)

This move might appear to be more active than 7...\(\text{e}7\), but it is played much more rarely in practice. There are perfectly logical reasons for this: Black's piece activity is harmless, while the pin on his knight might become rather annoying.

8.\(\text{c}2\)

8...h6

Black prepares kingside casting, which was impossible immediately because he would lose his h7-pawn.

Another interesting try here is 8...\(\text{f}8\) – Black wants to transfer his knight to g6 as quickly as possible and get rid of the unpleasant pin. However, this move has a serious drawback – his king remains in the centre. 9.0–0–0. White should strive to open the centre quickly, to exploit his lead in development. 9...\(\text{g}6\) (the move 9...\(\text{g}4\) fails to prevent White from advancing with e3-e4. 10.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}6\) 11.h3 \(\text{d}7\) 12.e4 \(\text{f}4\)+ 13.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{xf}4\) 14.exd5+ \(\text{f}8\) 15.dxc6 \(\text{xc}6\) 16.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xg}2\) 17.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{h}4\) 18.\(\text{d}5\); Black lags considerably behind in development and his king can no longer castle. Knaak - Moehring, Leipzig 1981; this variation convincingly shows what can happen to Black if he neglects his development and delays castling) 10.\(\text{ge}2\) h6 11.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\). Black succeeded in carrying out the plan he began several moves earlier, but after 12.e4, he is thrown onto the defensive and will need to work hard to prevent White's initiative from becoming decisive.

(diagram)

12...dxe4 13.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{d}8\) 14.\(\text{d}5\)†. Just in time, White breaks in the centre, while Black is still uncastled. Knaak - Gruenberg, Leipzig 1980. White has seized the initiative.

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It is possible that Black’s best chance in this position might be 12...\texttt{xf2}, but this is a difficult move to make in a practical game. 13.exd5 0–0 14.\texttt{e4 \texttt{e3+} 15.\texttt{b1 \texttt{b4} 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.a3 \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{h1 f1 \texttt{h4} 19.\texttt{x6 e4 \texttt{g4} 20.\texttt{e4 c3! \texttt{ac8} 21.\texttt{e4 \texttt{xe4} 22.\texttt{xe4+}.}}}}

Black has the bishop pair, which can be an important factor in an open position. His pieces are active too, but all this is not enough to compensate for the missing pawn. If White succeeds in neutralising the activity of his opponent’s pieces, he can rely on realising his slight material advantage.

9.\texttt{h4} 0–0 10.\texttt{f3 \texttt{e8}}
11.0–0 \texttt{f8} 12.\texttt{ae1}

White is preparing e3-e4.

12...\texttt{g4}

Black forces the enemy knight to retreat from its active position.

13.\texttt{d2}

(diagram)

13...\texttt{e7}

He has several moves to choose from, beside the one in the text.

It is obviously bad for him to play 13...\texttt{e6}, because after 14.f4 \texttt{e7} 15.\texttt{f3+ Black’s position remains very difficult, Bareev – Ljubojevic, Monte Carlo 2003.}

Here 13...\texttt{h5}, with the idea to counter 14.f4

with 14...\texttt{g5?!}, deserves great attention. This sharp move is the essence of Black’s idea. (A transposition to the main line arises after 14...\texttt{e7}, while if 14...\texttt{g6} White can easily gain a slight edge by exploiting the misplacement of Black’s light-squared bishop: 15.\texttt{xg6 \texttt{xg6} 16.f5 \texttt{h7} 17.e4\texttt{+ Dudukin – Klimychev, Nizhniy Novgorod 2008.}) 15.fxg5\texttt{g4} 16.\texttt{f3 \texttt{xe3} 17.\texttt{f2!}}

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A very complex and irrational position has arisen on the board and only this move offers White any chance of gaining an edge (the position is equal after 17. \texttt{Exe3 Exe3 18.gxh6 \texttt{Exe7=}} Jones – Taksrud, Email 2010). 17...\texttt{Nxf1} This is a principled move for Black (after 17...\texttt{Nf4}, the following variation is possible: 18.g6 \texttt{Ec7 19.gxf7+ Exf7 20.De5 \texttt{Exe5 21.}} \texttt{Exf4 Exf4 22.Exf4 Ec6 23.Nf2 Ec8 24.Eh4=, with a slight edge for White in the endgame). 18. gxh6 \texttt{Ec7 19.Nxf1= and in this sharp tactical position, White has a pawn and a strong attack for the sacrificed exchange.}

After somewhat routine play with 14.a3 \texttt{h5 15.b4 \texttt{g6 16.}} \texttt{Exg6 Exg6 17.Exf6 Exf6 18Nb3 \texttt{e7 19.Dc5 \texttt{b8 20.De2 \texttt{d6 21.}} Dg3 \texttt{Exg3 22.hxg3 Dg5 23.De2= White failed to achieve anything substantial in the game Riazantsev – Zakharevich, Vladimir 2004.}

14...\texttt{Nf3} \texttt{15.Ef3}

Another interesting idea for White is to play 15.h3!? after which he continues with a plan known from the games of Capablanca – the idea is to isolate Black’s bishop: 15...\texttt{g6 16.f5 \texttt{h7 17.Ef2 \texttt{Ed7 18.g4 \texttt{d6 19.}} \texttt{Be2 Ec8 20.e4! c5 21.exd5 \texttt{Exe2 22.}} \texttt{Exe2 cxd4 23.\texttt{Exd4 \texttt{Ed5 24.}} Dde4 \texttt{Ab8 25.\texttt{Ed1 \texttt{Wh4 26.}} \texttt{Ef1+ and Black has great difficulty in bringing his h7-bishop into play, so White is virtually playing with an extra piece, Boehme – Basiliev, Email 2011.}}

15...\texttt{Exf3}

Black wants to get rid of the bishop which might be his only source of anxiety.

15...\texttt{g6 16.Exf6 (here the move 16.f5 is less effective, since Black can respond with 16...\texttt{h5 and from there he can activate his bishop much more easily after f6: 17.De5 \texttt{Dd7 18.\texttt{Exe7 Exe7 19.}} Dxd7 Dxd7 20.e4! dxe4 21.Dxe4 \texttt{Db6 22.\texttt{Egf6 23.}} \texttt{Cc5 \texttt{f2f6 24.}} \texttt{Exe7}}

14.f4!

This is the right move!
And while the weakness of the e6-square assures White of some advantage, nevertheless it must be admitted that he has achieved less than he might have desired) 16...\texttt{e}xf6 17. \texttt{e}e5 \texttt{xd}d3 18.\texttt{xd}d3\texttt{xd}3 and White's knight on e5 dominates the board and he has a slight but stable edge.

16.gxf3!

After this strong move, Black is almost helpless against the gradual advance of White's centre pawns.

Here is a possible continuation: 16...\texttt{h}5 17.\texttt{f}f2 \texttt{h}4 18. \texttt{h}h1 \texttt{f}f6 19.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{xf}2 20.\texttt{xf}2 \texttt{e}7 21.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{ad}d8 22.f5. White's initiative has become threatening and his pawns are unstoppable. However, he will need to play very inventively and calculate very precisely in order to advance them any further... 22...\texttt{h}7 23. \texttt{d}d1! \texttt{h}8 24.e4! \texttt{g}g8 25.f4! \texttt{f}f6 26.e5+ and White's pawns are ready to conquer the board.

C) 6...\texttt{e}e7 7.\texttt{d}d3

7...\texttt{bd}d7

It is interesting for Black to try to exchange the light-squared bishops, which is to his benefit in this pawn structure, with the move 7...\texttt{g}g4. His bishop is heading for the g6-square. This plan has a serious drawback however – it takes too much time. 8.\texttt{b}b3!?

This is an intriguing move. White wishes to provoke his opponent into occupying the b6-square with his queen, where it can be attacked with tempo in the future with the move \texttt{a}a4. 8...\texttt{b}6 9.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{bd}7 (it is bad for Black to play 9...\texttt{h}5, in view of 10.f4!\texttt{d}d3 and White succeeded in
winning quickly by exploiting the misplacement of Black's bishop on h5, Avrukh – Summerscale, London 2010; after 9...h6 10.\textit{\textbf{xf4}} \textit{\textbf{bd7}} 11.h3 \textit{\textbf{e6}} 12.\textit{\textbf{xf3}} \textit{\textbf{c8}} 13.0–0 0–0 14.\textit{\textbf{ac1}}\textsuperscript{±}, in the game Dragomarezkij – Gavrilov, Moscow 1992, White maintained a slight edge; Black now retreated his knight to the wrong square: 14...\textit{\textbf{e8}}?! 15.\textit{\textbf{a4}}\textsuperscript{±} and White's advantage became considerable) 10.h3 \textit{\textbf{e6}} (it is again bad for Black to play 10...\textit{\textbf{h5}} 11.f4\textsuperscript{±} Varga – Kovacs, Nyiregyhaza 2005) 11.\textit{\textbf{f3}} \textit{\textbf{d6}} 12.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textit{\textbf{c7}} 13.\textit{\textbf{xd6}} \textit{\textbf{xd6}} 14.0–0 0–0 15.b4 h6 16.\textit{\textbf{ab1}} a6 17.a4\textsuperscript{±} Kruppa – Galinsky, Kiev 2006. White has a slight but stable advantage. We shall analyse similar positions in detail in the next chapter.

It is possible that Black should not allow his opponent to realise his plans so easily and should play instead 8...b6, for example: 9.\textit{\textbf{ge2}} \textit{\textbf{h5}} 10.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textit{\textbf{g6}} 11.\textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{f5}} 12.\textit{\textbf{c1}} 0–0 13.\textit{\textbf{l}}h4 h6 14.\textit{\textbf{g3}} \textit{\textbf{d6}} 15.0–0\textsuperscript{±}. White's position is clearly better, since Black's queenside pawn structure has been slightly weakened, Beliavsky – Ljubojevic, Linares 1995.

\textbf{8.\textbf{xf3}}

This is an important finesse. It is important for White not to determine the position of his queen yet, because in some variations it should go not to c2, as usual, but to b1, preparing b2–b4 and attacking Black’s h7-pawn.

After 8.\textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{h5}} 9.\textit{\textbf{xe7}} \textit{\textbf{xe7}}\textsuperscript{±}, we reach a well-known theoretical position in which White has chances of maintaining a slight edge, although his opponent's position might prove to be a hard nut to crack.

\textbf{8...\textbf{h5}}

The move 8...0–0 transposes to the main lines which we shall examine in the next two chapters. Here we shall analyse some variations which although less popular can still be encountered quite often in contemporary tournament practice.

Black can also consider the move 8...\textit{\textbf{e4}} – this move is worth analysing not least because Dreev likes to play it. 9.\textit{\textbf{f4}} \textit{\textbf{g5}} (the position is complicated but still better for White after 9...\textit{\textbf{df6}} 10.\textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{f5}} 11.\textit{\textbf{e5}} g6 12.0–0 \textit{\textbf{d6}} 13.\textit{\textbf{b4}}\textsuperscript{±} I.Sokolov – Pelletier, Germany 2005; the variation 9..\textit{\textbf{f5}} 10.\textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{f8}} 12.\textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{f8}} transposes to positions which will be dealt with in the next few chapters)
10.h3 (White also maintains a slight edge after 10.\texttt{hxg5!} \texttt{hxg5} 11.b4 0–0 12.0–0± – he has seized the initiative on the queenside; or 10.\texttt{c2} \texttt{xf3+} 11.gxf3 \texttt{xf6} 12.0–0–0± Sakaev – Dreev, Tripoli 2004) 10...a5 11.\texttt{xg5} \texttt{hxg5} 12.\texttt{h2} \texttt{e7} 13.0–0±. White's prospects are again preferable, Delchev – Saric, Zadar 2003.

9.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 10.0–0

10...0–0
Black has some alternatives to the text move.

For example: 10...g6 11.\texttt{b1} 0–0 12.b4 a6 13.a4 \texttt{hf6} 14.\texttt{c2} \texttt{e8} 15.\texttt{fc1±}, White is ideally prepared to develop his queenside initiative and Black has no active counterplay, Kryakvin – Khruschoiv, Moscow 2006.

Or 10...\texttt{hf6} 11.\texttt{b1} a5 12.\texttt{c2} 0–0 13.a3 \texttt{e8} 14.\texttt{fc1} \texttt{f8} (after 14...b6 15.b4 \texttt{b7} 16.\texttt{b3} axb4 17.axb4 b5 18.\texttt{e1±}, Black's bishop on b7 is misplaced and his c6-pawn is weak, while White has a clear-cut plan for the improvement of his position – the preparation of the pawn-break e3–e4, Zakhartsov – Burmakin, Togliatti 2001) 15.a4 \texttt{d8} 16.b4 axb4 17.axb4± White's queenside action is developing much faster than Black's counterplay on the opposite side of the board, David – Godena, Plovdiv 2003.

11.\texttt{b1}!

White exploits the temporary defencelessness of Black's h7-pawn and wins a tempo for the organization of his typical pawn-minority attack.

11...\texttt{hf6}

Black has also tried the variation 11...g6 12.b4 \texttt{df6} 13.b5 c5 14.dxc5 \texttt{xc5} 15.\texttt{b2} \texttt{g7} (after 15...\texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{fd1} \texttt{e6} 17.a4 \texttt{fd8} 18.a5±, Black's knight on h5 is misplaced and his d5-pawn is weak, I.Sokolov – Day, London/Crowthorne 2006) 16.\texttt{ac1} \texttt{e7} 17.\texttt{fd1} \texttt{g4} 18.\texttt{e2±}. White can be quite optimistic about the future, with pressure on Black's d5-pawn and possession of the wonderful d4-outpost for his pieces,

12.b4 əe8 13.əc1 a6 14.a4±

(diagram)

White has a slight edge and the game Kramnik – Timman, Belgrade 1995 continued with 14...g6 15.əb2 a5 16.bxa5 əxa5 17.əd2 əg4 18.əb3 əd6 19.əg3 – White has ensured the safety of his king and Black is almost helpless against White's increasing initiative on the queenside.

Conclusion

We have now completed the analysis of Black's attempts to avoid the main lines of the Queen's Gambit. In general, White obtains promising positions in all variations. It is understandable that often his advantage is not as great as he might have wished, but this is hardly surprising. The Queen's Gambit is one of the most reliable openings for Black against 1.d4. First White must be prepared to counter the move 6...əf5, after which there arises an endgame with many pieces still on the board, in which White must play very precisely to maintain even a slight edge. Exemplary play in this type of endgame was shown by Loek van Wely in his encounter with Nigel Short.
Chapter 16  
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.dıc3 dıf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.dıg5 dıe7 6.e3 0–0 7.dıd3 dıbd7 8.dıc2 dıe8 9.dıf3 dıf8 10.0–0 c6

Queen’s Gambit Declined: the main line.

This is the main line of the Exchange Variation of the Queen’s Gambit. It is encountered quite frequently in tournament practice. Both sides have numerous ways to continue. Usually White aims to continue either with the minority attack b4–b5, inflicting weaknesses in Black’s queenside pawn structure, or with the plan, made famous by Pillsbury’s games, of planting his knight on e5 and then supporting it with f2–f4, followed by an attack on the kingside.

11.h3

Recently this modest pawn move has become White’s most popular continuation. It is quite sensible, because not only does it give the white king an escape square and vacates the h2-square for the bishop, but it is also prophylaxis against Black’s possible dıg4. It is also preparation for dıe5, preventing the simplifying reply dıg4.

The immediate implementation of Pillsbury’s plan does not work, because of the weakness of the e3-pawn: 11.dıe5 dıg4! 12.dıxe7 dęxe7 (White cannot play f4) 13.dıxg4 dıxg4=, and the exchange of two pairs of minor pieces is naturally in Black’s favour.

Fans of the minority attack may be disappointed, but White gains no advantage after 11.dıab1, because after 11...dıa5 12.dıa3 Black can organise excellent counterplay on the kingside: 12...dıg6 13.dıb4 dıxb4 14.dıxb4 dıd6! 15.dıfe1 dıg4 16.dıh4 dıd7 17.dıh3 dıa3=. If White plays the immediate 15.b5 then with 15...dıh6 16.dıxf6 dıxf6 Black forces the favourable exchange of White’s dark-squared bishop and now all Black’s pieces can take part in the attack on the enemy.
king. White must be very careful not to get mated: after 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.e4 Qf4 19.e5 Qe6 20.Qe2 Qxd3 21.Qxd3 a6 22.Qc2 Qf8 23.Qfe1 &c4 24.Qc3 c5 Black has kept the advantage of the bishop pair and can even think about more than just equality, Milos – Ioseliani, Rio de Janeiro 1985.

White gains no advantage with the old move 11.Qae1, which was Marshall’s favourite line. After the virtually forced variation 11... Qe4 12.Qxe7 Qxe7 13.Qxe4 dxe4 14.Qd2 f5 15.f3 exf3 16.Qxf3 Qe6 17.e4 fxe4 18.Qxe4 h6 a position arises in which White has no way of exploiting the activity of his pieces, because Black’s position is very solid and the material is much reduced, Jussupow – Kramnik, Vienna 1996.

It does not seem logical for Black to play 11...h6, because in this variation White’s bishop goes to the f4-square anyway. 12.Qf4 Qd6 13.Qe5 Qe6 (the position is very difficult for Black after 13... Qe7 14.Qfe1 Qe6 15.Qh2 Qc7 16. Qac1 Qe6 17.Qf3 Qxh2+ 18.Qxh2 Qd7 19.Qe2 Qf6 20.Qf4 Qe7 21.a3 Qd6 22.Qg1 Qac8 23.b4 Qf6 24.a4± since White’s pieces have occupied ideal positions for the minority attack, while Black’s knight on c7 is terribly misplaced, Safarian – Zirek, Email 2009) 14.Qg3±; White’s knight on c5 is very strong and he has every chance of launching a successful attack on the enemy king, Tal – Adianto, Reykjavik 1986.

A) 11...Qd6

Here this move is not as good as after 11...b1, because Black will find it difficult to organise any counterplay on the kingside. (There are many variations in which White benefits from the fact that his h3-pawn controls g4.)

12.Qae1

After 11.h3, Black has a choice between many different possibilities: A) 11...Qd6, B) 11...Qe4, C) 11...g6, D) 11...Qh5, E) 11...Qg6.

We shall devote our next chapter to the move 11...Qe6.
12...\(\text{\textae}\)d7

Now 12...\(\text{\textae}\)e6 13.\(\text{\textae}\)e5± leads to positions which will be analysed in the next chapter, but under worse circumstances for Black, Dambacher – Van de Griendt, Netherlands 2011.

After 12...h6, White can advantageously open the centre: 13.\(\text{\textae}\)xf6 (in the game Kornev – Ziatdinov, St Petersburg 2004, White played too slowly with 13.\(\text{\textae}\)h4?! and missed the opportunity to gain a big advantage) 13...\(\text{\textae}\)xf6 14.e4±; Black has not completed his development yet and will have difficulty in preventing White's threats of e5 and exd5 without making considerable positional concessions, Motoc – Padurariu, Balatonlelle 2001.

For the same reasons, it is rather dubious for Black to play 12...\(\text{\textae}\)g6?! because the opening of the centre is rather dangerous for him, in view of the pin on his knight: 13.e4! dxe4 14.\(\text{\textae}\)xe4 \(\text{\textae}\)e7 15.\(\text{\textae}\)xf6+ \(\text{\textae}\)xf6 16.\(\text{\textae}\)xe8+ \(\text{\textae}\)xe8 17.\(\text{\textae}\)e1 \(\text{\textae}\)f8 18.\(\text{\textae}\)xf6 gxf6± and Black has no compensation for his hopelessly weakened pawn structure on the kingside, Adhiban – Payen, Olomouc 2010.

13.e4

Of course, White’s piece activity is not fatal to Black, since he can diminish it by exchanging pieces, but nevertheless this should not be sufficient to equalise.

13...dxe4 14.\(\text{\textae}\)xe4 \(\text{\textae}\)e7 15.\(\text{\textae}\)c5 \(\text{\textae}\)c8 16.\(\text{\textae}\)c4 \(\text{\textae}\)d5

In this position White has a choice between two methods of gaining an advantage.

He can try to take advantage of Black’s “bad” bishop on c8 with 17.\(\text{\textae}\)xd5 cxd5 18.\(\text{\textae}\)xe7 \(\text{\textae}\)xe7 19.\(\text{\textae}\)e7 \(\text{\textae}\)xe7± Lukacs – Halasz, Lillafured 1989

or try to organise active piece play with 17.\(\text{\textae}\)xe7?! \(\text{\textae}\)xe7 18.\(\text{\textae}\)xe7 \(\text{\textae}\)xe7 19.\(\text{\textae}\)c3 \(\text{\textae}\)e4 20.\(\text{\textae}\)e1±. All White’s pieces have occupied active positions, while Black has not yet completed the development of his queenside. The fact that White has an isolated pawn on d4 is absolutely irrelevant in this position.

B) 11...\(\text{\textae}\)e4

This is a standard idea in this variation. Black wants to exchange some minor pieces to make his defence easier.

12.\(\text{\textae}\)f4!
Naturally, White should avoid exchanges and try to exploit the unstable position of Black's knight on e4.

Now Black has a choice between retreating his knight from the centre with B1) 12...\( \text{Qg5} \), or else fortifying its position at the cost of weakening the e5-square with B2) 12...\( \text{f5} \).

It seems inferior for Black to play 12...\( \text{Qxc3} \)!, because after 13.bxc3 White gains a pawn majority in the centre: 13...\( \text{d6} \) (similar positions arise after 13...\( \text{g6} \) 14.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{d6} \) 15.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 16.c4± – this is a consequence of the exchange on c3) 14.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 15.\( \text{c4} \) \( \text{dxc4} \) 16.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{e6} \) 17.\( \text{ab1} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 18.\( \text{wc4} \)

Here it is rather dubious for Black to play 18...\( \text{b5} \)!. As a rule, the defending side should refrain from such weakening moves, which tend to worsen the position rather than help the organisation of counterplay. 19.\( \text{wb4} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 20.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21.\( \text{c1} \) a5 22.\( \text{b2} \) \( \text{ec8} \). In the game Turov–Vokarev, Da­gomy, 2010, White found a spectacular tactical shot – 23.d5! and gained an obvious advantage in the endgame: 23...\( \text{xd5} \) 24.\( \text{xc8}+ \) \( \text{xc8} \) 25.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 26.\( \text{b7} \) \( \text{f8} \) 27.\( \text{d4} \) g6 28.\( \text{a7} \) \( \text{e6} \) 29.\( \text{b3}± \)

18...\( \text{e7} \) 19.\( \text{fc1}± \). A standard position has arisen, with a slight but stable advantage for White. His central pawns seem stronger than Black's flankpawns. White's rookscan exert powerful pressure on the half-open b- and c-files and he can exploit his pawn major­ity in the centre in two different ways. He can either play e3-e4, or else deploy his knight on the e5-square, supported by his d4-pawn.

B1) 12...\( \text{Qg5} \) 13.\( \text{xc5} \)

This is a typical idea. In this variation White often exchanges his dark-squared bishop for an enemy knight in order to gain some tempi for his standard mi­norityattack.

13...\( \text{xc5} \) 14.b4

(diagram)

Black has three main moves in this position: B1a) 14...\( \text{a6} \), B1b) 14...\( \text{f6} \), B1c) 14...\( \text{e7} \).
This is a good defensive resource for Black. The exchange of the a-pawn will be in his favour, since White's minority attack will then leave Black with only one weak pawn on c6, instead of two.

15.a4 \(e7\) 16.b5 axb5 17. axb5 \(\text{xa}1\) 18.\(\text{xa}1\) \(\text{d}6\)

19.bxc6

Here 19.\(\text{xa}8\)?! \(\pm\) is also interesting, and the activity of his rook gives him a slight edge, Arkhipov - Pigusov, Moscow 1987.

19...bxc6 20.e4

We shall also come across this idea in some other variations. White opens files in order to be able to attack Black's weakness on c6 more effectively.

20...dxe4 21.\(\text{xe}4\) \(c7\)

22.\(\text{xd}6\)

Naturally, White should not leave his opponent's dark-squared bishop on the board. 22.\(\text{c}1\) \(f4=\) Drasko - Andersson, Sarajevo 1985.

22...\(\text{xd}6\) 23.\(\text{e}4\) \(d7\) 24. \(\text{a}6\) \(\pm\). White's pressure against the c6-pawn enables him to torture his opponent in the middle-game as well as the endgame.

B1b) 14...\(f6\) 15.e4

This is the only move for White which preserves his chances of gaining an advantage from the opening. Now Black is more or less forced to sacrifice a piece.

15.\(\text{xc}h3\)

The play is forced now.

16.e5 \(h6\) 17.\(\text{gxh}3\) \(\text{hxh}3\)

18.\(\text{gxg}5\) \(g4+\) 19.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{xg}5\)

20.\(\text{e}2\) \(e6\) 21.\(g3\)
21...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{e}h6+}}

This is Black's best chance of achieving a positive result from the game.

White gains an overwhelming advantage after 21...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}h4+}} 22.\textit{\texttt{\textbf{g}2} \textit{\texttt{w}xd4} 23.f4 \textit{\texttt{w}xb4} (Black cannot solve his defensive problems with 23...g6 24.\textit{\texttt{f}b1} \textit{\texttt{ae8} 25.\textit{\texttt{f}2} \textit{\texttt{e}6} 26.\textit{\texttt{f}2} \textit{\texttt{e}6} 27.\textit{\texttt{w}xd4} \textit{\texttt{xd4} 28.\textit{\texttt{f}2} b6 29.\textit{\texttt{e}c1} \textit{\texttt{c}7} 30.\textit{\texttt{e}e2} \textit{\texttt{xe}2} 31.\textit{\texttt{xe}2± and in the endgame White's bishop is stronger than Black's three pawns, since Black can hardly advance his pawn mass, Golod - Likavsky, Ohrid 2001) 24.\textit{\texttt{f}5} \textit{\texttt{b}6} 25.\textit{\texttt{f}3} c5 26.\textit{\texttt{h}1} \textit{\texttt{g}6} 27.\textit{\texttt{e}e3} c4 28.\textit{\texttt{f}5}. White's minor piece is more powerful than Black's pawns in the middle game, since it will need too much time for them to be promoted, while White's extra piece makes his attack against the enemy king too difficult to parry. 28...\textit{\texttt{d}4} 29.\textit{\texttt{g}3} \textit{\texttt{d}8} 30.\textit{\texttt{h}2± Luzuriaga - Garcia Conca, Email 2005.

22.\textit{\texttt{g}2} \textit{\texttt{e}e6} 23.\textit{\texttt{h}1} \textit{\texttt{xh1} 24.\textit{\texttt{xh1} g6} 25.\textit{\texttt{c}3} \textit{\texttt{g}4} 26.\textit{\texttt{e}2} \textit{\texttt{xd4} 27.\textit{\texttt{xd4} \textit{\texttt{xd4} 28.\textit{\texttt{d}3} \textit{\texttt{e}6} 29.\textit{\texttt{e}e2} a5 30.\textit{\texttt{b}5} c5 31.f4 \textit{\texttt{d}8} 32.\textit{\texttt{b}1±

White has succeeded in neutralising Black's attack by exchanging pieces and now in the endgame he retains a slight advantage, because Black's d5 and c5 pawns will be easily blockaded if they try to advance.

\textbf{B1c) 14...\textit{\texttt{e}e7}}

Black redeploy his bishop to a more active position. Now his plan is very simple. He places his bishop on d6 and his queen on f6, after which he will be threatening to capture on h3.
Here White can gain a slight edge in three different ways. In practice this type of position will be encountered by White very often, so we shall analyse all three methods.

B1c1) 17.\&f5!? 
White not only deprives his opponent of the advantage of the bishop pair, he also pre-empts any counterplay based on the weakness of the h3-pawn.

17...\&f6
After the exchange of the light-squared bishops, this move is not dangerous for White.

Black can also try to transfer his queen to the queenside: 17...\&a5 18.\&xc8 \&xc8 19.\&ab1 \&e6 20.\&b7 \&b8 21.\&fb1 \&xb7 22.\&xb7 \&b8 23.\&xb8+ \&xb8 24.\&a4 \&b5 25.\&c5 \&f8\#; White retains his standard advantage in the endgame thanks to the weakness of Black's c6-pawn. It would be disastrous for Black to continue with 25...g6?!, which led in the game Djuric – Pfleger, Srbija – Bayern 1984 to a hopeless endgame for Black because of his numerous weaknesses: 26.a4 \&c4 27.\&xc4 dxc4 28.\&xe6 fxe6 29.\&f1+

18.\&xc8 \&xc8 19.\&ab1 \&ab8 20.\&fc1 \&g6 21.\&xg6 \&xg6 22.\&a4 \&e7 23.\&e1 
White's knight is heading for the d3-square in order to increase his control over the c5-outpost.

23...\&b5 24.\&d3\#. Black is again condemned to passive defence in the ensuing endgame.

B1c2) 17.e4?!

This is White's most aggressive move. He opens the position
in the centre with the idea of attacking Black's weakness on c6 more effectively.

17...\textit{a}5

The move 17...\textit{g}6 allows White to play 18.e5 and as well as playing against Black's weak c6-pawn he can try to exploit his kingside pawn majority (f2-f4-f5).

18.\textit{f}8 19.\textit{fd}1 \textit{b}8 20.\textit{a}4 \textit{h}8 21.\textit{ab}1 \textit{xb}1 22.\textit{xb}1 \textit{f}4 23.\textit{f}1± Hentze – Zielinski, Email 2005.

17.\textit{a}5! This is Black's best move. In the first game his play was clearly weaker, since his queen walked into a fork: 17...\textit{f}6?! 18.e4 dxe4 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{h}6 20.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 21.\textit{e}4±; Black is likely to lose his c6-pawn, Gulko – M.Gurevich, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

18.e4! White reverts to his plan of the pawn-break e4.

White failed to exploit the advantages of his position with 18.\textit{a}4 \textit{xa}4 19.\textit{xa}4 \textit{d}7 20.\textit{b}7 \textit{eb}8 21.\textit{fb}1 \textit{f}6 22.\textit{xb}8 \textit{xb}8 23.\textit{xb}8 \textit{xb}8 24.\textit{d}3 \textit{f}7 25.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}7= and he could not breach Black's fortress, Romanov – M. Gurevich, Plovdiv 2008.

Here White could consider an interesting pawn-sacrifice: 18.\textit{a}4!? \textit{d}7 19.\textit{e}5!? \textit{xe}5 20.\textit{dxe}5 \textit{xe}5 21.\textit{c}5 \textit{e}8 (21...\textit{g}6 22.
He definitely has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but it is questionable whether he can prove more than that.

18...\textsf{\textit{d7}} 19.e5 \textsf{\textit{e7}} 20.\textsf{\textit{d2}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{ab8}}} 21.f4 \textsf{\textsf{\textit{xb1}}} 22.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{xb1}}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{b4}}} 23.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{b3}}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{a3}}} 24.f5†

White has played energetically and succeeded in advancing his e- and f-pawns. Now Black has serious problems defending against his opponent's initiative on the kingside. In addition, he should not forget that he also has weaknesses on the opposite side of the board.

\textbf{B2) 12...f5}

After this sharp move, the position resembles the Dutch Defence. The plans for both sides are quite clear.

Black will try by all means to preserve his knight on e4 (he needs it for the organisation of his kingside counterplay), while White will try to exploit the weakening of the e5-square and to evict the enemy knight from the e4-square as quickly as possible with the move f2-f3.

13.\textsf{\textit{e5}} \textsf{\textit{g6}}

Black should tackle the enemy knight on e5 immediately, even at the cost of weakening his kingside pawn structure.

He cannot equalise with 13...\textsf{\textit{g5}}, because after 14.\textsf{\textit{xg5}} \textsf{\textit{hxg5}} 15.f4 \textsf{\textit{e7}} 16.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{xe4}}} dxe4 17.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{fd1}}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{e6}}} 18.d5 cxd5 19.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{xd5}}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{wh4}}} 20.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{h2}}}! (this is stronger than 20.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{f2}} \textsf{\textit{xf2+}}} 21.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{xf2}}}= with an approximately equal endgame, Kramnik – Nikolic, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 20...\textsf{\textit{ac8}} 21.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{a4}}=; White has seized the initiative, thanks to his strong knights in the centre. We have to mention that Black does not achieve much with 21...\textsf{\textsf{\textit{f2}}} since after 22.\textsf{\textsf{\textit{c4}}}± his queen will soon have to retreat ignominiously.

14.\textsf{\textit{xg6}} \textsf{\textsf{\textit{hxg6}}}

\textbf{15.f3}

This move immediately forces Black to clarify the future of his knight.
Here White has another possibility to fight for an opening advantage: 15.\textit{e}e5 \textit{d}d6 16.f4. It is good for him not to exchange the bishops himself, but to wait for Black to capture on e5 (unnecessary complications arise after 16.\textit{x}xd6 \textit{xd}6 17.h4 \textit{f}f7 18.\textit{e}e2 \textit{f}f6 19.g3 \textit{g}5 20..\textit{h}xg5 \textit{g}xg5 21.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}4 22.\textit{g}2 \textit{g}5 23.\textit{h}5 \textit{g}6 24.\textit{h}1 \textit{d}7 25.\textit{a}f1 \textit{e}7 26.f3 \textit{d}6 27.g4 \textit{d}8 28.e4 \textit{f}xe4 29..\textit{f}xe4 \textit{d}xe4 30.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}7 and in this position, which is too complicated for practical chess, the opponents agreed to a draw in the correspondence game Waters – A. Ivanov, Email 2010) 16...\textit{e}6 17.\textit{a}4

White has the initiative, thanks to his play on the dark squares, since after 17...\textit{xe}5 18.\textit{f}xe5\textit{g}5 19.\textit{ae}1 \textit{e}7 (the character of the struggle remains the same after 19...\textit{ad}8 20.\textit{c}5 \textit{c}8 21.b4=) 20.\textit{c}5 \textit{f}7 21.b4= White is preparing his standard minority attack and we must evaluate the position in his favour, because after 17...\textit{we}7 18.\textit{xe}4 \textit{dx}e4 19.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 20.\textit{ac}1 \textit{g}5 (20...\textit{we}7 21.b3 \textit{ad}8 22.\textit{c}5=) 21..\textit{fx}g5 \textit{g}3 22.\textit{f}2 \textit{xf}5 23.h4 \textit{f}6 24.b3 \textit{ad}8 25.\textit{c}3 \textit{d}6 26.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 27.\textit{e}2 b6 28.\textit{f}4= Black’s centre pawns are fixed on light squares, so his bishop is inferior to White’s knight.

15...\textit{f}6

This is Black’s most popular move.

After 15...\textit{d}6 16.\textit{ae}1\textit{g}5 17.\textit{e}5 \textit{h}4 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}6 19.f4= White has a slight edge thanks to his domination of the dark squares and Black’s passive bishop on c8.

The move 15...\textit{g}5 is just an unnecessary waste of time and after 16.\textit{ad}1 \textit{d}6 17.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 18.\textit{f}2 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{c}2 \textit{e}6 20.h4 \textit{f}7 21.e4= Meessen – Inkiiov, Eupen 1996, Black’s knight is misplaced on f7. White gains the advantage with this standard pawn break in the centre, since his pieces are better coordinated.

16.\textit{ae}1

White also maintains a slight
edge with 16.\textipa{f}2 \textipa{h}5 17.\textipa{e}5 \textipa{h}4 18.\textipa{d}2 \textipa{g}3, I.\textipa{S}okolov - Oll, Pula 1997, and now 19.\textipa{f}4, preserving his bishop, which occupies a dominating position in the centre.

16...\textipa{h}5 17.\textipa{e}5
White is centralising once again!

17...\textipa{d}6 18.\textipa{f}4 \textipa{g}3 19.\textipa{f}3 \textipa{e}4 20.\textipa{x}e4 \textipa{x}e4 21.\textipa{g}3 \textipa{f}5 22.\textipa{x}d6 \textipa{x}d6 23.\textipa{g}5 Rieden­er - Desboeufs, Email 2007. In this position White can continue to play for a win for a long time, combining play against the weak pawns on \textipa{g}7 and \textipa{g}6 with the preparation of a minority attack. Black has no active counterplay and is forced to wait passively for his eventual demise.

C) 11...\textipa{g}6
This is Black’s most positional move. He is preparing the exchange of his “bad” \textipa{c}8-bishop. To accomplish this he plans to put his knight on \textipa{g}7 and to follow this with \textipa{f}5.

12.\textipa{a}ab1
White prepares the minority attack.
12...\textipa{e}e6

A transposition arises after 12...a5 13.a3 \textipa{e}e6 14.\textipa{h}4 \textipa{g}7 15.\textipa{b}4 axb4 16.axb4 \textipa{f}5 17.\textipa{x}f5 \textipa{x}f5 18.\textipa{x}f6 \textipa{x}f6 19.\textipa{b}5 - see 12...\textipa{e}e6.

13.\textipa{h}4 \textipa{g}7
Black continues with his plan.

After 13...\textipa{h}5 14.\textipa{x}e7 \textipa{x}e7 15.\textipa{b}4 \textipa{g}5 16.\textipa{x}g5 (16.\textipa{e}2!? \textipa{a}6 17.\textipa{a}4± Fourie - Torner Planell, Email 2007) 16...\textipa{x}g5 17.\textipa{h}2 \textipa{f}5 18.\textipa{f}e1 \textipa{d}7 19.\textipa{e}2 \textipa{f}6 20.\textipa{f}3 \textipa{e}7 21.\textipa{b}5± White’s queenside initiative is faster than Black’s counterplay on the opposite wing, Stanec - Onischuk, Kallithea 2002.

14.\textipa{b}4 \textipa{a}6
We have already mentioned that it is advantageous for the defending side to exchange the a-pawns when defending against the minority attack.
15.\textipa{a}4
This is a dream position for White when he adopts the minority attack plan. Black’s seemingly “good” bishop cannot take part in the defence of his weak c6-pawn and thus White will soon have an extra pawn. All he needs to do is attack it with all his pieces, at the same time taking care not to allow the move c6-c5.

15...\textit{\textasciitilde}f5
This is again the most logical move for Black. Now White is unable to avoid the exchange of the light-squared bishops.

In practice Black has also tried the line 15...\textit{\textasciitilde}f5 16.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf6 17. b5 axb5 18.axb5 \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 19.bxc6 (it is also good for White to play 19. \textit{\textasciitilde}d2 \textit{\textasciitilde}f5 20.\textit{\textasciitilde}f3 \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 21.\textit{\textasciitilde}fc1 \textit{\textasciitilde}a5 22.\textit{\textasciitilde}b3 \textit{\textasciitilde}f5 23.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 24.bxc6 bxc6 25.\textit{\textasciitilde}b7 \textit{\textasciitilde}a8 26.\textit{\textasciitilde}e2\pm, reaching a typical position for the minority attack in which White maintains an advantage, Gelfand – Lobron, Munich 1994) 19...bxc6 20.\textit{\textasciitilde}a1 \textit{\textasciitilde}b8 21.\textit{\textasciitilde}fb1 \textit{\textasciitilde}xb1+ 22. \textit{\textasciitilde}xb1 \textit{\textasciitilde}f5 23.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 24.\textit{\textasciitilde}a4 \textit{\textasciitilde}d6 25.\textit{\textasciitilde}c5 \textit{\textasciitilde}a8 26.\textit{\textasciitilde}c1 \textit{\textasciitilde}h4 27. \textit{\textasciitilde}xh4 \textit{\textasciitilde}xh4 28.\textit{\textasciitilde}d3\pm Ilczuk – Nocci, Email 2002.

16.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 \textit{\textasciitilde}xf5 17.\textit{\textasciitilde}xf6
Once again White exchanges his dark-squared bishop in order to gain a tempo for his queenside attack.

17...\textit{\textasciitilde}xf6 18.b5 axb5 19. axb5

This position has arisen many times in tournament play.

It is quite difficult for White to realise his slight positional advantage, but in practice playing this position is much easier for him. Black will be forced to defend patiently for a long time.

There are in fact only two possible results of the game: White either wins or draws.
19...\texttt{d}d6

There are other ways for Black to play, but the character of the position would not change and White maintains an edge in all lines.

19...\texttt{e}a5 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.ee2 (also playable is 21.\texttt{f}c1!? \texttt{ec}8 22.\texttt{b}b2 \texttt{d}d6 23.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{e}e7 24.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{d}d8 25.\texttt{x}xa8 \texttt{xa}8 26.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{a}a6 27.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{a}a8 28.\texttt{d}d3\texttt{f} and White has parried the activity of Black’s pieces on the queenside and has forced him to forget about active play and switch to passive defence, Pelletier – Gabriel, Switzerland 2003) 21...\texttt{ec}8

22.\texttt{f}f4 (here too it is worth considering 22.\texttt{fc}1 \texttt{d}d6 23.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{g}g5 24.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{a}a6 25.\texttt{x}xa6 \texttt{xa}6 26.\texttt{c}c2\texttt{f} and although in the game Bologan – Onischuk, Poikovsky 2008, the opponents agreed to a draw here, White maintains a slight edge in this endgame) 22...\texttt{d}d8 23.\texttt{d}d3\texttt{f} Van Wely – I. Sokolov, Belgrade 1999.

During the work on this chapter, the author was tempted to adapt Tolstoy’s famous dictum about families to fit this type of situation: “Positions in which White has a slight advantage, when implementing the minority attack plan, are all alike…”

The active-looking move 19...\texttt{a}a3 leads to a very bad position for Black after 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.\texttt{a}a1 \texttt{e}a5 22.\texttt{x}xa3 \texttt{x}xa3 23.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{e}e7 24.\texttt{b}b1 \texttt{a}a8 25.\texttt{c}c5 \texttt{a}a7 26.\texttt{g}4\texttt{f}+.

![Diagram](image)

This is a standard idea. White begins active play on the kingside with the idea of creating a second weakness.

His later play is extremely instructive: 26...h6 27.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{g}5 (after this move a second weakness appears in Black’s camp – the h6-pawn) 28.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{x}xb3 29.\texttt{x}xb3 \texttt{c}c7 30.\texttt{b}b8+ \texttt{g}7 31.\texttt{a}a6 \texttt{a}a7 32.\texttt{b}b6 \texttt{f}f8 33.\texttt{e}e1! White hurries to redeploy his other knight to the queenside. 33...\texttt{e}e8 34.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{d}d7 35.\texttt{d}c5+ \texttt{d}d6 36.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{g}7 37.\texttt{e}e2 \texttt{c}c8 38.\texttt{b}b8 \texttt{e}e7 39.\texttt{d}d8+ and in the game Navrotescu – Demuth, Niort 2004, Black resigned a move before being checkmated.
20.bxc6 bxc6 21.Qd2

21...a3

It is clearly bad for Black to play 21...d7?! since after 22. Qa4! his queen is misplaced. 22...d8 (he loses a pawn after 22...Qad8? 23.Qb6 Qe6 24.Qxc6+- Khenkin – Heberla, Plovdiv 2012) 23.Qfc1 Qb5 24.Qa1 Qc8 25.Qf3 Qd6 26.Qc5 Qe7 27.Qa6± and Black’s c6-pawn will soon be in great danger, Kovalyov – Vavrak, Benidorm 2009.

22.Qe2 Qa8 23.Qfc1 a2 24.Qb2

Once again Black’s piece activity on the queenside has not achieved anything more than exchanges.

24...Qxb2 25.Qxb2 Qf5 26.Qf4 Qe7 27.Qf3±

(diagram)

This position, in which White has a slight edge, arose in the game Khenkin – Asrian, Moscow 2001. White went on to turn his advantage into the full point. 27...Qb8 28.Qa1 Qxb2 29. Qxa8+ Qg7 30.g4!±. The principle of weaknesses is again in operation... 30...h6 31.h4 Qg8 32.g5 hxg5 33.hxg5 Qe7 34. Qa7 Qb8 35.Qc7 Qb6 36.Qe5 Qa6 37.Qg2 Qf8 38.Qf3 Qa1 39.Qxc6 Qxg5 40.Qxd5+- White wins a second pawn and with it the game.

D) 11...Qh5

This awkward-looking knight move to the edge of the board is played with the idea of preventing the retreat of White’s bishop to f4. Later, after the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, Black intends to continue with Qf6, with
the idea of threatening to take the h3-pawn with his bishop. Meanwhile, if White decides to play e3–e4, he will need to consider the possibility of h5–f4.

12...\texttt{fxe7} \texttt{fxe7}

The recapture with the rook is played less often: 12...\texttt{xe7} 13.b4 \texttt{e6} (the risky move 13...\texttt{e6}?! leads after 14.b5 \texttt{h6} 15.bxc6± to a difficult position for Black, because he has difficulty organising any attack on the kingside, while his queenside has been weakened considerably, Ljavadansky – Toprover, Voronezh 1997) 14.\texttt{a4} (it is also good for White to continue here with 14.b5 \texttt{xb5} 15.\texttt{xb5} a6 16.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c8} 17.\texttt{b2}± and Black’s d5-pawn needs constant protection, Yermolinsky – Ivanov, Parsippany 1996) 14...\texttt{f6} 15.\texttt{c5}±; White has accomplished the typical transfer of his knight to the c5-square and is ready to begin his standard minority attack. Black’s position is solid but rather passive.

13.\texttt{ab1}

13...\texttt{f6}

This is the only way for Black to create some counterplay.

All the alternatives condemn him to adopt a waiting strategy.

13...\texttt{g6} 14.\texttt{b4} a6 15.\texttt{fe1} \texttt{f6} 16.\texttt{e5} \texttt{g7} 17.\texttt{a4} \texttt{ge6} 18.\texttt{b6} \texttt{b8} 19.\texttt{f4}±; the activity of White’s pieces gives him a slight edge, Viaud – Hanauer, corr. 1990.

13...\texttt{e6} 14.\texttt{b4} \texttt{ac8} 15.\texttt{fc1} \texttt{g6} 16.b5 c5 17.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 18.\texttt{a4}± The minority attack did not yield anything for White, but Black’s weakness on d5 makes it difficult for him to equalize, Kasimdzhanov – Jonkman, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

13...\texttt{a6} 14.\texttt{a3} \texttt{g6} 15.\texttt{a4} \texttt{d7} 16.b4 \texttt{xb4} 17.\texttt{xb4} b5 18.\texttt{c5} \texttt{xc5} 19.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{g7} 20.\texttt{a1} \texttt{f5} 21.\texttt{d4} \texttt{xd3} 22.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{f6} 23.\texttt{c3}± White is better, thanks to his strong knight on d4, Psakhis – Ruban, Novosibirsk 1993. Black needs to be careful; otherwise, after \texttt{b5} he might soon be a pawn down.

13...\texttt{f6} 14.\texttt{b4} a6 15.\texttt{a4} \texttt{g6} 16.b5 \texttt{xb5} 17.\texttt{xb5} c5. White has played b4–b5 without having control of the c5-square and Black can exploit the opportunity to organise some counterplay (he cannot equalise with 17...\texttt{e4} 18.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{x} 19.\texttt{a1}± Almada – Oliver Martinez Fornes, Chiasso 1991). 18.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 19.\texttt{fc1}±. White’s
position is preferable in view of Black's weak d5-pawn, Mootamri – Dalar, Email 2010.

14.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}\text{e}5\)

White not only parries the threat of \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}\text{h}3\), but occupies a central square with his knight.

\[14.\ldots d6\]

It is possible that another queen move might be preferable for Black: \(14.\ldots \text{d}6\) \(15.b4 \text{f}6\) \(16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{d}4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{d}7\), Rowson – Slobodjan, Mulhouse 2005, 17.f4\(\pm\) and of course White has the edge but Black's position remains a hard nut to crack.

Interesting play results from \(14.\ldots \text{g}6\) \(15.f4 \text{g}3\) \(16.f3 \text{f}5\) \(17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{g}4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{g}4\) \(18.f2 \text{xe}3\) \(19.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}\text{h}7+ \text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{h}8\) \(20.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}2 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}\text{h}7\) (he loses immediately after 20...\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}\text{g}2??\), because of 21.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}\text{2}+\)– and his knights are hopelessly stranded on the kingside and doomed to perish, Iotov – Chatalbashev, Pleven 2005) 21.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash i}}\text{xe}3\)\(\pm\)

(diagram)

White has a strong knight on e5 and the possibility of organising an attack on the enemy king by advancing his f and g-pawns, so he is clearly better.

15.b4 \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}\text{6}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}\text{g}6\) \(\text{h}xg6\) 17.b5 \(\text{f}6\)

18.bxc6

It is obviously wrong for White to try 18.e4?!=, as in the game Ardeleanu – Oprisoni, Timisoara 1999.

18.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}\text{xc}6\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}\text{2}\)

White combines the attack on the queenside with the defence of his kingside. This knight is heading for the f4-square to provide secure protection for the g2- and h3-pawns.

19...\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}\text{5}\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}\text{4}\) \(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}\text{7}\) 21.\(\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}\text{7}\)\(\pm\). It is hard to see how Black
can attack on the kingside, whereas his queenside is completely in ruins.

E) 11...\texttt{Ag6}

Black is preparing to organise counterplay on the kingside. He wants to continue with \texttt{Ad6} and h6. Therefore it is best for White to exchange immediately on f6, since Black's bishop is then deflected from control of the b4-square and White does not need to lose any time on the preparatory move \texttt{Ab1}.

12.\texttt{Ax6f6 Ax6f6 13.b4}

13...a6

Black's bishop is misplaced on f6 and he should transfer it to the h2-b8 diagonal.

The move 13...\texttt{Ee7} is premature, however, because after 14.b5 \texttt{Ed6} 15.bxc6 bxc6 16.\texttt{Ef5}! (it is useful for White to deprive the opponent of the advantage of the bishop pair) 16...\texttt{Wf6} 17.\texttt{Ax8c8 Exxc8} 18.\texttt{Ab1}± Black has two weak pawns on the queenside – a7 and c6, Nielsen – Grischuk, Esbjerg 2000.

An interesting try for Black, but still insufficient for equality, is 13...\texttt{Ed6}, with the idea of transferring the bishop to the c7-square. However, this battery will not be dangerous for White, because his knight securely covers the h2-square. It is worth noticing once again how important for White the move h2-h3 is. If that pawn had been on h2, with a queen on d6 and a bishop on c7, Black could have attacked the knight on f3, which protects the h2-pawn, with the move \texttt{Gg4}. 14.\texttt{Ab1} a6 (14...\texttt{Ad8} 15.b5 c5 – Black should refrain from this move – 16.dxc5 \texttt{Exc5} 17.\texttt{Ef1 d6} 18.\texttt{Exd5}±; White has a solid extra pawn and Black is left with only faint chances of saving the game, thanks to his two bishops, Kotanjian – Esen, Dresden 2007) 15.\texttt{Efc1 Ad8} 16.\texttt{Af5 Ac7} 17.\texttt{Aa4 Ax5} 18.\texttt{Wxf5 Ey7} 19.\texttt{Ec5 Ad8} 20.a4±. White is ideally placed to develop his queenside initiative, whereas
following the exchange of the light-squared bishops Black's counterplay is not dangerous, Lerner – Malakhov, Oberwart 1999.

14.a4

14...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e7}}}\)

It might also be interesting for Black to try 14...a5. This seemingly illogical move is based on a sound positional idea, which is often encountered in similar positions. He wants to preserve the pawns on a4 and a5 in order later to exploit the weakness of the b4-square. However, after 15.b5 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f8}}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d6}}}\) 17.bxc6 bxc6 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{fc1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d7}}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f5}}}!\) (White again makes this important exchange.) 19... \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xf5}}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xf5}}}!\) White has gained a slight edge, because Black's weak c6-pawn is a real target for White's attack, while Black can hardly turn his control over the b4-square into anything substantial, Gavrilov – Kosyrev, Moscow 2007.

15.b5

15...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{axb5}}}\)

This is Black's most logical move. He wants to ease his defence by exchanging pawns.

Nevertheless, here too he has sometimes tried plans based on exploiting the weak b4-square.

For example: 15...a5 16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e2}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d6}}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{g3}}}\) c5, Nikolic – Seirawan, Nisic 1983, 18.dxc5 \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc5}}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc6}}}\) hxc6 21.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{e2}}}!\). Black's pawn on d5 is very weak and despite his two powerful bishops, we have to evaluate this position in White's favour.

Or 15...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{d6}}}\) 16.bxc6 bxc6 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{f5}}}\) a5 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{fc1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{f6}}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xg6}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{xc8}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{exc8}}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{ab1}}}!\) and although the weakness of the b4-square (and in some cases the a4-pawn too) provides Black with some counterplay, White's prospects are better, thanks to the weakness of Black's c6-pawn, Grabarczyk – Balashov, Germany 1997.

16.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{AXB5}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{D7}}}\)

White is better after 16...\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xa1}}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{xa1}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{d6}}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a8}}}\) \(\text{\textit{\textbf{c7}}}\) 19.bxc6 bxc6 20.\(\text{\textit{\textbf{a4}}}!\) and Black must be very careful, because White's pieces are extremely active. For
example, after the careless 20... \( \text{\text{d}}e7?! \) 21.e4!± White's advantage becomes menacing, Wallinger – Hesselbarth, Germany 1995.

17.bxc6 bxc6 18.\( \text{\text{d}}/a4\) \( \text{\text{a}}5 \) 19. \( \text{\text{d}}d2 \) \( \text{\text{c}}7 \) 20.\( \text{\text{b}}b3 \) \( \text{\text{a}}7 \) 21.\( \text{\text{a}}c5 \) White has accomplished the standard occupation of the c5-square with his knight and Black's defence will be difficult.

21...\( \text{\text{c}}c5 \) 22.\( \text{\text{x}}a7 \) \( \text{\text{x}}a7 \) 23. \( \text{\text{a}}1 \) \( \text{\text{c}}7 \) 24.\( \text{\text{a}}6 \) \( \text{\text{b}}6 \) 25.\( \text{\text{b}}c5 \) \( \text{\text{d}}d6 \) 26.\( \text{\text{b}}1 \)±. White has seized the initiative, Nikolic – Ljubojevic, Amsterdam 1988. The maximum that Black can dream about is to exchange pieces and try to escape into an inferior endgame, in which he will be doomed to a long and passive defence.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have analysed the variations in which, after the move 11. h3 and Black's various responses, White focuses mainly on the queenside. He implements a plan based on the minority attack. The positions in which White prefers the plan of the Pillsbury Attack are analysed in the next chapter. The standard positions with the minority attack are various and complex, but we can highlight here several typical ideas for White:

1. The exchange \( \text{\text{a}}xf6 \) is used to deflect Black's bishop from its control over the b4-square, in order to win a tempo for the minority attack (b4).

2. The exchange of the light-squared bishops deprives Black of the advantage of the two bishops and also prevents counterplay on the kingside based on \( \text{\text{w}}f6 \) and \( \text{\text{x}}h3 \). Furthermore Black's apparently passive bishop can give secure protection to his weakness on c6.

3. The pawn-break e3-e4. This idea is used in two cases: a) if Black lags in development; b) when White needs to open files in order to attack the weak c6-pawn more effectively.

4. When pursuing the minority attack, White should keep a careful watch for the pawn-break c6-c5 (in reply to b4-b5). He therefore often carries out the manoeuvre \( \text{\text{d}}c3-a4-c5 \). If White's queen knight is unable to perform this task, its kingside counterpart should be redeployed from the kingside to help, via the route \( \text{\text{f}}3-e1-d3 \).

5. It is essential to understand that in the endgame just one weak pawn on c6 may prove to be insufficient to win the game, so White, in accordance with the principle of two weaknesses, should create another target on the kingside. This often happens to be Black's h-pawn. So, in order to prevent h7-h5, White often plays g2-g4!

I hope that the theoretical aspect of this book, with the explanations in this chapter and my recommendations, will help readers to gain a deep understanding of how to play all the complex positions in this variation of the Queen's Gambit.
This chapter is devoted to the move 11...\textit{\&}e6. I decided to analyse it in a separate chapter because here, unlike in the other variations of the main line of the Queen's Gambit Exchange Variation, White does not proceed with the minority attack, but instead tries to continue with active play in the centre and on the kingside.

12.\textit{\&}e5!

This is the start of the plan introduced by Pillsbury. I believe this energetic move creates the most problems for Black. Naturally, White has other possibilities as well.

He often plays the semi-waiting move 12.\textit{\&}f4!? , but it is difficult to understand why he should need such manoeuvres when he can gain an advantage by simple means.

It might be interesting for White to try 12.\textit{\&}ab1 here, for example: 12...\textit{\&}e4!? Black wants to exploit the position of his bishop on e6, since in some variations White's a2-pawn will be loose. 13.\textit{\&}xe7 \textit{\&}xe7 14.b4 (it is possible that White has better chances of an edge with 14.\textit{\&}xe4 dxe4 15.\textit{\&}xe4 \textit{\&}xa2 16.\textit{\&}a1 \textit{\&}d5 17.\textit{\&}xd5 \textit{\&}xd5 18.\textit{\&}a4 \textit{\&}e6 19.\textit{\&}fa1 a6 20.\textit{\&}a5 \textit{\&}d6 21.\textit{\&}b3 \textit{\&}d8± and thanks to his pawn majority in the centre, he maintainssome initiative) 14...\textit{\&}f5 15.\textit{\&}d2 \textit{\&}xc3 16.\textit{\&}xc3 \textit{\&}xd3 17.\textit{\&}xd3 \textit{\&}e6 18.b5 c5! 19.dxc5 \textit{\&}xc5 20.\textit{\&}a3 \textit{\&}e6 21.\textit{\&}f3 \textit{\&}d7 22.\textit{\&}fd1 d4 23.\textit{\&}xd4 \textit{\&}xd4 24.exd4 \textit{\&}xd4=; the position is dead equal, Bacrot – Stojanovic, Basel 2011.

To fans of the minority attack who do not like to study theory, I can recommend an idea which
played by Karpov: 12...f6d7 13...f4 b6 14...ab1 d6 15...e2 g6 16...xd6 w xd6 17.a4 ac8 18.cc5

White has obtained a slight edge and he went on to convert it. Karpov's further play is absolutely exemplary: 18...wb8 19.ca3 a6 20.cc3 wc7 21.bc1 a8 22.dd2 a5 23.bb1 cc8 24.b4 axb4 25. wxb4 dd6 26.db3 ec8 27.a5 de7 28.gg3 g6 29.cc1 h5 30.a1 h4 31.cf1 ef5 32.fe2 de4 33.cc5 xc5 34.xc5 xe6 35.dd2 ef5 36.cf3 wd8 37.a6 bxa6 38.xa6 exa6 39.xa6 wa8 40.xc6 wxc6 41.xc6 aa8 42.dd3 and in view of the loss of a second pawn, Black resigned, Karpov – Kharitonov, Moscow 1988.

12...d6d7

Of course Black cannot tolerate White's knight on e5 for long and tries to exchange it immediately.

13...xe7 (diagram)

Now Black has a choice of recaptures on e7: with the rook A) 13...xe7, or with the queen B) 13...we7.

A) 13...xe7 14.f4 f6 15.cf3 bb6

It is not good for White to exchange the knights, because firstly he has more space and secondly, the f3-knight might take part in an attack later, whereas Black's knight on d7 merely stands in the way of his own pieces.

16.cc1

12...d6d7

Of course Black cannot tolerate White's knight on e5 for long and tries to exchange it immediately.

13...xe7

(diagram)

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A) 13...xe7 14.f4 f6 15.cf3 bb6

It is not good for White to exchange the knights, because firstly he has more space and secondly, the f3-knight might take part in an attack later, whereas Black's knight on d7 merely stands in the way of his own pieces.

16.cc1

16...wc7!

This is a safe defensive move, after which White has problems maintaining an edge. Black wants to create pressure against White's backward e3-pawn as quickly as possible, deflecting his
opponent from the attack in the process.

16...\(\textit{c}8\). This transfer of the knight to the d6-square is a bit slow and allows White to begin his kingside attack without difficulty. 17.g4 \(\textit{d}6\) 18.\(\textit{g}2\) (it is also good for White to follow the recommendation of V.Kramnik: 18. \(f5!\) \(\textit{f}7\) 19.\(\textit{h}2\).) 18...\(\textit{h}8\) 19.f5 \(\textit{f}7\) 20.\(\textit{h}1\) \(\textit{c}7\) 21.\(\textit{g}1\)

21...\(\textit{d}7\) (Black will be in great trouble after the impulsive move 21...g5?!, because after 22.h4! he will be helpless against the penetration of White's pieces on the h-file; 22...h6 23.\(\textit{w}h2\) \(\textit{e}8\) 24.\(\textit{g}3\) \(\textit{h}7\) 25.\(\textit{g}2\) \(\textit{g}8\) 26.hxg5 hxg5 27.\(\textit{w}h6++\) and in the game Kramnik – Renet, Clichy 1995, White's attack was decisive) 22.\(\textit{g}3\) \(\textit{d}8\) 23.\(\textit{g}2\) and even though White's backward e3-pawn might become a cause of anxiety, his kingside attack is a much more important factor.

(diagram)

17.\(\textit{e}2\)

White needs to take prophylactic measures, since the immediate 17.g4 would lead to a very complex and unclear struggle, but does not promise any advantage. 17...\(\textit{e}8\) 18.\(\textit{g}2\) \(\textit{f}7\) 19.\(\textit{d}2\) \(\textit{c}8\) 20.\(\textit{e}2\) \(\textit{d}6\) 21.\(\textit{c}1\) \(\textit{b}8\) 22.b3 \(\textit{g}6\) 23.f5 \(\textit{f}7\) 24.\(\textit{d}1\) \(\textit{e}4\) 25. \(\textit{x}e4\) dx \(\textit{e}4\) 26.\(\textit{h}2\) \(\textit{d}7\) 27.\(\textit{c}1\) b5 28.\(\textit{f}1\) \(\textit{d}8\) 29.\(\textit{e}1\) c5 30.\(\textit{g}3\) \(\textit{b}6\). Black has succeeded in organising counterplay on the queenside and the position holds chances for both sides, Reichert – Diehl, Email 2010.

17...\(\textit{d}7\) 18.\(\textit{f}e1\)

White has securely protected his weakness on e3 and will try to exploit the potential energy of his pieces after the central pawn break e3-e4.

18...\(\textit{e}8\)

Naturally the threat of e3-e4 is rather unpleasant for Black, but if 18...c5?!, the medicine proves to be more harmful than the disease itself. White has his hands free and after 19.e4! \(\textit{x}d4\) 20.\(\textit{x}d5\) \(\textit{d}5\) 21.\(\textit{x}d5\) \(\textit{x}c2\) 22.\(\textit{x}c2\) \(\textit{e}2\) 23.\(\textit{xe}2\) Black's position crumbles. White has a clear advantage
and Black is unable to defend his weak d4-pawn. I.Sokolov – Timman, Amsterdam 2001.

19.f5!

This move appears to be anti-positional, because White voluntarily places his pawn on a square of the same colour as his bishop. It has some concrete justification, though. Now White can advance e4, since his f4-pawn will not be hanging. In addition, his f5-pawn considerably restricts the mobility of Black’s minor pieces (the bishop on d7 and the knight on f8, which has no moves at all).

19...h8 20.e4

This thematic move guarantees White an edge in all variations.

Black has no active counterplay and White could also seize space on the queenside with 20.b4!? b8 21.a3±, or restrict the mobility of his opponent’s knight, just in case, with the move 20.b3!± and in both variations he maintains an advantage.

20...dxe4 21.xe4 xe4 22. xe4 xe4 23.xe4 d5 24.

The endgame is better for White, since his bishop and the d6-knight occupy strong positions. Black’s knight is terribly misplaced on f8 and his queenside pawns might prove to be weaker than White’s isolated d4-pawn.

B) 13...xe7 14.f6 15.f3

White avoids the exchange of knights, just as in variation A.

15...b6

The plan of organising immediate counterplay in the centre
with the undermining pawn move c6-c5 does not promise equality for Black: 15...\textit{f7} 16.\textit{ae1} c5 17.\textit{f2} b6 18.\textit{h4} cxd4 19.exd4 \textit{c7} 20.c1 d8, M.Gurevich - Akopian, Barcelona 1992, 21.b5 \textit{e6}

This is the point of White’s last move. Black’s rook is forced to occupy an unfavourable position, where in some variations it comes under attack from the move f4-f5. 22.g3 c8 23.f5 g6 24.xg7. This move highlights the unfortunate position of Black’s rook. Now White can organise a powerful attack by energetic play against the g6-square. 24.xg7 25.f5 d6 26.f2 e7 27.fxg6 hxg6 28.h4 a6 29.d3 e8 30.h5. The castled position of Black’s king crumbles.

\textbf{16.\textit{ae1} \textit{d6}}

Here, the plan of preparing c6-c5 is more justified, but it does not promise complete equality for Black either. 16...\textit{f7} 17.g4 c5 18.g2 cxd4 19.xd4 d8, Shariyazdanov - Belozerov, Elista 2001, 20.f5 b4 21.a3 c5 22.e1 c4 23.xc4 \textit{xc4} 24.f1±.

White’s king is slightly exposed, but his pieces are very active, he has complete control over the d4-square and Black’s queen is misplaced, so White maintains a slight advantage.

\textbf{17.g4}

White launches an attack.

\textbf{17...\textit{e7}}

After 17...\textit{f7}, in the game Sage – Svoboda, Email 2005, White tried an interesting plan with the pawn break g4-g5 and he gained access to the e5-outpost for his knight: 18.g2 \textit{e7} 19.g5 \textit{ae8} 20.gxf6 \textit{xf6} 21.e5 \textit{bd7} (Black cannot solve all his defensive problems with 21...\textit{fd7} 22.g3 \textit{f8} 23.h2, since White can patiently prepare his attack on the g-file) 22.e4. After White has achieved this timely pawn break in the centre, Black must be very careful, otherwise White's initiative will become decisive.

\textbf{18.f2 \textit{ae8} 19.e2 \textit{d7}}

White patiently prepares the pawn break e3-e4.

\textbf{20.f1}

White patiently prepares the pawn break e3-e4.
very difficult. Here is a sample continuation, which is quite indicative of the great problems he faces. It also shows how White should proceed: 21...\texttt{h8} 22.e4 dxe4 23.exd4 \texttt{e4} 24.xf2 d5 25.c4 \texttt{xf2}+ 26.xf2 \texttt{d8} 27.\texttt{ff1}. The endgame is very difficult for Black. His minor pieces are restricted by his opponent’s pawn on f5, while White’s knights will occupy dominating positions on the c5 and d6-squares. Black will then have no alternative but to resign.

This is a position from the game V.Popov - Jirovsky, Batumi 2002. \texttt{21.f5!} After this strong move Black’s defence becomes

**Conclusion**

We have analysed the variation 11.h3 \texttt{e6} 12.e5, in which White obtains a very promising position in all lines. He usually chooses between two possible plans:

1) White organises a kingside attack and for this he tries to open files by advancing his g-pawn. This plan is too straightforward, however, and Black can prepare well against it.

2) White can also double his rooks behind his e3-pawn. He plays f5, restricting the mobility of Black’s pieces and advances e3-e4 at an opportune moment. After this, even the exchange of queens fails to solve all Black’s problems, because White’s minor pieces will be much more active than their black counterparts in the endgame.
The final part of our book is devoted to the Slav Defence. This defence, together with the Queen's Gambit Declined, seems to me to be Black's most reliable response to 1.d4. However, in the Slav Black has a much wider range of possibilities than in the Queen's Gambit Declined, and he can play not just to equalise but even to seize the initiative. This is the reason for its great popularity nowadays.

We shall devote eight chapters to this defence: the Winawer Counter-gambit (Chapter 18), the 3...dxc4 variation (Chapter 19), the variations with 4...&g4 and 4...&f5 (Chapter 20), the Chebanenko variation (Chapter 21), and the Schlechter variation (Chapter 22).

The last three chapters of the book are devoted to the move 4...e6, the Semi-Slav Defence. In Chapter 23 we analyse 5...a6, Chapter 24 examines Black's attempts to avoid the Meran variation, and finally in Chapter 25 we study Black's main weapon in the Semi-Slav – the Meran.

White has serious problems to solve, not only against the Meran, but also against the Chebanenko variation and the 3...dxc4 variation, which has been quite popular lately.
Chapter 18  

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.\(\text{\&}c3\) e5

The Winawer Counter-gambit

4.dxe5
This is White's best response.

After the move 4.e3 matters are rather unclear; the response 4...e4 leads to a variation of the French Defence with colours reversed, in which White's extra tempo is no guarantee of an advantage.

4...d4 5.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}a5+\) 6.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 7.\(\text{\&}g3\)

In chess theory this move is named after the Polish master Szymon Winawer, who played it for the first time in his game against Marshall back in 1901. The main idea is to fight for the initiative at a very early stage of the game. This gambit has never really attracted many followers in tournament play. It was only at the end of the 90s of the last century that it began to appear in tournaments at the top level, thanks to the efforts of Nikolic and Morozevich. However, after Kasparov's game against Nikolic in 1992 its popularity plummeted once again. According to contemporary theory, Black's position is very difficult.

7...\(\text{\&}f6\)
7...\(\text{\&}d6\) 8.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}f6\) 9.\(c2\) – see 7...\(\text{\&}f6\).

Black has also tried the move 7...c5, but after 8.\(\text{\&}f3\)
it seems rather dubious to con­
tinue with 8...\textit{\texttt{e7}} 9.e3 g5. Here,
the simplest response for White is
10.h3!± and Black's lag in devel­
opment, combined with his weak­
ened kingside pawn structure, is
likely to become an important fac­
tor (White has no need to enter the
rather unclear complications arising
from the piece sacrifice 10.\textit{\texttt{e2}}
g4 11.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}} 12.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} Fries
Nielsen – Hector, Aarhus 1993).

It is safer for Black to play 8...
\textit{\texttt{c7}}, but even then after 9.e3 dxe3
(Black fails to equalise with 9...
\textit{\texttt{c6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}} 11.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 12.
0–0±; White has a slight edge,
since he has already completed
his development and Black's d4-
pawn is very weak, Agrest – Hec­
tor, Malmo 1993) 10.\textit{\texttt{e2}}!? This is
White's simplest option. 10...\textit{\texttt{f6}}
11.\textit{\texttt{xe3+}} \textit{\texttt{e7}} 12.\textit{\texttt{d3}} \textit{\texttt{c6}} 13.0–0
0–0 14.\textit{\texttt{c3}}±. The pawn structure
is symmetrical, but White's minor
pieces are better placed (particu­
larly his bishops on d3 and c3)
and his position is preferable.

8.\textit{\texttt{f3}}

White gains time for the develop­
ment of his pieces by attacking
Black's queen.

8...\textit{\texttt{d6}}

This is the most popular retreat-square for Black's queen,
but also playable is 8...\textit{\texttt{c5}}.\textit{\texttt{c2}}
\textit{\texttt{e6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{c1}} \textit{\texttt{a6}} (or 10...\textit{\texttt{b6}} 11.\textit{\texttt{c5}}
\textit{\texttt{d8}} 12.a3!?±; and in the game
Skororokin – Milov, Berlin
1994, White obtained a slight edge
after 12.\textit{\texttt{d3}}11.a3 (White restricts
the scope of his opponent's knight)

11...\textit{\texttt{b6}} 12.b4 c5 13.b5 \textit{\texttt{c7}}
14.e3\textit{\texttt{xe3}}15.\textit{\texttt{xe3}}!?a6 16.a4\textit{\texttt{xb5}}
17.\textit{\texttt{xb5}} \textit{\texttt{d6}} 18.\textit{\texttt{e4}} \textit{\texttt{xe4}} 19.
\textit{\texttt{xe4}} 0–0 20.\textit{\texttt{d3}} f5 21.\textit{\texttt{h4}} \textit{\texttt{f6}},
Erofeev – Hirtreiter, corr. 1997,
22.0–0 \textit{\texttt{a3}} 23.\textit{\texttt{c3}} \textit{\texttt{h6}} 24.\textit{\texttt{f2}}±.
White is better, in view of his su­
perior piece coordination, while
Black's knight on c7 is badly mis­
placed.
11...0–0–0 12.b4 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 14.\textit{xf}5+ \textit{b}8, Papa – Dimitrijevic, Hengelo 2004, 15.\textit{f}4+ \textit{a}8 16.c5 \textit{c}7 17.\textit{e}5± and White has an advantage, thanks to his two bishops and the weakness of Black’s d4-pawn.

\subsection{9.\textit{c}2}

With 9...c5 Black securely protects his d4-pawn but falls even further behind in development. 10.0–0–0 \textit{c}6 11.e3 \textit{g}4 (11... \textit{e}6?! loses a pawn after 12.\textit{c}3! \textit{c}8 13.exd4 cxd4 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{a}6 16.\textit{b}1± and Black has no compensation, Sakalaukas – Zapolskis, Lithuania 1995) 12.exd4 \textit{xd}4 (it is disastrous to play 12... \textit{xf}3? 13.\textit{xe}1+ \textit{e}7 14.\textit{f}5± – once Black’s light-squared bishop ceases to control the important f5-square, White’s knight immediately heads there) 13.\textit{e}1+ \textit{e}6 (the endgame after 13...\textit{e}7 14.\textit{xd}4 cxd4 15.\textit{a}4+ \textit{d}7 16.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 17.\textit{d}3± is worse for Black) 14.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 15.\textit{e}3 0–0–0

\subsection{9...\textit{e}7}

The queen sacrifice 11...dxc3 12.\textit{xc}3 dxe3 12.\textit{xe}3 \textit{c}7 13.\textit{c}3, as played in the game Kasparov – Nikolic, Manila 1992.

\subsection{11.\textit{c}3!}

This is White’s best move.

Also playable is 11.e3 \textit{dxe}3 12.\textit{f}xe3 \textit{c}7 13.\textit{c}3, as played in the game Kasparov – Nikolic, Manila 1992.

\subsection{11...\textit{f}4+}

The queen sacrifice 11...dxc3 12.\textit{xc}3 cxb2+ is rather dubious for Black since after 13.\textit{xb}2! \textit{xd}6 14.e3 \textit{a}6 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}5 16.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}7 17.\textit{c}2 \textit{e}8 18.\textit{d}4 b6 19.\textit{h}4 h6 20.\textit{d}4± White’s queen is clearly stronger than Black’s rook and bishop, Fielding – Carless, IECC 2011.

A more interesting try is 11...c5 12.e3 \textit{c}6 (12...\textit{a}6 13.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xa}2
14.d5\(=\) 13.exd4 cxd4 14.\(\text{c}x\text{d}4 \text{b}4 15.\text{x}b4 \text{w}xb4 16.\text{d}3 \text{w}b6\(=\) when Black's two bishops partially compensate for White's extra pawn, but not enough for equality, Arlandi – Ortega, Imperia 1996.

12.e3

This pawn sacrifice is the real point of White's eleventh move. He is willing to offer material in order to open files for his pieces.

12...dxe3 13.fxe3

Accepting the sacrifice with 13...\(\text{w}x\text{e}3+\) leads after 14.\(\text{b}1 \text{a}6 15.\text{a}3 \text{e}6 16.\text{d}3 \text{g}6 17.\text{de}1 \text{w}h6 18.\text{d}4 \text{c}7 19.\text{h}4\(=\) to a very difficult position for Black, Rogemont – Gunnlaugsson, corr. 2001. White can quickly organise a deadly attack against the enemy king, while Black's queen on h6 is badly misplaced.

14.\text{d}3 \text{a}6 15.\text{w}e2 \text{g}6 16.\text{h}3 \text{e}6 17.\text{d}4 \text{ad}8 18.\text{h}f1\(=\)

13...\text{h}6

In his book “The Complete Slav”, Sakaev marked this move as a novelty, promising Black good play. However, there was a correspondence game played in 2011 which cast doubt on this evaluation.

White's isolated e3-pawn cannot console Black fully for the fact that White's pieces have all occupied ideal positions for an attack on the enemy king, while Black's forces lack coordination, Dorner – Barreras Garcia, Email 2011.

Conclusion

White should strive to develop his pieces quickly and to castle queenside. He should also try to exchange Black's d4-pawn as quickly as possible, because this pawn is preventing White from occupying the important c3-square with his bishop. From there it will control the very important a1-h8 diagonal and take part in the attack against the enemy king. In order to achieve this, White will often be ready to weaken his position and even to sacrifice a pawn.
Chapter 19  

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.\(\text{\&}c3\) dxc4

This chapter will be devoted to the 3...dxc4 variation. Botvinnik and Euwe sometimes played this line back in the 1930s, but it did not attract many followers in tournament practice. We must admit, however, that lately this variation is becoming more and more popular and is encountered in the games of many contemporary grandmasters. It should be sufficient to say that strong players such as Vitiugov and Vallejo employ it. This variation is based on the idea of exploiting the disadvantages of the position of White’s knight on c3, because in many lines he will need to lose a tempo retreating after b5-b4. White’s path to advantage is by no means simple and he must demonstrate thorough knowledge of many complicated lines and excellent calculation of variations.

4.e3

This move leads to very complex positions.

The play is much simpler after 4.e4. This often produces positions in which Black’s knight occupies a very strong outpost on d5. White can maintain a slight edge with precise play, but the character of the struggle is not to everybody’s taste. Here is a sample continuation: 4...b5 5.a4 b4 6.\(\text{\&}b1\) a6 7.\(\text{\&}c2\) f6 8.\(\text{\&}d2\) e6 9.\(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}xc4\) 10.\(\text{\&}xc4\) c5 11.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}bd7\) 12.0-0 cxd4 13.\(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}xd4\) 14.\(\text{\&}b3\) e7 15.\(\text{\&}xd4\) c7 16.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}c8\) 17.\(\text{\&}bd4\) 0-0 18.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}c4\frown\), and Black has enough counterplay, thanks to his strong knight on d5, Khismatullin – Vitiugov, Aix-les-Bains 2011. He went on to exploit some errors by White and in the end scored a convincing victory.
Now Black can protect his c4-pawn in two different ways: A) 4...Ae6 and B) 4...b5.

A) 4...Ae6
In this way he defends his c4-pawn without weakening his queenside pawn structure, but the unfavourable position of the bishop on e6 does not promise him equality.

5...f3
Black again has a choice. He can try to develop his kingside pieces quickly with A1) 5...Af6, or securely protect his c4-pawn with A2) 5...b5.

A1) 5...Af6 6.Ag5
Now Black can either move his bishop or protect it with his queen.

(diagram)

6...Ad5
This is his main response.

After 6...Ag4 White regains his pawn and keeps a slight edge, thanks to his central superiority. In addition, Black's light-squared bishop is restricted by White's pawns. 7.f3 Ah5 8.Axc4 e6 9.0–0 Abd7 10.e4 h6 11.Ah3 e5 12.Ae3± Zhu Chen – Ushenina, Batumi 2012.

With 6...Ad7 Black retains his extra pawn, but White's compensation is more than enough. 7.e4 h6 8.Axe6 Axe6 9.e5 Abd7 10.Ae2 Ad5 11.0–0 Ab7b6 (it is bad for Black to play 11...Axc3 12.bxc3 Ab6, Grigorov – Stojanovic, Kavala 2007 and here the energetic move 13.a4!± creates serious problems for Black) 12.Ae4 Ac8 13.b3 cxb3 14.Axb3 e6 15.Ac3 Ac7 16.Ad6 Axd6 17.Axd6+ Af8 18.Afab1. White's knight on d6 is very powerful and he has a strong initiative, especially since Black's king has lost its castling rights. The extra pawn is completely irrelevant.

The other way to protect the bishop does not promise equality for Black either. 6...Ac8 7.Ae2 Ad5 (it is worse for him to play 7...b5 8.Axe6 Axe6 9.Af3 b4 10.Ac4 Abd7 11.Ad2 a5 12.Ac2 g5 13.h3
\(\text{c8 14.} \text{c1}^\pm, \text{since White regains his pawn and Black has no com-}
\text{pensation for the many weaknesses in his pawn structure, Karasek – Peled, Email 2007) 8.e4 h6 9.}
\text{exd5 h}x\text{g5 10.dxc6 } \text{dxc6 11.d5 } \text{e5 12.} \text{xg5 a6 13.} \text{d4 } \text{w}f\text{5 14.}
\text{h4}^\pm. \text{White’s two strong bishops guarantee him a slight edge. Black lags in development and his c4-}
\text{pawn might turn out to be weak, Braziulis – Voveris, Email 2009.}

11.\text{d4}!

This is a classic manoeuvre which was once used by Mikhail Botvinnik in a similar position in the Panov Attack (Caro-Kann De-}

\text{fence).}

Amazingly, White has no ad-
\text{vantage after 11.} \text{txg5 owing to}
11 ... \text{b6}! This move looks anti-}
\text{positional (Black lags in develop-
\text{ment and leaves his king in the}
\text{centre in order to go after White’s}
\text{b2-pawn) but concrete analysis}
\text{indicates that White has no ad-
\text{vantage, even in correspondence}
\text{play. 12.} \text{xc4 } \text{xb2 13.} \text{b5+ w}d\text{8 14.} \text{c1 } \text{e4 15.} \text{xe4 } \text{xb5 16.} \text{e2}
\text{a6 17.} \text{c5 } \text{xe2+ 18.} \text{xe2 b5 19.}
\text{h4 } \text{c4 20.h5 } \text{c8 21.d3 } \text{d}7
\text{22.f4 f6 and here, in the game}
\text{Zielinski – Koenig, Email 2008,}
\text{the players agreed a draw.}

12.e4

White should begin active play in the centre, since his knight has not yet been driven away from the g5-square.

7...h6 8.exd5 h\text{xg5 9.dxc6}
\text{dxc6 10.d5 } \text{e5}

11...\text{d7}

Black’s position is no easier af-
\text{ter 11 ... } \text{d6 12.} \text{xg5 a6 13.f4}
\text{eg4, Theising – Varga, Baia Sp-}
\text{rie 2009, 14.} \text{xc4 } \text{hxh2 15.} \text{xh2}
\text{hxh2 16.0-0-0 } \text{c8 17.} \text{e2 } \text{hg4}
18.\text{b1 } \text{h6 19.} \text{e1 } \text{f5 20.} \text{d3}^\pm
– he lags seriously behind in de-
\text{velopment. It is rare to see a posi-
\text{tion in which after twenty moves}
\text{Black’s bishop is still on f8 and his}
\text{pawns are on e7 and g7.}

12.\text{xg5 } \text{b6}

12...f6?! 13.\text{e3}^\pm is very bad
\text{for Black, Akopian – Kirov, Palma}
de Mallorca 1989.
13.\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}3}} \textit{\textbf{x}d4} 14.\textit{\textbf{x}d4} \textit{\textbf{h}4}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{image}
\end{center}

15.\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}e}5}!?

This is stronger than 15.0–0-0 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}3}+} 16.\textit{\textbf{x}d3} \textit{\textbf{x}d4} 17.\textit{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{e}5} 18.\textit{\textbf{e}2} \textit{\textbf{x}d1}+ 19.\textit{\textbf{x}d1} \textit{\textbf{d}8} 20. \textit{\textbf{c}2} g5= and Black’s counterplay on the dark squares proved sufficient for a draw in the game Quaranta – Syblik, Lechenicher Schach-Server 2010.

15...\textit{\textbf{\textit{x}e}5} 16.\textit{\textbf{g}3} \textit{\textbf{h}6} 17.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{d}7} 18.\textit{\textbf{xc}4}=. White is a pawn up and, although Black’s counterplay should not be underestimated, White’s position is preferable, despite the drawish tendencies of the bishops of opposite colour.

A2) 5...\textit{\textbf{b}5}

After this move it is not at all easy for White to prove an advantage. In general, he should quietly complete his development and not strive immediately to regain his sacrificed pawn. The best way to do this is

6.\textit{\textbf{\textit{e}2}!}?

After 6.a4 b4 7.\textit{\textbf{e}4} \textit{\textbf{f}6} 8.\textit{\textbf{c}5} (in practice White has tried various other knight moves here – 8. \textit{\textbf{\textit{d}ed}2}, 8.\textit{\textbf{g}3}, 8.\textit{\textbf{xf}6} – but has failed to demonstrate an edge with any of them) 8...\textit{\textbf{d}5}. A complicated position has arisen, in which White can try to exploit the seemingly vulnerable position of Black’s bishop on d5, but this is not an easy task. Furthermore, if he is too persistent in following this path, he can even lose very quickly, as happened in the following game. 9.\textit{\textbf{e}5} \textit{\textbf{e}6} 10.\textit{\textbf{f}3} \textit{\textbf{xc}5} 11.\textit{\textbf{x}c5} \textit{\textbf{fd}7} 12.\textit{\textbf{xd}7} \textit{\textbf{xd}7} 13.\textit{\textbf{e}4} \textit{\textbf{xe}4} 14.\textit{\textbf{fxe}4} \textit{\textbf{h}4}+ 15.\textit{\textbf{e}2} \textit{\textbf{e}5} 16. \textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}2}} \textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}3}} 17.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{e}3}} \textit{\textbf{c}1}+ 18.\textit{\textbf{f}3} \textit{\textbf{e}5}+ 19.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{h}4}+ 20.\textit{\textbf{xe}5} \textit{\textbf{f}6}+ 21.\textit{\textbf{d}6} \textit{\textbf{e}5}+ 22.\textit{\textbf{c}7} \textit{\textbf{d}8}+ 23. \textit{\textbf{xc}6} \textit{\textbf{d}7}# Itzoria – Kupreichik, Istanbul 2003.

6...\textit{\textbf{f}6} 7.0–0 \textit{\textbf{g}6} 8.\textit{\textbf{g}5}
Chapter 19

White has completed the development of his kingside pieces and should now begin active play on the queenside, exploiting his lead in development. However, first it is a good idea to drive Black's bishop away from the e6-square, since it protects the c4-pawn from there. At the same time White prepares the transfer of his knight to e4, to exploit the weakening of the c5-square.

8...\texttt{c8}

After the alternative retreat of the bishop 8...\texttt{d7}, White obtains an excellent position with 9.b3 \texttt{h6} 10.\texttt{ge4} \texttt{xe4} 11.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{xb3} 12.\texttt{xb3} \texttt{g7} 13.\texttt{d2} 0-0 14.\texttt{a5} \texttt{c8} 15.\texttt{c1} \texttt{f5} 16.\texttt{c5} \texttt{a6} 17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{xc5} 18.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{a6} 19.\texttt{b4} \texttt{ac8} 20.\texttt{c2±}, since Black's numerous weaknesses and White's strong pressure on the c-file make the position very difficult for Black to defend, despite his extra pawn, Spirin – Mashinskaya, Leiden 2011.

9.a4!? White maintains a slight edge with this move.

He fails to achieve anything real with 9.b3, since after 9...\texttt{h6} 10.\texttt{ge4} \texttt{b4} 11.\texttt{xf6+} \texttt{exf6} 12.\texttt{e4} \texttt{f5} 13.\texttt{c5} \texttt{c3} 14.\texttt{a3} \texttt{xc5} 15.\texttt{xc5} Black has the strong response 15...\texttt{xd1??} (better than 15...\texttt{a6} 16.\texttt{c2±} Wang Yue – Zhang Pengxiang, Shandong 2007) and in the endgame his defence is quite firm, for example: 16.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{a6} 17.\texttt{c4} \texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{f3} \texttt{d8} 19.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{xd8} 20.\texttt{f2} \texttt{b8} 21.\texttt{e2} \texttt{bxa3} 22.\texttt{xa3} \texttt{c7} 23.\texttt{d3} \texttt{e6} 24.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{xc4} 25.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{e6}=

9...\texttt{h6} 10.\texttt{ge4} \texttt{xe4} 11.\texttt{xe4±}

In this position, White has more than enough compensation for the pawn. Black lags considerably behind in development and his pawn structure on the queenside might well prove to be weak.

11...\texttt{g7}

This is his best defence.
After 11...a6, Ward – Taras, Email 2006, White has the powerful manoeuvre 12.\textit{d}2! \textit{d}7 13.\textbf{AXB}5 \text{c}xb5 14.\textit{a}5 \textit{b}6 15.\textbf{B}3 \text{c}xb3 16.\textbf{W}xb3± and his strong pressure, the unpleasant pin on the b6-knight and his considerable lead in development allow us to evaluate this position as clearly better for White.

12.\textbf{AXB}5 \text{c}xb5 13.\textbf{B}3±

Black will be unable to retain his extra pawn, so White will be left with a slight edge, owing to the weakness of Black's a7-pawn.

\textbf{B) 4...b5}

This is the most popular and most logical move for Black. After all, he did not capture on c4 only to give the pawn back without a struggle...

5.a\textbf{4}b4 6.\textit{D}e4

(diagram)

The most frequently played move here is \textbf{B2) 6...\textbf{D}d5}, but first we shall analyse \textbf{B1) 6...\textit{f}6}.

\textbf{B1) 6...\textit{f}6}

This is an unambitious move. Black does not try to protect his extra pawn and only wishes to complete the development of his pieces quickly. In a position with material equality, White will easily retain a slight opening advantage, because Black's queenside pawn structure has been weakened.

7.\textbf{xf}6+ \textit{exf}6 8.\textbf{xc}4 \textit{d}6

9.\textbf{f}3 0–0 10.0–0

10...\textbf{D}d7

Black has also tried here 10...\textbf{f}5 11.b3 \textit{d}7 12.\textbf{b}2± and White's better pawn structure
gave him a slight edge in the game Zhukova – Kononenko, Antalya 2002.

The attempt to fight for the e4-square leads to a difficult position for Black: 10...f5 11.a5 d7 12.c2 d6 13.b3 e6 14.d2 e7 15.\textit{xe}6 fxe6 16.xc6 e4 17.fc1 g5 18.e1 g4 19.e5 xe5 20.xe5 \textit{e}4 17.\textit{xc}6 21.\textit{c}4 Black has an extra (albeit doubled) pawn.

11.b3 \textit{b}7 12.a5+ and once again White’s better pawn structure gives him a slight edge, Epishin – Schmidt, Germany 1998.

B2) 6...d5
This is best – Black protects his pawn with tempo.

7.g3 f6 8.e2

In this position Black has four main moves: B2a) 8...h5, B2b) 8...e6, B2c) 8...e5, B2d) 8...a6.

B2a) 8...h5
Black wishes to exploit the disadvantages of the position of White’s knight on the g3-square.

9.e4 \textit{f}5

10.h4

10...e5

White’s position is better after 10...a6, Riazantsev – Chadaev, Olginka 2011, and now the energetic move 11.e5!?, planning to sacrifice the pawn on e6 to impede Black’s development. 11...d5 12.e6! fxe6 13.f3! g6 14.0–0 g8 15.c2 b3 16.e4. Black is behind in development and will have difficulty protecting his many weaknesses.

10...e5 11.xc4 d6 12.f3 0–0, Hillarp Persson – Tikkanen, Vasteras 2011, 13.g5! exd4
(13...g4 14.b3) 14.xh5 bd7 15.xf6+ xf6 16.xd4± with an extra pawn for White. It is also possible for him to continue with 16.d3? g4 17.f4 h6 18.0–0→ with a strong attack.

B2b) 8...e6 9.e4

This pawn sacrifice is typical for this variation.

9...xe4

This is Black’s most principled move – he accepts the sacrifice.

The cautious move 9...a5 does not equalise: 10.xc4 a6 11.xa6 xa6 (after 11...xa6 12.f3 e7 13.0–0 0–0 14.e5± White’s position is preferable in view of the weakness of Black’s queenside pawns, Delchev – Guramishvili, Zaragoza 2010) 12.g5 bd7 13.e2 xe2+ 14.xe2 c5 15.f3 cxd4 (the evaluation of the position is not changed by the inclusion of the moves 15...h5 16.h4± Lysyj – Ernst, Plovdiv 2012) 16.xd4 c5 17.hd1 c8 18.b3 0–0 19.ac1 b6 20.a5 c7 21.e3±. White’s rooks have occupied the c- and d- files, while Black’s weak a7- and b4- pawns will be a cause of lasting anxiety, Flumbort – Hartl, Austria 2012.

10.f3 f5 11.e2

11...c3

It is bad for Black to play 11...xg3 12.hxg3 xd4 13.f4± and despite his considerable material advantage, he did not survive for long in the game Borovikov – Dehmel, Germany 2012, owing to his terrible lag in development and his weak pawns.

He does not equalise either with 11...b3 12.xe4 fxe4 13.xe4 b4+ 14.f1 d7 15.f3±; Sakaev, in his book on the Slav Defense, evaluates this position as playable for Black, but it seems to me this evaluation is too optimistic, because his lag in development and the weaknesses in his pawn structure guarantee an advantage to White. 15...0–0 (White is much better after 15...a6 16.g1 c3 17.e3±) 16.g1! This is a
key move. Now Black’s countermoves on the f1-a6 diagonal is not dangerous for White. 16...c3 17. bxc3  bxc3 18. a3  xd4 19. xb3 e5 20. h3  a6 21. c2  h8 (Black loses immediately after 21...g6 22. h4!+- with a winning attack, or 21...h6 22. h2  f6 23. d1  c7 24. xd4 exd4+ and White’s rook will join in the attack with decisive affect after 25. g3+--) 22. h7± and Black’s position is extremely difficult, in view of the weakness of his king.

12. xe4 fxe4 13. xe4

Here Sakaev once again underestimates White’s initiative and considers Black’s position playable. In fact his position is difficult. Here is a sample variation: 13... b3 14. d3 exb2 15. xb2  a6 16. xa6  xa6 17. xa6  xb2 18. xc6+  f7 19. c1 b3 20. b7+  g8 21. e2  d8 22. e4  b4+ 23. f1 h5 24. xe6+  h7 25. e4± and White maintains a great advantage. Black’s king is in danger and his b3-pawn is a liability rather than an asset.

**B2c) 8...e5**

This move enables Black to complete the development of his kingside pieces smoothly, but leaves White with a slight edge, since he easily regains the c4-pawn.

9. f3 exd4

After 9... bd7, in the game Mamedyarov – Brunello, Porto Carras 2011, Black quickly landed in a hopeless position: 10. 0-0  d6 11. d2 c3 12. bxc3 bxc3 13. e4 e6 14. f5 0-0 15. c4  d5 16. f3+-

10. exd4  d6 11. f1 c3 12. e3
12...\(\text{We}6\)

Black fails to equalise with 12...cxb2 13.cxb2 \(\text{Wa5}\), because White has a very strong resource in 14.d5\(\ast\), sacrificing a second pawn and opening the diagonal for his bishop. Black will have great difficulty completing the development of his pieces. 14...c5 (or 14...\(\text{Qxd5}\) 15.d4 f6 16.0–0 0–0 17.c4 b7 18.\(\text{We}4!\) \(\text{Ee}7\) 19.\(\text{Efd1}\) \(\text{Da6}\) 20.\(\text{Qxd5}\) cxd5 21.\(\text{Qxd5}\) \(\text{Af8}\) 22.\(\text{Wc4}\)± and Black's position crumbles) 15.\(\text{Qxf6}\) gxf6 16.\(\text{Wb3}\) 0–0 17.0–0 \(\text{Qxe3}\) 18.fxe3 cxd5 19.\(\text{Qd4}\) \(\text{Qd7}\) 20.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{Qe5}\) 21.\(\text{Qxd5}\) \(\text{Eb8}\) 22.\(\text{Wxf6}\)±; White has regained his sacrificed material and has a strong attack.

13.bxc3 bxc3 14.0–0 0–0 15.\(\text{Cc4}\)

This is stronger than 15.\(\text{Cc3}\) \(\text{Cc6}\) 16.\(\text{Cc4}\) \(\text{We7}\) 17.\(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{Cb4}\)\(\ast\), when Black had good counterplay in the game V.Georgiev – Milov, Dieren 2011.

White retains a slightedge after 15...\(\text{Wd7}\) 16.\(\text{Ca3}\) \(\text{C6}\) 17.\(\text{Ce5}\) \(\text{Cc7}\) 18.\(\text{Cc6}\) \(\text{Cc6}\) 19.\(\text{Cb3}\)±; he regains his pawn, while Black ends up with a weak c6-pawn and a knight out of play on a6.

16.\(\text{Ce1}\) \(\text{Cc7}\) 17.\(\text{Ca3}\) \(\text{Cb6}\) 18.\(\text{Cc6}\) \(\text{Cc6}\) 19.\(\text{Cc1}\) \(\text{Cb4}\) 20.\(\text{Cc3}\)± and Black's position crumbles.

B2d) 8...\(\text{Ca6}\)

This is the most principled move. Black is not inclined to give up the c4-pawn without a fight.

9.e4

White must sacrifice a second pawn if he is to achieve anything tangible.

Now Black must make a decision: he can either accept the sacrifice with B2d2) 9...\(\text{Ce4}\), or continue more cautiously with B2d1) 9...\(\text{Wa5}\).

B2d1) 9...\(\text{Wa5}\)

Black wants to avoid complications. He sets himself a more
modest task – to hold on to his extra pawn on c4 for as long as possible, since if he loses it, his queenside weaknesses will cause him to suffer.

10.ðf3 e6 11.0–0 ²bd7 12. ²g5

Black has several options here, but none of them equalise.

12...h6

This is possibly his best move in the position.

After 12...c3 13.bxc3 ²xe2 14. ²xe2 bxc3, White will usually regain his pawn and maintain a slight edge: 15.²xf6 ²xf6 (15... gxf6 16.²fc1 ²h6 17.²c2 0–0 18. ²d3 ²ab8 19.²xc3± A.Moiseenko – Van Haastert, Plovdiv 2010) 16.²c4 ²c8 17.²fb1± Erdos – Golod, Cappelle la Grande 2007.

After 12...²e7, White regains the pawn and keeps a slight edge: 13.²c2 ²b6, Bruzon Batista – Felgaer, Quito 2012, and now 14.e5 is the simplest move. Black is unable to profit from the d5-square. 14...²fd5 15.²xe7 ²xe7 16.²e4 0–0 17.²c5 ²ad8 18.²xa6 ²xa6 19.a5 ²bd5 20.²xc4± and White maintains a slight edge, because the c5- and d6- squares in Black's camp are weak. If White manages to occupy one of these squares with his knight, his advantage will most likely be decisive.

13.²xf6 gxf6

Black wants to use the open g-file to create some counterplay.

14.²c1 ²b6 15.²f4

The position remains rather unclear after 15.²d2 0–0–0∞ Gelfand – Huzman, Ramat Aviv 2000.

15...²e7

White frees the f1-square for his knight. His rook should go precisely to e1, where it protects the bishop, since after 16.²fc1 the move ²f1 will be impossible, owing to the tactical blow c4-c3.

16.²f1! White's knight is heading for the e3-
square, after which he will regain his pawn and retain some advantage, thanks to his better pawn structure and safer king.

**B2d2) 9...\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\)**

Black grabs a second pawn, but falls considerably behind in development.

10.\(\text{\textit{f3}}\) f5 11.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) g6

After 11...\(\text{\textit{f7}}\) 12.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) fxe4 13.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) e6 14.\(\text{\textit{f4!}}\) d6 15.\(\text{\textit{h3!}}\) h6 16.g4 g5 17.f4+, White launches an attack on the enemy king.

12.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) \(\text{\textit{f7}}\)

13.0–0!

This energetic move is stronger than 13.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) fxe4 14.\(\text{\textit{g4}}\) h5 15.\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) \(\text{\textit{f6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{h3}}\) c3\(\text{\textit{c}}\), which leads to a complicated position which is practically impossible to evaluate, Yu – Balogh, Ningbo 2011.

13...\(\text{\textit{g5}}\)

It is bad for Black to play 13...\(\text{\textit{h6}}\) in view of 14.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) c3 (the evaluation of the position remains the same after 14...\(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) Postny – Guramishvili, Achaea 2012) and here White can gain a big advantage by following Sakaev's recommendation of 15.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\)! fxe4 16.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) cxb2 17.\(\text{\textit{xb2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf4}}\) 18.d5 \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 19.dxc6 \(\text{\textit{f5}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c5}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{xb4}}\)

14.d5

14...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\)

After 14...\(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xf3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xb7}}\) and 16.\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) cxd5 17.\(\text{\textit{e1}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{f4}}\) \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{a1}}\), White obtains sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, thanks to his
strong knight on e6 and Black's lag in development. It is worth mentioning that if, for some strange reason, White is afraid to play this position for a win, he can always force a draw with 19.\textit{g}5 \textit{f}8 20.\textit{e}6 \textit{f}7 21.\textit{g}5=

15.\textit{d}x\textit{c}6 \textit{x}f3+ 16.\textit{x}f3 0–0 17.\textit{c}7 \textit{d}7 18.\textit{c}6 \textit{e}5 19.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}x\textit{f}4 20.\textit{x}d7 \textit{f}6 21.\textit{d}5+ \textit{h}8 22.\textit{x}f4 \textit{a}e8, Gustafsson – Balogh, Porto Carras 2011.

Now after 23.\textit{d}1 Black's position becomes critical.

23...\textit{x}b2 24.\textit{c}6 \textit{f}6 25.\textit{d}6 \textit{c}8 26.\textit{xc}4±. The c4-pawn has disappeared from the board and Black’s b4-pawn is not dangerous to White. In contrast, White’s strong c7-pawn guarantees him an advantage which is almost decisive.

**Conclusion**

We have been analysing the variation with 3...\textit{d}xc4. It generally leads to complex positions in which White is trying to seize the initiative and is quite prepared to sacrifice material. After White’s move 4.e3 the response 4...b5 can be identified as the most dangerous to White. In this variation Black tries to preserve his extra pawn by all means and White needs to sacrifice a second pawn on the altar of attack (e3-e4 after \textit{d}5) in order to seize the initiative. The positions arising are tremendously sharp and complicated and it is not easy to find the right path by just using common sense. White needs to know some concrete theoretical variations (I hope this chapter will be of a great help to readers in that respect...) and to be tactically on the alert at all times.
Chapter 20 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.\textit{c}c3 \textit{d}f6

The 4...\textit{g}4 and 4...\textit{f}5 Variations

In this chapter we shall start to analyse some of the strongest and most popular lines for Black.

4.e3

In this book we shall treat the Meran Variation as Black’s main weapon in the (Semi-) Slav Defence. It is more practical for White to head for the Meran via the move 4.e3 rather than 4.\textit{f}f3, since in that case White would also have to be prepared for the possibility of 4...dxc4. We should not study any more variations than are strictly necessary.

In this chapter we shall analyse the moves A) 4...\textit{f}5 and B) 4...\textit{g}4.

Neither of these moves is played very often in contempo-
Chapter 20

5...cxd5

The move 5...cxd5 was played in the game Alekhine – Opolencsky, Paris 1925. After 6.c4 e6 7.ge2 d7 8.e4 xc3 9.xc3 g6 10.0-0 White has a slight but stable advantage, since his pawns have occupied the centre. The resulting position resembles the variation of the Slav Defence that goes 4.flf3 dxc4 5.a4, but with the important difference that White has not had to play the move a4, which weakens the b4-square.

6.\textit{b}3


After 6...d7?! 7.f3 c6, Black's queen is misplaced and by attacking it White can gain time to create pressure on the a4-e8 diagonal. Black cannot defend against this without giving up material. 8.e5 c7 b5 e6 10.a4 c8 11.xa7 d6 12.xc6 bxc6 13.xc7 xc7 14.e2+; once again, Black has no compensation for the pawn, Jussupow – Foerster, Schwaebisch Gmuend 2000.

7.f3 c6

There is a transposition of moves after 7...e6 8.e5.

8.e5!

This is an important moment. Although White has gained two tempi in the opening (e8-f5-e8), this is a special case and his advantage is not yet secure. The point is that after the exchange on
d5, Black's queen's knight has obtained access to its ideal square on c6. If Black succeeds in completing his development, he will be able to exploit the unfavourable position of White's queen on b3 with the move \( \texttt{a}5 \). Celebrations would therefore be distinctly premature; White must continue to play energetically and accurately. With his last move he occupies a central square with his knight, with the plan of supporting it with his f-pawn.

8...e6 9.f4

With 9...g6, followed by \( \texttt{g7} \), Black can securely fortify his kingside, but the deployment of his bishop on g7 has some drawbacks too. He weakens his control of the c5-square and White can exploit this with active play on the c-file. 10.\( \texttt{d2} \) \( \texttt{g7} \) 11.\( \texttt{d3} \) 0–0 12.0–0 \( \texttt{d7} \) 13.\( \texttt{xc6} \) bxc6 14.\( \texttt{a4} \) \( \texttt{b8} \) 15.\( \texttt{c2} \) \( \texttt{f6} \) 16.\( \texttt{c5} \) \( \texttt{d7} \) 17. \( \texttt{fc1} \) White's clear-cut plan of attack against the weak enemy c6-pawn guarantees him a big advantage, Goloshchapov – Deviatkin, Moscow 2004.

Black's position is slightly worse after 9...\( \texttt{d7} \) 10.\( \texttt{d3} \) \( \texttt{dxe5} \) 11.\( \texttt{fxe5} \) \( \texttt{e7} \) 12.0–0 \( \texttt{f6} \) 13.\( \texttt{exf6} \) \( \texttt{fxf6} \) 14.\( \texttt{d2} \) since although he has succeeded in exchanging first the enemy knight on e5 and then the pawn which replaced it, he lags considerably behind in development, Korotylev – Komliakov, Moscow 1999.

9...\( \texttt{e7} \)

White is ideally prepared for a successful attack on the kingside,

**B) 4...\textit{g}4**

This move leads to more complicated positions than 4...\textit{f}5, because Black provokes some weakening of White’s kingside.

5.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}6

This is an interesting move. Black follows a well known principle: if he really must suffer, he should at least have a pawn for his trouble.

His bishop has a range of squares to retreat to:

It is clearly bad for Black to play 5...\textit{h}5, because this enables White to advance g2-g4-g5 with tempo and win a pawn. 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.\textit{b}3\textit{d}7 8.\textit{g}4 \textit{g}6 9.g5 \textit{h}5 10.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}6 11.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 12.e4= S.Andreev – D.Andreev, Sofia 2008.

5...\textit{d}7 – Now Black will have problems developing his b8-

knight. 6.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}6 7.c5 \textit{c}7 8.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}6 9.\textit{cxb}6 axb6 10.\textit{ge}2 \textit{e}6 11.e4 \textit{e}7 12.\textit{f}4=. Black’s position is solid but very passive, Kraai – Lakdawala, San Francisco 2000.

5...\textit{f}5. The drawback of this move is that just as in the variation with 4...\textit{f}5, White can make use of the weakness of Black’s d5- and b7-pawns. 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}8 (the position is difficult for Black after 7...\textit{d}7?! 8.g4 \textit{e}6, Kharitonov – Devoille, Cappelle la Grande 2012, 9.g5 \textit{h}5 10.e4= since his pieces are undeveloped and his knight is misplaced at the edge of the board, while White has already started active play in the centre) 8.f4 \textit{e}6 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{e}5 – see variation\textit{A}.

5...\textit{c}8 – This move is passive, but fairly safe. 6.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}6 7.\textit{ge}2 \textit{c}5 (after 7...\textit{bd}7 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.0–0 \textit{d}6 10.\textit{d}2 0–0 11.\textit{e}1 \textit{b}612.\textit{b}5 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}8 14.\textit{wc}2 \textit{df}6 15.\textit{fc}1= White gains a great advantage, because Black’s pieces are so passive that he is unable to contest the c-file, which is key in this pawn structure, S.Volkov – Shurygin, Minsk 1996) 8.cxd5 exd5 9.0–0 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}7 11.\textit{c}1 0–0 12.\textit{e}1 \textit{e}6 13.\textit{h}4= Dydyshko – Meduna, Czech Republic 1999. This position is reminiscent of the system in the Exchange Variation of the Queen’s Gambit where White develops his knight to e2. White has the better pros-
pects, because Black’s bishop is restricted by his own d5-pawn, which might turn out to be weak in many lines.

6.\(\text{Q}e2\)
White must sacrifice his c4-pawn if he wishes to fight for an opening advantage.

6...dxc4 7.\(\text{Q}f4\)

7...\(\text{c8}\)!
This is Black’s most principled move. After the more cautious reply 7...\(\text{c8}\) White regains his pawn and gains an edge thanks to his central pawn majority and lead in development: 8.\(\text{N}xc4\) e6 9.0–0± A.Petrosian – Taimanov, Yerevan 1986.

8.e4
Now a double-edged fight flares up, in which White has the better prospects.

8...g6 9.\(\text{N}xe6\) \(\text{Fxe6}\) 10.\(\text{a4}\) b5 11.\(\text{a5}\) d5?! 12.\(\text{Q}xd5\) 13.\(\text{N}xb5\) \(\text{d7}\) 14.\(\text{N}x5\) \(\text{xd5}\) 15.exd5 \(\text{b6}\) 16.b3 \(\text{g7}\) 17.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 18.0–0–0± and as a result of an almost forced sequence, the position has been simplified to an endgame in which White maintains a slight edge.

Conclusion

We have just analysed the 4...\(\text{f5}\) and 4...\(\text{g4}\) variations and in both lines White succeeds in gaining a slight edge.

In the 4...\(\text{f5}\) variation, White follows this plan:
1. by playing \(\text{b3}\), he forces Black’s bishop to retreat to c8;
2. White exploits his lead in development and posts his knight on e5, supporting it with f2-f4;
3. Later, depending on Black’s response, White either organises an attack on the kingside (\(\text{f1}-\text{f3}\)), or starts active play on the c-file (\(\text{d2}, \text{c1}\)).

In the variation with 4...\(\text{g4}\), White is usually able to maintain an edge quite easily. The only exception is the line with 5...\(\text{e6}\), against which he is forced to sacrifice a pawn and to demonstrate some knowledge of concrete variations.
Chapter 21 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.c3 d6 4.e3 a6

The Chebanenko Variation

In this chapter we shall analyse one of the most mysterious systems in contemporary opening theory – the Chebanenko variation. It is named after the Moldavian coach and theoretician Vyacheslav Chebanenko. Of course, he was not the first to play this way, but his great contribution to the popularity of this variation is unquestionable. It took only a very short time before 4...a6 turned from a move which raised only ironic smiles into a system encountered at the highest level. It was even played by Kasparov, which is a sort of guarantee of quality. Contemporary players who employ the Chebanenko inclusion Aronian, Ivanchuk, Morozevich, Svidler and many others.

There is a thematic similarity between this move and the Schlechter variation (4...g6), which is analysed in the next chapter. The main purpose of move 4...a6 is to prevent the restriction of the light-squared bishop, as happens after the move 4...e6. The move is not really a loss of time, because it prepares b7-b5, seizing space on the queenside. The main difference between this line and the Schlechter variation is that Black keeps open the possibility of developing his king’s bishop to d6 (or e7). It is usually more active there than on the g7-square, since it is not restricted by his opponent’s pawn on d4. In this variation, White needs to play very precisely to obtain even a minimal edge, because Black has a very solid position and can easily launch a dangerous counterattack if White makes a single inaccurate move.

Black sometimes plays the
move 4...\texttt{b}6 with the same idea. However, it is obvious that such an early queen sortie cannot be good. White easily gains the better position, for example: 5.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{e}e6 and here the simplest is 6.\texttt{b}3?! (also playable is 6.\texttt{f}3 dxc4 7.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{g}4 8.\texttt{x}c4± Kasparov – Morozevich, Moscow 2004) 6...\texttt{g}6 7.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{g}7 8.\texttt{f}3 0–0 9.0–0±. White maintains a slight advantage, since the position of Black's queen on \texttt{b}6 seems senseless.

5.\texttt{c}2

This move is often used by the Azerbaijani grandmaster Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. Its main purpose is to prevent Black's main idea – to develop his \texttt{c}8-bishop, which he achieves easily in the more popular line 5.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{b}5 6.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{g}4; this variation has accumulated a lot of theory, but no way has yet been found for White to gain even a minimal edge.

Now Black has a choice between the following moves: A) 5...\texttt{g}4, B) 5...\texttt{b}5, C) 5...\texttt{g}6.

A) 5...\texttt{g}4

This move is played only rarely in contemporary tournament practice, since it leads to a passive position for Black. If he wants to develop his bishop on \texttt{g}4, he should try to do this only after the preliminary move \texttt{b}7-\texttt{b}5 (variation B).

The move 5...\texttt{e}6, which has been quite popular lately, will be covered under the move order 4...\texttt{e}6 (see Chapters 23-25).

6.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}5 7.\texttt{b}3

This is the point! Now Black will have problems with the protection of his \texttt{b}7-pawn and he will be forced to place his rook awkwardly.

7...\texttt{a}7

7...\texttt{b}5 leads to a weakening of Black's queenside pawn structure: 8.exd5 \texttt{d}5 (he is forced to recapture with the knight, because 8...\texttt{x}d5?! loses a pawn after 9.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{g}6 10.\texttt{g}5±) 9.a4 \texttt{b}4 10.\texttt{xd}5

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cx\textsubscript{d}5 11.\texttt{d}d\texttt{d}2± and White has every chance of exploiting Black’s weakened queenside pawn structure, Aleksandrov – Kallio, Batumi 2002.

\textbf{8.}\texttt{d}d\texttt{d}2!?

This is an interesting move, after which White keeps a small advantage in the middlegame.

Unfortunately, the attempt to gain a bigger advantage with 8. cx\textsubscript{d}5 does not succeed, since after 8...cx\textsubscript{d}5 9.g4 \texttt{g}6 10.g5,

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Black has the good reply 10...\texttt{e}4. The game Navara – Postny, Warsaw 2005, continued 11.\texttt{x}xd\textsubscript{5} \texttt{x}xd\textsubscript{5} 12.\texttt{d}xd\textsubscript{5} \texttt{d}xg\textsubscript{5} 13.\texttt{c}c\textsubscript{3} \texttt{e}4 14.\texttt{x}xe\textsubscript{4} \texttt{x}xe\textsubscript{4} 15.f\textsubscript{3} \texttt{c}c\textsubscript{6} 16.e\textsubscript{4} e\textsubscript{6} 17.\texttt{e}e\textsubscript{3} \texttt{a}a\textsubscript{8} 18.\texttt{e}e\textsubscript{2} \texttt{e}e\textsubscript{7} 19.\texttt{c}c\textsubscript{3} 0–0 20.0–0–0 \texttt{d}d\textsubscript{8}±, and although White definitely has some advantage in this endgame, the position is considerably simplified and Black has good drawing chances.

\textbf{8...e}6

The character of the struggle remains more or less the same after 8...\texttt{x}xe\textsubscript{2} 9.\texttt{x}xe\textsubscript{2} e6 10.a4 \texttt{d}d\textsubscript{6} 11.a5 \texttt{b}bd\textsubscript{7} 12.\texttt{d}d\textsubscript{2} 0–0 13.0–0 \texttt{c}c\textsubscript{7} 14.\texttt{f}fd\textsubscript{1} \texttt{b}b\textsubscript{8} 15.\texttt{c}c\textsubscript{2}±. White’s position is preferable, thanks to his bishop pair, Sadler – Hodgson, Isle of Man 1995.

\textbf{9.}\texttt{f}f\textsubscript{4} \texttt{g}6 10.\texttt{x}g\textsubscript{6} hxg\textsubscript{6}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{11.}\texttt{d}d\texttt{d}2!?

This is a safe move, preventing Black’s counterplay.

After 11.g3 Black could try the interesting idea of 11...dxc\textsubscript{4}!? (11...\texttt{d}d\textsubscript{6} 12.\texttt{g}2± Blagojevic – Bukal, Lido Estensi 2003) 12.\texttt{x}xc\textsubscript{4} b\textsubscript{5} 13.\texttt{d}d\textsubscript{3} c\textsubscript{5} 14.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{d}d\textsubscript{7}± and Black’s rook on a7, which was taking a nap for a while, woke up suddenly and joined in the fight, creating counterplay.

11...\texttt{e}e\textsubscript{7} 12.\texttt{e}e\textsubscript{2} 0–0 13.0–0 \texttt{b}bd\textsubscript{7} 14.\texttt{f}fc\textsubscript{1}± White maintains a slight edge in this position, since he has the bishop pair, while Black’s rook is misplaced on a\textsubscript{7}. 
B) 5...b5

We have demonstrated that the immediate development of Black's bishop to g4 fails to help him organise meaningful counterplay. Recently, therefore, when Black wants to develop the bishop to this square, he automatically plays b7-b5 first, to avoid problems later with the protection of his b7-pawn.

6.b3

This is a logical move, which cannot be said of 6...e6. Although that move gives Black a solid position, his bishop is doomed to remain pent up inside his own camp for a long time, restricted by his own pawn chain. The dangers looming over Black can be best illustrated by the game Tomashevsky - I.Popov, Novosibirsk 2005: 7.d3 b7 8.e2 b7 9.0-0 e7 10.b2 0-0 11.dad1 c8 12.c5 wc7 13.b4 c8 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.dxe5 b5; Black is short of space and his bishop on b7 is a sorry sight. Later Tomashevsky convincingly increased his advantage and finally won the game with a simple combination. 15...f6 16.g4 f5 17.e2 a5 18.a3 g6 19.f4 g7 20.d3 a8 21.e2 a4 22.d4 c8 23.h3 d7 24.g4 h5 25.gxf5 exf5 26.ad2 e6 27.g2 xd4 28.xd4 b7 29.h1 e6 30.g1 g8 31.xg6 1-0.

It seems more prudent for Black to play 6...g6. This line leads to positions similar to variation C, but with the inclusion of the moves b7-b5 and b2-b3. This rather favours White, because later he might be able to exploit the weakening of Black's queenside pawn structure. 7.d3 g7 8.f3 0-0 9.d7 10.b2 b7 11.dad1 c7 12.e4 b4 13.a4 dxe4 14.xe4 dxe4 15.xe4#. White retains a slight edge, because Black's bishop on b7 is restricted by his own c6-pawn and the attempt to solve this problem radically with 15...c5?! serves only to increase his difficulties: 16.d5 e5 17.e3 ac8 18.e1 fe8 19.d3
Chapter 21

$\text{c}d6 20.f3 f5 21.\text{c}f1 h6 22.\text{c}f2 g5 23.\text{c}g3 \text{c}h7 24.\text{e}e2 \text{e}e7 25.\text{d}e1\pm$. White’s pieces have occupied excellent squares for an attack on Black’s pawns at $c5$ and $e5$, Tomashevsky – Epishin, Kazan 2005.

7.\text{c}g2

This is a standard move in this variation. White will transfer his knight to $f4$ (only rarely to $g3$) in order to exchange it at some point for the enemy light-squared bishop, after which he will have the advantage of the bishop pair.

7...\text{bd}7 8.h3

8...\text{h}5

This is Black’s main move here. If he has to exchange his light-squared bishop, he would prefer it to happen on the $g6$-square, so that he will have the $h$-file opened for his rook. This might provide him with counterplay in some variations.

Black stands worse after 8...\text{xe}2 9.\text{xe}2, for example 9...e6 10.0–0 \text{e}7 11.e4. This is a standard breakthrough. White is not afraid of 11...b4, since then he can make a sacrifice of a piece for three pawns which is typical in this line, after which Black will have great problems coping with White’s passed pawns. 12.exd5 \text{bxc}3 13.dxc6 \text{f}8 14.\text{xc}3 \text{g}6 15.\text{b}4 \text{b}6 16.b5 axb5 17.cxb5 \text{d}5 18.\text{c}4 0–0 19.a4\#. White’s pawn chain looks menacing and in the game Mamedyarov – S.Volkov, Sochi 2006, White even sacrificed a rook later, leading to a very unusual position in which his four connected passed pawns proved to be stronger than Black’s rook: 19...\text{b}4 20.\text{f}3 \text{g}7 21.\text{g}5 h6 22.\text{xe}7 \text{xe}7 23.\text{xd}5 \text{exd}5 24.\text{xd}5 \text{fd}8 25.\text{e}4 \text{f}6 26.d5! \text{xa}1 27.\text{xa}1 \text{c}5 28.\text{d}1 \text{e}8 29.\text{f}4 \text{xe}2 30.c7 \text{xa}4 31.c8\#+ \text{xc}8 32.\text{xa}4\#; Black had to give back his extra rook and White realised his material advantage in the endgame.

9.\text{f}4 \text{g}6 10.\text{xc}6 \text{hxg}6 11.\text{e}2

11...e6
This is the most popular move for Black.

After 11...e5, the position is opened in White's favour, since he has the bishop pair. 12.dxe5 \( \text{\#xe5} \) 13.\#b2 dxc4 (after 13...bxc4 14.bxc4 \( \text{\#xc4} \) 15.\#xc4 dxc4 16.0-0 \#e7 17.\#fd1, the fact that Black has an extra pawn at the moment should fool no-one; White will quickly regain the pawn on c4 and will then be able to keep pressing for a win, by playing against Black's pawn weaknesses, Karpov – Bareev, Cap d'Agde 2002) 14.bxc4 \#b4. This move was recommended by Huebner, but it fails to equalise. 15.0-0 \#e7 16.cx b5 axb5 17.a4 bxa4 18.\#xa4 0-0 19.\#xa8 \#xa8 20.\#e4. White has the advantage of the bishop pair and a clear plan of action against Black's weakc6-pawn.

12.0-0 \#d6

It is worse for Black to play 12..\#c8 here, since after 13.c5 White not only prevents Black's bishop from taking up an active position on d6 but also begins active play on the queenside. 13...e5 14.b4 e4 15.a4 \#e7 16.axb5 axb5 17.\#a6 \#f8. Now in the game Atalik – Harikrishna, Kallithea 2008, White continued with a spectacular sacrifice and gained a decisive advantage: 18.\#xc6! \#xc619.\#xb5 \#c8 20.\#a4+-

13.\#d2!?

This is an interesting move. White is in no hurry to start active play in the centre and makes a useful developing move.

13...0-0

After 13...g5?! White can play energetically in the centre, quickly proving that Black's flank attack has been premature. 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.e4!b4 16.\#xd5exd517.e5 g4 18.exd6 gxh3 19.\#f3 \#c8 20.\#d3 \#b6 21.\#fc1 \#b8 22.\#f4+-; White's two powerful bishops and his strong d6-pawn make Black's defence almost hopeless, Zebre – Vinchev, Email 2007.

14.c5! This is another standard idea for White in such positions. We should mention he generally plays this move only when Black is unable to advance with e6-e5. 14...\#c7 15.f4!± Now Black's counterplay based on e6-e5 is impossible, so White can exploit his space advantage and patiently prepare to open the game on the kingside. Black has no counterplay at all and is forced to wait for his opponent to act.
This is Black's safest move. It leads to an interesting hybrid between the Chebanenko and the Schlechter variation. It might seem that the move a7-a6 is a loss of a tempo, but White's move \( \text{c}2 \) is not so useful either in this line.

6.\( \text{d}3 \)

This is forced. White defends against \( \text{f}5 \).

6...\( \text{g}77.\text{f}3 \)

7...0–0

This is the most popular move for Black, but he can also try the immediate 7...\( \text{g}4 \) 8.\( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 9.\( \text{d}2 \) dxc4 (9...0–0 10.0–0 transposes to the main line) 10.\( \text{xc}4 \) \( \text{bd}7 \) 11.\( \text{b}4 \) \( \text{xc}4 \). Black concedes the advantage of the bishop pair, but is able to accomplish the freeing move e7–e5. 12.\( \text{xc}4 \) e5 13. dxe5 \( \text{xe}5 \) 14.\( \text{e}2 \)

A typical position in the Chebanenko variation has arisen. While retains a slight edge, but breaching Black's position will not be at all easy and a single inaccuracy by White might allow a sudden tactical blow to be struck by one of Black’s knights.

14...\( \text{d}5 \) is another option for Black, but White can still keep a slight edge. 15.\( \text{b}1 \) 0–0 16.0–0 \( \text{e}7 \) 17.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{fd}8 \) 18.\( \text{fd}1 \) h5 19.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{h}7 \) 20.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \). Here the players agreed a draw, but the position is still somewhat more pleasant for White, Kornev – S.Volkov, Voronezh 2012.

14...0–0 15.0–0 \( \text{e}8 \) (15...\( \text{e}7 \) 16.\( \text{ab}1 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 17.\( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{fe}8 \) 18.\( \text{h}3 \) and White's two bishops give him a slight edge, Shimanov – Sichinava, St Petersburg 2012. We mentioned earlier that Black's position is solid, but White finally won this game on move 118...)
16...\textit{f}d1\textpm (the consequences of inaccurate play by White can be seen in the game Shimanov – Kornev, Taganrog 2011: 16.h3 \textit{e}7 17.a3 \textit{f}ad8 18.\textit{ad}1 c5 19.f4?! when after this careless move, weakening the e3-pawn, Black seized the initiative by sacrificing the exchange: 19...\textit{c}6 20.bxc5 \textit{xc}5 21.\textit{c}c1 \textit{xd}2 22.\textit{xd}2 \textit{xe}3 23.\textit{a}4 \textit{xc}1 24.\textit{xc}1 \textit{e}e4 25.\textit{a}a2 \textit{d}4. The deployment of the black knights in the centre of the board is very striking. 26.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}8 27. \textit{b}6 \textit{c}3 28.\textit{aa}1 \textit{b}3 29.\textit{c}c4 \textit{xc}1 30.\textit{xc}1 \textit{e}2+ 31.\textit{xe}2 \textit{xe}2\textpm).

\textbf{8.0–0}

\textit{8...\textit{g}4}

8...\textit{xc}4 This opening of the centre is illogical. 9.\textit{xc}4 \textit{f}5 (after 9...b5 10.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}7 11.a3 \textit{bd}7 12.b4\textpm, Black is unable to advance with c6-c5, so White has a slight advantage, thanks to the unfavourable position of Black's bishop on b7, Kruppa – Zhukova, Alushta 1999) 10.e4 \textit{g}4 11.e5 \textit{d}5 12.\textit{e}4 \textit{xf}3 (Black's position is horrible after 12...\textit{f}5?! 13.\textit{h}4\textpm, when White's pieces are aimed menacingly at Black's king, Gareev – Safin, Tashkent 2007) 13.\textit{xf}3 \textit{b}6 (it is too passive to play 13...\textit{c}7 14.\textit{d}1 \textit{d}7 15.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}6 16.h4 \textit{bd}5 17.h5\textpm and White has not only extra space and the bishop pair, but also a strong initiative on the kingside, Khismatullin – Romanov, Olginka 2011) 14.\textit{b}3 \textit{xd}4 15.e6 f5 16.\textit{d}1\textpm. White's compensation for the sacrificed pawn is more than insufficient.

It seems too passive for Black to play 8...\textit{bd}7. Now the simplest way for White to gain a slight edge is 9.cxd5?!?, exploiting the circumstance that Black's knight cannot go to c6, so he will have great problems countering White's piece pressure on the c-file. 9...cxd5 10.\textit{d}2 b5 11.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{fc}1 \textit{c}8 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{e}4 14. \textit{b}4 \textit{e}8 15.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 16.\textit{c}1. White has a slight advantage. His bishop on b4 is obviously more active than its black counterpart, and the weakness of the c5-square
might become a significant factor, Ernst – Tafner, Email 2011.

9.\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{e}5 \text{\texttt{e}}6 10.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}2\)

![Diagram](image)

10...dxc4

Here Black can choose a plan based on an immediate challenge to White’s knight on e5.

10...\(\text{\texttt{d}}\text{f}d7 11.\text{\texttt{x}}\text{xd7 \texttt{xd}d7 12.c5.}\)

In the positions arising, White is ahead of his opponent in the development of his queenside play and Black’s standard counterplay, based on the pawn advance e7-e5, will be impeded by the misplaced bishop on e6. 12...f5 (Black does best to remain passive, since the only possible active plan, based on preparing e7-e5 with f7-f6, would lead only to a worsening of Black’s position, because White will be able to respond with f4-f5. For example: 12...\(\text{\texttt{e}}\text{c7 13.b4 \texttt{f}fe8 14.f4 f6 15.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{e}1 \text{\texttt{f}}f7 16.f5!± A.Moisseenko – Burmakin, Sochi 2012, or 12...f6 13.f4 \text{\texttt{f}}f7 14.f5 \texttt{w}e8 15.\text{\texttt{e}}4!± Malakhatko – Slaby, Salou 2005} \) 13.b4 \(\text{\texttt{f}}f7 14.f4 \text{\texttt{d}}f6 15.a4 \text{\texttt{e}}e4 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 \text{\texttt{c}}c7 18.\text{\texttt{f}}fb1±

Black has no counterplay, whereas White retains the possibility of breaking on the queenside. Later, in the game Milov – Dunis, Cannes 2006, White managed to outplay his opponent by making some strange manoeuvres with his major pieces on both the a- and the h- files. 18...h6 19.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{e}1 g5 20.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{e}2 \text{\texttt{h}}h5 21.\text{\texttt{g}}\text{g}3 \text{\texttt{g}}g6 22.\text{\texttt{e}}\text{e}2 \text{\texttt{h}}h5 23.\text{\texttt{b}}\text{b}6 \text{\texttt{w}d}d7 24. \text{\texttt{g}}\text{g}3 \text{\texttt{xe}}2 25.\text{\texttt{xe}}2 \text{\texttt{x}}xg3 26.hxg3 e6 27.\text{\texttt{a}a}4 \text{\texttt{fe}}6 28.\text{\texttt{ba}1 \texttt{ab}8 29. \text{\texttt{f}}f2 \text{\texttt{g}}g7 30.\text{\texttt{h}}h1 g4 31.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}1 \text{\texttt{a}a}8 32.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}2 \text{\texttt{ab}8 33.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}3 \text{\texttt{g}}g6 34.\text{\texttt{a}a}7 \text{\texttt{g}}g7 35.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}2 \text{\texttt{f}}f7 36.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}1 \text{\texttt{e}}e7 37. \text{\texttt{a}a}4 \text{\texttt{fc}8 38.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}1 \text{\texttt{f}}f6 39.\text{\texttt{g}}g1 \text{\texttt{g}}g6 40.\text{\texttt{h}}h2 \text{\texttt{f}}f6 41.\text{\texttt{h}}h5 \text{\texttt{f}}f8 42.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}1 \text{\texttt{g}}g8 43.\text{\texttt{e}}\text{e}2 \text{\texttt{f}}f8 44.\text{\texttt{d}}\text{d}2 \text{\texttt{g}}g8 45. \text{\texttt{ha}1 \text{\texttt{f}}f8 46.\text{\texttt{e}e}1 \text{\texttt{g}}g8 47.\text{\texttt{f}}f2 \text{\texttt{f}}f8 48.\text{\texttt{a}a}6 \text{\texttt{e}e}7 49.\text{\texttt{xb}7 1-0

Or 10...\(\text{\texttt{b}b}d7 11.\text{\texttt{x}}\text{xd7 \texttt{xd}d7 (11...\text{\texttt{x}}\text{xd7 12.c5 \texttt{b}b8 13.\text{\texttt{a}a}4± and White’s position is preferable thanks to his extra space, Ivanchuk – Wang Yue Dagomys 2010) 12.cxd5}

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12...cxd5 (giving up the centre with the move 12...\texttt{xd}5 cannot provide Black with an acceptable position either: after 13.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 15.e4 \texttt{f}4 16.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{ad}8 17.g3 \texttt{h}5 18.\texttt{e}3± White has two bishops and a strong pawn centre, Sundararajan – Vidit, New Delhi 2010) 13.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{ac}8 14.\texttt{c}5 \texttt{c}7 15.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{f}5 16.\texttt{xf}5 \texttt{xf}5 17.\texttt{fc}1± Ivanchuk – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2008. White's strong knight on c5 and his superior pawn structure give him a stable advantage. Black is helpless against the doubling of White's rooks on the c-file, under the cover of the knight on c5.

11.\texttt{xc}4

11...\texttt{bd}7 12.b4 \texttt{xc}4 13.\texttt{xc}4 e5 14.dxe5 \texttt{xe}5 15.\texttt{e}2 leads to positions previously analysed under 7...\texttt{g}4.

12.\texttt{e}5 c5 13.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{c}7 14.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{xc}5 15.\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{d}8

If 15...\texttt{bd}7 16.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{b}6 17.\texttt{a}4±, White gains a slight edge thanks to the weakness of Black's pawns on a6 and b5 and the unfavourable position of his bishop on e6.

16.\texttt{d}4\texttt{d}7

17.\texttt{b}3

White bases his hopes of gaining an edge on the misplacement of Black's queen.

This is stronger than 17.\texttt{b}3= Avrukh – Kobalia, Biel 2001.

17...\texttt{b}6 18.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{d}6 19.\texttt{c}5\texttt{c}6

After 19...\texttt{c}6 20.\texttt{xd}7 White has some advantage, thanks to his bishop pair in an open position. 20...\texttt{g}4 (Black's position only becomes worse if he initiates tactical complications with 20...\texttt{xd}4 since after 21.\texttt{xf}6+ \texttt{xf}6 22.exd4 \texttt{xd}4 23.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{xd}3 24.}
\( \text{\textit{xd8+ he has no compensation for the exchange.}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{f3 \textit{xd7}}} \)
22.\( \text{\textit{xe2 \textit{ac8}}} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{fd1+}} \)

\textbf{20.\textit{xe2}}

This is the only way for White to gain any advantage.

The point is that after 20.\( \text{\textit{xc6}}, \) Black has a virtually forced draw:
20 \( \text{\textit{xc6 \textit{fd1 \textit{g4!}}} \text{ 22.\textit{f4 \textit{d4!}}} \text{ 23.\textit{a3 \textit{d5}}} \text{ 24.\textit{h3 \textit{f3+}}} \text{ 25.\textit{gf3 \textit{xf3}}} \text{ 26.\textit{hxg4 \textit{g3=}}}; by sacrificing both knights he ends the game with perpetual check. \)

\textbf{20\textit{...xd5 \textit{21.a3}}}

White’s knight on \( c5 \) is very strong and Black has weakened his queen-side with the move \( b7-b5 \), so White’s position is preferable.

\textbf{Conclusion}

We have now concluded our analysis of one of the most solid lines in the Slav Defence – the Chebanenko variation. It has to be admitted that White’s path to an advantage is not at all easy. Nevertheless, I believe that he can retain an edge in all lines. Gaining an advantage, however, is not the same as winning the game. White needs to remain on full alert in order not to overlook some tactical counter-blow.
Chapter 22

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.\text{c}c3 \text{f}f6 4.e3 g6

The Schlechter Variation

This move introduces a variation which was played at the top level for the first time by Carl Schlechter in his match against Emanuel Lasker in 1910, and was therefore named after him. This set-up is a sort of hybrid between the Slav and the Gruenfeld Defence. The idea of 4...g6 for Black is to keep open the possibility of developing the queen’s bishop to the g4-square, which is impossible after 4...e6. In fact, this variation is the thematic predecessor of Chebanenko’s move 4...a6 (here too Black retains the possibility of developing his queen’s bishop to an active position).

Smyslov was a great expert and practitioner of this variation during his career and he made a great contribution to its theory. However, it is fair to say that, despite all his efforts, this variation is played only rarely in today’s tournaments. The main reason is that although Black’s set-up is quite solid it is alsovery passive. In fact, what we have on the board is a position from the Gruenfeld Defence, except that Black, instead of the active move c7-c5, has played the rather passive c7-c6. He will therefore not be inclined to play c6-c5 anytime soon, losing a tempo, so he will have to stick to a defensive strategy for most of the game.

In modern tournaments this variation is played by only a few verystrong grandmasters, such as Gashimov and Kamsky, and some of the top Chinese players. Obviously, as White almost all the contemporary grandmasters who open with 1.d4 and play the move 4.e3 against the Slav Defence have had to face the Schlechter Variation. In this chapter we shall be referring to many games played by the grandmaster from Saratov, Evgeny Tomashevsky,
who has contributed greatly to the search for a sure path for White to maintain an advantage.

5.\( \text{d}f3 \text{g}7\)

6.\( \text{e}2\)

White plans to castle kingside.

The move 6.\( \text{d}3\) is considered to be about equally strong. The bishop looks a bit more active there than on e2, but it allows the f3-knight to be pinned. Let us see how the game might develop in this line: 6...\( \text{g}8\) 7.\( \text{h}3 \text{g}4\) 8.\( \text{h}f3 \text{xf}3\) 9.\( \text{xf}3 \text{e}6\) 10.\( \text{d}1 \text{bd}7\)

11.\( \text{b}3\) (but not 11.e4?! e5!, as in some games of Smyslov; White's seemingly powerful centre is destroyed and Black even gains an edge thanks to his play on the e5- and d4-squares; White's queen is misplaced on f3, because Black can win an important tempo in most variations with the move \( \text{e}5\) 11...\( \text{e}8\) 12.\( \text{b}2 \text{a}5\) 13.\( \text{a}3 \text{ad}8\) 14.\( \text{ac}1 \text{c}8\) 15.\( \text{f}1 \text{c}7\) 16.\( \text{g}3 \text{b}8\) 17.\( \text{c}2 \text{a}6\) 18.\( \text{g}2 \text{b}6\) 19.\( \text{e}2 \text{cd}8\) 20.\( \text{ac}1 \text{c}8\) 21.\( \text{c}2 \text{d}6\) 22.\( \text{e}2 \text{d}7\) 23.\( \text{f}4 \text{f}5\) 24.\( \text{d}3\pm\)

White has accomplished the typical plan for the move 6.\( \text{d}3\) and in the forthcoming middlegame his chances should be preferable, Dreev – Torre, Jakarta 2011. Black has no obvious weaknesses in his position, but is limited to passive defence and in the game failed to cope...

6...\( \text{g}0\) 7.\( \text{h}0\)
In this position Black has a wide range of options: A) 7...b6, B) 7...\(\text{\&}d7\), C) 7...e6, D) 7...a6, E) 7...\(\text{\&}e6\), F) 7...\(\text{\&}g4\) and G) 7...dxc4.

**A) 7...b6**

Black’s position is passive after this, as in most of the lines of this variation.

**8.cxd5**

It is obvious that Black wants to develop his light-squared bishop on b7, so White exchanges on d5 in order not to allow the opponent to play dxc4, improving the prospects of his bishop.

8...\(\text{\&}d2\)?? This move is also worth considering for White. He wants to complete the development of his queenside pieces, before determining the central pawn structure. 8...\(\text{\&}b7\) 9.e4 \(\text{\&}c1\) \(\text{\&}bd7\) 10.cxd5. After Black’s knight has been placed on d7, White exchanges on d5, since Black’s knight will have difficulty reaching the c6-square. This exchange is already familiar from Rubinstein’s games. We will see this idea again and again. 10...cxd5 11.\(\text{\&}b3\) \(\text{\&}e4\) 12.\(\text{\&}fd1\) e6 13.\(\text{\&}e1\) a6 14.a4 \(\text{\&}c8\) 15.e2 \(\text{\&}d6\) 16.e4 \(\text{\&}e7\) 17.a5 \(\text{\&}a3\) \(\text{\&}f5\) 18.\(\text{\&}xe7\) \(\text{\&}xe7\) 19.\(\text{\&}d2\) \(\text{\&}fd8\) 20.\(\text{\&}b3\) \(\text{\&}f8\) 21.a5 b5 22.g4 \(\text{\&}c6\) 23.f4 \(\text{\&}dc8\) 24.\(\text{\&}d3\) f5 25.h3 \(\text{\&}f7\) 26.\(\text{\&}f2\) \(\text{\&}c8\) 27.\(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}c8\) 28.\(\text{\&}a2\) Fressinet - Nanu, Belfort 2012. In this endgame White has an edge, one which might not be sufficient for victory but which is real nevertheless. Black’s a6-pawn is weak and his bishop on b7 is very passive. In addition, White can accomplish a favourable exchange of the dark-squared bishops after \(\text{\&}b4\).

**8...cxd5**

This recapture is in the spirit of the Slav Defence.

After 8...cxd5 9.e4 \(\text{\&}xc3\) 10.\(\text{\&}xc3\)\(\text{\&}b4\) we reach a position more typical of the Gruenfeld Defence, one which is somewhat in White’s favour, because Black has made the unnecessary move b6. The fact that White has lost a tempo by advancing with e4 in two moves does not make Black’s defence any easier, because he will lose a tempo, sooner or later, by advancing with c5 in two moves (c7-c6,c6-c5).

**9.\(\text{\&}e5\)**

(diagram)

White’s knight occupies a powerful position in the centre of
the board. Naturally, Black will try to combat it, but this will not be at all easy. White will support his knight with the move f2–f4 and Black will either have let it stay on e5 or else exchange it, allowing a white pawn to land on the e5-square (after fxe5 or dxe5), which is in White’s favour.

9...b7 10.d2 c6

This is the most natural development of Black’s knight.

Black fails to equalise with the manoeuvre cfd7, followed by f6, because although in this way he succeeds in driving White’s knight away from its active position in the centre, he also weakens his castled position and restricts his own bishop on g7: 10...cfd7 11.f4 f6 12.f3 e7 13.d3 f8 14.f5! and in the game Gulko – Salov, Reykjavik 1991, White started an attack on the enemy king which later led to victory.

11.f4 e8

Before exchanging on e5, Black removes his knight in advance, so that he can tackle White’s e5-pawn later with the move f7–f6.

12.c1 xex5

13.dxe5

This is an interesting idea – White is trying to organise active piece play.

He can also retain a slight positional edge with the more usual recapture 13.fxe5!±

13...f6

Of course, Black has no other reasonable plan at his disposal. After this move, however, his king will be weaker and White will have the better pawn structure (two pawn islands against three).

14.exf6 xf6

The evaluation of the position remains the same after 14...xf6 15.b5 e4 16.b4± – White’s pieces have occupied active positions. Of course, here 16...xb2 loses to 17.c7+– with a decisive double attack.

15.b3

(diagram)

This move not only protects the b2-pawn against possible attack, but also forces Black to play e6, weakening the a3–f8 diagonal, which White’s dark-squared bish-
We have already discussed the drawbacks of this move. Now after the exchange on d5, Black's knight will have difficulty redeploying to its ideal square on c6, so he will have great problems neutralising the pressure from White's major pieces along the c-file.

8...cxd5!
Of course, this is the right move!

8...cxd5
The move 8...\(\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\) was tested in the classical game Rubinstein – Bogoljubow, Vienna 1922. 9. \(\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\). Akiba Rubinstein continues consistently with his plan (it is also possible for White to play 9.e4!? \(\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\)). 10.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\). 10...e6. 11.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\). 12.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\). 13. \(\text{\texttt{g7}}\). 14.\(\text{\texttt{c1}}\). 15.\(\text{\texttt{dc2}}\). 16...\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\). 17.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\). 18.\(\text{\texttt{g7}}\).

8...\(\text{\texttt{bd7}}\)

The move \(8...\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\) was tested in the classical game Rubinstein – Bogoljubow, Vienna 1922. 9. \(\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\). Akiba Rubinstein continues consistently with his plan (it is also possible for White to play 9.e4!? \(\text{\texttt{cxd5}}\)). 10.\(\text{\texttt{b3}}\). 10...e6. 11.\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\). 12.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\). 13. \(\text{\texttt{g7}}\). 14.\(\text{\texttt{c1}}\). 15.\(\text{\texttt{dc2}}\). 16...\(\text{\texttt{e4}}\). 17.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\). 18.\(\text{\texttt{g7}}\).

8...\texttt{a6} 19.\texttt{b4} Demchenko – Shvedchikov, Moscow 2011. White has seized the initiative. Black must consider the possibility of White's rooks invading along the c-file and his knight landing on the d6-square. In addition, Black's weak e6-pawn needs constant protection.

B) 7...\texttt{bd7}
that White cannot capture on e4, because after dxe4, his knight would have to move to back rank. Furthermore, since White has not yet developed his king’s rook to c1, the move 11.âe1 would prevent him from connecting his rooks. White should therefore try to prepare the doubling of the rooks on the c-file with 11.âfd1 âxd2 12.âxd2 âb8 (intending âc6).

Now White must play very carefully.

The point is that White gains no advantage after 13.âe5, because his opponent has the strong reply 13...âc6! (but not 13...âxe5?± when Black not only loses the advantage of the bishop pair but also horribly weakens his king’s defences, Djuric – Bastian, Plovdiv 1983) 14.âxc6 bxc6 15.âc1 e5! After this move, the position starts to open up, meaning that Black’s bishops will become a powerful force. Then the activity of his pieces will provide good compensation for the weakness of his pawn on c6.

13.âc1! This is White’s best move. He follows his main plan. The idea is to double rooks on the c-file, transfer the knight to the c5-square and if the black knight appears on c6, then attack it immediately with âb5. Here is a sample continuation: 13...âc6 14.âdc2 âd6 15.âa4 âb8 16.âb5 âd7 17.âc5 âe8 18.âc3 e5 19.âxc6 exd4 20.âxd4 âxe6 21.âd2 âfe8 22.b4±. Black has advanced e5, activating his bishops a little, but White has not been idle either. His cavalry has occupied the d4- and c5-squares and he has the better prospects in the forthcoming middle game.

11.âfc1 b6 12.âc2 âb7 13.âac1 âb8 14.âe1 âe8 15.a4

Black’s position is very solid and cannot easily be breached.
With his last move, White is preparing to redeploy his knight via a2 to b4, where it will attack the enemy a6-pawn and might threaten to go to c6. White can also prepare the pawn advance a4-a5, after which Black’s bishop on b7 will be virtually stalemated inside its own camp, since all the black pawns will be on light squares.

15...£c8 16.£a2 £xc2 17.£xc2 £a8 18.a5 £b5 19.£b4 £c8 20.£xc8+ £xc8 21.£d3 £f8 22.£b4±

In the game Nielsen – Le Quang, Beijing 2011, Black managed to draw after a long and laborious defence, but the evaluation of the position remains as better for White. After the favourable exchange of the dark-squared bishops, Black is left with a “bad” bishop on b7. In addition, his a6-pawn is very weak (this is a consequence of the pawn-advance a2-a4-a5!) and he will be forced to guard against the possibility of White’s knights attacking it from the b4- and c5- squares. If an ending arises with the light-squared bishops still on the board, Black’s position will be again very difficult, because all his pawns are placed against the rules of positional play, i.e. on the same colour squares as his bishop.

C) 7...£e6

This is Black’s most solid move, but it is very passive, even by the standards of the Schlechter variation. He does not even think about activity and merely tries to strengthen his position in the centre. Naturally, shutting his bishop inside his own camp is no way for him to equalise. It is also worth mentioning that now the pawn structure resembles that of the Meran Variation (which will be analysed in detail later in the book), with the difference that Black’s dark-squared bishop is not placed on g7 instead of d6. This favours White, because Black has difficulty organising active counterplay with his bishop placed on g7, since it does not support the freeing pawn breaks e6-e5 and c6-c5.
consider the possibility of White's standard pawn sacrifice in such positions 14.c5!?, radically preventing Black from accomplishing the freeing pawn advance c6-c5. 14...bxc5 15.dxc5 a5 16.b4

White will enjoy an enduring initiative for the sacrificed pawn. In addition, Black's queenside pawn structure has been weakened and his bishop on b7 can forget about ever reaching the long light-squared diagonal. White's possible tactical blows should not be underestimated either. 16...a5 17.a3 f8 18.xd8+ xd8 19.g5. Before going to e3, the bishop provokes a weakening of Black's kingside pawn structure. 19...f6 20.e3 f8 21.xa5

Black has succeeded in neutralising the rather unpleasant
pin on the knight, but he has lost his a5-pawn. 21...\(\text{d}d3\), Timman – Tal, Hilversum 1988, 22.a4\(=\). White advances his passed a-pawn without delay. 22...\(\text{a}a8\) (22...\(\text{d}x\text{b}2\) 23.\(\text{w}b6\) \(\text{d}d3\) 24.\(\text{e}d1+\)) 23.\(\text{w}b6\) \(\text{d}b4\) 24.\(\text{d}d2\) \(\text{d}d5\) 25.\(\text{w}b3\) \(\text{c}c8\) 26.\(\text{a}5\). In this position White has the initiative. Black must reckon with the advance of his opponent's a-pawn, as well as the possible threats against his king (as a result of the weakening move f7-f6). He should not forget about the weakness of his c6-pawn as well.

12.\(\text{d}xf6\)+

White can continue here with the familiar idea of 14.c5!, but this time it is not a pawn-sacrifice. 14...\(\text{bxc}5\) 15.\(\text{dxc}5\) \(\text{b}b8\) 16. \(\text{a}a1\) \(\text{w}a5\) 17.\(\text{d}d4\) \(\text{w}x\text{c}5\) 18.\(\text{w}x\text{c}5\) \(\text{d}xc5\) 19.\(\text{d}xc6\) After the exchange of the c5-pawn for the c6-pawn, White has obtained a pawn majority on the queenside and can eventually try to create a passed pawn there. 19...\(\text{b}b6\) (but not 19...\(\text{d}x\text{b}2\), since after 20.\(\text{w}x\text{b}2\) \(\text{d}x\text{b}2\) 21.\(\text{e}e7+\) \(\text{h}h8\) 22.\(\text{b}b5+-\) Black suddenly loses on the spot owing to the weakness of his back rank) 20.\(\text{e}e3\) \(\text{c}c6\) 21.\(\text{b}b5\) \(\text{d}d7\) 22.\(\text{d}x\text{c}6\) \(\text{d}x\text{c}6\) 23.\(\text{d}x\text{c}5\)= and in the game Vaganian – Smyslov, Lvov 1978, White realised his material advantage.

13.\(\text{e}e5\)

White exploits the fact that Black has lost control of the e5-square and he posts his knight there immediately.

13...\(\text{e}d7\)

14.\(\text{d}xc6\)=

With this simple tactical com-
combination, White retains the advantage in all variations.

14...\texttt{b7} 15...\texttt{e7+!}

This is clearly stronger than 15...d5 \texttt{xc6} 16...\texttt{xc6} \texttt{e5} 17...\texttt{e3} and the players agreed a draw in the game Turov – Harikrishna, Biel 2012.

15...\texttt{h8} 16...d5 \texttt{e5} 17...\texttt{d2!}

17...\texttt{xh2+}

The best move for Black in this position might be 17...\texttt{exd5}, although even then, after 18...\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 19...\texttt{cxd5} \texttt{h2+} 20...\texttt{h1+}, White maintains a stable advantage, since his bishop pair can become very active in this open position and his central passed d5-pawn is obviously stronger than Black’s h7-pawn. The only thing White needs to do is complete the development of his queenside pieces.

18...\texttt{f1} \texttt{e5} 19...\texttt{d6} \texttt{d8} 20...\texttt{a4!}

This move is clearly stronger than 20...\texttt{b1?!}, which was recommended by Sundararajan Kidambi in New in Chess Yearbook 105.

20...\texttt{g7} 21...\texttt{a3+}

This rook lift to the third rank is the point of his 20th move. Now the rook can take part in the attack on the enemy king along the h-file (\texttt{h3}), or support his passed d6-pawn (\texttt{d3}). Black’s defence is very difficult, because White’s d6-pawn divides the enemy position into two badly coordinated halves.

D) 7...\texttt{a6}

This is a more modern move. This position also arises some-
times from the Chebanenko variation by transposition. Black makes a waiting move, one which might prove useful later, without determining yet the deployment of his light-squared bishop.

8.\textit{d}2!? 
This is the Tomashevsky's favourite move.

8...\textit{d}xc4
The drawback of this move is that Black gives up the centre. Now the positions arising will be similar to those analysed in variation G) 7...\textit{d}xc4, except that here Black has made the unnecessary move a6. However, the alternatives are not very attractive either.

8...\textit{d}e4. This is an interesting move. Black gains the advantage of the bishop pair in anticipation of the forthcoming middle game. 9.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}xd2 10.\textit{c}xd2 e6 11.b4 \textit{d}7 12.a4 b6 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}7 14.c5. Naturally, it would be advantageous for White to keep the position closed, because in such positions the knights are not inferior to the bishops and sometimes they might even be stronger. 14...e5 15.\textit{x}d5 cxd5 16.c6 \textit{c}8 17.cxd7 \textit{x}d7

18.dxe5! (White has no advantage after 18.b5 axb5 19.\textit{x}b5= because there is now too little material left on the board and also his knight on b3 is a bit misplaced, Spoelman – E.L'Ami, Eindhoven 2010) 18...\textit{x}a4 19.f4= Having exchanged his rook pawn for the enemy's central pawn, White is slightly better. Of course, he needs to be very careful in his fight against the enemy bishops.

After 8...\textit{g}4 9.\textit{w}3 Black's rook is forced to take up a passive position. 9...\textit{a}7 10.h3 \textit{f}x3 11.\textit{f}x3 e6 12.\textit{f}d1 \textit{b}d7 13.e4 \textit{d}xe4

14.\textit{x}e4! This interesting idea is often encountered in practical
play. White exploits the fact that Black will be reluctant to capture on e4, since White’s knight can then quickly occupy the d6-square. 14...\( \texttt{\%}c7 \) 15.\( \texttt{\%}f3 \). Now the bishop retreats and so White has avoided the exchange of minor pieces, which is definitely advantageous for him, since he has more space, while Black’s pieces are cramped inside his own camp. 15...\( \texttt{\%}a\texttt{a}8 \) 16.\( \texttt{\%}c\texttt{a}1 \) Dorfman – Hauchard, Mondariz 2000. White is better, thanks to his bishop pair. He should now prepare the pawn-break d4-d5 at an opportune moment, opening the position in the centre.

After 8...\( \texttt{\%}b5 \) 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.b4, White fixes his opponent’s pawn on b5 as a target. 10...\( \texttt{\%}e4 \) 11.a4 \( \texttt{\%}xc3 \) 12.\( \texttt{\%}xc3 \) bxa4 13.\( \texttt{\%}xa4 \)

Now he attacks the pawn on a6. In order to do this effectively, he needs to transfer his knight to the weakened c5-square as quickly as possible. 13...\( \texttt{\%}b7 \) 14.\( \texttt{\%}a1 \) \( \texttt{\%}d7 \) 15.\( \texttt{\%}d2 \) e6 16.\( \texttt{\%}b3 \) \( \texttt{\%}b6 \) 17.\( \texttt{\%}a5 \) \( \texttt{\%}c4 \) 18.\( \texttt{\%}xc4 \) dxc4 19.\( \texttt{\%}c5 \). White has executed his plan brilliantly and Black’s position is already very difficult. After 19...\( \texttt{\%}b6 \), White could have continued with an energetic pawn-break, launching a decisive attack on the dark squares. 20.d5! (but even after the less energetic 20.\( \texttt{\%}xb7 \) \( \texttt{\%}xb7 \) 21.\( \texttt{\%}a2 \) White converted his great positional advantage into a full point in the game Potkin – Amonatov, Ulan Ude 2009) 20...\( \texttt{\%}xc3 \) 21.\( \texttt{\%}xc3 \) \( \texttt{\%}ad8 \) 22.\( \texttt{\%}e4 +–

9.\( \texttt{\%}xc4 \) \( \texttt{\%}g4 \) 10.h3 \( \texttt{\%}xf3 \) 11.\( \texttt{\%}xf3 \) \( \texttt{\%}bd7 \) 12.\( \texttt{\%}fd1 \) e5 13.\( \texttt{\%}b3 \) \( \texttt{\%}e7 \) 14.\( \texttt{\%}ac1 \)

The theory of this position is based mostly on Tomashevsky’s games.

14...\( \texttt{\%}b6 \)
Black has also tried 14...\( \texttt{\%}fe8 \) 15.\( \texttt{\%}a4 \).

(direct)
Now after 15...\( \texttt{\%}b5 \), White’s best move is 16.\( \texttt{\%}c5 \) (he has no advantage after 16.\( \texttt{\%}c3 \) = Tomashevsky – Bu Xiangzhi, Ningpo 2008.) 16...\( \texttt{\%}xd4 \) 17.\( \texttt{\%}xd7 \) \( \texttt{\%}xd7 \) 18.\( \texttt{\%}xc6 \) and thanks to his strong bishop
pair in this open position, White maintains the advantage.

After 15...exd4 16.exd4 0-0 17.0-0, White can play the energetic move 22. d6!, creating very difficult problems for Black (in the game Tomashevsky - Bu Xiangzhi, Dagomys 2008, White played the weaker move 22.dxc4?! and the opponents soon agreed a draw). 22...d7 23.e4. White can combine threats against Black's f7-pawn with cramping his opponent's pieces with the possible advance d6-d7 and he can thus gain a big advantage. For example: 23...b6 24.e5 dxe5 25.dxe5 fxe5 26.e6 f6 27.d5 d7 28.dxe7 e7 29.g4 g5 30.f5±. White is very close to winning this endgame. He has a strong passed d6-pawn and very active rooks.

15.dxe5 0xe5 16.e4 (diagram)

This is the beginning of a standard plan for this pawn structure. White should try to advance his kingside pawns as quickly as possible. It is very instructive to see how, with very energetic play, he won this position in less than ten moves.

16...0bd7 17.0f4 0a5 18. 0d6 0f6 19.0e3 0f8 20.0f4 0xd6 21.0xd6 0e5 22.0xe5 0xe5 23.0c1 0e7 24.f4! and Black resigned, because he is helpless against the threat of e4-e5, Tomashevsky - Panarin, Krasnoyarsk 2007. His loss was due to one important defect of his position – he did not have any secure squares for his knights in the centre of the board.

E) 7...0e6

This is an interesting move. The bishop occupies an unnatural
position, in front of the e7-pawn, but in this way Black creates counterplay against White’s pawn on c4.

8...cxd5

This is the simplest continuation, leading to a slight but stable advantage. It is going to be very difficult for Black to create counterplay. For almost the whole game he will reduced to passive defence.

8...cxd5

Here, once again, 8...exd5 9.e4± leads to a version of the Gruenfeld Defence which is favourable to White.

After 8...exd5 9.c2, in view of the threat of e3-e4, Black is forced to give his opponent the advantage of the bishop pair. 9...xf3 10.xf3 bd7 11.e4 e5 13.d5 ac8 14.xc6 xc6 15.e3±. White’s advantage is beyond doubt. He has two strong bishops and his knight may soon occupy the d5-outpost, Cvitan - Torre, Novi Sad 1990.

9.b3 wb6

This move leads to an endgame with a slight edge for White.

Naturally, Black would fail to equalise with 9...c8. This would avoid weakening his pawn structure, but he cannot afford to lose losing two tempi in this manner. White is able to plant his knight in the outpost on e5. 10.e5 e6 (after 10...c6 11.xc6 bxc6 12.d2 a5 13.fc1 a6 14.xa6 xa6 15.a4±, White’s prospects are better, in view of the weakness of his opponent’s c6-pawn, Kosyrev – Hasangatin, Moscow 2006) 11.d2 fd7 12.f4 xe5 13.fxe5 c6 14.e1! This prepares the standard knight manoeuvre (even after 14.ac1± White realised his advantage in the game Karpov – Ivanovic, Moscow 1993). Black’s position is cramped and if 14...f6, White has the strong reply 15.h4±, so his advantage is not in doubt.

10.xb6 axb6 11.b3

This is the beginning of an interesting regrouping. White wants to deploy his knight on the a4-square, from where it not only attacks the enemy b6-pawn but allows the development of his bishop to a3.

11...g4

The character of the fight remains the same after 11...c8 12.
\[ d4 \ d5 \ c4 \ c6 \ 3.\ d3 \ f6 \ 4.\ e3 \ g6 5.\ d2 \ g7 \ 6.0-0 \ a6 \ 7.0-0 \ l0a4 \ l0bd7 \ l0a3; \text{and in the endgame White retains a slight edge, Bischoff – Erdos, Deizisau 2012.}

Black’s defence is made no easier by the active move 11...\textit{dxe4}. After 12.\textit{dxe4} \textit{d}7 13.\textit{a3} \textit{c}3 14. \textit{x}c3 \textit{xf}3 15.\textit{b}5 \textit{b}8 16.\textit{c}7 \textit{ac}8, Delchev – Cheparinov, Ses-\textit{tao 2010, White could have obtained a big advantage with 17. \textit{xe6! fxe6 18.\textit{g}5\text{±. Black has problems protecting his e6-pawn. In addition, with f2–f4 White can continue with his standard plan of cramping Black’s bishop inside its own camp. It is restricted by the pawn on e7 and cannot escape from the cage created by White’s pawns on d4 and f4, which means that White can play actively on the queenside practically with an extra piece.}}

\[ 12.h3 \]

A very similar position arises after 12.\textit{a4} \textit{d}7 13.h3 \textit{xf}3 14. \textit{xf}3 \textit{e}6 15.\textit{d}2\text{± and White managed to prevail in the endgame, Epishin – Gulko, Dos Hermanas 1994.}

\[ 12...\textit{xf}3 13.\textit{xf}3 \textit{e}6 14. \textit{b}2 \textit{c}8 15.\textit{fc}1 \textit{c}6 16.\textit{a}4 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}8 18.\textit{f}1 \textit{d}6 19.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}8 20.\textit{b}5\text{± Jakovenko – Rapport, Aix-les-Bains 2011.} (diagram)

White’s knight has occupied the excellent b5-square. In this position he has the advantage of the bishop pair as well as a superior pawn structure.

\[ F) 7...\textit{g}4 \]

This is the most logical move for Black, which I believe is much more in the spirit of the Schlechter variation. He develops his bishop to an active position. Unfortunately for him, the move has a serious drawback, since it leaves the pawn on b7 unprotected.

\[ 8.cxd5 \]

As in most similar variations, before developing his queen on the b3-square, it is advantageous for White to exchange on d5, so that he can capture on d5 if Black’s queen goes to b6.
Naturally, Black cannot equalise with 8...\(\text{cxd5}\), because after 9.h3 \(\text{xf3}\) 10.\(\text{xf3}\) White not only dominates the centre but also has the bishop pair. The game Ribli – Tischbierek, Baden-Baden 1992, continued: 10...e6 11.\(\text{c2}\) d7 12.\(\text{d1}\) c8 13.a4 a5 14.b3 a6 15.a1 c3 (it is worse for Black to play 15...\(\text{d7}\), because after 16.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17.a4, in view of the threat of \(\text{b6}\), Black will have problems maintaining the material balance) 16.a3 b7 17.e2 e8 18.a1 f8 19.b2 d6 20.e1 c8 21.\(\text{e2}\) d7 22.a5 e8 23.a2 c8 24.d3 c2 25.a2 c8 26.a2 c8.

White has deployed his pieces in ideal fashion and is ready to advance with e3-e4. Black has no weaknesses in his camp, but he is condemned to a long and laborious passive defence.

9.\(\text{b3}\) b6 10.h3

Rather surprisingly, this move has become very popular lately. Instead of exchanging on f3, Black’s bishop retreats, with the plan of going to b7. From there it will protect the d5-pawn securely and also cover a6- and c6-squares, which were weakened by the move b7-b6.

Black’s position is very passive after 10...\(\text{xf3}\) 11.\(\text{xf3}\). White’s game is very easy both in the middle game and the endgame. He will try to exploit the weakened light squares on the queenside and penetrate with his rook on the c-file. 11...e6 12.a4 a5 13.a1 c3 (it is worse for Black to play 15...\(\text{d7}\), because after 16.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17.a4, in view of the threat of \(\text{b6}\), Black will have problems maintaining the material balance) 16.a3 b7 17.e2 e8 18.a1 f8 19.b2 d6 20.e1 c8 21.\(\text{e2}\) d7 22.a5 e8 23.a2 c8 24.d3 c2 25.a2 c8 26.a2 c8.

27.g4\(\pm\). White has a great positional advantage in this endgame. He not only has two strong bishops, but also has the possibility to attack and capture his opponent’s weak a6-pawn. As we know, one weakness is often not sufficient for victory, so with his last move White advances 27.g4, launching an offensive on the kingside, in accordance with the principle of the two weaknesses. In particular, as the move h7-h5 cannot be good for Black, he will have to accept the creation of an-
other weakness in his position – the h7-pawn.

It is also possible here for White to play 27.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{xb}4\) 28. \(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{a}7\) 29.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 30.\(\text{e}1\) and thanks to his two bishops, he can play for a win in this endgame, Serper – Palatnik, Philadelphia 1997.

11.\(\text{e}5\) \(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}6\)

13.\(\text{xc}6\)

White can now play the standard move 13.\(\text{f}4!\)\(\pm\), maintaining the opening advantage thanks to the strong position of his knight on e5.

13...\(\text{xc}6\) 14.\(\text{fc}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 15.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{fc}8\)

16.\(\text{ac}2!\)?

White is preparing to double rooks.

This is stronger than the immediate 16.\(\text{a}5\), since pawn exchanges are in Black's favour: 16...\(\text{bxa}5\) 17.\(\text{xa}5\) \(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{ca}1\) \(\text{f}8\) 19.\(\text{a}2\)\(=\) and in the game Anand – Gashimov, Nanjing 2010, Black succeeded in holding the position, because it was easier for him to protect one pawn on a7, than two – on a7 and b6.

16...\(\text{e}6\) 17.\(\text{ac}1\)\(=\)

White has a slight but stable advantage. There might follow:

17...\(\text{f}8\) 18.\(\text{a}6\) \(\text{b}7\) 19.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{xb}5\) 20.\(\text{axb}5!\)? \(\text{cb}8\) 21.\(\text{a}2!\) \(\text{e}4\) 22.\(\text{b}4\). Although in the game Grachev – Vysochin, St Petersburg 2010, White failed to win, his position is obviously much more pleasant. His rooks control the c-file and his b5-pawn has securely fixed the enemy weakness on a7. White's knight can go after it at any moment via a2-b4-c6.

G) 7...\(\text{dxc}4\)
This move is very often played, but I do not like it, since Black gives up the centre voluntarily.

8.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xc4 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}}g4

After 8...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}bd7 9.e4, a position arises which is similar to theGrünfeld Defence, but with a misplaced black knight on the d7-square. 9...b5. This is the only way for Black to justify the move c6 (it seems very bad to play 9...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}b6, since his knight does not exert any pressure against White’s centre from this square: 10.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}e2 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}g4
11.h3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}}xf3 12.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textbullet}}}xf3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}c7 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textbullet}}b3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd7 14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}e3 e5 15.d5± and White has developed his pieces harmoniously, he has two strong bishops and his passed d5-pawn might become very dangerous, Khairullin – Romanov, St Petersburg 2010) 10.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}d3 e5 (it looks rather slow for Black to play 10...a6 11.e5 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}d5 12.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd5 cxd5 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}xe1± K.Georgiev – Baramidze, Kusadasi 2006; White has more space, while Black must worry about the weakness of the c5-square; his bishop on g7 is passively placed, restricted by the pawn on e5, and if he plays e7-e6 his dark squares will be weakened) 11.dxe5 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}g4 12.e6 fx6 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}h3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}ge5 14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}xe5 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xe5 (Black fails to equalise with 14...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xe5 15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}c2 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}b6 16.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}e3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}d4 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd4 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd4 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}ad1 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e5 19.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e2 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}b7 20.f4 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}5+ 21.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xc5±; White has a slight but stable edge in this endgame, thanks to his superior pawn structure, Kleine – Beavan, Email 2009) 15.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e2 a5

16.f4! (White must be very careful, because after the careless 16.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}a6 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}c2 b4 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}d1 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}h4=, Black gains excellent counterplay on the kingside, Greenfeld – Burg, Deizisau 2011) 16...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}c4 17.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd8 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xd8 18.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e5. After this move, White neutralises the unpleasant pressure of Black’s bishop on g7 against the queenside and White can begin attacking his opponent’s pawn weaknesses. 18...g5 19.g3 gxf4 20. gxf4 a4 21.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e4 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}d4 22.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}f3±. Black’s piece activity is only temporary. It will soon be neutralised, after which the weakness of his entire queenside and the passivity of his bishop on c8 will become significant factors.

9.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}e2!?

This is an interesting move which has been often played by Tomashevsky.

According to contemporary theory, White can also gain an edge with 9.h3, but after 9...\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xf3 10.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xf3 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}bd7 11.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}d1 e5 12.d5 e4 13.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xe4 \textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xe4 14.\textbf{\textit{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textbullet}}}}}xe4± White
has to memorise a lot of theoretical lines, while if he tries to avoid the main lines he may well lose the chance of gaining any advantage from the opening.

9...\(\text{\&bd7}\)

Once again, Black cannot equalise by playing in Gruenfeld fashion: 9...\(c5\) 10.d5 \(\text{\&bd7}\) 11.e4 \(\text{\&e8}\) 12.\(f4\); he has no compensation for White’s strong centre, Tomashevsky – Li, St Petersburg 2012.

There is no need to fear 9...\(\text{\&b6}\) 10.\(\text{\&c2}\) \(\text{\&bd7}\) 11.\(\text{\&d1}\) \(\text{\&xf3}\) 12.\(\text{\&xf3}\) \(e5\) 13.dxe5 \(\text{\&xe5}\) 14.\(\text{\&e2}\) \(\text{\&fe8}\) 15.\(h3\) \(h6\) 16.\(\text{\&d2}\) \(\text{\&c5}\) 17.\(\text{\&ac1}\); and after a tough struggle White managed to realise his advantage of the bishop pair in the game, P.Nielsen – Gashimov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

10.e4

(diagram)

10...\(\text{\&b6}\)

Black fails to equalise with 10...\(\text{\&e8}\) 11.\(\text{\&g5}\) \(\text{\&b6}\) 12.\(\text{\&d2}\) \(\text{\&c7}\) 13.\(\text{\&ad1}\) \(\text{\&e6}\) 14.\(\text{\&e3}\); and White again succeeded in advancing \(e4\) under favourable circumstances, Tomashevsky – Romanov, Dagomys 2010.

11.\(\text{\&b1}\) \(\text{\&xf3}\) 12.\(\text{\&xf3}\) \(e5\) 13.d5 \(\text{\&xd5}\) 14.\(\text{\&xd5}\) \(\text{\&d6}\) 15.\(\text{\&e3}\)

Black has some counterplay on the dark squares, but White’s position is preferable, thanks to his two bishops and his passed \(d5\)-pawn, Tomashevsky – Danin, Olginka 2011.

Conclusion

We have completed the analysis of the Schlechter Variation. Black has a lot of options in this variation, but they usually lead to more or less similar positions, in which White maintains a slight edge, thanks to his extra space and the bishop pair. Of course, this is no guarantee of victory, because there will be a hard struggle in the ensuing middle game and endgame. Nevertheless, White’s game will be much easier. As a rule, Black will be forced to defend passively, without any chances of organising counterplay.
The 4...e6, 5...a6 Variation

There is no doubt that this is the most popular and best move for Black. We shall devote chapters 23-25 to its analysis.

5.\textit{d}f\textit{3} a6

This interesting move has attracted a large following lately. It was even Anand's main defence in his World Championship match against Gelfand (Moscow 2012). It was also often used during the 1930s by Alekhine. Among contemporary grandmasters Bacrot, M.Gurevich, Jakovenko, and Kobalia have all played this line many times.

The idea of this move is to wait for the development of White's king's bishop. After 6.\textit{d}d3, Black intends to capture on c4 and follow up with b5. We should mention that the variation has already amassed a lot of theory and if White wishes to fight for an opening advantage against it he must find his way among many different possibilities. The character of the struggle in this variation can vary a lot; from middlegame attacks on opposite wings to endgames with a minimal edge for White.

6.\textit{c}2

White delays the development of his f1-bishop, so that if Black captures on c4 White can regain his pawn without losing a tempo.

Now Black has two main lines: 
A) 6...\textit{bd}7 and B) 6...c5.
After 6...b5 7.b3 there is a transposition to the Chebanenko variation, which we have covered earlier.

6...dxc4 7.\textsubscript{\texttt{d}}xc4

Now the move 7...c5 leads to positions from the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but with an extra tempo for White (\textsubscript{\texttt{c}}c2). It is quite possible this is not the best square for White's queen, but a tempo is a tempo and you should "not look a gift horse in the mouth." After 8.dxc5 \textsubscript{\texttt{x}}xc5 9.0-0 0-0 10.e4 b5 11.\textsubscript{\texttt{b}}3 \textsubscript{\texttt{b}}7 12.e5 \textsubscript{\texttt{f}}d7 13.\textsubscript{\texttt{g}}5 g6 14.\textsubscript{\texttt{c}}e4 \textsubscript{\texttt{e}}7 15.\textsubscript{\texttt{f}}4 \textsubscript{\texttt{c}}6 16.\textsubscript{\texttt{a}}d1\textsubscript{\texttt{+}}. White has a considerable advantage, Ehlvest – Neiksans, Riga 2012. Black's castled position has been weakened and White's knight has taken up a very strong position on the e4-square. In addition, the "X-ray" of White's rook and Black's queen on the d-file seems very promising for White.

7...b5 8.\textsubscript{\texttt{d}}d3 \textsubscript{\texttt{b}}7 9.a4 b4 10.\textsubscript{\texttt{e}}4 \textsubscript{\texttt{b}}d7. Once again, White has an extra tempo in comparison with the Meran variation, which we shall deal with later. 11.0-0 c5 12.\textsubscript{\texttt{x}}f6+ \textsubscript{\texttt{x}}f6 13.dxc5 \textsubscript{\texttt{c}}xc5 14.e4 \textsubscript{\texttt{c}}c8 15.\textsubscript{\texttt{e}}e2\textsubscript{\texttt{+}}. White's pieces are better developed and Black's queenside pawns are weak (particularly his a6-pawn), so White is clearly better, Melkumyan – Benidze, Plovdiv 2012.

A) 6...\textsubscript{\texttt{d}}bd7

Now we reach positions from the Anti-Meran variation, but with the inclusion for Black of the unnecessary move a7-a6.

7.\textsubscript{\texttt{d}}d2

An interesting idea – White is preparing e3-e4. He assumes, quite justifiably, that after opening of the centre, Black's move a7-a6 will turn out to be completely useless.

It is premature for White to play 7.e4, because of 7...dxe4 8.\textsubscript{\texttt{x}}xe4 \textsubscript{\texttt{x}}xe4 9.\textsubscript{\texttt{w}}xe4 \textsubscript{\texttt{b}}4+ and after simplifying the position by exchanges, Black can be quite optimistic about the future.

Now Black has a wide range of options, namely: A) 7...\textsubscript{\texttt{c}}5, A) 7...\textsubscript{\texttt{e}}7, A) 7...\textsubscript{\texttt{d}}6 and A) 7...dxc4.
It would be a mistake to play 7...b5?, because White can gain a decisive advantage with a simple combination: 8.cxb5 cxb5 9...xb5! axb5 10...xb5+-- Pataki – Acosta Sosa, Las Palmas 2012. Black cannot save the game with 10...b8 since after 11.c7+ e7 12.a5 he loses his queen.

A1) 7...c5
Chess is such an amazing game! Black loses a tempo and advances c7-c5 in two moves yet it is still far from easy for White to prove that he has an advantage.

8.cxd5 exd5

9.g4!?
An energetic move; White exploits the circumstance that Black’s pawn on d5 is protected only by his knight on f6.

9...h6
It is obvious that the exchange of a flank pawn for a central pawn after 9...xg4 is in White’s favour; after 10...d5 d6 11.xf6+ xf6 12.e4+ e6 13.xe6+ xe6 14.g1 White has the better ending, Malakhov – Ni Hua, Sochi 2009.

After 9...cxd4 10...d4 c5 11.f3+, White is again better, because he is ideally prepared to start a pawn storm on the kingside.

10...d6
Black’s bishop is more active here than on the e7-square.

The move 10...b6 securely protects the d5-pawn. After 11.h3 e6 12.e2 c8 13.c3 e4 14.f4 c4 15.0-0 Fichaud – Madesuke, Email 2007. White has established a lead in development and his knight on f4 is very strong. It can exchange Black’s bishop on e6 at any moment, after which White will have the advantage of the bishop pair. His other knight on f3 and the bishop on c3 give him a secure hold over the d4-square.
The move 10...\(\text{\&}7\) prepares castling and strives for the quickest possible development of Black's kingside. 11.h4 \(\text{\&}xg4\) (opening the centre with 11...\text{cxd4} is not in Black's favour, since he lags behind in development: after 12.\text{cxd4} \text{g4} 13.\text{cxd5} 0-0 14.\text{f3} \text{f6} 15.\text{b4} \text{e8} 16.0-0-0+ White's pieces have occupied dominating positions and he is threatening a routine knight fork on the c7-square, while Black's rook on a8 and his bishop on c8 will have difficulty coming into play any time soon, Malakhov – Ni Hua, Sochi 2009) 12.\text{cxd4} \text{g4} 13.\text{cxd5} 0-0 14.\text{f5} \text{f6} 15.\text{b4} \text{e8} 16.0-0-0+. White's prospects are preferable, with play on both sides of the board.

15.\text{cxd6} \text{\&}xd2 16.\text{\&}xd2 \text{\&}xd6 17.\text{c1} 0-0 18.\text{c5} \text{\&}xc5 19.\text{\&}xc5+ White has better chances in this endgame, since Black's d5-pawn is weak, Eljanov – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

A2) 7...\text{\&}e7

This is a solid but rather passive move.

8.e4

It is also interesting for White to play 8.g4!? here, but he does not need to complicate the game, because he can gain an advantage without any risk.

8...\text{dxe4}

With 8...\text{dxe4} Black gives up the centre and, naturally, this fails to equalise. 9.e5 \text{\&}d5 10.\text{\&}xc4 b5 11.\text{\&}e2 \text{\&}b4 12.\text{\&}e4 f5 13.exf6 \text{\&}xf6 14.\text{\&}b1 c5 15.\text{\&}xc5 \text{\&}xc5 16.\text{\&}e4 \text{\&}xe4 17.\text{\&}xe4 \text{\&}d5 18.\text{\&}xd5 \text{\&}xd5 19.\text{\&}c1 \text{\&}e7 20.\text{\&}g5
Chapter 23

\( \text{A3) } 7... \text{d6} \)

This is the natural developing square for the bishop. Unlike in the Queen's Gambit Declined, in which it is usually developed on e7, in the Semi-Slav Defence the bishop is more active on d6, where it controls the e5-square.

8.e4

It is once again interesting for White to play 8.g4!? Sedlak - Ushenina, Murska Sobota 2008.

8...dxe4

The move 8...e5 often leads to the complete disappearance of all the centre pawns. Nevertheless, White can keep an edge thanks to
his better development (this is a consequence of the tempo Black lost with the move a7-a6). For example: 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.\(\text{cxd5}\) 11.exd5 \(0-0\) 12.\(\text{d3}\) h6 13. \(0-0\) exd4 14.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(e6\) 15.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{cxd5}\) 16.\(\text{ad1}\) and White is ideally prepared for the coming battle, while Black must be very careful. For example, following: after 16...\(\text{e5}\) 17.\(\text{f4}\) \(e8\) 18.\(\text{f6}\) the activity of White’s pieces becomes menacing.

9.\(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 10.\(\text{xe4}\) c5
The move 10...\(\text{f6}\) usually leads to a transposition of moves.

11.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 12.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{cxd4}\) 13.\(0-0\) \(\text{e7}\) 14.\(\text{ad1}\)

Black has an extra pawn at the moment, but his defence is very difficult, since he is behind in development and White will easily regain the d4-pawn.

14...b6
This is Black’s safest move, preparing the development of his bishop to an active position.

It looks rather dubious for him to play 14...\(\text{d7}\) since after 15.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{c5}\) 16.\(\text{xg7}\) (stronger than 16.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 17.\(\text{xd3}\) 0-0 18.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{e8}\) 19.\(\text{h6}\) \(g6\) 20.\(\text{xf8}\), although even then White scored a convincing victory in the game S. Atalik – Savva, Heraklio 2007) 16.\(\text{f6}\) 17.\(\text{h6}\) \(\text{xd3}\) 18.\(\text{a5}\) \(\text{xa5}\) 19.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{g8}\) 20.\(\text{xd3}\) – Black’s position is completely hopeless. This game is a good illustration of what can happen to Black if he ignores the development of his pieces.

15.\(\text{f1}\)
This is more precise than 15.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{b7}\) 16.\(\text{e2}\) \(h6\) 17.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{d6}\) 19.\(\text{fd1}\) 0-0-0 and in the game Ehvest – Shabalov, Tilburg 1994, there arose a complicated position with chances for both sides.

15...\(\text{b7}\) 16.\(\text{xd4}\)±

White’s position is preferable, in view of his superior development. A possible continuation is 16...\(\text{e4}\) 17.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{f6}\) 18.\(\text{f4}\) (18.\(\text{xe6}\) is an interesting piece sacrifice, but the consequences would not be at all easy to calcu-
late over the board) 18...0–0
19.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{wd6} \) 20.\( \text{we3!} \) \( \text{efe8} \) 21.\( \text{wh3} \). White maintains the initiative and his bishops and queen exert strong pressure against the h7- and g7-squares.

A4) 7...dxc4

Black cannot achieve much if he does not capture on d4.

For example: 9...\( \text{wc7} \) 10.\( \text{d3} \) b6 11.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 12.0–0 \( \text{e8} \) 13.\( \text{f1c1} \). White's better piece development and his pressure against the c5-pawn give him an edge, Epishin – Cornette, Creon 2003.

After 9...\( \text{e7} \) 10.0–0 0–0 11.\( \text{dxc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 12.\( \text{fd1} \) \( \text{e7} \) 13.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 14.\( \text{xe4} \), Black is noticeably behind in development, Hovhanisian – Malakhatko, Lommel 2012.

10.exd4

In the position with an isolated queen's pawn that has arisen, White maintains the initiative and Black will not find it easy to exploit the weakness of the d4-pawn and the b4-square.

Black can also play 10...\( \text{e7} \) 11.0–0 0–0 12.\( \text{ac1} \) \( \text{b6} \) 13.\( \text{d3} \) (diagram) and after 13...\( \text{bd5} \) 14.\( \text{xd5} \)
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d3 d3 3...d6 4.e3 e6 5.f3 a6 6.c2

This move is unquestionably more reliable than 13...b4?! 14. axb4 axb4 15.h7! g6 16.xg6 fxg6 17.xg6+ f8 18.e5 e7 19.a1 Carlsen – Nakamura, Monte Carlo 2011. White has three pawns and a crushing attack for the sacrificed piece. Black's king is hopelessly weak and his queenside pieces are not yet developed.

13.e4 axd5 14.xd5 e7

Also playable is 16.c4; after 16...c6 17.e5 e8 18.fc1, White has pressure on the c-file and his pieces are active, but unlike in the 16.xd5 variation, he still has an isolated pawn.

16.xd5 17 wc5 18.b3 c8 19.b4 b6 20.a5±
After the exchange of the a-pawn for the b-pawn, White's knight will gain access to the ideal c5-square. Add to this the fact that Black has not castled yet and his bishop on b7 is restricted by his own pawn on d5, and we can evaluate the position as clearly in White's favour.

B) 6...c5

This move has become very popular lately. The fact that Black has lost a tempo does not matter, because the position of White's queen on c2 might well turn out to be unsatisfactory in some variations (e.g. it might come under attack after d6-b4, e8-f5, a8-c8).

7.cxd5 exd5 8.e2

Now Black must choose between B1) 8...c6 and B2) 8...e6.

B1) 8...c6

This natural-looking move is possibly inaccurate, because it presents White with the possibility of...

9.e5

Now it is bad for Black to capture on e5, so he must seriously consider how to prevent the move 10.c6.

9...c7

This is his most natural reply, planning to recapture on c6 with the queen. However, before we analyse this move, we shall take a look at Black's alternatives.

9...d7. Black prepares to recapture on c6 with the bishop. 10.0–0 cxd4 11.e6 c6 12.exd4 h6 (after 12...b4 13.f3 0–0 14.g5 xc3 15.xc3 e4
16.\texttt{xd8} \texttt{xc3} 17.\texttt{g5g4} 18.\texttt{xf4\texttt{f4\texttt{f4}}}, White's two bishops guarantee an advantage in the endgame, Blagojevic – Jovanic, Zadar 2006) 13.\texttt{xe1?!} (this is a slight improvement on 13.\texttt{xf3 d6 14.e1+} \texttt{f8} 15.\texttt{e3} g6 16.\texttt{d2} \texttt{g7} 17.\texttt{f4} \texttt{xf4} 18.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{b6--}, when Black has completed his development and White's edge has mysteriously disappeared, Tomashevsky – Lintchevski, Olginka 2011) 13.\texttt{e7} 14.\texttt{f4} 0–0 15.\texttt{f3} \texttt{d6} 16.\texttt{e5\texttt{e5}}. We have reached a common type of position for this variation, with isolated pawns for each side on d4 and d5. White's bishops are more active and his position is preferable.

9...\texttt{xe6}. Now, just like after 9...cxd4, Black fails to equalise because of his weakness on c6: 10.\texttt{xc6 bxc6} 11.0–0 \texttt{c7} 12.\texttt{a4} cxd4 13.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{d6} 14.h3 0–0 15.\texttt{d3} \texttt{h2+} 16.\texttt{h1} \texttt{f4} 17.\texttt{c5} a5 18.e1 \texttt{c8} 19.\texttt{xf4?!} This is the simplest for White (also playable here is 19.\texttt{d2} \texttt{xd2} 20.\texttt{xd2\texttt{d2}} Saric – Stojanovic, Sarajevo 2007) and after 19...\texttt{xf4} 20.\texttt{ad1} g6 21.\texttt{g1} \texttt{d7} 22.\texttt{a4!} \texttt{d6} 23.\texttt{a3\texttt{a3}} once again Black's c6-pawn is weaker than White's d4-pawn.

9...\texttt{cxd4}. Black is not afraid of being saddled with a weak pawn on c6 after 10.\texttt{xc6 bxc6} 11.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{d6} 12.0–0 0–0 13.\texttt{g5 e8} 14.\texttt{fe1} h6 15.\texttt{h4} g5. This is a very active move (after 15...\texttt{b8} 16.b3 g5 17.\texttt{g3} \texttt{xg3} 18.\texttt{hxg3} \texttt{a5} 19.\texttt{a4} \texttt{g4} 20.f3 \texttt{ad7} 21.\texttt{c5} \texttt{e7} 22.\texttt{ed1+}, the strong position of White's knight on c5 guarantees a slight edge, Khairullin – Matlakov, St Petersburg 2010). 16.\texttt{g3} \texttt{xg3} 17.\texttt{hxg3} \texttt{b6} (17...\texttt{a7} 18.\texttt{d3} \texttt{ae7} 19.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} 20.a3?!± and once again, Black's pawn weaknesses deprive him of any chance of equalising) 18.\texttt{ad1} \texttt{g4}, David – Feller, Evry 2009. Here, White should continue with 19.f3 \texttt{h5} 20.\texttt{zd2} a5 21.\texttt{a4} \texttt{b4} 22.\texttt{c5\texttt{c5}} and having transferred his knight to c5, he can be quite optimistic about the future.

9...\texttt{b4}. This move has not been played very often, but it is far from simple for White to prove an advantage. 10.\texttt{xa4+} \texttt{d7} 11.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7}

12.\texttt{d1?!} This is the only way to fight for an edge (White does not achieve much with 12.\texttt{b5} \texttt{c6} 13.0–0 \texttt{c8=} Caruana – Dominguez Perez, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010). Now the game might continue in the following fashion: 12...\texttt{c4} 13.0–0 \texttt{e7} 14.b3 b5 15.a3 \texttt{c6} 16.bxc4 bxc4 17.\texttt{b1} 0–0 18.\texttt{a4} \texttt{ab8} 19.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e6} 20.\texttt{fe1} h6
Chapter 23

21.h3  \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d6}}}}} \) 22.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f3}}}}} \) 23.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{c7}}}}} \) 24.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xb8}}}}} \) 25.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe7}}}}} \) 26.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc3}}}}} \) 27.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{g6}}}}} \) 28.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f1}}}}} \) 29.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{a5}}}}} \) 30.g4=. White's advantage of the bishop pair and the weakness of Black's d5-pawn provide White with some advantage, but breaching Black's defences might prove a difficult task.

10.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{dxc6}}}}} \)

10...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{bxc6}}}}} \)

It seems illogical for Black to play 10...bxc6. Then White's simplest way of maintaining an advantage is to open the centre with 11.e4?!, for example: 11...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{e6}}}}} \) (Black fails to equalise with 11...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{cx}}}}} \) 12.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xd5}}}}} \) 13.exd5 \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{b7}}}}} \) 14.0=0 \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d6}}}}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f3}}}}} \) exd5 16.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{e1+}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f8}}}}} \) 17.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc7}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc7}}}}} \) 18.b3 \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d6}}}}} \) 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{b2}}}}} \) h5 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{ad1+}}}}} \), because after White regains his d4-pawn, he will start to attack the enemy d5-pawn. Black will be faced with a difficult defence in the endgame, and in the game Zhou Weiqi – Ni Hua, Danzhou 2010, he did not manage to cope with that task...)

12.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) (the seemingly logical attempt for Black to keep the position closed with the move 12...c4 does not equalise, since he is behind in development; a possible continuation is 13.0=0 \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{e7}}}}} \) 14.b3 cxb3 15.axb3 dxe4 16.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{dxe4}}}}} \) 17.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{b7}}}}} \) 18.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{c4}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d5}}}}} \) 19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d3}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc4}}}}} \) 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc4}}}}} \) 0=0 21.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{fb1+}}}}} \) and Black's weak a6- and c6-pawns are excellent targets for White's major pieces, Jovanic – Svetushkin, Zadar 2011) 13.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{dxe4}}}}} \) 14.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc5}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{a5+}}}}} \) 15.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d2}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xc5}}}}} \) 16.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d5}}}}} \) 17.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d3}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4+}}}}} \) 18.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{dxe4}}}}} \)

19.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xd5}}}}} \) (White also gains a slight edge with 19.0=0–0!? \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xe4}}}}} \) 20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{he1}}}}} \) f5 21.f3 \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{c5}}}}} \) 22.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{fxe4}}}}} \) 0=0 23.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xf5}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xf5}}}}} \) 24.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{c3}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f2}}}}} \) 25.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d2+}}}}} \) since Black has problems with the protection of his weak a6- and c6-pawns) 19...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{xd5}}}}} \) 20.0=0–0 (20.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{e2+}}}}} \) is also good, Ponomariov – Movsesian, Istanbul 2012) 20...\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f6}}}}} \) 21.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{e3}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d8}}}}} \) 22.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{d3}}}}} \) \( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{f7}}}}} \) 23.\( \text{\textcolor{red}{\text{\textsf{\texttt{hd1+}}}}} \).

In this position White has a clear plan of campaign against Black's weak d5- and a6-pawns. We should also mention the fact that this position bears a close resemblance to the endgame which can
be reached in the Panov attack of the Caro-Kann Defence, the difference being that here White’s pawn is not on f3, as in the Panov, but on g2, which is obviously in White’s favour.

11.0–0

![Diagram]

11...cxd4

The alternatives for Black do not equalise either.

11...d7 This is not the best square for the bishop. 12.f3± Turov – S. Atalik, Kusadasi 2006.

11...d6 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 13.d2 0–0 14.ac1 d4 (Black fails to equalise after 14...e6! 15.d3±; White can attack the weak enemy d5-pawn and this gives him a slight edge) 15.e4 xxe4 (White is better in the endgame after 15...xc2 16.xf6+ gxf6 17.xc2 xf5 18.c4 dxe3 19.xe3, because Black’s pawn structure has been weakened) 16.xe4 e5 17.xe5 xe5 18.b3 dxe3 19.xe3 e6 20.f3± and despite the almost symmetrical position, in the game Mamedyarov – Grischuk, Nalchik 2009, Black failed to save the game; what makes all the difference is that White’s bishop on f3 exerts very strong pressure against Black’s queenside.

It is also possible for Black to play 11...e6 12.dxc5 xxc5 13.d2 d6 14.a4+ d7 15.b3 d4. Here, 16.a4! looks very strong for White (also playable is 16.exd4± Alvarez Pedraza – Rusev, Pamplona 2009); after 16...g5 (16...d5 17.exd4±) 17.f4 g6 18.b6 c6 19.f3 d8 20.c4± White has a slight advantage, since his pieces are more actively placed, while Black has not even castled yet.

12.exd4

![Diagram]

12...b4

Black does not solve his problems with 12...e7 13.f4 e6 (13...0–0 14.ac1 b5 15.b3 d7 16.f3±; White’s pieces have occupied active positions, applying pressure to Black’s weakness on d5 and now he just needs to play
his bishop to e5, Papin – Pushkarev, Ulan Ude 2009) 14.\textit{a}c1 0–0 15.\textit{b}b3±. Black’s position has no apparent weaknesses, but his pieces are very passive, Wojtaszek – Cerveny, Czech Republic 2009.

13.\textit{f}4

13...\textit{xc}3

Black presents his opponent with the advantage of the bishop pair, but creates a weakness in White’s pawn-structure.

Black does not equalise with 13...0–0 14.\textit{a}c1 \textit{d}6 15.\textit{e}5! \textit{g}4 (it is obviously weaker to continue with 15...\textit{d}7, since this leads, after 16.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 17.\textit{a}4 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 19.\textit{xc}5±, to a very difficult endgame for Black; his queenside is undeveloped and his d5-pawn is very weak, Tomashevsky – Rychagov, Krasnoyarsk 2007) 16.\textit{x}g4 \textit{g}g4 17.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}6 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{xc}2 19.\textit{xc}2 \textit{f}5 20.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xc}2 21.\textit{xf}8 \textit{xf}8 22.\textit{c}1 \textit{c}8 23.\textit{f}3 \textit{f}5 24.\textit{xc}8+ \textit{xc}8±. White’s knight is obviously superior to Black’s bishop in this endgame.

14.\textit{xc}3!?  
White keeps the queens on the board and thus retains maximum chances of realising his advantage.

Also playable is 14.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 15.\textit{xc}3±, and White’s bishop pair is a much more important positional factor than the weakness on c3, Mamedyarov – Wang Yue, Elista 2008.

14...0–0 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{h}6 16.\textit{h}3±

White is better, thanks to his bishop pair. However, Black’s position remains quite solid...

B2) 8...\textit{e}6!
This is a more accurate move for Black. Without a black knight on c6, the otherwise rather unpleasant occupation of the e5-square by White’s knight loses its point. Black can develop his knight to c6 with his next move.

9.0–0 d6 10.\texttt{d1}

Now he is again faced with a choice. Black can either try to defend a slightly inferior position after B2a) 10...cxd4, or go in for complications after B2b) 10...\texttt{b4}.

B2a) 10...cxd4 11.\texttt{xd4}

It is favourable for White to exchange the knights, firstly because his bishop gains access to the wonderful f3-square, from where it can exert pressure against Black’s d5-pawn, and secondly the remaining white knight is clearly more active than its black counterpart (White’s knight attacks the d5-pawn, while Black’s knight has a defensive role).

11...\texttt{xd4}

This move is almost forced.

After 11...\texttt{c8}, White gains the advantage of the bishop pair. 12.\texttt{xe6 fxe6 13.e4 d4 14.\texttt{b3 d7}}, Krasenkow – Bareev, Wijk aan Zee 2003, 15.\texttt{f4 d6 16.e5 xe5 17.xe5 xe5 18.xd4± and owing to the weakness of Black’s e6-pawn, White’s position is preferable. Black cannot play 18...\texttt{xd4?}, because of 19.\texttt{xe6+ d8 20.d1±

After 11...\texttt{d6}, Saric – Esen, Novi Sad 2009, the simplest move for White is 12.e4!±, since he is much better prepared for the opening of the game.
12.exd4!?  
After this capture, White abandons the campaign against his opponent's isolated d5-pawn and instead concentrates on exploiting Black's bishop on e6, which is restricted by his own d-pawn.

White fails to gain any advantage after 12...xd4. The game Gelfand – Anand, Moscow 2012, continued 12...c5 13.d1 w7 14.f3 0-0 15.xd5 xxd5 16.xd5 xxd5 17.xd5 ac8 18.d2 xe3 19.c3 b6 20.f5 w6= and the numerous exchanges led to an equal position.

12...e7  
The move 12...d6 allows the rather unpleasant pin of the knight with 13.g5 h6 14.h4±, Grischuk – Rublevsky, chessassistantclub.com 2004.

13.g5  
Here another interesting idea for White is 13.b3! b5 14.g5 w6 15.f3 d8 16.a4 b4 17.e2; Black's queenside pawns have been weakened, while White's knight can easily occupy an active position on the c5-square, Fridman – David, Turin 2006.

13..0-0 14.b3 b5 15.f3 w6

After 15..b8 16.ac1 h8, S.Volkov – Motylev, Novokuzensk 2008, White can keep a slight edge with 17.e2!?±, manoeuvring the knight to f4. From there it will not only increase the pressure on Black's d5-pawn, but will be threatening to capture on e6. Most important of all, though, is that at any moment the knight can be posted via f4-d3 to c5, with the aim of attacking Black's weakened queenside.

16.a4!?  
This is stronger than 16.xf6 xf6 and in the game Lalic – Malakhatko, Bergamo 2004, the players agreed a draw, since after 17.xd5 b4 18.xe6 bxc3 19.xc4 cxb2 20.xb2 ab8 21.xc3 fd8= White would be unable to realise his extra pawn.
16...b4 17.\(\text{\textregistered}\)e2 \(\text{\textregistered}\)ac8 18.\(\text{\textregistered}\)f4 \(\text{\textregistered}\)f5 19.\(\text{\textregistered}\)d3 h6 20.\(\text{\textregistered}\)f4± Black's queenside pawns have been weakened and White's knight is heading for the outpost on c5.

**B2b) 10...\(\text{\textregistered}\)b4**

This move leads to a very sharp game, in which White needs to know a lot of theoretical variations.

11.\(\text{\textregistered}\)b1

This is the only move with which to play for a win.

The position becomes simplified and equal after 11.\(\text{\textregistered}\)d2 \(\text{\textregistered}\)e4= 11...\(\text{\textregistered}\)c8 12.\(\text{\textregistered}\)d2 \(\text{\textregistered}\)f5 13.\(\text{\textregistered}\)c1

13...c4

Black increases his control over the weak d3-square.

Instead, 13...\(\text{\textregistered}\)c2 is a bad idea. Black wins the exchange, but his position remains very difficult. 14.\(\text{\textregistered}\)b1 \(\text{\textregistered}\)b4 15.a3 \(\text{\textregistered}\)xb1 16.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xb1 \(\text{\textregistered}\)c6 17.\(\text{\textregistered}\)a4 \(\text{\textregistered}\)c7 18.dxc5 \(\text{\textregistered}\)d8 19.\(\text{\textregistered}\)c3±

Black's real problem is that he cannot save his d5-pawn and Whitewill have, not one, but two pawns for the exchange, while retaining an obvious lead in development. For example: 19...\(\text{\textregistered}\)e4 20.b4 \(\text{\textregistered}\)xc3 21.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xc3 \(\text{\textregistered}\)d7 (Black's position is lost after 21...\(\text{\textregistered}\)e7 22.\(\text{\textregistered}\)e4 dxe4 23.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xe4 \(\text{\textregistered}\)xd1+ 24.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xd1+-) 22.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xd5 \(\text{\textregistered}\)d8 23.\(\text{\textregistered}\)e4+- Hammer – Andersen, Reykjavik 2012.

14.a3 \(\text{\textregistered}\)d3 15.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xd3 \(\text{\textregistered}\)xd3 16.\(\text{\textregistered}\)e5

(diagram)

16...\(\text{\textregistered}\)f5

It is obviously bad for Black to play 16...\(\text{\textregistered}\)d6?! 17.\(\text{\textregistered}\)xd3 cxd3 18.\(\text{\textregistered}\)e1 \(\text{\textregistered}\)f5 19.f3± since he will soon lose his weak d3-pawn, Batsiashvili – Bulmaga, Moscow 2012.
It looks safer to continue with 16...\g6. Here, however, Tomashevsky continued in exemplary manner: 17.e4 dxe4 18.lila4 tfe6 19.lilxc4 \e7 20.lilcS \e6 21.lilaS \id5 22.lilaxb7t, and Black's compensation for the pawn was insufficient, Tomashevsky - Ni Hua, Saratov 2011.

17.e4!

After this pawn sacrifice, White's pieces become very active.

17...dxe4 18.g5 \e6 19.\e2

The knight is transferred to the f4-square.

White also keeps an edge with the simple line: 19.e1!? \d6 20.\xf6 gxf6 21.d3 \g6 22.d5 \e7 23.d2 f5 24.xc4 0-0 25.xd6 xd6 26.xh6 ef8 27.h4\+. He has a passed pawn and Black's king's position has been weakened. Meanwhile, his bishop on g6 is severely restricted by his own pawns.

19...\d5 20.d4 \xf4 21.\xf4 \c8

After 21...b5, White gains a slight edge with 22.a4 \d5 23. axb5 axb5 24.\xa8+ \xa8 25.d5t, and Black's extra pawn is irrelevant, since he lags considerably behind in development, while White's passed d5-pawn is very dangerous.

22.d5 \f6 23.d6 \xd6 24.\xd6 \xd6 25.\xf7 \e6 26.\d6+ \f8

27.xc8. This is the simplest way for White; it is less precise to play 27.\c3 and, after several mistakes, White even went on to lose in the game Wojtaszek -
I. Sokolov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2010).

27... $\textit{xc} c8 28. $\textit{e} e5† This is a key transfer of the bishop. It is heading for c3, from where it will not only exert strong pressure against the g7-square, but will also protect the white queenside pawns. Black's defence is extremely difficult and his extra pawn is of no importance.

Conclusion

We have just completed the analysis of the move 5...a6. In general, the variations lead to a hard and complex struggle with a slight advantage for White. After our move 6. $\textit{c} c2, the most worrying response is 6...c5. This often leads to positions with isolated pawns on d4 and d5. White can usually maintain a slight edge both in the middlegame by organising pressure against Black's weak d5-pawn with $\textit{c} c3, $\textit{b} b3, $\textit{f} f3 and eventually $\textit{f} 4-e5, and in the endgame, because almost all the endgames with a black bishop on e6 are bad for Black. However, it should be understood that gaining an edge does not mean winning the game automatically, so in some variations White's advantage might not be enough for victory.
This is White’s main move in this position. It usually leads to the Meran Variation (6...dxc4 7...xc4 b5), which we shall cover in the next chapter.

Now Black has other options:
A) 6...b4 and B) 6...d6.

A) 6...b4
This move does not promise equality for Black and usually lands him in a passive position. This is not surprising, because what we have here is essentially a position from the Rubinstein Variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, but instead of the active move c7-c5, attacking White’s centre, Black has played the passive c7-c6.

7.0–0 0–0 8...c2

8...e7
White retains the advantage after all Black’s alternatives as well.

For example: 8...e8 (preparing e6-e5) 9.d2 (another possibility is 9.e5!?, radically solving the problem of Black’s possible pawn break e6-e5; after 9...dxc4 10...xc4 dxe5 11.dxe5 d5 12.e4 White has the edge, despite his doubled pawns on the e-file, since Black’s pieces, particularly his bishop on c8, are cramped, while White’s knight can head for the excellent d6-outpost, Garcia Palermo – Rogers, Dieren 1988)
9...e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.cac1 d7 14.fd1+ with a clear advantage, based on the possibility of active play against Black's isolated pawn on d5; the game Milton – Primrose, Email 2010, continued 14...c8 15.b3 a5 16.a3 d6 17.f4 h5 18.e2 g4 19.xg4 xg4 20.h3 f6 21.e2 c5 22.g3± and Black's attack on the kingside had backfired, leaving his rook horribly misplaced on h5.

After 8...dxc4 9.xc4 d6 we have a position from the Anti-Meran variation, but with a tempo less for Black. With 10.d1 e7 11.h3 e5 12.b3± White keeps a slight edge and after the careless move 12...h6? White's reply 13.h4± placed Black in a very difficult position in the game Mitkov – Drobne, Tivat 2011.

9.a3 dxc4 10.xc4 d6 11.h3

This move is played automatically in such positions; the idea is that if Black plays e6-e5, exchanging on d4 and then continues with b6, then in the resulting isolated queen's pawn position Black's bishop on c8 will lack a good developing square, because White's pawn on h3 deprives it of the use of g4.

11...e5 12.a2 b6

Black's position is difficult after 12...c7 13.d1 exd4 14.exd4 b6 15.g5± Podgaets – Lein, Tashkent 1973, or 12...a5 13.d1±

13.e1 a6 14.e4

14...exd4 15.xd4 e5 16.f3 h5 17.d1 e5 18.xe5 xex5 19.xh5 xh5 20.d1± In this endgame White not only has the bishop pair, but also a clear plan for the improvement of
his position. He should advance his e- and f-pawns (and also the g-pawn, if necessary), seizing space in the centre and on the kingside and restricting Black's knights in the process, Gulko – Huebner, Biel 1987.

**B) 6...\textit{d6}**

This was Chigorin's favourite move. Here, unlike in the Meran variation, Black does not seek immediate active counterplay, but defends passively. His main task is to prepare a freeing pawn-advance, either c6-c5 or e6-e5. White usually gains a slightly better position quite easily, but then exploiting this is not at all easy. At the start of this century, the future World Champion Anand tried this line.

More or less similar types of position arise after 6...\textit{e7} 7.e4 dx4 8.\textit{x}e4 \textit{dx}4 9.xe4, but Black's bishop is more passively placed on e7 than on d6, because it does not control the e5-square.

**7.e4 \textit{dxe4}**

Black sometimes plays 7...\textit{xc4} 8.xc4 e5 9.xe5 \textit{dxe5} 10.xe5 \textit{xd}8+ 11.xf7 \textit{xf8} 12.b3 \textit{xc3}+ 14.xc3 \textit{dx}4 15.0–0 \textit{c5}, but after 16.a3! (this is stronger for White than 16.e3 \textit{xb}3 17.axb3 \textit{c7} 18.xa7\+, since although he wins a pawn the presence of bishops of opposite colours makes its realisation very difficult, Gurevich – Van Renswoude, Vlissingen 2006) 16...b6 17.xad1+ \textit{c7} 18.fe1 White's bishop-pair gives him a big advantage in this open position. In addition, he can always exchange his bishop on a3 for the knight on c5, which will cripple Black's queenside pawn majority.

**8.xe4 \textit{dxe4} 9.xe4**

**9...0–0**

This is Black's main move here, since this is a move he needs to play in any case.

9...\textit{b4}+ reveals that Black's ambition in this position is just to
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.d3 d6 4.e3 e6 5.f3 f5 6.e3 e5 7.d3 d7 8.c3 c3 a5 9.e4 e5 10.d3 d6 19.c3 d9 20.ad1±; White maintains a slight advantage in the endgame, thanks to his extra space and the passivity of Black's bishop on b7, Karpov – Korchnoi, Vienna 1986) 15.e5 dx7 16.b4 e7 17.f3 h8 18.c3 f8a8 19.he1±. White has more space and very active pieces, Loeffler – Eyer, Email 2007.

9...e5 Black usually executes this freeing pawn advance only after castling. Now it has the advantage that he can do it without the move h6, since after the double exchange on e5, White will not have the combination g×h7+ and h5+, winning a pawn. 10.0–0 exd4 11.exd4 f6

9...c5 10.0–0 c7 11.e1 f6 12.c2 d7 13.e5 cxd4 14.f3 d7±. Once again White retains a slight edge, thanks to his active pieces and queenside pawn-majority, Sosonko – Smyslov, Tilburg 1982.

9...f6. Black wants to make the familiar exchange of dark-squared bishops, but with the inclusion of the moves f6 and c2. 10.c2 b4 11.d2 a5 12.a3 d2 f+ 13.xd2 xd2+ 14.xd2 b6 (the character of the struggle would not change after 14...e7 15.he1 b6 16.e5 b7 17.f3 d7

Once again Black shows that his aim is limited to exchanging pieces and playing for a draw. 12. d1 f4 (after 12...c7 13.g5 fxd4 14.f4 h6 15.h4 g5 16. g3 xg3 17.hxg3 c5 18.f3±, White is ahead in development and Black's kingside pawn structure (the f5-square) has been weakened, S.Ivanov – Godena, Moscow 2006; or 12...e7 13.e3 f4d4 14.xd4 f6 15.c2 0–0 make a draw, and to achieve this he wants to exchange as many pieces as possible. 10.d2 a5 (after 10...xd2+ 11.xd2 c5 12.0–0 0–0 13.he1 cxd4 14. xd4± – we have a position in which White will be better both in the middlegame, thanks to his superior piece development, and the endgame, owing to his queenside pawn majority, Smyslov – Fressinet, Cannes 1996) 11.0–0 xd2 12. xd2 f6 14.f3 d8 (if 14...c7?!, Black's position is terrible after 15.c5±, when White's knight heads for the d6-square, while the future of Black's bishop on c8 remains a mystery, Najdorf – Reilly, Moscow 1956) 15.b3 ed7 16.e2 b6 17.f5±. In order to assess this position as in White's favour, it is sufficient to compare the relative strengths of the bishops on f3 and c8, Polugaevsky – Schweber, Mar del Plata 1971.

9.e5 10.0–0 c7 11.e1 f6 12.c2 d7±. Once again White retains a slight edge, thanks to his active pieces and queenside pawn-majority, Sosonko – Smyslov, Tilburg 1982.
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16.h3 😁e8 17.።f5 ☂xf5 18.≧xf5†, and White's two bishops enable us to evaluate the position in his favour, Bareev - Anand, Dortmund 2000) 13.日讯d4 ☂c7 (13... ☂f6 14.≧f3† Ksir - Valenta, Czech Republic 2004) 14._transient f5 g6 15._transient d6+ ☂xd6 16._transient xd6++; White can play for a win without any risk in this endgame, in view of his better development and strong pair of bishops, Bagaturov - Anastasian, Protvino 1993.

10.0-0

Black is preparing the freeing advance e5, which is not playable at the moment, since it would lose a pawn.

It looks rather dubious to play 10...f5?! since after 11._transient d3 b6 12._transient e1 ☂f6 13._transient d2 c5 14._transient c3 ☂b7 15._transient xe6 ☂e4 16.d5 ☂c8 17._transient xe4 fxe4 18._transient xe4 White has two pawns for the exchange, a powerful passed pawn on d5 and very active minor pieces, Siikaluoma - Berger, Email 2008.

10...h6

10...h6

11._transient c2 e5 12._transient e1

It is also possible for Black to play 10...c5, although he usually inserts ☂f6 first. 11._transient c2 ☂c7 12._transient dxc5 ☂xc5 (if 12... ≦xc5 White can continue with 13.b4†, very quickly advancing his queenside pawns) 13._transient e2± Sergeev - Zawadzki, Czech Republic 2003.

10... ☂f6 11._transient c2 c5 12._transient g5 (without the prior inclusion of the moves h6 and ☂h4, the exchange 12...cxd4 might be very risky for Black, since White's queen can go to the h4-square and a sacrifice on h6 might then become decisive; this was perfectly illustrated by the game E.Geller - Papapavlou, Amsterdam 1954: 13._transient xd4 ☂e7 14._transient h4 h6 15._transient xh6 gxh6 16._transient xh6 ☂a5 17._transient g5+–) 12...h6 13._transient h4 cxd4 14._transient xd4 ☂e7 (Black weakens his castled position with the move 14...g5?!, which can be answered with 15._transient ad1±) 15._transient c3 ☂c716._transient g3 ☂c5 17._transient e5+. White has a slight edge, based on his lead in development.

11.Transient c2 e5 12._transient e1
12...exd4

Black's position remains passive and slightly worse after 12...\texttt{b4} 13.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xd}2 14.\texttt{xd}2 \texttt{exd}4 15.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{f}6 16.c5 \texttt{c}7 17.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}8 18.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}4 19.\texttt{e}2= Schmamdt – Schmandt, Email 2007.

13.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}5 14.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{a}5

After 14...\texttt{b}6 White can continue with a plan which is standard in this type of position. He exchanges Black's active bishop on c5 and exploits his lead in development to occupy the dark squares with his pieces (the c5-pawn, \texttt{e}5, \texttt{e}1 and eventually \texttt{d}4 or \texttt{b}3). On top of all Black's problems, he needs to make up his mind what to do with his bishop on c8. For example: 15.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{f}6 16.\texttt{x}c5 \texttt{x}c5 17.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{b}6 18.c5 \texttt{c}7 19.\texttt{ae}1 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{b}3=. In the game Prasad – Barua, Kolkata 1998, White followed this plan and gained a clear advantage.

15.a3

We have already seen this idea, but with the inclusion of the moves a5 and a3.

The careless 15...\texttt{f}6 allows White to strike tactical blow with 16.\texttt{x}h6! Of course, Black is not losing a pawn, since he has a counter-sacrifice, but his knight will be badly misplaced on the h6-square. For example: 16...\texttt{xf}2+ (16...\texttt{gx}h6 17.\texttt{ad}1=) 17.\texttt{xf}2 \texttt{g}4+ 18.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{x}h6 19.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{c}7 20.h3!? \texttt{f}5 21.\texttt{x}f5 \texttt{x}f5 22.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{xe}5 23.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{g}6 24.g4 \texttt{g}7 25.\texttt{e}7=; Black has managed to solve the problem of his knight on h6, but in the meantime White has succeeded in penetrating to the seventh rank.

It is safer for Black to play 15...\texttt{e}8, although even then after 16.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{xe}1+ 17.\texttt{xe}1 \texttt{f}6 18.h3 \texttt{e}6 19.\texttt{e}5=, White's pieces are clearly more active, Gurevich – Korkmaz, Istanbul 2006.

16.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}4 17.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{xe}3

After 17...\texttt{a}5 White can transfer his bishop to an active position on c3 with 18.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{f}6 19.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}8 20.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}6 21.\texttt{c}3=. Black cannot organise any meaningful pressure on the f2-square, since White can easily protect it, while it is unclear what Black is supposed to do with his f6-knight, Vera Gonzalez – Dumitrache, Andorra 2002.

15...\texttt{b}6

18.\texttt{xe}3
This is stronger than 18...\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}f6?!\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}d6\) when White’s piece activity on the dark squares is very dangerous, Signes – Koziol, Email 2007. The possible exchange sacrifice on f6 will give White a decisive attack in many lines.

19.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}d3\) \(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}f6\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{\textdagger}}e7\) Black’s position is solid, but his pieces are passive and the position can be evaluated in White’s favour.

**Conclusion**

We have just analysed Black’s possible attempts to avoid the Meran variation. Black’s position is generally tenable, but very passive. He has no counterplay and the most he can hope for is a draw. It is not surprising therefore that in today’s tournaments, most of which are organised on the Swiss system, meaning that the players are almost forced to play for a win irrespective of the colour of the pieces, this variation is seen only very rarely.
On the board we have the Meran Variation. It was so named after the game Gruenfeld – Rubinstein, played in the international tournament in Merano (a.k.a. Meran) in 1924. Black starts active play on the queenside, straight from the opening. For his part, White must respond with an offensive in the centre. This all leads to very interesting and complex positions, which is why the Meran occupies a leading place in contemporary opening theory. I shall not try to list all the grandmasters who play it, since it seems to be used by the entire chess elite nowadays.

8.\textit{d3}

After this natural and strong retreat of the bishop, Black has a choice between four possibilities: A) 8...\textit{d6}, B) 8...\textit{b4}, C) 8...\textit{a6} and D) 8...\textit{b7}.

A) 8...\textit{d6}

This move was neglected for a longtime and it is only during the past decade that it has attracted theoretical attention. However, this suddenly happened so convincingly that it has now been played even at the top level. Suffice it to say that this line has been included in the opening repertoires of Anand and Aronian. The idea of this move is easily to un-

\textit{d3}
derstand – Black is preparing to parry e3-e4 with e6-e5.

9.0-0 0-0

10.\textit{d2}!?

Immediate activity in the centre with 10.e4 is ineffective, so White must use more subtle methods in his quest for an opening advantage. With his last move he not only frees the c1-square for his rook but, more importantly, after his knight on c3 moves away, his bishop on d2 will support the pawn advance b2-b4. This is one of White's main ideas in this variation. If he manages to accomplish it then he will usually have the advantage. The point is that after b2-b4, Black cannot advance c6-c5, so his c6-pawn becomes weak and his bishop on b7 turns into a very passive piece.

We should also mention that if White plays 10.\textit{c2} the game transposes to the so-called Anti-Meran variation, where it is quite difficult for White to thread his way through the extremely complicated tangle of variations, especially since there are various possible transpositions, complicating the issue.

10...\textit{b7} 11.\textit{c1}

11...\textit{c8}

This is the most popular move for Black.

After 11...\textit{a6}?! White is able to carry out his main idea – to prevent the freeing move c6-c5 with b2-b4. 12.\textit{e4} \textit{x} 13.\textit{x} 14.\textit{b4}. Black's position is very difficult. 14...\textit{e7} (if 14...f5, then 15.\textit{c2} \textit{e7} 16.e4! \textit{xe4} 17.\textit{g} 5 \textit{f} 18.\textit{b3} \textit{d} 5 19.\textit{g} 4 \textit{ce8} 20.\textit{xe4} and on top of all Black's other problems, he must now worry about the weakness of his e6-pawn) 15.\textit{b3} \textit{h8} 16.\textit{c3} \textit{b8} 17.\textit{fd1} f5 18.\textit{d3} \textit{f6} 19.a3 \textit{g} 4 20.h3 \textit{f6} 21.\textit{b2} \textit{d} 5 22.\textit{c2}. White is clearly better and to understand why it is enough to look at Black's bishop on b7, Yakovich – Ali Marandi, Izmir 2011.

Black does not equalise with 11...\textit{b8} 12.e4 e5 13.dxe5 \textit{xe5
(after 13... \texttt{x}e5 14.\texttt{x}e5 \texttt{xe}5 his hopes of relying on active piece play are not going to be fulfilled; White will gradually force the active enemy pieces to retreat: 15. \texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}d8 16.\texttt{c}2 c5 17.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{eg}4 18.g3 \texttt{e}5 19.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 20.\texttt{xb}5 \texttt{xb}d4 21.f3\texttt{±} and Black has no compensation for the pawn, Tkachiev – Guidarelli, Aix les Bains 2007) 14.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 15.f4 \texttt{d}4+ 16.\texttt{h}1 c5 17.e5 \texttt{xc}3 18.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{e}4, Gagunashvili – Zhang Zhong Jakarta 2011. Here, White has a very strong reply with 19.\texttt{e}2! \texttt{xc}3 20.\texttt{xc}3\texttt{±} and Black is forced to give up his c5-pawn, since 20... c4?? loses immediately to 21. \texttt{x}h7+ \texttt{x}h7 22.\texttt{h}5+ \texttt{g}8 23. \texttt{h}3 f6 24.e6+-

It looks safer for Black to play 11...\texttt{e}7 12.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{bc}8 (12...\texttt{fd}8 13.f4 h6 14.\texttt{ge}4 \texttt{c}7 15.\texttt{xf}6+ \texttt{xf}6 16.\texttt{e}4\texttt{±}; White has prevented the freeing pawn breaks e6-e5 and c6-c5 and Black faces a rather difficult defence, Peralta – Thompson, Barbera del Valles 2011; or 12...a6 13.\texttt{ce}4 \texttt{xe}4 14. \texttt{xe}4 c5 15.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 16.dxc5 \texttt{xc}5 17.\texttt{h}7+ \texttt{h}7 18.\texttt{h}5+ \texttt{g}8 19.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 20.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{ac}8 21.\texttt{xc}8 \texttt{xc}8 22.\texttt{c}3\texttt{±} and in the game Sueess – Atuan, Email 2011, despite the presence of opposite coloured bishops, White realised his extra pawn in the endgame) 13.\texttt{ge}4 \texttt{c}7 14.b4 a5 15.a3 e5 16.\texttt{f}3 axb4 17.axb4\texttt{±} and in this complex and double-edged position White has a slight edge, because Black’s bishop on b7 is extremely passive, Krasenkow – Brunner, Germany 2009.

12.a3

It is useful for White to insert the move a3 before advancing with e3-e4, because Black’s queenside weaknesses might become a significant factor later.

12...a5 13.e4 e5 14.dxe5 \texttt{xe}5 15.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 16.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}8 17.\texttt{fd}1

This is the critical position of the variation. White has a slight edge, despite Black’s apparently active play. White just needs to play accurately to neutralise Black’s initiative on the queenside. For this, he often places his pawns on f3 and g3, after which Black’s dark-squared bishop and his knight will be severely restricted in their mobility.

17...\texttt{e}7

Or 17...\texttt{d}6 18.g3\texttt{e}7 (another option here is 18...\texttt{e}6 19.f3 h5
20.\&e3 h4 21.g4 \&h7 22.g5± and White still has an edge, since he has started his attack on the kingside, while Black's bishop on h7 remains out of play, Brodsky – Kharitonov, Cappelle la Grande 2012) 19.f3 h5 20.\&e3 \&cd8 21.\&b1 \&c8 22.\&b6 \&xd1+ 23.\&xd1 h4 24.f4 \&b8, Khismatullin – Maletin, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011, and now with 25.e5!? White gains a strong initiative on the kingside.

18.f3

[Diagram]

18...h5

18...\&d6 19.g3 \&e6 20.\&e3 transposes.

After 18...\&cd8 19.\&e3 \&d7 20.\&c2 h6 21.\&f2 \&a6 22.\&c5 \&e6, White needs to continue very accurately with 23.\&e2±, avoiding the careless 23.\&cd2, when Black has a simple combination which equalises completely: 23...\&xd3!? 24.\&xd3 b4= Fressinet – Gozzoli, Belfort 2012.

Black has also tried 18...\&d7 19.f4 \&b8 (after 19.\&d4+ 20.\&e3 \&xe3+ 21.\&xe3\&e5 White's e-pawn is ready to advance, opening the diagonal for the bishop, and his knight can head for d6 via e4, Bukavshin – Hovhannisyan, St Petersburg 2012) 20.e5 f6 21.\&h5!? (this seems safer than 21.\&f5 fxe5 22.\&e4 and although White's prospects here are still preferable, the position is very complicated, Wojtaszek – Pashikian, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011) 21...\&f8 22.\&e4 fxe5 23.f5±. This is a standard pawn sacrifice. White has gained a considerable positional advantage and Black has difficulty stemming his opponent's growing initiative; for example, after the natural response 23...\&d7 White can win by force with 24.\&g5 \&f6 25.\&c4! bxc4 26.\&xf6 gxf6 27.\&d7+-

19.\&e3 \&d6 20.g3 \&e6 21.\&f2 \&cd8 22.\&f1 \&xd1 23.\&xd1 h4 24.\&d2 hgx3 25.hgx3 \&h5 26.\&e2± White has securely strengthened his kingside. He retains a slight edge and if Black continues rather carelessly with 26...f5?! 27.\&h3 g6 28.f4 \&c7 29.e5± White's advantage becomes overwhelming, thanks to his protected passed pawn and better placed pieces, Sjugirov – Jakovenko, Novosibirsk 2012.
B) 8...b4

This move was introduced into tournament practice by the Swedish master Erik Lundin. It is less popular than 8...a6 and 8...b7, but is still played quite often in tournament practice. It usually leads to a type of game which is untypical of the Meran variation. Instead of seeking active play on the queenside, Black tries to exchange some pieces, seeking to draw a slightly inferior position.

9.\textit{\text{De}4}

In accordance with Doctor Tarrasch’s advice, White’s knight heads for the centre of the board. Here we shall analyse in detail the moves B1) 9...\textit{De}7 and B2) 9...\textit{De}4.

9...\textit{Db7} transposes to variation B1 after 10.\textit{Dxf6+ Dxf6 11.e4 Dxe7 12.0–0}.

9...c5 is quite a normal move for Black in the Meran, but here it is inadvisable, mainly for tactical reasons. 10.\textit{Dxf6+ gxf6. Unfortu-

nately for Black, he is forced to recapture with the pawn. (The natural move 10...\textit{Dxf6?! lands him in a very difficult position after 11.\textit{De}5 \textit{Dd6 12.Db5+ Dd7 13. Dxd7 Dxd7 14.e4 Db8 15.Da4± and the pin on the a4-e8 diagonal is very unpleasant, Gligoric – Reilly, Madrid 1960.) 11.Dxe4 Db8 12.0–0 f5 13.Dc6 Dc7 14.Da4?! This is the simplest move (it is advisable to avoid the tactical complications arising after 14.d5 Da7 15.e4 fxe4 16.De1∞ Ivanchuk – Oll, Biel 1993). 14...Da7 15.Dd2 0–0 16.Dc1 Db7 17.Dxd7 Dxd7 18.Dxc5±. White is a pawn up, but Black’s strong light-squared bishop provides some hopes of saving the game.

B1) 9...\textit{De}7

This leads to a passive position for Black.

10.\textit{Dxf6+ Dxf6 11.e4 Db7 12.0–0 0–0 13.e5 Dd7 14.De4}

Now White’s bishop on e4 is much stronger than its counterpart on b7.
Black's idea is obvious. He is trying to prepare the freeing pawn advance c6-c5, in order to exchange his passive bishop. White should prevent this, even if he needs to sacrifice material to do so.

15.a3 bxa3 16.b4

This attempt by Black to fortify his kingside leads to the formation of a weakness on e6.

It is obviously bad to play 16...a5?! 17.bxa5 wxa5 18.axb3 wxb8 (Black loses after 18...wxa3 19.\textbf{\textit{xh7+}}! \textbf{\textit{xh7}} 20.g5+ g6 21.wd3+ f5 22.xe6 a8 23.xb1 xc8 24.xb3 1-0 Kasimdzhanov – Lesiege, Istanbul 2000; or 23...wxb4 24.cf4+ cf7 25.wxh5+ xe7 26.wd6+ df8 27.wg8+ df7 28.d6+ d8 29.wxf8 wd8 30.wxa3 1-0 Moiseenko – Novikov, Montreal 2004) 19.xe7 wb7 20.xf8 wxe7 20.\textbf{\textit{xf8+}} and White has a great advantage, thanks to the weakness of Black's pawn on c6, meaning that his bishop on b7 resembles a big pawn, Milov – C.Hansen, Essen 2000.

17.d3 db6 18.d2 dd5 19.c4 wb6 20.wa4

White has the advantage, because all Black's pawns on the queenside are weak and his bishop on b7 is out of play. Black has tried various ways of solving his defensive problems, but in general his prospects are not good. At best, he will be limited to passive defence, since if he risks trying to play actively, he can easily end up losing.

For example: 20...c8 21.xf1 a5 (it is possibly safer for Black to play 21...xb4 and then defend passively: 22.wxa3 a6 23.b3=) 22.wxa5 wxa5 23.bxa5 xa8 24.d1 ad6 25.axb4 dxa6 26.xd3 cd8 27.b7= White has a big advantage and after the careless 27...\textbf{\textit{xf8+}}, White has the simple combination 28.wxe7! xxe7 29.g5+– with a decisive advantage, Volzhin – Sharif, Abu Dhabi 2001.

The energetic move 20...g5
played in the game Chorfi – Mayer, Email 2005 led after 21.$x d 5\text{ cxd5} 2 2.\textsf{c} x g 5 f 4 2 3.\textsf{a} f 3 \textsf{d} a 6 2 4.\textsf{e} e 1 \textsf{c} a 4 2 5.\textsf{d} a 3 a 6 2 6.\textsf{c} c 1 \textsf{b} b 4 2 7.\textsf{c} x b 4 \textsf{b} b 4 2 8.\textsf{d} g 5 \textsf{e} e 7 2 9.\textsf{e} e 4 d x e 4 3 0 .\textsf{d} x c 4 \textsf{b} b 4 3 1 .\textsf{c} c 3 \textsf{b} b 7 3 2 .\textsf{d} x e 4 \textsf{d} h 8 3 3 .\textsf{d} a e 1 \textsf{f} 3 3 4.\textsf{g} 3 \pm to a very difficult major-piece endgame for Black, in which his king was vulnerable.

Black’s safest line might be 20...\textsf{b} a 8 and although White’s advantage after 21.\textsf{d} x a 3 \pm is not in doubt, Black retains some chances of saving the game with accurate defence, Andriulaitis – Atakisi, Switzerland 2002.

B2) 9...\textsf{d} x e 4

This move is in the spirit of the variation that Black has chosen, since it leads to a simplification of the position. Nevertheless, White keeps a slight edge; he just needs to be very careful to prevent Black’s freeing move c6-c5.

10.\textsf{d} x e 4 \textsf{b} b 7 11.\textsf{c} c 4 \textsf{b} b 6 12.0–0 \textsf{e} e 7

After 12...\textsf{c} c 8 13.a 3 (it is also possible for White to continue with 13.\textsf{d} d 2?! \textsf{d} d 6 14.a 3 a 5 15.axb 4 axb 4 16.\textsf{d} a 5 \pm and after the exchange of queens White will have the slightly better ending, since his bishop on e4 is obviously more active than its black counterpart and Black’s queenside pawn structure is noticeably weakened, Kozul – Malakhov, Sibenik 2007) 13...\textsf{d} a 6 14.\textsf{e} e 1 \textsf{b} b 5 15.\textsf{c} c 2 \textsf{f} f 6 16.\textsf{d} d 3\textsf{x} d 3 17.\textsf{x} x d 3 \pm. White has a slight edge. He is ahead in development and has the better pawn structure. Black should adopt a waiting strategy, since the opening of the position, with 17...c 5?! led in the game Podgaets – Karasev, USSR 1979, to nothing but disappointment for him: 18.axb 4 cxd 4 19.b 5 dxe 3 20.\textsf{d} x e 3 \textsf{c} c 5 2 1 .\textsf{c} c 1 0–0 2 2.\textsf{d} x c 5 \textsf{x} c 5 2 3.\textsf{a} a 3\textsf{c} e 4 2 4.\textsf{d} d 2 \pm

13.\textsf{d} d 2

This is a standard knight manoeuvre in this line. It is heading for the c4-square, weakened by Black’s pawn-advance b5-b4, and it might even go to a5.

13...a 5 14.\textsf{c} c 4

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14...\(\text{a6}\)

After 14...\(\text{c7}\) White often gains an advantage by sacrificing his queen. 15.\(\text{d2}\) 0–0 16.a3

16...\(\text{f6}\) 17.\(\text{f3}\). White has a slight edge, in view of his more active pieces and the weakness of Black’s queenside pawns. After the careless move 17...c5?! 18.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb7}\), White can choose between the greedy move 19.dxc5\(\pm\), with an extra pawn, and the more creative line 19.\(\text{xa5}\)!\(\text{a5}\) 20.\(\text{xa5}\) \(\text{a8}\) 21.\(\text{xa8}\) +\(\text{xa8}\) 22.\(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{b8}\) 23.bxc5\(\pm\), when his strong passed pawns on the queenside provide more than enough compensation for the sacrificed queen. In the game Furman – Osnos, Tbilisi 1973, Black failed to withstand the pressure and played 23...\(\text{xb2}\)?, landing in a lost position immediately after 24.\(\text{xa8}\)+\(\text{a8}\) 25.c6–

16...\(\text{c5}\) 17.\(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb7}\) 18.\(\text{xa5}\)! White is preparing the now familiar queen sacrifice. (He gains no advantage with the rather cautious line 18.axb4 axb4= Korchnoi – Bronstein, Leningrad 1970.) 18...\(\text{xa5}\) 19.\(\text{xa5}\) \(\text{a8}\) 20.\(\text{xa8}\)+\(\text{xa8}\) 21.axb4 \(\text{b7}\) 22. bxc5\(\pm\). White’s b- and c- pawns are very strong.

15.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{a7}\)

16.\(\text{d1}\)? This is the simplest. In the game I. Sokolov – Dreev, Poikovsky 2006, White played 16.\(\text{c2}\) and although he had the initiative, this proved insufficient to score the full point.

16...\(\text{b6}\) 17.\(\text{c2}\) \(\text{c4}\) 18.\(\text{xc4}\) 0–0

Ivan Sokolov, in his annotations to his game against Dreev, evaluated this position as equal. However, White retains a slight
advantage thanks to his superiority in the centre, for example:

19.e4 \(\text{2}d\text{d}8\) 20.e3 c5 21.d5 exd5 22.\(xd\text{d}5\) \(xd\text{d}5\) 23.exd5 \(d\text{d}7\) 24.\(c4\) \(f\text{d}8\) 25.\(d\text{d}2\) \(b\text{b}\text{7}\) 26.\(d\text{d}1\) His strong pawn on d5 guarantees an advantage. In addition, the weakness of Black's c5-pawn on c5 might become a telling factor later.

C) 8...a6

This is Black's most principled move, as played by Rubinstein against Gruenfeld in the stem-game of the variation, mentioned earlier Black prepares immediate active play on the queenside, since by protecting his b5-pawn he makes the move c6-c5 possible. This is a very good plan and this line has been played by all the three last World Champions: Kasparov, Kramnik and Anand.

Now White needs to play very energetically.

9.a4!? 

It is possible that this move is objectively inferior to 9.e4. The point is, however, that this leads to very complicated positions in which White not only needs to play inventively over the board, but must also be familiar with numerous theoretical variations. The following game provides a very instructive example: 9...c5 10.e5 cxd4 11.xb5 axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.0-0 \(b\text{b}\text{6}\) 14.\(e\text{2}\) \(b\text{7}\) 15.\(x\text{xb}\text{5}\) \(g\text{8}\) 16.\(f\text{4}\) \(d\text{6}\) 17.\(g\text{3}\) \(f\text{5}\) 18.\(f\text{c}\text{1}\) \(f\text{4}\) 19.\(h\text{4}\) \(e\text{7}\) 20.a4 \(x\text{h}4\) 21.\(x\text{h}4\) \(e\text{7}\) 22.a3 \(x\text{ac}\text{8}\) 23.\(x\text{c}\text{8}\) \(x\text{c}\text{8}\) 24.\(a\text{a}\text{1}\) \(c\text{5}\) 25.\(g\text{4}\) \(e\text{5}\) 26.\(f\text{3}\) \(f\text{6}\) 27.\(e\text{e}\text{1}\) \(e\text{c}\text{5}\) 28.\(b\text{4}\) \(c\text{3}\) 29.\(x\text{d}4\) \(x\text{d}4\) 30.\(d\text{d}\text{1}\) \(f\text{6}\) 31.\(x\text{d}4\) \(x\text{g}\text{4}\) 32.\(d\text{d}\text{7}\) \(f\text{6}\) 33.\(x\text{b}\text{7}\) \(x\text{c}\text{1}\) 34.\(f\text{f}\text{1}\) \(e\text{3}\) 35.\(x\text{e}3\) \(x\text{e}3\) 0-1 Kramnik – Anand, Bonn 2008. This game was played in a World Championship match and despite the numerous months spent in preparation and the fact that this was the second time in the match that Anand played this variation, Kramnik managed to lose with White, something that happens to him only very rarely. If it can happen to Kramnik, what about us mere mortals...?

This is why I have decided to recommend the move 9.a4 as the main weapon for White. It leads to simpler positions and usually White's play is purely positional. His task is quite simple. He wants to exploit the drawbacks of the moves b5 and a6.

9...\(b\text{7}\)

There is only a transposition of
Chapter 25

moves after 9...b4 10.Qe4 c5 11.0–0 &b7.

10.0–0 b4 11.Qe4 c5

Once again, there is a possible transposition after 11...Qxe4 12. Qxe4 &f6 13.d3 c5 14.dxc5 Qxc5 15.Qe2.

12.Qxf6+

Here Black must decide how to recapture on f6: with the queen

C1) 12...Qxf6, with the pawn

C2) 12...gxf6, or with the knight

C3) 12...Qxf6.

C1) 12...Qxf6

This move has been tried only rarely, but proving even a minimal advantage for White is not at all easy.

13.e4!?

This is possibly the only chance of fighting for an edge in the opening. The point is that after practically every other move, Black can exchange on f3 and this would lead to an approximately equal endgame, since White cannot exploit his bishop pair owing to the weaknesses in his pawn structure, for example: 13.b3 cxd4

White has sacrificed a pawn but has compensation, thanks to his better development. His prospects are in fact slightly preferable in this complex position. Of course, it would be very difficult to analyse such a complex position thoroughly, but the variations we offer below should provide a good idea of the character of the coming struggle.

16...Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe4 18. Qc4 f6 19.Qxd4 Qb7

White has sacrificed a pawn but has compensation, thanks to his better development. His prospects are in fact slightly preferable in this complex position. Of course, it would be very difficult to analyse such a complex position thoroughly, but the variations we offer below should provide a good idea of the character of the coming struggle.

16...Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxe4 18. Qc4 f6 19.Qxd4 Qb7

After 19...Qc6 20.Qe3 Qxa4 21.Qe2 Qc8 22.Qc4± Black is even two pawns up, but the rather unpleasant pin on the c-file, the facts that his king is stranded in the centre and his kingside pieces are still undeveloped, lead us to an evaluation of this position as in White’s favour.

20.Qe3 Qc8 21.Qc4 Qf7 22.
C2) 12...gx6

The positions arising from this move are double-edged. Black voluntarily weakens his kingside pawns so that he can organise counterplay on the g-file, relying on the power of his bishop on b7. Still, he will have to pay for weakening his position in this way.

13...e6

This is the most natural development of Black's bishop. As in a famous game by Emanuel Lasker, Black's bishops are poised, ready to be sacrificed at an opportune moment on g2 and h2.

13...e7 Black's bishop is less actively placed here as on the d6-square. 14.d1 cxd4, Lupik – Shadrina, Smolensk 2007, and now 15.exd4 gives White a slight edge, thanks to his better pawn structure, and the fact that Black's king is rather poorly protected. Now if 15...f5, White can increase his advantage with a clever breakthrough in the centre: 16.d5 e5xd5 17.xaxa6 0–0 18.xh6 e8 19.b5±

13...cxd4 This exchange leads to positions with an isolated queen's pawn in which White can rely on gaining an advantage because Black's king is unsafe. 14. exd4 b6 15.f4 d5 16.g3 e7 17.e1 f5 18.e5 0–0

19.a5. This is a typical idea in this variation. White fixes Black's weakness on a6. 19...g5 20.c4 f4 21.xf4 xf4 22.b6 a7
23.d5 \( \text{\textit{xd5}} \), Najer – Shirov, Germany 2011, 24.\( \text{\textit{e}} \text{\textit{d1}} \) \( \text{\textit{c7}} \) 25.\( \text{\textit{x}} \text{\textit{f5}} \) \( \text{\textit{xb6}} \) 26.\( \text{\textit{axb6}} \) \( \text{\textit{d7}} \) 27.\( \text{\textit{g4+}} \) \( \text{\textit{h8}} \) 28.\( \text{\textit{d4+}} \) \( \text{\textit{f6}} \) 29.\( \text{\textit{g4}}\text{\textit{+}} \). Black will have a long struggle to draw, despite the strong position of his bishop on d5. White’s major pieces are ideally placed in the centre and his passed b6-pawn might become very dangerous, while Black’s king is seriously endangered.

\textbf{14.\textit{d2}}

\textbf{14...\textit{g8}}

This is the most principled move for Black since, after all, this is why he opened the g-file...

It looks very bad to play 14...a5, because this presents White with the excellent b5-square for his bishop: 15.\( \text{\textit{ac1}} \) \( \text{\textit{e7}} \) 16.\( \text{\textit{b5}} \) \( \text{\textit{c8}} \) 17.\( \text{\textit{fd1}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \)

(digram)

Now with an energetic break in the centre 18.d5! White gains a great advantage. 18...\( \text{\textit{exd5}} \) (if 18...\( \text{\textit{xd5}} \), Black’s position is just horrible, since the pin along the d-file

is deadly: 19.\( \text{\textit{xd7}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd7}} \) 20.e4 \( \text{\textit{b3}} \) 21.\( \text{\textit{f4}} \) \( \text{\textit{xd1}} \) 22.\( \text{\textit{xd1}} \) \( \text{\textit{e5}} \) 23.\( \text{\textit{x}} \text{\textit{e5+}} \) \( \text{\textit{fxe5}} \) 24.\( \text{\textit{xe5+}} \) ) 19.\( \text{\textit{h4}}\text{\textit{+}} \). This is the point of White’s pawn sacrifice; his knight will occupy a very strong position on the f5-square. Black has an extra pawn, but his king will be in serious danger.

\textbf{15.a5 \( \text{\textit{b8}} \)}

\textbf{16.g3!}

After this move, Black’s play on the g-file will be less dangerous and he will be unable to exploit the weakness along the \( \text{\textit{hl-a8}} \) diagonal because his queen is misplaced. In addition, White can play \( \text{e3-e4} \) at any moment, not only blocking the weakened diagonal, but beginning advantageous play in the centre.
White does not achieve much with 16.h3?! f5 17.e4 c4± Gelfand – Kasimdzhanov, Elista 2007, or 16.h1 ±xh2; this exchange of a bishop for three pawns leads almost by force to an approximately equal position (but it is bad for Black to play 16...f5 17.e4 cxd4 18.exf5±). 17.g3 ±xg3 18.g1 ±e7 19.xg3 ±xg3 20.fxg3 ±xg3 21.e4 ±g8 22.g1 ±h3 23.h2 ±xg1+ 24.xg1 ±g3+ 25.h1 f5± and in this variation you can see the potential power of Black's bishop on b7.

16...f5 17.e4 c4 18.c2 fxe4 19.xe4 ±f6 20.xb7 ±xb7 21.e5± White has parried Black's immediate threats and – most importantly – he has exchanged Black's strong light-squared bishop. In the ensuing struggle White has good prospects of exploiting the defects of Black's position: his unsafe king and the weakness of his queenside pawns.

C3) 12...±xf6

14...0–0

This natural move allows White to play e3-e4.

Instead of this, Black has the interesting possibility of manoeuvring his queen to the h5-square with 14...±d5 15.d1 ±h5 16.h3

16...±d8 (after 16...±xf3 17. ±xf3 ±xf3 18.gxf3±, White has a slight advantage in the endgame thanks to his two bishops, Kaba-
tianski – Kindermann, Germany 2008; Black’s position is very bad after 16...\e4?! owing to 17.\b5+ \f8 18.\d7 \d6 19.\d3 \e8 20.\xb7 \xb7 21.\xa6 \d6 22. \e4 and in the game Matlakov – Vysochin, St Petersburg 2007, White won very quickly; if you glance at the position you might think that White has no advantage, but you should not forget that Black’s king has been deprived of its castling rights and will not survive for long in the centre) 17.b3 0–0 (the move 17... \e5?! is not dangerous for White, because of the now familiar check with the bishop on b5. 18.\b2 \e4 19.\b5+) 18.\b2 \a5 19.\ac1 \e4 20.\e5 \g5 21.\g4 \xg4 22. \hxg4± and White maintains a slight edge in the endgame, Tomashevsky – Riazantsev, Ulan Ude 2009.

You have now seen what White should be aiming for in this line. With his ninth move he has forced Black to play b4 and when Black protects this pawn with a6-a5, then the a-pawn itself becomes a weakness. White will attack it in the endgame, either with his knight from c4, or with his bishop from b6 (c7).

15.e4  
(diagram)  
15...\d7

This is an interesting plan. Black is planning to manoeuvre his knight to c5.

If 15...\e5 16.\g5. Now after 16...\e8 17.\ac1 \e7 18.\fd1 \a5 19.\d2 \xa4 20.\c4 \ad8, A. Moiseenko – Malikentzos, Kalitheia 2008, 21.\xe5; or 16...h6 17.\h4 \e7 18.\ac1 \fc8 (if 18... \d6, White keeps a slight edge with the standard knight manoeuvre to the c4-square: 19. \d2\ Bruzon Batista – Echavarría, San Jose 2009) 19.\h1 \g5 20.\g3 \d7 21.\c4 \h7 22.h4\ Korchnoi – Berkes, Paks 2004, White has a positional advantage.

16.\f4 \e7 17.\fd1 \c5 18. \c2 \e8 19.\d4

19...\d8
One of the drawbacks of this move is that now White can easily continue his active play on the kingside with $\text{Dh}6$, followed by $\text{Dh}4$.

14. $\text{Dxd}4$

This is Black's most popular move.

After 14...$\text{Dg}6$ 15.$\text{Dh}6$ $\text{Dg}5$ 16. $\text{Dxb}5 \text{Dxh}6$ 17.$\text{Dc}5$ 0-0 18.$\text{Dxd}7$ $\text{a}6$ 19.$\text{Db}4\pm$ (Dreev), Black's compensation for the exchange is insufficient.

After 14...$\text{Da}5$, White begins his standard attack against his opponent’s b4-pawn: 15.$\text{Dd}2$ $\text{Db}8$ 16.$\text{Da}3\pm$ Kaidanov - Shabalov, New York 1993.

Interesting complications arise after 14...$\text{Cc}7$ 15.$\text{Dh}5$ $\text{g}6$ 16.$\text{Dh}6$ $\text{Dxe}5$ 17.$\text{Db}5+$ $\text{Dd}7$ 18.$\text{Dg}7$ $\text{Df}8$ 19.$\text{Dg}5$ $\text{Dxg}5$ 20.$\text{Dc}5$ 0-0-0 21. $\text{Dxd}7$ $\text{Dfe}8$ 22.$\text{Df}3$ $\text{Df}4$ 23.$\text{Dg}3$ $\text{Dxd}7$ 24.$\text{Dxd}7+$ $\text{Dxd}7$ 25.$\text{gx}f4$ $\text{Dxf}4$ 26. $\text{Dxe}5+$ $\text{Dxe}7$ 27.$\text{f}3$. After some almost forced play, there has arisen an interesting position in which Black has two pawns for the sacrificed exchange and it seems that he is immune against any threats. It is no surprise that Dreev in his book evaluates the position as unclear. However, in a correspondence game White succeeded in gaining a slight advantage in the endgame after 27...$\text{Dg}5+$ 28.$\text{Dh}1$ $\text{Df}6$ 29.$\text{Dh}6$ $\text{Dc}8$ 30.$\text{Dac}1$ $\text{g}5$ 31. $\text{Dxf}6+$ $\text{Dxf}6$ 32.$\text{Dxc}8$ $\text{Dxc}8$ 33. $\text{Dg}2$ $\text{Da}6$ 34.$\text{Dh}4$ $\text{gx}h4$ 35.$\text{De}4$ $\text{h}5$ 36.$\text{Dh}3$ $\text{Df}7$ 37.$\text{Dc}4$ $\text{Dg}6$ 38.$\text{Dd}2\pm$ and despite the fact that Black has sufficient material compensation for the exchange, the weakness of his pawns on b4 and a7 enabled White to realise his advantage in the game Elyakim - Hall, Email 2009.

15.$\text{Dg}4$

The queen takes up an attacking position.

15...$\text{Dxe}8$

This is Black's most sensible prophylactic move against the threat of $\text{Dh}6$.

After 15...$\text{Dh}8$, in the game Dorfman - Bednarski, Polanica Zdroj 1978, White achieved a very strong attacking position: 16.$\text{Dh}3$ $\text{g}6$ 17.$\text{Dh}6$ $\text{Df}8$ 18.$\text{Db}5$ $\text{Dc}8$ 19. $\text{Df}3\dagger$

16.$\text{Db}5$

(diagram)

This is White's most promising move. He suddenly changes
2.c4 c6 3.\(c3\) \(\text{d}f6\) 4.e3 e6 5.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}b7\) 6.\(\text{d}3\) dc 7.\(\text{x}c4\) b5 8.\(\text{d}3\)

After 19...\(f6\)?!, White's play in the game Brynell – Matthiesen, Copenhagen 2006, could be regarded as exemplary. He exchanges the dark-squared bishops and Black's seemingly good bishop on b7 turns out to be clearly misplaced; it is restricted by White's e4-pawn, supported by the pawn on f3, and cannot assist with the protection of the weak pawns on a5 and b4. 20.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{c}e8\) 21.\(\text{x}c5\) \(\text{xc}5\) 22.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 23.\(\text{d}6\) \(\text{xd}6\) 24.\(\text{xd}6\) e5 25.\(\text{ad}1\) a5 26.f3 \(\text{e}6\) 27.\(\text{d}6\) 28.e5 \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{xc}8\) 29.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 30.\(\text{a}7\)++. Black loses the a5-pawn and his position crumbles.

20.\(\text{d}2\)?

This is stronger than 20.\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{a}8\) 22.\(\text{x}b4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 23.\(\text{xe}7\) and in the game Drozdovskij – Galkin, Dagomys 2009, the opponents agreed to a draw.

20...\(\text{f}6\) 21.e5 \(\text{e}7\) 22.\(\text{g}4\)± White has extra space and his pieces are more active. Of course, Black's position remains quite solid.

D) 8...\(\text{b}7\)

This move has been played quite successfully by Dreev over a period of many years. Furthermore, a few years ago he published a book devoted to this variation. I have managed to find a way for White to obtain a minimal edge, but only by researching in a database of correspondence games.

9.e4 b4 10.\(\text{a}4\) c5 11.e5 \(\text{d}5\) 12.0–0 \(\text{cxd}4\) 13.\(\text{e}1\)

With his last move, White has protected his pawn on e5 and has prepared to recapture on d4 with his knight.

Now Black is faced with a choice: to develop his bishop immediately with D1) 13...\(\text{e}7\), or to prepare to fianchetto it with the move D2) 13...g6.

The prophylactic move 13...a6 does not equalise for Black: 14.\(\text{d}2\) g6 15.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{b}8\) 16.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{a}7\) 17.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{c}8\) 18.\(\text{d}2\)++; his queen is misplaced on a7 and his king will be stuck in the centre for a long time, San Segundo Carrillo – Anand, Madrid 1993.
the target of his attack and instead of an offensive against the enemy king, he develops an initiative on the queenside.

I should like to focus readers' attention once more on White's knight on a4. Whether White will obtain an advantage or not in this variation really depends on the fate of this knight. If White manages to activate it via c5 or c4 (after the preliminary move b3), then he will retain an edge. If not, then Black might well be able seize the initiative, since he will have practically an extra piece in play.

16...h8 17.d2 a6

Black does not equalize with 17...Ec8 18.a3 a6 19.d3 bxa3 20.bxa3 Ec5 21.xc5 xc5 22.\(\texttt{#ab1}\)wd7 23.\(\texttt{#h3}\)g6 24.\(\texttt{#f3}\)± Riazantsev – Shirov, Plovdiv 2010. Black's kingside has been considerably weakened after the move g6; White managed to exploit this and scored a victory in the endgame.

18 Ec6
\( \text{Dxe7 25.\text{x}xb4 \text{d}d5 26.\text{d}d2} \)
\( \text{\text{c}8 27.\text{c}c1 \text{\text{c}c}1+ 28.\text{\text{c}c}1=} \)

This is an energetic move on Black’s part.

White has a stable advantage in this endgame. He can create a passed pawn and his bishop is clearly stronger than either of Black’s knights, since there is play on both wings.

\( \text{D2) 13...g6} \)

Black is preparing to fianchetto his bishop in order to protect his kingside securely against the aggression of White’s pieces. However, this move might turn out to be a loss of a tempo.

\( \text{14.\text{g}5 \text{a}a5} \)

It is obviously bad for him to play 14...\text{b}8, which is answered by 15.\text{b}5+ Staniszewski – Ostrowski, Zakopane 2000.

\( \text{14...\text{e}7 15.\text{h}6 \text{f}8 16.\text{d}2} \)
\( \text{\text{c}6 17.\text{e}4! \text{a}5} \) (Black loses after 17...\text{xa}4, because of 18.\text{xd}5 exd5 19.e6+-) 18.b3 \text{xa}419.\text{b}xa4 d3! 20.\text{xf}8 \text{xf}8 21.a3 \text{c}8 22.\text{xd}5 \text{xd}5 23.\text{xb}4 \text{c}2 24.\text{h}6+ \text{e}7 25.\text{h}4+. Black’s king has lost its castling rights and is badly misplaced in the centre of the board, Krotofil – Wolff, Email 2007.

\( \text{15.\text{xd}4} \text{a}6 \)

Not 15...\text{g}7? 16.\text{b}5+

\( \text{16.\text{d}2?!} \)

This is a rarely played move with which White retains chances of gaining an advantage. He wants to exploit the unfavourable position of Black’s queen on the a5-square by playing a3.
16...\textit{g7}

After 16...\textit{d8}?! White gains a very strong attack. He sacrifices his knight on e6 and his offensive against Black’s king, stranded in the centre, becomes very menacing: 17.\textit{c1} (or 17.\textit{g4} \textit{g7} 18.\textit{g5} \textit{e7} 19.\textit{a1} \textit{e5} 20.\textit{xe6}! \textit{fxe6} 21.\textit{xxg6+} \textit{h5xg6} 22.\textit{xxd8+} \textit{xxd8} 23.\textit{xxe7} \textit{xxe7} 24.\textit{xxc5} \textit{d5} 25.\textit{xxe6} \textit{xxe6} 26.\textit{xxg7} \textit{g8} 27.\textit{xxh7} \textit{dd6} 28.\textit{h4} \textit{d7} 29.\textit{h5} \textit{d4} 30.\textit{g3} a5 31.\textit{h6} \textit{g6} 32.\textit{h8} \textit{h4} 33.\textit{h7} \textit{d5} 34.\textit{xxf7+} \textit{xxf7} 35.\textit{xe5+} 1-0 I.Sokolov – Habu, Brussels 2007) 17...\textit{d7} 18.\textit{e4} \textit{xe5} 19.\textit{f3} \textit{d6} 20.\textit{h6} \textit{d7} 21.\textit{d4} \textit{g8} 22.\textit{g5} \textit{e7} 23.\textit{c5} \textit{xe4} 24.\textit{xxe4} \textit{b8} 25.\textit{xxd6}! Once again, this sacrifice is decisive! 25...\textit{fxe6} 26.\textit{xxe6} \textit{f8} 27.\textit{c5d1} \textit{f7} 28.\textit{e5} \textit{g7} 29.\textit{h6} 1-0 Morozevich – Anand, Nice 2008.

17.\textit{a3} \textit{xe5} 18.\textit{e4} 0-0 19.\textit{axb4} \textit{c7}

The character of the struggle remains more or less the same after Dreev’s recommendation 19...\textit{d8} 20.\textit{c5}†

20.\textit{xc1} \textit{d6} 21.\textit{c5} \textit{ab8} 22.\textit{xc3} \textit{a8} 23.\textit{dxb3}†

(diagram)

White has a slight edge thanks to his strong knight on c5. Of course, Black’s knights on d5 and e5 are also very strong and should not be underestimated.

23...\textit{b8d8} 24.\textit{xxd5}?! This is a concrete approach to the position and it should not be too surprising, because in correspondence games you can use computers. Of course, in an over-the-board game you would need to weigh up all the pros and cons before parting with such a strong bishop. 24...\textit{xxd5} 25.\textit{a5}. White’s knights are ideally placed in the a5- and c5- outposts. Now his task is to exchange his bishop at an opportune moment for the enemy knight on e5. It is obvious that first Whiteneedsto force his opponent to play f7-f6, so that he will not be able to recapture on e5 with his bishop. 25...\textit{f6} 26.\textit{e2} \textit{b5} 27.\textit{ed1} \textit{db8} 28.\textit{ab3} \textit{b5} 29.\textit{d2} \textit{d6} 30.\textit{a1} \textit{a8} 31.\textit{de4} \textit{e7} 32.\textit{xe5} \textit{fxe5} 33.\textit{c3} \textit{f7} 34.\textit{h3} \textit{h5} 35.\textit{a3}† Black’s pawns on e5 and e6 are very weak, as is his a6-pawn, so in spite of Black’s bishop-pair, White has a clear advantage, Klausen – Peli, Email 2010.
Conclusion

Having analysed all the intricacies of the Meran variation, we have come to the conclusion that although the positions arising are varied and extremely complicated, White can still count on gaining an advantage from the opening. The main obstacle is the move 8...a6, which he should counter with 9.a4, contenting himself with a slight but stable advantage, instead of entering the wild complications arising from 9.e4.

After 8...b7, White has no other choice except to learn the numerous theoretical lines, since any attempt to avoid the main line can not only mean the loss of his advantage but even lead to an inferior position.
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